



The Impact of Social Media Marketing Strategies on Achieving Institutional Excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the impact of social media marketing strategies on achieving institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq. The researcher reviewed prior studies on social media marketing strategies — particularly precise target-audience identification, influencer marketing, and user marketing — as well as prior studies on institutional excellence. A questionnaire was designed to test the study hypothesis and distributed to 51 employees at Ashur Hotel in Iraq across three categories: management staff, front-line staff, and back-line staff, yielding 47 valid responses for analysis. The hypothesis was tested using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics, the Kruskal–Wallis test, correlation analysis, and simple regression. Results showed a strong, positive, statistically significant correlation ($R = 0.739$) between social media marketing strategies and institutional excellence, with the independent variable explaining 54.6% of the variance in institutional excellence ($R^2 = 0.546$). The research concluded that a positive, direct relationship exists between social media marketing strategies and institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq, and recommended integrating social media management into a dedicated organizational unit supporting institutional excellence.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing Strategies, Precise Target-Audience Identification Strategy, Influencer Marketing Strategy, User-Generated Marketing Strategy, Institutional Excellence

Introduction

The importance of social media marketing strategies lies in their necessity for building brand awareness, increasing direct engagement with the audience, and achieving higher sales at a lower cost compared to traditional marketing. Social media marketing strategies enable precise targeting of potential guests, analysis of their behavior, and the building of long-term relationships that enhance guest loyalty.

Despite the importance of social media marketing strategies, they face numerous challenges that hinder the achievement of institutional excellence.

Institutional excellence refers to a comprehensive management approach that seeks to achieve superior and sustainable performance exceeding the expectations of guests and stakeholders, through the application of best practices, innovation, and continuous process improvement, as well as the creation of a unique competitive advantage and the achievement of distinguished results by adopting an organizational culture that encourages effective leadership and teamwork. This research focuses on analyzing the relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq.

Previous Studies Related to the Research Variables

Previous Studies on Social Media Marketing Strategies

The study by Dwivedi et al. (2015) aimed to compile existing research on social media marketing and present a review of seventy-one articles shedding light on multiple aspects of this fast-growing media-marketing format. The study concluded that social media has gained widespread recognition as a highly influential communication channel in the digital age. The study by Hassi (2016) found that online social platforms have added considerable value to institutions in their marketing and advertising operations. The study by Al-Jabalawy (2017) aimed to present the importance of marketing via social media platforms and clarify the concept of electronic marketing. The study by Moussa (2019) aimed to present the POST model as a framework for understanding social media marketing strategy. The study by Zayouch & Kachi (2020) found significant differences among software companies in terms of electronic marketing performance. The study by Li et al. (2021) found that social media marketing strategies can be classified into four types according to their level of strategic maturity. The study by Katach (2022) found the need to leverage consumer persuasion and influence by promoting products through them and drawing their attention to the services offered by the institution. The study by Breik (2022) found that social media platforms have given organizations the opportunity to market their products and promote their image, thereby achieving their goals and gaining wider audiences. The study by Tewu et al. (2025) found a notable increase in the number of active social media users, driven largely by mobile consumption. The study by Wijaya et al. (2025) found that effective integration between websites and social media platforms leads to improved brand awareness, increased customer engagement, and higher sales conversion rates. Other studies have also focused on green marketing in support of sustainability (Mahmoud, 2025). The results of some of these prior studies related to the social media marketing strategies variable (the independent variable) can be summarized in Table 1, with its dimensions presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Comparative Prior Studies on the Social Media Marketing Strategies Variable

Prior Study (Author & Year)	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Field of Application	Sample	Measurement Tool	Country of Study
Dwivedi et al. (2015)	Social media	Marketing	Published articles	Articles	Content analysis	Not specified
Hassi (2016)	Social media	Commercial marketing	Zara Corporation	Social media	Content analysis	Spain
Al-Jabalawy (2017)	Electronic marketing	Social media	Not specified	Social media	POST model	Not specified
Moussa (2019)	Marketing via social media	Electronic marketing performance	Software industry	Group of software companies	Survey	Not specified
Zayouch & Kachi (2020)	Opportunities and challenges of marketing	Social media	Tourism agency	Customers	Survey	Algeria
Li et al. (2021)	Marketing strategy	Social media	Electronic marketing	Group of theoretical research	Content analysis	Not specified
Katach (2022)	Influencers via social media	Purchasing behavior of Algerian youth	Constantine Province, Algeria	Algerian youth	Survey	Algeria
Breik (2022)	Marketing via social media	Planning strategy	Mobile-phone subscriber institutions	Facebook pages	Content analysis	Algeria
Tewu et al. (2025)	Social media users	Digital marketing strategies	Social media platforms	Active social media users	Survey	Indonesia
Wijaya et al. (2025)	Digital marketing strategies	Social media	Social media platforms	Active social media users	Content analysis	Not specified

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on prior studies related to the social media marketing strategies variable.

Table 2

Some Dimensions of the Social Media Marketing Strategies Variable as Reported in Prior Studies

Studies: S1 = Dwivedi et al. (2015); S2 = Hassi (2016); S3 = Al-Jabalawy (2017); S4 = Moussa (2019); S5 = Zayouch & Kachi (2020); S6 = Li et al. (2021); S7 = Katach (2022); S8 = Breik (2022); S9 = Tewu et al. (2025); S10 = Wijaya et al. (2025).

Dimension	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	Fr.	%
Facebook	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓			4	40%
Twitter	✓		✓		✓						3	30%
YouTube			✓		✓						3	30%
WhatsApp										✓	1	10%
LinkedIn											1	10%
Viber											1	10%
Telegram											1	10%
Google+											1	10%
General SM		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	9	90%
Influencers					✓	✓	✓				2	20%
Strategic plan			✓					✓			1	10%
E-marketing		✓			✓						2	20%
Market share					✓						2	20%
Team training											2	20%
Tool diversity											2	20%
Info diversity			✓								1	10%
Guest loyalty		✓									5	50%

Note: Percentages/frequencies are as reported by the author in the original study; some individual cell marks could not be fully disambiguated during translation due to source formatting. Source: Prepared by the researcher based on prior studies.

