1. Introduction
1.1 Setting the Scene- How horseracing and royalty fit perfectly hand in hand.

It’s clear that royalty has played a huge part in the evolution of horseracing over thousands of years. Many key milestones have now shaped this industry to what it is today, as a highly supported professional sport and some of the most recognised and historical events in the world. The researcher believes it is important to have an understanding of horseracing history to be able to make a contribution to modern literature. This will be completed by identifying trends which may affect horseracing events today.

Since early domestication, horseracing is one of the most ancient sports in the world (Equine World UK, 2017). Horseracing originated through the return of English knights from Crusades with Arab horses, therefore breeding and creating thoroughbreds, the known race horse in the UK today (Aird, 2002).

King Charles II held horseracing events from 1660-1685, with only two horses racing with prizes awarded to the winner (Great British horseracing, 2017). During his reign, Newmarket was the first venue to hold a horseracing event in Britain (Aird, 2002 and Great British Horseracing, 2017). Queen Anne made a big contribution to the industry and impacted the evolution of horseracing events quite extensively. During 1702-1714, she introduced several horses in races and introduced spectators placing bets, which then further grew becoming recognised as a professional sport (Equine World UK, 2017). This spread very quickly throughout England. In 1711, Queen Anne founded Ascot by riding on a stretch of land, known today at Ascot Racecourse as The Heath.

Queen Elizabeth II continues the royalty passion and involvement in horseracing. ‘Even our very own Queen Elizabeth II has owned and bred horses that went on to win at Royal Ascot and classic races’ (Great British Horseracing, 2017: Online). ‘The Ascot races grew in popularity throughout the eighteenth century, becoming a very popular fixture in the English social calendar’ (Johnson, 2017: Online).
A solid link between the British monarchy and Ascot racecourse has always been established as the reigning Monarch own the grounds and property (Johnson, 2017). Ascot holds many high-profile races throughout the year, including King George VI weekend and Royal Ascot. ‘This five day event in mid-June (extended from the original four days in 2002 in celebration of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee) attracts around 300,000 visitors every year’ (Johnson, 2017: Online). The event contains eighteen group races and offers nearly £4,000,000 in prize money (Johnson, 2017).

1.2 Research Rationale

Attendees at horseracing events remain very healthy and are second to football attendees (Wood, 2014 and Great British Horseracing, 2017). This healthy attendance at horseracing events, encouraged the researcher to expand further, therefore choosing this event typology. Social media is also on trend with extraordinary growth.

‘The power of social networking is such that, the number of worldwide users is expected to reach 2.95 billion by 2020, around a third of Earth’s entire population’ (Statista, 2017: Online).

This growth is forecasted for the very near future. The researcher believes it’s important that all event organisations need to be vigilant, consider applying social media within strategic development and explore how this growth and interaction with social media affects both staff and customer experiences at mega-events.

1.3 Identifying the Case Study

Royal Ascot is a very famous annual horseracing event held at Ascot Racecourse in June (Ascot, 2017). Royal Ascot is a brand which is always forward thinking with the intent to lead upcoming trends into the industry (Ascot, 2017). This identifies Royal Ascot as almost a perfect event to compare experiences being expressed via Facebook and Twitter, because of this desire to be trend setters. The results of this research should appeal to Royal Ascots’ marketing team and similar horseracing events.

1.4 Identifying the Research
This research aims to fill a gap in the academic theory of experience being expressed through social media at horseracing events. Working at Royal Ascot and having an overall personal passion for horseracing, inspired the author with this study. The researcher also wanted to investigate social media impacts on events, due to their awareness of importance and growth of social media trends, and how quickly they are becoming a part of, not only events but everyday life (Lee and Kotler, 2011). In addition, there are many theoretical statistics on usage and overall worth of Facebook and Twitter but not a large amount of academic theory on why and how customers and staff use these sites to express their experience at an event.

### 1.5 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is:

- To compare and contrast how the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter impact upon the customer and staff experience at a horse racing event, using a case study of Royal Ascot.

For of this aim to be fulfilled, the following objective’s must be achieved:

- To critically review the academic literature on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter, customer and staff experience and horseracing events.

- To carry out two phases of primary research with the customer and staff on how social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter has impacted upon their experience at horseracing events and Royal Ascot.

- To compare and contrast the findings from phase one and phase two of how the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter impact upon customer and staff experience at Royal Ascot.

- To make recommendations to Royal Ascot on how to enhance the existing social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter to enhance the customer and staff experience at this horseracing event.
1.6 Outline of Chapters

Before chapter 1- the introduction, the abstract, acknowledgements, contents, list of figures and list of tables are presented.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, explores current academic theory and presents the reader with knowledge of all areas of the research. The literature review covers seven elements: social media platforms, Facebook, Twitter, horseracing events, Royal Ascot, staff experience at Royal Ascot and customer experience at Royal Ascot. Finally, these elements in the literature review, will be revisited within chapter 4, results & discussion in order to identify and compare key findings.

Chapter 3, the Methodology, presents the research agenda and ethics to ensure the project can go ahead. This chapter shows all the methods of research used and considered for this project. Additional methods are explored and justified why they were dismissed and not used for this study. Sampling, validity, ethics and use of data were discussed, implementing the use of transcriptions and a variety of graphs to show the data collection process.

Chapter 4, the Results & Discussion, collects and assorts the primary data findings by the methods used and discussed within chapter 3. The data is displayed in a similar structure as the literature review for ease of correlation. To identify connections, the findings of research, both quotations and graphs, will be linked back to the literature where most appropriate and valid.