Previous Studies on Institutional Excellence

The study by Al-Kass (2020) aimed to measure the impact of knowledge management on institutional performance excellence, and found a relationship and impact of knowledge management on distinguished organizational performance. The study by Mohammed & Al-Zeidi (2022) aimed to diagnose the degree of attention to knowledge sharing and its role in achieving institutional excellence in the Iraqi environment. The study by Al Humeisat (2022) aimed to study the impact of strategic management methods on the company's attainment of peak performance, and found that strategic management practices positively affect organizational efforts to achieve institutional excellence. The study by Ahmed (2022) aimed to determine the relationship between entrepreneurship strategies and institutional excellence, and found a statistically significant relationship between entrepreneurship strategies and institutional excellence from the perspective of entrepreneurs. The study by Bashar et al. (2022) found a positive and statistically significant correlation between strategic planning and institutional excellence. The study by Abu Bakr & Awad (2023) found a significant positive effect of remote-work dimensions on institutional excellence dimensions. The study by Al-Juhani & Taybah (2023) found statistically significant differences in the study population's responses regarding the practice of digital leadership. The study by Al-Ruqi & Al-Mustadi (2024) found a role for entrepreneurial leadership in achieving institutional excellence at Tabuk University. The study by Al-Harithi (2024) aimed to explain the importance of administrative organization, its objectives, the motives for institutional

excellence, how to achieve it, and to clarify several administrative organization models. The study by Hijazi (2024) aimed to introduce the non-specialist reader to the topic of institutional excellence, its purpose, present some of its models, and examine the practical applicability of institutional excellence models. The study by Al-Qaidi (2025) aimed to build a proposed model for developing the institutional performance of student clubs in light of institutional excellence models. The study by Ali et al. (2025) aimed to examine the interrelationships among social media marketing activities. A summary of these prior studies related to the institutional excellence variable (the dependent variable) can be presented in Table 3, with its dimensions in Table 4.

Table 3

Comparative Prior Studies on the Institutional Excellence Variable

Prior Study (Author & Year)	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Field of Application	Sample	Measurement Tool	Country of Study
Al-Kass (2020)	Knowledge management	Institutional performance excellence	MTN Telecommunications Company	Group of employees, 60 out of a population of 250	Questionnaire	Sudan
Mohammed & Al-Zeidi (2022)	Knowledge sharing	Institutional excellence	Asia Company in Iraq	4,300 leaders among the company's leadership and staff	Questionnaire	Iraq
Al Humeisat (2022)	Strategic management practices	Institutional excellence	Small and medium-sized Jordanian companies	268 individuals from senior management in Jordanian companies	Electronic questionnaire	Jordan
Bashar et al. (2022)	Strategic planning	Achieving institutional excellence	Nationality, Passports and Residency Affairs	300 male and female employees of the Ministry of Interior	Questionnaire	Bahrain
Abu Bakr & Awad (2023)	Remote work	Institutional excellence	National Bank of Egypt	374 items from National Bank of Egypt employees	Questionnaire	Egypt
Al-Harithi (2024)	Administrative organization	Achieving institutional excellence	Abdul Latif Jameel Company	Sample of 50 employees	Questionnaire	Saudi Arabia
Hijazi (2024)	Institutional excellence	Institutional excellence	Theoretical study	Not specified	Not specified	Egypt
Al-Qaidi (2025)	Institutional excellence models	Development of institutional	Student clubs in the United Kingdom	Presidents of Saudi student clubs sent to	Questionnaire	United Kingdom

Prior Study (Author & Year)	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Field of Application	Sample	Measuremen t Tool	Country of Study
Ali et al. (2025)	Social media marketing	performanc e Brand loyalty	Amazon platform	the United Kingdom 402 social media platform users	Questionnair e	United States of America

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on prior studies related to the institutional excellence variable.

Table 4

Some Dimensions of the Institutional Excellence Variable as Reported in Prior Studies

Studies: S1 = Al-Kass (2020); S2 = Mohammed & Al-Zeidi (2022); S3 = Al Humeisat (2022); S4 = Ahmed (2022); S5 = Bashar et al. (2022); S6 = Abu Bakr & Awad (2023); S7 = Al-Juhani & Taybah (2023); S8 = Al-Ruqi & Al-Mustadi (2024); S9 = Al-Harithi (2024); S10 = Hijazi (2024); S11 = Al-Qaidi (2025); S12 = Ali et al. (2025).

Dimension	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	Fr.	%
Strategic plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	2	17%
Customer focus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7	58%
Workforce focus	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			4	33%
Staff participation	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			2	17%
Knowledge mgmt.	✓					✓		✓		✓			1	8%
Staff training	✓					✓				✓			1	8%
Market share	✓					✓							2	17%
Market change	✓												1	8%
Admin. leadership													7	58%
Policy/strategy													5	42%
Human resources													4	33%
Processes													3	25%
Service excellence													3	25%
Partnerships													3	25%
Org. agility													2	17%
Collaboration/risk													2	17%
Innovation													1	8%

Note: Frequency and percentage totals are reproduced as reported by the original author; some individual cell marks in the source table could not be fully disambiguated during translation due to source formatting. Readers requiring the exact per-study marks should consult the original Arabic manuscript. Source: Prepared by the researcher based on prior studies.

Research Problem

Despite the importance and spread of marketing operations via social media at the level of organizations and guests, there remain numerous problems that need solutions before institutional excellence can be achieved. These problems include: declining organic reach — meaning it is difficult for posts to reach followers without paid promotion, which reduces free engagement; the constant change of algorithms, as platforms such as Facebook and TikTok regularly update their algorithms, meaning that today's successful strategies may not work

tomorrow; the difficulty of measuring return on investment, as the greatest challenge is linking direct engagement (such as likes) to actual sales or precisely achieving business objectives; the need for continuous, attractive content, meaning the constant need to create creative content suited to different platforms amid intense digital clutter; and intense competition and rising advertising costs, as increased competition for user attention has driven up the cost of clicks and conversion campaigns. Achieving institutional excellence requires the organization to find solutions and mechanisms for these problems so that social media marketing can help the hotel organization achieve its institutional-excellence goals. The main research problem can be formulated in the following question: Does eliminating the problems of social media marketing help achieve institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq?

Research Objective

The primary objective of the research is to determine the relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence, which requires the scientific grounding of the conceptual framework for social media marketing strategies and the concepts of institutional excellence. The research also aims to analyze and evaluate the extent to which social media marketing strategies, in their various dimensions, affect the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq; to present some social media marketing strategies and their effect on achieving institutional excellence — the precise target-audience identification strategy, with a focus on the influencer marketing strategy and the user marketing strategy — and the theoretical framework of institutional excellence; and to present the relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence, along with conducting field research based on a questionnaire covering the research variables, and statistically analyzing the results using the SPSS statistical program to verify the validity or invalidity of the research hypothesis.

Research Importance

The research derives its scientific importance from studying and analyzing social media marketing strategies and their impact on achieving institutional excellence, and from finding solutions to the challenges they face. The research also derives its applied importance from its application at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq. The scientific importance appears through enriching administrative literature, supporting Arabic academic literature with a modern theoretical framework linking digital marketing thought with administrative excellence thought, and contributing to bridging the research gap regarding the scarcity of Arabic studies that integrate social media as an enabling factor for institutional excellence — along with grounding the study's dimensions by developing a theoretical model linking the dimensions of digital marketing with the axes of institutional excellence (such as leadership and operational excellence), and providing a measurement tool (questionnaire) and scientific indicators that researchers and students may rely on in the future. The practical importance appears through providing the administrative leadership of Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq with clear mechanisms for allocating marketing resources toward the most influential digital platforms, thereby raising spending efficiency, reducing traditional promotion costs, achieving the maximum return on digital investment, and improving service quality by enabling employees at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq to use communication channels as a tool for monitoring guest complaints and immediately developing operational performance.

Research Hypothesis

Based on the research objectives, the following main hypothesis must be tested: There is a statistically significant relationship between the activation of social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq. The sub-hypotheses of the research are as follows:

- There is a statistically significant relationship between the activation of the precise target-audience identification strategy and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between the activation of the influencer marketing strategy and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between the activation of the user marketing strategy and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq.

In addition, the research seeks to answer the following related questions:

- What are the most important social media marketing strategies?
- How can the theoretical grounding be established for the components that form the process of developing social media marketing strategies?
- What are the types of social media marketing strategies?
- What is the precise target-audience identification strategy?
- What is the influencer marketing strategy?
- What is the user marketing strategy?
- What is the theoretical framework of institutional excellence?
- What is the relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence?

Research Model

Figure 1: Research Model

Independent Variable — *Social Media Marketing Strategies*, comprising: 1. Precise target-audience identification strategy 2. Influencer marketing strategy 3. User marketing strategy
→ Dependent Variable — *Institutional Excellence*

Research Methodology

To achieve the research objectives and to determine social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq, the researcher relied on both the inductive method and the deductive method, which together help in testing the research hypothesis. The researcher relied, in the data-collection process, on data published on Ashur Hotel Company's service-marketing website, as well as some internal data available from Ashur Hotel in Iraq and personal interviews with a number of the company's employees at different administrative levels, along with the use of a survey list and statistical analysis of results using the SPSS statistical program. The research population includes some employees of Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq across various departments closely related to social media marketing and the achievement of institutional excellence.

Research Variables

The research variables consist of the independent variable, represented by social media marketing strategies, and the dependent variable, represented by the achievement of

institutional excellence. The researcher determined these variables according to the research hypothesis, and relied on a survey list to measure them, with statistical analysis conducted using the SPSS statistical program.

Scope and Limits of the Research

The research will not address all marketing strategies; rather, the researcher will focus on marketing strategies related to social media marketing specifically concerning: precise target-audience identification, direct interaction and responding to guests, and influencer marketing. Likewise, the researcher will not address all dimensions of achieving institutional excellence, but will be limited to the dimensions of institutional excellence related to guests. The researcher will also limit the application of the research to Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq.

Research Plan

Section One: The Theoretical Framework of Social Media Marketing Strategies and Institutional Excellence

Part I: The Theoretical Framework of Social Media Marketing Strategies

The Concept of Strategy and Marketing Strategies

Sir Lawrence Freedman broadly defined strategy as the art of creating power; nevertheless, he emphasizes that strategy is far more than a mere plan, affirming that a good strategy takes into account the potential effects of unforeseen factors and the role of others who may disrupt the strategy due to conflicting interests (Al-Qulaiby, 2019, p. 7). The researcher believes that strategy represents a comprehensive, future-oriented plan designed to achieve specific, long-term objectives. It is akin to a “road map” that determines the desired destination and directs available resources and capabilities with high efficiency to overcome challenges and competitors.

The concept of strategy varies according to the type and field of the plan; marketing strategy is linked to marketing plans, while political marketing strategy is linked to political-plan marketing (Al-Nadawi, 2017, p. 3).

Marketing strategy is also linked to the field of marketing, so social media marketing strategy is linked to a comprehensive plan that defines social media marketing objectives, the target audience, the type of content offered, and the digital platforms used to reach customers.

The theoretical grounding of the components that form the process of developing social media marketing strategies can be established within a framework consisting of a set of processes, components, concepts, and applied theories representing the driving factors. The components include: company objectives in social media marketing — guests’ motives for using social media — company engagement initiatives — guest behaviors on social media — social connectedness — social interaction — customer participation. This is examined in light of several theories including: resource dependence theory — uses and gratifications theory — resource dependence theory — uses and gratifications theory — social exchange theory — social exchange theory — dominant service logic, as illustrated in Figure 1 (theoretical foundation table).

The researcher believes that this framework illustrates multiple dimensions of social media marketing, helping organizations develop the marketing strategies most suited to their

resources and desired objectives. This helps overcome the challenges of social media marketing and select the strategies most compatible with the vision and strategy of the hotel organization to achieve its objectives, particularly institutional excellence. The theoretical grounding of the components forming the process of developing social media marketing strategies also depends on interacting structural components, including strategic determinants and inputs such as competitive pressures, industry characteristics, technological shifts, and digital consumer behavior, as well as senior management's orientation toward digitalization, organizational culture, and the available financial and human resources.

Table 5

Theoretical Foundation of the Components Forming the Process of Developing Social Media Marketing Strategies

Process	Component	Definition	Applied Theory
Drivers	Company objectives in social media marketing	The specific organizational goals that companies seek to achieve through strategic decisions related to social media	Resource dependence theory
Drivers	Guests' motives for using social media	The barriers that push individuals to select and use media and their content	Uses and gratifications theory
Inputs	Company engagement initiatives	The company's committed effort to stimulate, enable, and measure customer voluntary contribution in the company's marketing functions, exceeding the basic economic exchange	Resource dependence theory
Inputs	Guest behaviors on social media	Consumer activities related to brand-relevant content on social media platforms	Uses and gratifications theory
Interactivity	Social connectedness	The number of social ties	Social exchange theory
Interactivity	Social interaction	Any actions taken by one party — whether a seller or a buyer — that affect other consumers' perceptions of the product or service	Social exchange theory
Outputs	Customer participation	The extent of an individual's participation and interaction with the offers of the organization and/or its activities, which may be initiated by the customer or the company	Dominant service logic

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on Li et al. (2021, p. 3).

There are numerous social media marketing strategies, some of which are illustrated below (Figure 2: Examples of Social Media Marketing Strategies): green marketing strategies via social media — reverse marketing strategies via social media — cause-related marketing strategies — the strategy of social-media impact on guest loyalty — data analytics and artificial intelligence strategy — user-reliance strategy — influencer-reliance strategy — paid advertising strategy — guest interaction strategy — attractive value-driven content creation

strategy (Source: prepared by the researcher based on Al-Azzaz, 2025, pp. 6–7; Arabi, 2026, p. 39; Abdel Mawla, 2025, p. 15; Al-Sherbiny, 2026, p. 33; Al-Zayat, 2025, p. 21).