Chapter 5, the Conclusion, collectively combines the literature review, methodology, and results and discussion. The aim of the conclusion is to evaluate the fulfilment of the aim of this dissertation. The aim will be revisited including all objectives. Limitations of research will be discussed with recommendations to future research. Themes will be discussed throughout the chapter, finishing with recommendations to Royal Ascot. The key findings will be recognised as the researcher’s contribution to the literature. To conclude the study, the appendices and references will be displayed.
1.7 Summary

This chapter introduces the reader with background and reasoning’s supporting the investigation into this research. This chapter highlighted an introduction to the case study and the identification of research. Both motivated the author to conduct this study. Finally, the aim and objectives are stated and explained along with a brief overview of the chapters. By the end of this study, the aim is to advise Royal Ascot and highlight the key findings to allow for further development and consideration of how customer and staff express their experiences via Facebook and Twitter. The researcher deems this study to be successful through relevant literature and theory, premeditated methodology and detailed discussions challenging both the findings and literature.
2. Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

This chapter states the current academic literature that is already discovered with intension to explore all aspects of the topic (Machi and McEvoy, 2009) accomplishing the first objective of this research project. Social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter, horseracing events, Royal Ascot, staff and customer experience will be the components that form this literature review. These components will be critically reviewed, which will be referred back to throughout and compared to the findings later in this research project.

2.2 Social Media Platforms

Social media is now a huge part of our life’s as it includes so many units such as discussion groups, blogs and networks. They provide social marketers with timely and personal ways to deliver products and promotional communications (Lee and Kotler, 2011:368). Ward (2010) and Bowdin et al (2010), supports this: ‘Social media platforms offer tremendous opportunities to engage our audience deeply and widely’ (Ward, 2010 cited in Lee and Kotler 2011: 351). ‘Social media is the democratisation of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers’ (Bowdin et al, 2010:434).

The graph below identifies all social media sites by the active number of users in January 2017. Chaffey (2017), shows several social media sites, including Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is identified as the most amount of user’s worldwide.
Table 2.1: Usage of Social Networking Sites Worldwide (Chaffey, 2017: Online).

Chaffey, (2017) also highlights the daily, weekly and less often usage of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Facebook is shown again as a clear winner with Twitter having only 42% of users’ accessing this site daily.

Table 2.2: Frequency of Users’ Access of Social Networking Sites, as a Percentage (Chaffey, 2017: Online).
'The more forms you create your content in, the better because everyone has preferred format' (Browne, 2012:107). Browne (2012) discusses using many platforms but advises to show the main content on a corporate website with links to social media platforms which individuals wish to use. This will avoid duplicating content, save work load and reduces strain on resources for the event company.

Another benefit of using professional social media sites is identified by Social Business (2017). 57% of small businesses use social media which engages growth to a business via social media platforms - Facebook helped by 18% and LinkedIn by 13% (Social Business, 2017). It is stated that businesses use social media to increase brand awareness - 27% said this was the main reason for adopting social media platforms into business strategies (Social Business, 2017). Businesses could benefit from a permanent strategy development plan incorporating social media.

For professionals in the marketing industry individuals, known as smart marketers, have identified a shift from traditional channels (e.g. TV, radio and print) to a blended marketing mix incorporating social media options on mobile devices (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, interactive web sites and online forums). Knowledge of this shift is important for marketers as this could be very impactful to expression of event experiences.

2.2.1 Demographics of Social Media Users

Chaffey (2017) identified a variety of ages who use social media and how it’s increased over the years. It shows, the younger category uses social media more than the older category perhaps due to generational and demographical changes.
Gender is also a varying demographical factor within social media users. 72% of females engage with social media and only 66% of males, shown in Pew Research Centres’ line graph below.

**Table 2.3:** Usage of Social Networking Sites, by Age, as a Percentage (Chaffey, 2017: Online).

2.2.2. Events and Social Media

Individuals attend events for escapism and to explore many different emotions (Bowdin et al, 2010), which some may express on social media. Humans express experiences on social media because ‘they position themselves the way they want to be seen, known as self-presentation’ (Seiter, 2016: Online). ‘Humans devote about 30–40% of all speech to talking about
themselves, but online that number jumps to about 80% of social media posts’ (Seiter, 2016: Online).

Seiter (2016), also highlights individuals finding it easier to express their opinions, views and experience on social media more than face to face as ‘it’s messy and too emotionally involved whereas via social media individuals save time to construct and refine’ their views (Seiler, 2016: Online).

2.3 Facebook

Facebook is now a huge social networking site for individuals all around the world and can be used to publish and market events. It’s so big ‘38.6% of the online population use Facebook, worldwide’ (Smith, 2016). There are 1.71 billion monthly and 1.083 billion daily active users as of July 2016 (Smith, 2016). The line graph below shows this popularity with 79% of online adults using Facebook.

Table 2.5: Usage of Social Networking Site, by Platform, as a Percentage (Chaffey, 2017: Online).
2.3.1. Facebook and Events
Facebook has a specific tool for creating events that can be used to send invitations. This tool encourages responses and shares, spreading the following and target audience (Browne, 2012).

Interaction in Facebook during the event happens via mobile phones due to no computer access. ‘47% of Facebook users only access the platform through mobile’ (Smith, 2016:2). Companies are aware of this, and known to create a photo log of the event where attendees can be interactively sharing and tagging photos, spreading the awareness of the event while it’s happening (Browne, 2012).

2.3.2. Demographics of Facebook Users
Importantly, Facebook is not just for teens even though it was originally aimed at students. Facebook’s strongest growth is coming from 35 to 49-year-olds, adding twice as many 50-64-year-olds as opposed to those under 18. This highlights Facebook having a mixture of users when it comes to demographics.

2.3.3. Personal Vs Professional Use
There’s differences in a personal profile and company Facebook profile; but it is questioned whether Facebook is sustainable for businesses. For business and events, it is important for constant interaction, enabling Facebook to seem fresh and effective to the potentially interested customers. ‘It’s important that people coming to your page don’t see a three-month lag in your activity timeline’ (Bowdin et al, 2010).

40% of users don’t like any brand or business pages, meaning paid adverts are the only way to reach them. However, promoting via Facebook means that all your target audience need to use Facebook in the first place and have an active account otherwise they won’t access any of the information or content displayed (Browne, 2011). This encourages business to engage potential customers through promotional and informational videos to maximise interaction and engagement with the company (Smith, 2016).
It is vital for businesses, like Royal Ascot to be aware of and keep up with change to be competitive. Still stated as ‘new and untraditional’ methods of communication, social media of Facebook and Twitter, now known to be successful due to ‘catching your audience by surprise’ (Lee and Kotler, 2011:380).

2.4 Twitter

Twitter is a social media platform but with obvious differences to Facebook. Twitter is quick, up to date, low cost and no likelihood of time lag or delay (Browne, 2012).

Over the past 10 years, Twitter has grown, a total of 1.3 billion accounts have been created but 44% made an account and didn’t interact by sending a tweet (Smith, 2016 b). However, Twitter is so accessible, 82% of active users access the site via mobiles (Twitter, 2016) meaning, twitter is constantly active with around 500 million tweets sent each day equivalent to 6,000 Tweets every second (Smith, 2016 b).

Twitter uses a tweet cloud to follow trending topics about an event (Blanchard, 2011). This online tool will help visualise what words are currently being used. This is helpful as it shows trends but also shows bad publicity and comments around the event. This could either increase positive or negative online reputation of the event, meaning the tweet clouds can be a resource for online reputation management (Blanchard, 2011). Tweet clouds are closely linked with the hashtag tool.

‘Using the hashtag # to mark out the event or key goings-on of the event’ (Browne, 2011:21) can be useful as a marketing tool. The trending topics identified by the tweet cloud then produces key words which highlighted with a hashtag and in symbol form. This can be a tool for customers to use and follow the key words while attending or passively following the event, for example #RoyalAscot, which is evidently used within their marketing, website and at the event (see appendix G for hedge board). ‘It’s a platform that lets you find out about trending topics at the very moment they are trending’ (Browne, 2011:21) ideal for events. During the 2014 FIFA World Cup Final, 618,725 tweets were sent in a single minute (Oakes, 2016).
The table below shows how Twitter compares with Facebook and Instagram over 5 years. The table also shows how companies use Facebook more than Twitter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total*</td>
<td><strong>86.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>87.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>88.2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>88.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>89.4%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2.6: Company Usage of Social Networking Sites for Marketing Purposes, by Platform, between 2013-2017, as a Percentage (eMarketer, 2015: Online).

Companies using Twitter for customer service see a 19% lift in customer satisfaction (Smith, 2016, b). Businesses have recognised these facts and see a huge impact and reasoning to use Twitter. This shows a clear interaction with the Twitter users, this interaction can mean feedback or customer service suggestions.

2.4.1. Twitter and Events
‘Twitter’s value really shines through during an event’ (Browne, 2012:pg 22). Using Twitter at an event is so useful and impactful on experiences and the company itself. ‘The community can easily stay connected throughout the event via their smart phones’ (Browne, 2012:22) therefore through social media platforms, like Twitter.

2.5 Horseracing Events

2.5.1 Characteristic of Horseracing Events
As highlighted in Chapter 1, the introduction, horseracing events is a historical professional sport which is developing and is still very popular today. Many characteristics including the historical background make up modern horseracing events, such as the horses themselves, the gambling and betting aspect, the horseracing season and calendar, fashion, alcohol and social experiences.

Some horseracing events are a part of the biggest events in the world like the Royal Ascot (Johnson, 2017). Roche (2000:1) suggests that mega-events are best understood as ‘large-
scale cultural or sporting events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance’. The Royal Ascot covers all these aspects and is therefore known as a mega-event.

2.5.2 Gambling and Betting
‘Gambling has long been part of horseracing with the initial form of racing being to match races to settle bets on whose horse was fastest’ (McManus et al, 2013: 65).

Dixon (2017), suggests gambling and betting on horses at horseracing events is the reason why it is still so popular and highlighted as a professional sport.

‘Wagering on the outcome of horse races has been the main source of the appeal of the sport since the beginning, is the sole reason horseracing has survived as a major professional sport’ (Dixon, 2017: Online).

Gambling and betting is highlighted as clearly integral to horseracing events including at Royal Ascot and this aspect could also impact the experience of customers and staff.

2.5.3 Horseracing Events Expressed on Social Media
It’s highly important that the events industry is up to date with all current and forecast for future trends, which may affect the industry.

‘When social media is integrated with the company’s marketing strategy, the company’s management of its customer and brand assets is seamless’ (Moorman, 2014: Online).

Baer, (2017) highlights several ways how social media aims events to: engage, intrigue, invigorate, integrate, inform, propagate and aggregate customers and staff (Baer, 2017). Therefore, engaging horseracing events to adopt, use and express experience via social media.
2.5.4 Comparison to Royal Ascot
Royal Ascot is a very prestigious event but can be comparable to other horseracing events with obvious differing qualities to each one (Festival of Racing, 2017).