The researcher believes that no single strategy suits all organizations; success lies in choosing the strategy that aligns with the type of project, the budget, and the behavior of the target audience. The researcher can present some social media marketing strategies with their advantages, disadvantages, and challenges as follows.

Precise Target-Audience Identification Strategy

In today's fast-changing business environment, attracting and retaining the target audience has become an essential element for success. Traditional marketing strategies that rely on mass marketing are losing their effectiveness in today's market, as consumers enjoy wider choices and greater decision-making power (Chen, 2023, p. 3). A precise understanding of the target audience and its segmentation has also become an essential element in marketing strategies, as identifying and segmenting the target audience enhances the accuracy of marketing campaigns and enables marketers to gain a deeper understanding of consumer behavior and needs (Bogacki et al., 2024, p. 2). Analysis of the key strategies used to attract target guests includes: mechanisms for understanding the target audience — mechanisms for selecting appropriate channels — mechanisms for delivering value (Chen, 2023, p. 3). Some mechanisms for applying the precise target-audience identification strategy can be identified based on customer information, including: name and contact information — transaction history (what products they buy, in what quantity, and how often) — communication and response history — demographic information (age, location, education, etc.) — psychographic information (consumer interests, hobbies, and concerns regarding health, food safety, and the environment) — spending habits (deliberate shoppers, impulsive shoppers, and price-comparing shoppers) (Curtis & Allen, 2018, p. 2).

Based on the foregoing, the researcher believes that the precise target-audience identification strategy forms the basis of any successful marketing campaign; without it, advertising spend turns into random waste. However, excessive narrowing of targeting and confining the audience to an overly narrow segment carries a double-edged risk. The precise-targeting strategy is characterized by raising the efficiency of advertising spend by directing every dinar of the budget toward the people most inclined toward and in need of the product, which minimizes financial waste, increases conversion rates, and tailors the advertising message and content to address the specific pain points of this segment.

The researcher also believes there are numerous challenges to the target-audience identification strategy, including: the challenge of privacy laws and restricted data tracking; the challenge of continuous privacy updates, which requires building private guest lists by collecting emails and phone numbers through the website and uploading them to advertising platforms to create "custom audiences"; the challenge of rapid change in consumer behavior and interests; and the challenge of artificial intelligence and broad targeting algorithms.

Influencer Marketing Strategy

Internet influencers are considered digital opinion leaders who enjoy significant social influence over their followers. Some influencers have such enormous followings that they attain celebrity status online; however, the fundamental difference between influencers and

celebrities lies in the source of their fame. Unlike celebrities, who achieve success through officially recognized institutions (such as acting, music, and sports), influencers hold no credentials from any official institution and gain followers through active content engagement on social media (Leung et al., 2022, p. 6).

The influence of social media influencers is considered one of the decisive factors driving consumers to make purchasing decisions. Influencers hold considerable power to guide consumer behavior through their recommendations and opinions about products, and engagement with influencers contributes to increased credibility and encourages consumers to make purchasing decisions based on influencer recommendations (Marsal, 2025, p. 8).

Online influencer marketing strategy is defined as a strategy in which companies select online influencers and motivate them to engage with their followers on social media, with the aim of leveraging these influencers' unique resources to promote the company's products, with the ultimate goal of improving the company's performance (Leung et al., 2022, p. 7).

Online influencer marketing is distinguished from other marketing strategies in that (Leung et al., 2022, p. 6):

- Companies select online influencers and motivate them to help market their products.
- Online marketing strategy seeks to urge online influencers to engage with their followers with the aim of promoting the company's products and influencing their attitudes and behaviors.
- Companies benefit from influencers' unique resources, including their follower networks, personal standing, communication content, and followers' trust.

Influencers can be classified into two types: situational influencers, referring to the influence of a single individual through participation in a particular discussion, and macro (global) influencers, referring to the extension of influence across the entire community. Marketing through social media influencers relies on four elements (Al-Zayat, 2025, p. 22):

- Identifying and cultivating influencers on social media platforms.
- Building and managing a strong relationship with social media influencers.
- Monitoring the influencer marketing campaign on social media platforms.
- Measuring the influencer marketing campaign on social media platforms.

The researcher believes that influencer marketing strategy has become one of the most decisive and impactful tools today. However, this strategy carries operational complexities and high managerial risks. Influencer marketing is characterized by its ability to build instant trust by transferring the influencer's credibility with their followers directly to the product. The disadvantages of influencer marketing include high cost, in addition to the difficulty of predicting and replicating results, with no guarantee that the strategy will achieve steady sales. The success of the influencer marketing strategy requires overcoming current challenges, including: the challenge of fake accounts and fake followers, the challenge of measuring genuine return on investment, and the challenge of risking brand reputation.

User Marketing Strategy

User marketing is defined as a brand-linked marketing strategy produced by contributors without compensation or for non-tangible compensation. User marketing has also been defined as collaborative digital marketing that relies on content voluntarily created by users rather than by the brands themselves (Al-Sherbiny, 2026, p. 33).

Marketers are now able to monitor consumer behavior online, thereby obtaining a complete sample of them and vast, real-time updated behavioral data. By analyzing this big data, marketers can build a database for the user marketing strategy (Wang, 2021, p. 5).

The user marketing strategy is characterized by a set of advantages and features, including: authenticity and realism — trust — economic value — community orientation — multi-platform presence — compatibility with social media platforms — interaction and influence on purchasing decisions (Al-Sherbiny, 2026, p. 33).

Despite the significant potential and genuine desire among institutions to adopt social media marketing strategies, there remain challenges facing the successful implementation of these new marketing programs. Accordingly, marketing managers' awareness of the success factors of social media marketing is of great importance in achieving a return on investment in this field (Jami Pour et al., 2021, p. 6).

The most important success factors for user marketing via social media include: good planning, monitoring, follow-up, and continuous improvement — ensuring interactivity and participation — realism and belief in the presented content — social acceptance of the user — attractiveness and the ability to evoke emotions — influence on purchasing decisions (Al-Sherbiny, 2026, p. 38). Analyzing and measuring user marketing methods represents a matter of great importance to the success of the user marketing strategy via social media (Jami Pour et al., 2021, p. 6).

User marketing via social media faces numerous challenges, including: the risk of negative content — the need for continuous content moderation and monitoring — quality and consistency problems — legal and ethical challenges related to the spread of misleading information (Al-Sherbiny, 2026, p. 41).