‘Each enclosure at Royal Ascot has its own individual character, and all put you at the heart of the racing action. Wherever you are, there will be delicious food and drink, from world-class Fine Dining and hospitality to many different on-the-go options around the Racecourse’ (Royal Ascot, 2017: Online)

Royal Ascot highlights how experiences can be different even if you’re at the same event but in a differing enclosure, so Royal Ascot believe this experience can’t be duplicated at any other horseracing event.

2.6 Royal Ascot: A Case Study Approach

2.6.1 Royal Ascot History
The Royal family have always attended the races, the first formal Royal Processions at Ascot were introduced in 1825 by King George IV and have continued to this day (Johnson, 2017). Queen Elizabeth has attended Royal Ascot and proceeds in processions every year since her coronation in 1953 (BBC News, 2017). Since the early nineteenth century, traditionally the busiest day of the week, the third day of Royal Ascot is known as Ladies Day (Johnson, 2017). Ladies Day is known for attracting the biggest crowds, and as a consequence greater numbers of ladies. Today Ladies Day is very impressive and popular, highlighting the fashion element of Royal Ascot. Ladies come with on-trend, designer hats and outfits. Ladies Day has even been adopted by many other racecourses as an opportunity to attract a female audience.

2.6.2 What makes Royal Ascot ‘Like No Where Else’: From a Staff Perspective
Royal Ascot want to be the best, have the best and give the best, therefore branding themselves as ‘Like No Where Else’. From a staff perspective, this is not compromised either. They want the best staff working for them to provide the best service to their customers. Armstrong (2008), states 81% of customers expect a better experience as it’s high quality. Royal Ascot tries to provide their customers and staff with memorable enjoyable experiences with investment in training to focus on high quality.
Royal Ascot is steeped with history and reputation, meaning they don’t want standards slipping. Armstrong (2008), expresses the importance of having employees with skills, attributes and qualifications which best fit in within the organisations goals, values and behaviours. Armstrong (2008) highlights using employees through best fit to an organisation, so employing individuals that represent the event and share the same values to provide a service ‘Like No Where Else’.

2.6.3 What Makes Royal Ascot ‘Like No Where Else’: From a Customers Perspective

Royal Ascot is a unique, standalone event on the sporting and social calendar and dressing according is part of the experience (Ascot Media, 2016). Royal Ascot enforce a strict dress code onto guests in relations to the type of ticket purchased. Tradition is also a huge part of the event and customers value the traditions they behold, highlighted in the introduction.

Customers perceive high-quality events and expect to receive a good experience, which they don’t necessarily have to have experienced before. This perception can be perceived through images projected by the promoters (Yeoman et al, 2003) showing what customers can perceive as a high-quality event. For example, Royal Ascot use this and having done so been successful, gaining customer retention and high level of customer satisfaction (Ascot, 2016).

2.7 Staff Experience at Royal Ascot

The researcher highlights the importance to consider staff experiences at events and how they are different to customer experience. The UK events industry is well established with ‘its own practitioners, suppliers and professional associations’ (Bowdin et al, 2011:29). The growth has been huge affecting many aspects such as the nature of trends and legislation within the industry (Bowdin et al, 2011). Event Managers and staff on event sites need to be aware of such movements of the industry.

Goldblatt (2002:8), suggests that the event industry is ready to be accepted as a profession. Getz (2007) agrees that event management can be seen as a profession due to the increased number of courses and degrees.
2.7.1 Motivation to Work in the Industry

According to Wagen (2005), event employees are motivated by a wide range of factors including, hours compatible with study or other commitments, and getting work experience that will lead to career development opportunities.

Mullins (2007, cited in Raj et al 2013) expresses that employees are motivated through economic rewards, intrinsic satisfaction, social relationships, needs and expectations at work.

Bratton and Gold (2007), highlights an issue whether employees are motivated by pay and financial rewards only. This issue has been discussed since 1960 but additional motivational factors have been identified as more of an influence, such as personal passion for work itself, hygiene and basic needs, security and intrinsic motivations, supported by Getz (2012).

Major sporting event organisations (MESEOs) are heavily reliant on vast and complex workforces that grow and diminish around the life cycle of their event (Hanlon, 2003). These dynamic or ‘pulsating’ workforces (Toffler, 1990) are not easily managed.

2.7.2 Technological Impact: Mobile Devices

Yueh et al (2016) suggest that using mobile technology and devices, such as smartphones and tablets, in the workplace improves communication among employees to advance workflows and enhance professional image. Yueh et al (2016) shows clear positivity and advantages of using mobile devices within a workplace.

2.7.2. Staff Interaction with Social Media: Impact upon Experience

Social media interaction has always, until quite recently, been associated with personal social use via Facebook and Twitter, but businesses have identified so many benefits of usage to fully engage in these sites. However, some are still wary of combining social media within work practices. ‘Many companies are questioning the appropriateness of giving their employees access to social media at work’ (Holtz, 2017: Online).

The benefit of using social media for businesses is it’s free to market and promote, products, services and events, allowing staff to be close the event and to response prior, during and
post event, therefore impacting staff experiences. This highlights the use and interaction with customers during an event, for example if they’ve had a problem. A company can solve problems, improve customer and staff satisfaction and can adapt quickly to changing customer needs and desires (Holtz, 2017).

2.8 Customer Experience at Royal Ascot

Customers have high importance to an event. ‘The customers, the participants, the spectators for whom the event is intended and who ultimately vote with their feet for the success or failure of an event’ (Bowdin et al, 2010:240).

Events are intangible services with tangible products which make up an overall event experience (Bowdin et al, 2010). Pine and Gilmore (1999) believe that an event has modernised further than products and services into engaging or immersing customers in experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1999), views experiences engage guests in several different dimensions, referred to as the experience realm.