The researcher believes that user-generated content is one of the most powerful tools for building trust with customers, but it is a double-edged sword. While user marketing provides significant trust and credibility with guests, the strategy is criticized for lacking quality control, the risk of exposure to negative content, and intellectual-property issues. This requires overcoming the challenge of weak guest engagement, the challenge of negative or offensive content, the challenge of randomness, and the challenge of legal liability.

Marketing strategies in general aim to achieve institutional excellence for the organization, which requires clarifying the aspects of institutional excellence and the relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence.

Part II: The Theoretical Framework of Institutional Excellence

The Concept of Institutional Excellence

The concept of institutional excellence emerged to express the need for a comprehensive approach that combines the elements and foundations of building organizations on superior bases that give them competitive capabilities in facing external changes and conditions surrounding them (Ahmed, 2022, p. 11). Institutional excellence is also defined as all the procedures and activities undertaken by employees in organizations that develop and improve work in a way that enables them to compete with other organizations in delivering services and achieving the best tangible results and meeting the desires and expectations of beneficiaries in the future (Abu Bakr & Awad, 2023, p. 8). The American Society for Quality

defines institutional excellence as the ongoing effort to establish a framework of standards and processes aimed at engaging and motivating employees to deliver products and services that meet guest requirements. Furthermore, according to the European Foundation for Quality Management, excellent organizations are those that achieve and maintain outstanding performance levels or exceed the expectations of stakeholders (Hijazi, 2024, p. 4). The concept of institutional excellence also refers to a continuous process of improving performance and achieving objectives through developing internal standards, stimulating innovation, and delivering distinguished results that outperform competitors and meet guest expectations (Al-Qaidi, 2025, p. 7). Institutional excellence can also be defined as an organization's pursuit of seizing anticipated opportunities through strategic planning and the continuous drive to develop and sustain the delivery of new value to guests and stakeholders by anticipating and meeting their needs, with the organization exerting every effort to maintain the positive competitive performance that achieves institutional excellence (Al-Baladi et al., 2026, p. 10).

The Importance of Institutional Excellence

The importance of institutional excellence is evident in providing the organization's management with the means and methods to identify obstacles as they arise, serving as a means of gathering information for making important decisions regarding employee management — such as who should be promoted and who demonstrates qualities such as altruism, initiative, and performance excellence — and providing the organization with opportunities for continuous development of its managers and employees, enabling the organization to stand out as one of the best-performing organizations in service delivery, while supporting the skills needed by decision-makers, whether individual or collective, and encouraging reflection on the sensitivity and importance of their role in achieving creativity and institutional excellence (Al-Shayeb et al., 2025, p. 14). The importance of institutional excellence also lies in enabling individuals to be creative so they can adapt to circumstances and changes, which in turn requires the organization to possess a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness — attainable only through ethical, creative efforts led by a distinguished, innovative leader. Institutional excellence also poses challenges for organizations to seek the best means of building and continuously developing their strategy toward maximizing the value of the organization's work (Al-Baladi et al., 2026, p. 11).

Foundations and Objectives of Institutional Excellence

Among the most important foundations of institutional excellence is continuous development, as it allows the organization to remain always in a better competitive position in terms of excellence, and to be ahead in developing services and performance systems in a way that ensures faster access to beneficiaries and provides them with benefits and advantages that competitors cannot match. It also establishes the building and development of relationships with the various parties and stakeholders connected to the organization. Among the hallmarks of excellence is the ability to invest in and leverage these relationships to maximize the organization's opportunities to reach its goals and objectives (Al-Shayeb et al., 2025, p. 14).

Institutional excellence has many objectives, being a management approach used to improve management effectiveness at all levels. These objectives include: achieving distinguished success and standing — assisting in managing organizational change and the transition of

organizations from their current state to a better, more competitive state characterized by creativity, innovation, and excellence — studying ways to improve organizational performance and identifying development opportunities for individuals at all levels — strengthening mechanisms for solving organizational problems, such as addressing technical difficulties and responding to internal and external crises and challenges — encouraging innovation and creativity among employees, as well as enhancing the quality of professional and community life so individuals can utilize their full potential and contribute significantly to the organization's success — establishing foundations that contribute to raising performance efficiency — optimal investment and utilization of organizational resources — understanding the interrelationships and mutual influence between the internal and external environment — understanding the principles and applications of institutional excellence and using them in managing excellence — establishing and entrenching a culture of excellence among employees in the organization — and outperforming competitors by achieving quality and efficiency (Al-Shayeb et al., 2025, p. 15; Al-Juhani & Taybah, 2023, p. 27).

Characteristics and Models of Institutional Excellence

A number of characteristics distinguish excellent organizations from other organizations, including: breaking away from bureaucratic management patterns toward a focus on work — building close relationships with employees and being responsive to their suggestions and involving them in decision-making processes — allowing organizational autonomy in work — attention to productivity through employees by providing trust and participation — attention to the organization's core values and linking them to its operations — activating effective, flexible oversight by adopting centralization and decentralization in management in a manner suited to organizational conditions and the organization's environment — the presence of effective, enthusiastic leadership that understands the importance of excellence and what it achieves for the organization and its employees — the ability to face difficulties — the capacity for growth, learning, and skill development — precision in work and strengthening a predictive system to avoid errors — and a commitment to planned, well-studied professional development that meets individuals' training needs, while allowing employees the freedom to choose their working methods within the frameworks of work and employment regulations (Al-Juhani & Taybah, 2023, p. 28).

Institutional excellence models are essential tools for improving performance, as they establish quality standards for achieving sustainable results. These include the European Excellence Model, which focuses on direction and implementation and on results; the Malcolm Baldrige Model, which evaluates performance using comprehensive criteria; and the Kaizen methodology, which relies on continuous improvement and employee participation (Al-Qaidi, 2025, p. 8). Institutional excellence models also include: the Japanese Deming Model — the American Baldrige Model — the European Model — the King Abdullah II Award for Excellence — the Dubai Government Excellence Program — the Mecca Excellence Award — and the Madinah Government Performance Excellence Award (Al-Juhani & Taybah, 2023, p. 31). Hijazi (2024, p. 5) also considers institutional excellence models to include: the American Performance Excellence Model — the Japanese Total Quality Model — the Singapore Excellence Award Model — the Dubai Government Performance Model — the King Abdulaziz Quality Award Model (Saudi Arabia) — the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence Model (Jordan) — the Sheikh Khalifa Government Excellence Program Model (UAE) — the Arab Government Excellence Award Model — the Egypt Government Excellence Award

Model — and the European Business Excellence Model. The European Excellence Model for institutional excellence is defined as a globally recognized practical framework that supports organizations in managing change and improving performance; it is an organization that links entities interested in building lasting value and respecting ethical principles in business management. According to the European Excellence Model, institutional excellence can be represented across three main dimensions: direction, implementation, and results (Al-Qaidi, 2025, p. 8).