Further development and studies into experience in relation to products and services, Berridge (2007) has used the concept of design which he believes shapes how experiences can be controlled and influenced. The difference between products and service is that you must experience services in which to consume them. Delivering and consuming an event can be happening simultaneously for the consumer, but it is important for managers to anticipate the delivery of the quality of service, ensuring to be a good service, therefore customers receiving a better experience.

2.8.1. Demographic Analysis of Customers at Royal Ascot

Royal Ascot doesn’t have any age limit on their demographics on who attends (Ascot, 2017). Royal Ascot do however highlight a preference in gender demographics in their audience on a certain day- Ladies Day. This day doesn’t exclude men attendees but does somewhat concentrate on fashion and encouragement of female attendance, highlighted as part of tradition in chapter 2.6.1, page 17.
2.8.2 Technological Impacts: Mobile Devices
Technology is always developing and has a permanent position in the events industry. Managers can use current technology to help with involving and serving event participants, to enhance their experience and to extend the reach and access to certain events (Bowdin et al, 2010).

In 2015, 77% of individuals aged 16-24 reported using a smartphone most for social networking, while 33% over age of 55 preferred to use a laptop (Statista B, 2017). In 2013, 26% of UK respondents to a survey, uploaded content to social media via their smartphone at a sporting event and 48% whilst ‘out and about’ (Statista, 2017).

Colier (2012: Online) expresses how documenting and usage of mobile devices in society can have a negative effect stating, ‘technology captures life but simultaneously keeps us out of it’. Colier (2012) believes living an experience without technology involvement would be more meaningful. However, Kilkenny, (2011: Online) believes social media does impact customer experience, ‘this is a new and powerful way to enhance engagement from all concerned parties’.

2.9 Summary
All components have been critically evaluated using academic literature which will support this research project. The literature will be compared to the results of the research whether the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter are impacting the staff and customer at this particular event or if Royal Ascots’ social media practice are in need of some enhancements.
3. Methodology
3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods of research chosen for this project. It highlights the theory and explains the reasoning used by the researcher in deciding which methods to apply for this project. In doing this, key methodology such as the use of semi-structured interviews and online questionnaires are examined to support and justify why a mixed method approach was most suitable for this study. Finally, the importance of an ethical approach to the research is addressed.

3.2 Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methods aim to find out the motivations, opinions and feelings of others. This type of research was used to gain an in-depth understanding into areas deemed significant to meet the project’s aims and objectives (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

3.3 Characteristics of Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is associated with data expressed as statistics and numbers. These ‘scientific practices’ (Davies, 2007:9) have been developed and seen to be easier to analyse and relate back to the aim (Kumar, 2005 and Davies, 2007). This type of research was used through online questionnaires via Qualtrics.

3.4 Mixed Method Approach

Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) best define mixed method research as, when the researcher collects, analyses and uses data from both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study.

For this project, this approach was developed through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to enhance both detail and outcomes in fulfilling the aims of the project. It was also deemed more appropriate to use interviews for staff and questionnaires for customers.
The reasoning for this decision was based on accessibility of these two groups. It was also found that the data collected from both types of participant produced better results.

3.5 Research Methods for this Project

3.5.1 Characteristics of Interview Methods
When choosing to use interviews, it is dependent on the relevance and appropriateness of the situation in order to carry out an interview (Oppenheim, 1998). Interviews were suitable for this project as it supports the aim of exploring staff experiences.

The researcher has considered many advantages and disadvantages of interviews which have been identified within chapter 3.6.3, page 28. A variety of interview techniques were therefore researched including structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

3.5.2. Structured and Unstructured Interviews
‘An interview is a conversation with a purpose’ (Davies, 2007:164). Structured and unstructured interviews are very unlike with a completely different environment imposed on the participant.

Structured interviews ensure the interviewer retains a high level of control throughout the interview, meaning closed questions and an in-depth knowledge of the topic (Davies, 2007 and McLeod, 2014). With that in mind, unstructured interviews have the opposite effect, meaning the interviewee retains the control (McLeod, 2014).

The researcher decided that a semi-structured approach would serve best fulfilling the project’s aim, due to the characteristics of structured and unstructured interviews highlighted above (see appendix C for interview questions).

3.5.3. Semi-Structured Interviews
Semi-structured interviews are pre-planned and open questions with surrounding probes presented by the interviewer, to collect an overview of the interviewees opinion on each topic (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). The characteristics of semi structured interviews have a
Combination of structured and unstructured interviews. It is a conversation with loosely probed direction with the interviewer leading this activity. However, this means the participant can go off topic and give non-specific information, meaning the interviewer must step in, regaining control and providing direction to the interview (Seale et al, 1999 & Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

Overall, the researcher met the target of undertaking six interviews but not necessarily with the intended individuals’ initial chosen. The aim was to have three interviews with AP Security Management and three with Ascot Marketing Management. Unfortunately, this was not possible. However, two interviews were held with AP Security Management. Two interviews were held with operational staff. Two interviews were held with Ascot Marketing Management. These final interviews with the Marketing Executive and the Operations Planner proved most influential.

The interviews all varied in length and detail with no interview the same in terms of the opinion given. The researcher felt this added both variation and reliability to this research which will help to fulfil the aim of the project.

3.6 Characteristics of Questionnaire Methods

Questionnaires can be a mixture of both closed and open ended questions to gain a better indication of the attitudes, feelings and beliefs towards the topic of interest of the participate (Teddle and Tashakkori, 1998). The researcher has used a variety of questions, such as linkert scales, tick box, closed and open ended questions, to maximise the overview and to avoid boredom (Sudman and Bradburn, 1973).

The reason why questionnaires were chosen for the quantitative research method was because they were best suited based to explore the customer experiences at Royal Ascot, therefore fulfilling the aim.
3.6.1. Paper-Based Questionnaires

Paper-based questionnaires are the most common form of data collection but also the oldest form. The power of the internet has had a huge impact worldwide leading to a dramatic fall in this method. Within the UK, most households now own computers and have easy access to the internet. 86% of households in Great Britain, 22.5 million of the population had internet access in 2015 (Statistics.Gov, 2015). Consequently, online questionnaires have increased the attractiveness of carrying out this method of research (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007).

3.6.2. Online Questionnaires and Questionnaire Tools

Awareness when distributing online, it is essential. There are many risks as it’s so accessible and researchers need to know which samples are being targeted (Dolowitz et al, 2008).

The researcher chose to use online questionnaires as it was more accessible for the targeted customers, who attended Royal Ascot. This questionnaire was distributed to all Facebook pages stated within the ethics form. The target of forty responses stated within the ethics form was achieved, with forty-six respondents in total.

Qualtrics is a questionnaire tool which Cardiff Metropolitan University use for research projects. Due to the previous University experience, the researcher decided on using this tool. It was easy to use, highly accessible and a safe way to protect the researcher, the project and the University.

3.6.3. Comparison of Paper-Based Questionnaires Vs Online Questionnaires.

The table below shows, an overall comparison of paper-based questionnaires and online questionnaires, highlighting both their advantages and disadvantages. Overall, the outcomes favour the use of online questionnaires. They are many beneficial factors highlighted, but the key factor for the researcher was the difference in response rate and this clarified the researcher’s decision to use an online questionnaire (see appendix D for questionnaire questions).
Table 3.7: Comparison of Paper-Based Questionnaires Vs Online Questionnaires (Adapted from a comparison of Wyse, 2012: Online and Stiles, 2013: Online).

### 3.7. Comparison of Qualitative Vs Quantitative Research.

The table below shows, an overall comparison of qualitative research and quantitative research, presenting their different characteristics. Both advantages and disadvantages have been highlighted and using both types of research is appropriate to fulfil the aim of this study.
Table 3.8: Comparison of Qualitative Vs Quantitative Research

3.8 Sampling

When considering a sample for research, it is vital to understand the importance of access, size and its relationship to the project.

Cramer (2003), question whether the data collected in research projects applies in general to the population from the sample drawn by the researcher. This means the sample isn’t chosen by chance and needs some consideration to be effective, to fulfil the aim of this research project. The quality of data collected is the number one consideration, over quantity of respondents involved in this study.

The table below shows the sample of interviewees involved in this research, highlighting the reference code, extension and job title of each interviewee. The reference code will be used to identify each quotation in the results and discussion chapter and in the transcriptions.
Questionnaires are expected to be answered openly by the public whilst support will be given by the researcher for those known customers to complete the questionnaire. This is a form of random sampling.

**3.8.1. Random Sampling**
Random sampling is where a questionnaire is distributed without the control of direct target market but to those who have a loose connection to Royal Ascot. This means the researcher cannot guarantee the sample range would be diverse or have enough participants (Horton, 2015). However, it can have an opposite effect. There is the possibility that random sampling can gain a wider response rate from more participants expected, therefore making it worthwhile to adopt (Nisha, 2012).

The quantitative method of online questionnaires primarily used this effect of random sampling. The researcher knew of a minimum of twenty attendees, so was therefore reliant on this technique to reach the forty plus responses being aimed for, to ensure enough data was being collected in order to fulfil the aim. This technique proved very effective resulting in forty-six responses. This would have only been achievable with the use of this approach.

**3.8.2. Sampling Effects- Snowballing**
The researcher felt that the ‘snowballing effect’ is necessary for this study, due to the limited amount of access to managerial position at Royal Ascot and AP Security. Snowballing enables those who the researcher does have contact with to recommend others to be interviewed (Explorable, 2017).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference Code of Interviewee</th>
<th>Interviewee Extension</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MM1</td>
<td>Male Manager 1</td>
<td>Freelance Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM1</td>
<td>Female Manager 1</td>
<td>Ascot Marketing Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Female Staff Member 1</td>
<td>Event Steward (AP Security)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM2</td>
<td>Male Manager 2</td>
<td>AP Security Regional Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Female Staff Member 2</td>
<td>Hospitality Operational Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM2</td>
<td>Female Manager 2</td>
<td>Ascot Operation Planner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.9: Sample of Interviewees.*
Snowballing was very successful. An AP Security member was able to put the researcher in contact with the Operations Planner at Ascot, giving another perspective to this project.

3.9 Validity

Validity meaning fairness, trueness and reliability of research (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2008). When referring to judgemental validation, it is only a useful tool if a reliable academic with proven ability assesses the data requested by the researcher (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2008). This is can be facilitated via the researchers’ supervisor with their extensive experience of tutoring dissertation projects.

Both types of research methods, interviews and questionnaires, will be valid throughout for this research project.

3.10 Ethics

Conducting any type of research project has an element of risk, especially when primary research methods are used (Kumar, 2014). There is a chance for the researchers to ask questions of a personal nature, which some participants may find offensive (Kumar, 2014). It is essential for the researcher to explore all options to ensure sensitivity and avoid offence, but also to protect vulnerable individuals by considering the detail and consequence of questions asked.

To address this, all participants have been sent a consent form and information (see appendix B), to make them fully aware of the intent and outcome of the project. Within this notification, participants were advised of the researcher’s sole access which would be destroyed once it was of no further use within this research project.