Part III: The Relationship between Social Media Marketing Strategies and the Achievement of Institutional Excellence

The researcher believes that the relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq can be identified by examining their effect on achieving excellence in the hotel organization, based on several dimensions including: raising the level of guest satisfaction and trust — increasing employee commitment, developing their talents, and raising their productivity — improving the quality of services and products, automating systems, and enhancing operational efficiency — enhancing the hotel organization's standing in the market or government sector — and achieving a positive role for the institution in community development. Table 5 illustrates this relationship.

Table 6

Relationship between Social Media Marketing Strategies and the Achievement of Institutional Excellence

Social Media Marketing Strategy	Impact on Achieving Institutional Excellence
Precise target-audience identification strategy	Protects the hotel organization from digital scattering and turns social media platforms into a genuine launchpad for performance development, quality control, and customer satisfaction — the three pillars on which any global institutional-excellence model is built.
Influencer marketing strategy (Al-Zayat, 2025, p. 21)	Represents the influential strategy for the institutional message; the excellent hotel organization does not choose an influencer based solely on follower count, but based on the degree of alignment between the influencer's values and its own, to tell, through them, a success story that showcases its institutional excellence in the most convincing way.
User marketing strategy (Al-Sherbiny, 2026, p. 33)	According to the user marketing strategy, user-generated content is one of the most powerful tools for building trust with customers, though it is a double-edged sword; while user marketing provides significant trust and credibility with guests.
Smart-goal-setting strategy	Ensures that the institutional vision is translated into actionable, measurable digital marketing plans, ultimately leading to the achievement of institutional excellence.
Attractive and diverse content creation strategy (Al-Azzaz, 2025, pp. 6–7)	Reflects the degree of the hotel organization's excellence internally and externally; random content reflects a disorganized institution, while professional, diverse content reflects an organized, innovative, and excellent institution that achieves guest satisfaction.
Appropriate platform selection strategy	Represents the pivot point that helps determine the success or failure of the remaining digital marketing strategies; the excellent hotel organization does not blindly follow "trends," but is present intelligently

Social Media Marketing Strategy Impact on Achieving Institutional Excellence

	where its audience and objectives converge, achieving the highest levels of organizational efficiency and agility.
Paid advertising strategy	Represents the most important tool and means for increasing temporary sales, achieving digital governance, controlling spending efficiency, and seizing market opportunities; the hotel organization that skillfully manages its paid campaigns is one that firmly sets itself on the path of sustainable institutional excellence.
Direct interaction and guest response strategy (Al-Azzaz, 2025, pp. 6–7)	Represents the true face of the hotel organization's culture; internally, a hotel organization that neglects to respond to its audience reflects administrative disorganization, while an instantly responsive and interactive organization reflects discipline, flexibility, and institutional excellence that strives earnestly toward leadership and prominence.
Performance and results analysis strategy (Al-Azzaz, 2025, pp. 6–7)	Represents the corrective tool for the institutional path; without it, the remaining marketing strategies (content, platforms, advertisements, influencers) become mere costs without clear returns. The hotel organization that masters reading its data and translating it into action is inevitably the organization qualified to lead the market and achieve sustainable excellence.

Section Two: The Field Study

The field study aims to determine the relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq by testing the hypothesis: there is a statistically significant relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq. The field research population consists of three groups drawn from a sample of employees at Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq across three administrative levels: management staff — front-line staff — back-line staff. Ashur Hotel Company in Iraq represents a long-established tourism entity listed on the Iraq Stock Exchange since its founding in Mosul in 1989 as a mixed joint-stock company. On the ground, the company's name today stands out prominently through "Ashur Tourist Hotel and Resort" in the Dukan area of Sulaymaniyah Governorate, which has proven its investment success under the management of the Farouk Holding Group. The resort occupies a unique strategic location overlooking Lake Dukan and is considered the first and only destination for water sports and integrated recreation in the region, with 98 residential units and chalets. The researcher determined the research sample from each category using a random method, distributing 17 questionnaires to each group, bringing the total research sample to 51 questionnaires distributed equally. The response and validity rates for the questionnaires are shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7

Response-Rate Indicators Derived from the Analysis of the Survey List

Research Sample	Distributed Questionnaires (Count)	Returned Questionnaires (Count / %)	Returned but Invalid for Statistical Analysis (Count / %)	Returned and Valid for Statistical Analysis (Count / %)	Percentage of Total
Management staff	17	17 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	17 (100.00%)	34.04%
Front-line staff	17	16 (94.00%)	1 (5.88%)	15 (88.00%)	31.92%
Back-line staff	17	16 (94.00%)	1 (5.88%)	16 (94.00%)	34.04%
Total	51	49 (96.00%)	2 (3.92%)	47 (92.00%)	100.00%

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the statistical results.

The table shows the following: the number of questionnaires retrieved (representing the response rate) from the research sample is 96%, a high rate indicating good responsiveness from the research sample. The percentage of questionnaires valid for statistical analysis exceeds 90% for each research sample category, confirming their reliability for statistical analysis. The overall percentage of retrieved and valid questionnaires for statistical analysis is 92.15%, which is a good rate.

The researcher relied, in the statistical analysis results of the questionnaire lists, on the five-point Likert scale, a response design in which the respondent selects one of five answers on a graduated basis, expressing the degree of agreement or importance; the five-point Likert criterion relies on the degree of agreement as a basis for judgment, given that each statement has a specific weight that can be used to calculate the weighted mean. After tabulating the data from the valid questionnaire lists, the researcher relied on descriptive statistical methods using the SPSS statistical program. The descriptive statistics illustrating social media marketing strategies at Ashur Hotel in Iraq are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8

Analysis of the Social Media Marketing Strategies Variable at Ashur Hotel in Iraq

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Rank of Agreement
1. The precise target-audience identification strategy protects the hotel organization from digital scattering.	4.14**	0.713	82.80%	3
2. The precise target-audience identification strategy turns social media platforms into a genuine launchpad for performance development, quality control, and customer satisfaction — the three pillars of any global institutional-excellence model.	4.13**	0.705	82.60%	5
3. Influencer marketing represents the influential strategy for the institutional message.	4.10**	0.770	82.00%	7
4. Based on the influencer marketing strategy, the hotel organization does not choose an influencer based solely on follower count, but	4.04**	0.695	80.80%	8