For this research to go ahead, it is vital that the project receives ethical approval. Cardiff Metropolitan University’s ethics committee has a process for application, via form and meeting with the researcher’s supervisor to confirm approval. The committee is responsible for this decision prior to the research methods being released.
Confirmation for this project was received on the 12th December 2016, meaning the researcher, University and most importantly participants within this project are all protected.

3.10.1. Ethics based on Questionnaires

‘It is arguably part of the principles of freedom and autonomy inherent in taking part in research, that the participants should feel free to withdraw at any time, even if full consent of participation is given’ (Oliver, 2003:47).

Those individuals participating in the online questionnaires would have been informed of their rights. Right to anonymity, their right to withdraw data and how personal information wouldn’t be used prior to the questionnaire being completed.

Additional information will be provided within the initial paragraph, explaining the intent of the research and to encourage all participants to complete the the whole questionnaire. Participants were encouraged to use a computer or a save resource.

3.10.2. Ethics based on Interviews

Those individuals participating in the semi-structured interviews would have been informed of the same rights. While ‘public interest in ethics is at a historic high’ (Badaracco et al, 2003:68), it is vital that all parties are protected and research is undertaken correctly by being ethically sound and giving those participants all of their rights (Badaracco et al, 2003).

To avoid interviewees refusal at any point, the planned questions and the consent form will be sent to interviewee via email, prior to the interview (see appendix F for example correspondence). This enables all interviewees to review and refuse questions giving a ‘no comment’ response before or during the interview.

The interviews will be arranged in good time prior to the interview, at a location (preferably public) agreed by the researcher and interviewee and shared with the researcher’s supervisor of date, time and location of each interview. This protects all parties and ensures the interviews are safe and efficient to go ahead (Seale et al, 1999 and Oliver, 2003). See appendix A for ethics form.
3.11 Transcription, Use of Data and Analysis.

When analysing the researcher’s findings, it is helpful that both the analysis of questionnaires and interviews are produced visually within this research project.

The questionnaires will be produced in chart and graphical formats whilst all interviews will be transcribed. ‘A transcript is a translation from one narrative mode- oral discourse- into another narrative mode- written discourse’ (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2014: 204). Interviews are most commonly recorded via an audio recorder which ‘frees the interviewer to concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview’ (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2014:204). It is important to make the transcripts as relatable to the interview as possible so all pauses, phases and expressions must be included, resulting in hours of dedication and commitment to the collection of data via interviews (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2014).

The researcher will use direct quotes from the transcriptions of the audio recordings, with considerations to other factors including body language, sighs, pauses of silence, also addressed to enhance the researcher’s understanding of the total experience from staff during the Royal Ascot (see appendices H to M for transcriptions).

The researcher completed six transcriptions translated from the six semi-structured interviews. Most of the interviews were within the time frame of thirty to forty minutes with one exception being approximately fifty minutes. Using transcriptions to complete thematic analysis, will enable the visual outcomes to be analysed and ultimately fulfilling the aim.

The data collected from the interviews, will be evaluated through a method of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is ‘to think of a theme as a large category applied to a larger chunk of data than in top-down or bottom-up coding approaches.’ (Urquhart, 2012:39). The researcher will identify and highlight reoccurring themes within the interviews and relate them back to the theory, presented within chapter 2. Analyzing both the literature and the data helps produce reliable themes, fulfilling the aim (Flick, 1998).
The data collected from the quantitative research in questionnaires, will be produced via Qualtrics to provide a visual aid in the form of bar, line and pie charts. This shows the reader visual evidence of the research and makes its easily identifiable for the reader to interpret the data.

3.12 Summary

This chapter identifies and provides reasoning behind the types of research being used, within this combined approach of qualitative and quantitative research. Consideration has been given to the importance of sampling and ethical deliberations, with specifics highlighted within the ethics form. This chapter also shows how the researcher has considered issues and processes, when collecting the data and how the data is recorded and later analysed, to prepare for the next chapter.
4. Results and Discussion
4.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse the overall results of the primary research of this project, applying to the current academic literature. The results of the six semi-structured interviews will be used and applied with the most relevant quotations highlighted. The results of the online questionnaire will be shown via graphs and charts throughout. The researcher aims to discover connections between the findings and academic literature. The results and discussion has been categorised together in this chapter to aid the discussion adding evidence, depth and context to the findings. This chapter aims to mirror chapter 2 as much as possible to enable easy correlation for the reader.

4.2 Social Media Platforms

4.2.1 What is Social Media? – A channel of communication vs a publishing software/ a platform vs a vehicle?

There is some debate whether social media’s main function is a channel of communication or a publishing software.

‘Social media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers’ (Bowdin et al, 2010:434).

‘yeah, it’s a channel of communication- 100%’ (MM2)

MM2 is adamant it’s a communication tool whereas S2 expands on the theory and believes social media has evolved.

‘So, I do think initially it was maybe a channel of communication but its grown and adapted and now it’s more a publishing software, but I still think it’s both’ (S2)

Social media continues further debate on whether social media sites can be referred to as platform or vehicles. ‘Social media platforms offer tremendous opportunities to engage our audience deeply and widely’ (Lee and Kotler, 2011:351).
MM2 and FM2 have contrasting views. FM2 explained why Royal Ascot's social media sites would be referred to as a vehicle rather than a platform, therefore disagreeing with the literature.

‘I’d say it’s definitely more of vehicle to be honest, in terms of social media, we use it as a driving tool, you know as a vehicle, pushing the business forward’ (FM2)

MM2 agrees with the literature and highlights there’s a difference in how you’d refer to social media sites due to who is using them.