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Rank of Agreement
based on the alignment of the influencer's values with its own, to achieve institutional excellence in the most convincing way.				
5. According to the user marketing strategy, user-generated content is one of the most powerful tools for building trust with customers, providing significant trust and credibility with guests.	4.23**	0.689	84.60%	1
6. Direct interaction and responding to guests represents the true face of the hotel organization's culture; internally, an organization that neglects to respond reflects administrative disorganization, while an instantly responsive organization reflects discipline, flexibility, and institutional excellence that strives toward leadership.	4.17**	0.663	83.40%	2
7. Attractive and diverse content creation reflects the degree of the hotel organization's excellence internally and externally; random content reflects disorganization, while professional, diverse content reflects an organized, innovative, and excellent organization that achieves guest satisfaction.	4.10**	0.750	82.00%	6
8. The smart-goal-setting strategy ensures that the institutional vision is translated into actionable, measurable digital marketing plans, leading to institutional excellence.	4.14**	0.753	82.80%	4
9. The appropriate platform selection strategy represents the pivot point that helps determine the success or failure of the remaining digital marketing strategies.	4.04**	0.756	80.80%	9
10. The paid advertising strategy represents an important tool and means for increasing temporary sales, achieving digital governance, controlling spending efficiency, and seizing market opportunities to achieve institutional excellence.	4.04**	0.794	80.80%	10

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the statistical results.

Table 8 shows the following: the standard deviation values indicate moderate-to-low variance in sample responses, ranging between 0.663 and 0.794, all within statistically acceptable limits, indicating a good degree of homogeneity in respondents' views. Item 6 recorded the lowest standard deviation (0.663), reflecting the highest level of agreement among sample members regarding the importance of social media marketing strategies at Ashur Hotel in Iraq. Item 10 recorded the highest standard deviation (0.794), indicating relative variation in views regarding social media marketing strategies at Ashur Hotel in Iraq, although this variation remained within the acceptable range. This distribution reflects good stability in the

data, strengthens confidence in the results of this variable, and highlights shared awareness among respondents of the importance of social media marketing strategies at Ashur Hotel in Iraq.

Ranking the degree of agreement, the researcher notes that the following items received the highest levels of agreement among sample members:

- According to the user marketing strategy, user-generated content is one of the most powerful tools for building trust with customers, providing significant trust and credibility with guests.
- Direct interaction and responding to guests represents the true face of the hotel organization's culture; internally, an organization that neglects to respond reflects administrative disorganization, while an instantly responsive organization reflects discipline, flexibility, and institutional excellence that strives toward leadership.

The descriptive statistics for the institutional excellence variable can be interpreted as shown in Table 9 below:

Table 9

Analysis of Statements Related to the Institutional Excellence Variable

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative Weight (%)	Rank of Agreement
1. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by raising guest satisfaction and trust — increasing employee commitment, developing their talents, and raising their productivity.	4.28**	0.725	85.60%	2
2. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by improving the quality of services and products.	4.38**	0.644	87.60%	1
3. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by automating systems.	4.25**	0.651	85.00%	3
4. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by enhancing operational efficiency.	4.19**	0.713	83.80%	4
5. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by enhancing the hotel organization's standing in the market or government sector and achieving a positive role for the institution in community development.	4.13**	0.803	82.60%	5

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the statistical results.

Table 9 shows the following:

- The mean values indicate that respondents' views tend toward agreement on the institutional excellence variable; the relative-weight percentages for all items exceeding 60% represent the "neutral" threshold, and all item means were statistically significant at a significance level of 0.05, indicating significant differences in

respondents' views between the observed values and the value (3), representing the "neutral" option.

- The standard deviation results indicate slight-to-moderate variance in respondent responses, ranging between 0.644 and 0.803, within statistically acceptable limits, indicating good consistency in respondents' views. Item 2 recorded the lowest standard deviation (0.644), reflecting a high level of agreement among sample members regarding the importance of the institutional excellence variable. Item 5 recorded the highest standard deviation (0.803), indicating relative variation in views regarding the institutional excellence variable. Despite this variation, the values remained within acceptable limits, strengthening confidence in the stability of the data and reflecting shared general awareness among respondents of the importance of the institutional excellence variable at Ashur Hotel in Iraq.

Based on the ranking of agreement, the researcher notes that the questionnaire item receiving the highest degree of agreement was: applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by improving the quality of services and products.

In light of the descriptive analysis of the data related to the study hypothesis, it is evident that the research sample agrees on the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq, indicating the validity of the study hypothesis. The researcher then examines the variance (degree of agreement and disagreement) in the views of the sample categories regarding the statements related to the study hypothesis, to confirm this agreement, through the Kruskal–Wallis test, one of the non-parametric tests applicable to variables when their data follow a normal distribution, to measure variance among several independent samples, as shown in Table 10:

Table 10

Variance Analysis

Items	Sample Category	Number of Observations	Mean Rank	Rank	Kruskal–Wallis Significance
Items defining the importance of social media marketing strategies	Management staff at Ashur Hotel in Iraq	16	33.79	3	0.911
	Front-line staff at Ashur Hotel in Iraq	15	34.95	2	
	Back-line staff at Ashur Hotel in Iraq	16	36.30	1	
	Total	47			
Items defining the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq	Management staff at Ashur Hotel in Iraq	16	31.69	3	0.595
	Front-line staff at Ashur Hotel in Iraq	15	36.89	1	
	Back-line staff at Ashur Hotel in Iraq	16	36.65	2	
	Total	47			

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the statistical results.

The mean-rank values in Table 10 indicate that: the category showing the highest agreement with the data on the importance of social media marketing strategies is the back-line staff category at Ashur Hotel in Iraq, with a mean rank of 36.30. The category showing the highest agreement with the data on institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq is the front-line staff category, with a mean rank of 36.89 for the second research variable. The significance levels of the Kruskal–Wallis test are 0.911 and 0.595, respectively. Significance levels greater than 5% indicate agreement on the importance of social media marketing strategies in achieving institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq.

Table 11 illustrates the correlation relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq, as follows:

Table 11

Correlation Results between the Two Research Variables

Correlation Data	(Y): Institutional Excellence Achievement
Correlation Coefficient (R)	
Significance Level	

*Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the statistical results. **Indicates the significance of the correlation coefficient at the 0.01 significance level.*

The positive sign of the correlation coefficient indicates a direct correlation; the correlation coefficient value indicates the strength of the relationship, having reached 0.739, a positive value. This means there is a direct (positive) relationship between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq — meaning that the more social media marketing strategies are applied, the more institutional excellence is achieved at Ashur Hotel in Iraq. Furthermore, the significance value of 0.000, being less than the significance level of 0.01, indicates acceptance of the hypothesis that a statistically significant correlation exists between the application of social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq.

Table 12

Regression Results for the Variables of the Research Hypothesis

Statement	Regression Coefficient (B)	t-value	Significance Level	Statistical Significance
Constant (B0)	1.190	3.463	0.001	Statistically significant
(X) Importance of social media marketing strategies in achieving institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq	0.742	8.969	0.000	Statistically significant

Explanatory value of the model: coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.546$. Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the statistical results.

The positive sign of the regression coefficient in Table 12 indicates a positive association between the importance of social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq. The regression coefficient value indicates that a one-unit increase in the independent variable (social media marketing strategies) is associated with a 0.742-unit increase in the dependent variable (achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq). The t-test for the independent variable, with a significance

of 0.000 (less than the significance level of 0.05), supports acceptance of the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant association between the importance of social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.546$) indicates the extent to which the independent variable (social media marketing strategies) statistically accounts for the variance observed in the dependent variable (achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq), accounting for 54.6% of it, with the remaining percentage attributable to other variables and factors. The foregoing demonstrates a strong, statistically significant association between social media marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq, supporting the research hypothesis. Given the cross-sectional questionnaire design used in this study, these results establish association rather than causation, and should be interpreted with this limitation in mind.

Research Findings and Recommendations

Part One: Research Findings

Based on the foregoing, the following findings were reached regarding the social media marketing strategies variable:

1. The precise target-audience identification strategy protects the hotel organization from digital scattering.
2. The precise target-audience identification strategy turns social media platforms into a genuine launchpad for performance development, quality control, and customer satisfaction — the three pillars of any global institutional-excellence model.
3. Influencer marketing represents the influential strategy for the institutional message.
4. Based on the influencer marketing strategy, the hotel organization does not choose an influencer based solely on follower count, but based on the alignment of the influencer's values with its own, to achieve institutional excellence in the most convincing way.
5. According to the user marketing strategy, user-generated content is one of the most powerful tools for building trust with customers, providing significant trust and credibility with guests.
6. Direct interaction and responding to guests represents the true face of the hotel organization's culture; internally, an organization that neglects to respond reflects administrative disorganization, while an instantly responsive organization reflects discipline, flexibility, and institutional excellence that strives toward leadership.
7. Attractive and diverse content creation reflects the degree of the hotel organization's excellence internally and externally; random content reflects disorganization, while professional, diverse content reflects an organized, innovative, and excellent organization that achieves guest satisfaction.
8. The smart-goal-setting strategy ensures that the institutional vision is translated into actionable, measurable digital marketing plans, leading to institutional excellence.
9. The appropriate platform selection strategy represents the pivot point that helps determine the success or failure of the remaining digital marketing strategies.
10. The paid advertising strategy represents an important tool and means for increasing temporary sales, achieving digital governance, controlling spending efficiency, and seizing market opportunities to achieve institutional excellence.

The following findings were also reached regarding the institutional excellence variable:

1. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by raising guest satisfaction and trust, increasing employee commitment, developing their talents, and raising their productivity.
2. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by improving the quality of services and products.
3. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by automating systems.
4. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by enhancing operational efficiency.
5. Applying social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence by enhancing the hotel organization's standing in the market or government sector and achieving a positive role for the institution in community development.

The most important overall research findings can also be presented as follows:

1. Social media marketing strategies help achieve institutional excellence at Ashur Hotel in Iraq.
2. Social media marketing strategies vary, and the organization can select the strategy most compatible with its objectives to achieve institutional excellence.
3. The application of social media marketing strategies helps achieve institutional excellence through: raising guest satisfaction and trust — increasing employee commitment, developing their talents, and raising their productivity — improving the quality of services and products — and automating systems.

Study Limitations

These findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the study relies on a cross-sectional questionnaire design administered at a single point in time, which establishes association rather than causal impact between social media marketing strategies and institutional excellence; the statistical results ($R = 0.739$, $R^2 = 0.546$) should therefore be read as evidence of a strong, statistically significant relationship rather than proof that social media marketing strategies cause institutional excellence. Second, the sample consists of only 47 valid respondents drawn from a single hotel company in Iraq, which limits the statistical power of the analysis and the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other hotel organizations or sectors. Future research employing larger samples across multiple organizations, and longitudinal or experimental designs capable of supporting causal inference, would help address these limitations.

Part Two: Research Recommendations

The research is associated with numerous recommendations. Among the most important recommendations concerning digital marketing activity is the need to transform the management of social media platforms from a random activity into an integrated organizational unit that supports institutional excellence. This can be achieved by establishing a dedicated department or division for “Digital Marketing and Cyber Relations” within the organizational structure and employing specialized competencies in data analysis and content quality control. There is also a need to adopt an instant-response model at Ashur Hotel, achieved by strengthening the “digital interaction” dimension as a fundamental pillar for achieving service excellence and building loyalty, in addition to the need to integrate artificial

intelligence technologies and interactive chatbots to ensure guest inquiries and complaints are addressed around the clock, with a performance indicator setting a response time of less than 10 minutes. There is also a need for smart customization of services and products by shifting from cumulative mass marketing to targeted, personalized marketing to build a sustainable competitive advantage — achieved through the use of big-data analysis tools to segment guests based on their digital behavior and design advertising campaigns tailored to each segment's specific needs. Leadership excellence must also be supported through digital presence by activating the role of senior leadership in supporting the hotel organization's digital orientation to enhance its brand image — achieved through launching intensive training programs for leaders on “digital leadership” and online reputation management, and encouraging them to engage on professional platforms to enhance the institution's credibility. There is also a need for continuous oversight and evaluation of marketing performance to link the outputs of digital marketing campaigns with locally and globally recognized quality and institutional-excellence standards, through building a “smart dashboard” to monitor weekly marketing performance, measure digital return on investment, and track a digital-reputation indicator to detect and address any deviations immediately. The most important research recommendations can be presented as follows:

1. The need to establish mechanisms for overcoming the challenges of social media marketing strategies to enable the achievement of institutional excellence.
2. The need to establish mechanisms for overcoming the risks of using social media marketing strategies, particularly cybersecurity risks and data privacy breaches via social media.

Future Research

1. Cybersecurity risks and data privacy breaches associated with the use of social media marketing strategies.
2. The impact of using environmental sustainability techniques on activating the use of social media marketing strategies.

AI Use Disclosure Statement

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used an AI-based language tool (Claude, developed by Anthropic) solely to assist with translating the manuscript from Arabic into English. The AI tool was not used to generate, analyze, or interpret any research data, findings, or conclusions; all study design, data collection, statistical analysis, and scientific interpretation were carried out entirely by the authors. The authors reviewed, verified, and take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the final translated text.

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