‘In a social concept for normal people and not business- it’s a vehicle because of the concept of retweeting, forwarding and sharing but someone’s got to generate that information, so the event will be the platform to generate that information, then let the market consume it how they wish- but it’s definitely more of a Platform’ (MM2).

4.2.2 Personal Use of Social Media

The literature by Chaffey (2017), suggests Facebook as the clear favourite with 1,871 million users in January 2017. All interviewees and all questionnaire participants stated they all use social media including Facebook, shown in the pie chart.

‘I use it personally, like any second person you come across nowadays seems to have all the sites whether that’s from Facebook to Twitter to Instagram’ (FM2)

‘Yeah, personally. I go on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp. The majority of them’ (S1)
The bar chart below shows and agrees with the literature with Facebook being the most popular, according to the questionnaire participants.

\[ \text{Figure 1: Regular Usage of Social Media.} \]

The bar chart also shows Instagram more popular than Twitter, which surprised the researcher. Instagram was also mentioned by FM1 as used the most, personally.

‘I’d say I probably use Instagram the most-to follow my friends and brands’ (FM2).
The researcher asked which social media platforms are used and how often. More literature by Chaffey (2017), highlights Facebook being used the most often and Instagram second.

The 9 pie charts highlight what social media site is used and how often, categorising usage by all day, 2/3 times a day, once a day, 2/3 days a week, once a week, 2/3 times a month, once a month, less than once a month and never. There are 6 colours which represent each platform. 51.72% said they use Facebook everyday where are 24% said they never use Twitter. This is shows that the Twitter findings doesn’t support the literature as 42% said they use Twitter daily, according to Chaffey (2017) and 0% said they use Twitter daily within this research project.
Many additional social media sites are a part of this research as some do impact the usage of Facebook and Twitter, for example, Instagram is very popular with 34.48% said they use Instagram daily, within this research. Browne (2012:107), states ‘the more forms you create your content in, the better because everyone has preferred format’.

4.2.3 Business/Professional Use of Social Media

All interviewees saw the benefit of businesses using social media, with quotes from MM2 and S1 supporting the concept.

‘businesses need to embrace it’ (MM2).

‘So, it’s showing the more we can keep up to date then, not only with technology but also through the social media aspect of what is going on out in the real world of events and the industry, the better’ (S1).

57% of small businesses use social media which engages growth to the business via social media platforms- Facebook helped by 18% and LinkedIn by 13% (Social Business, 2017). MM1 highlighted the use of LinkedIn as a professional social media site along with multiple other interviewees.
‘Mainly on a professional level- I use Facebook and LinkedIn’ (MM1).

It is stated that businesses use social media to increase brand awareness- 27% said this was the main reason for adopting social media platforms into business strategies (Social Business, 2017). I think these statistics links back to what MM2 said about embracing social media, as there are so many benefits for business to use it, they should invest into social media platforms. FM1 Agrees:

‘I think it’s interesting for everyone to see how social media can support all aspects of business’ (FM1).

4.2.5 Demographic Analysis of Social Media
Smart marketers have identified a shift from traditional channels to an incorporation of social media platforms on mobile devices (Lee and Kotler, 2011).

Theory suggests that modern marketing is now a lot more based around technology and social media. The research shows that age and gender plays a part in who uses social media and how open they are too change. Quotes highlight many people use smarts phones and try to engage with social media but generational impact plays a part of this interaction.

‘they might be less engaged with social media because of such a sweeping generation’ (FM1)

‘You can see, more or less everyone has a smart phone of sorts between the ages of what 14-50/60’ (MM2)

Chaffey (2017) shows the different ages who use social media and how its increased over the years, due to this shift. As the researcher thought, the younger category use social media more than the older category, due to perhaps a sweeping generation and less open to change linking with FM1’s quote above.
Both age and gender was questioned within the research, age shown in the pie chart below with a big range and gender shown in the breakdown bar with female dominating the participants.

Figure 4: Demographic Analysis via Age

Figure 5: Demographic Analysis via Gender

77% of females took part in the research questionnaire this may mean more females are more likely to attend Royal Ascot or are more likely to use social media. Literature by Pew Research Centre (2017) backs this theory, showing that 72% of females engage with social media and only 66% of males. This literature explains why more females participated as it was distributed online via social media platforms, highlighting the likeliness of more females completely the questionnaire.
4.2.6 Experience Expressed on Social Media

The literature highlights individuals finding it easier to express their opinions, views and experience on social media more than face to face as ‘it’s messy and too emotionally involved whereas via social media individuals save time to construct and refine their views’ (Seiler, 2016: Online). Humans express experiences on social media because they ‘position themselves the way they want to be seen- self presentation’ (Seiter, 2016: Online). ‘Humans devote about 30–40% of all speech to talking about themselves, but online that number jumps to about 80% due to social media posts’ (Seiter, 2016: Online).

This is backed up by the research findings as 76.32% express their experience of an event on social media and 70% said yes to finding its easier to express their opinions and experiences on social media rather than any other method.

Figure 6: Expression of Experience via Social Media at an Event.

Figure 7: Ease of Expression of Experience via Social Media compared to Alternative Methods.
MM1 agrees with the literature by Seiter (2016), highlighting individuals will post because of enjoyment and showing others of their experience.

‘A lot of people including myself express their opinions on social media for many a different reason- Some do it because they want people to know that they have been to this event. Some do it because they just want to show family and friends that they enjoyed their experience’ (MM1)

The researcher questioned how this experience was express. The pie chart shows how people express their experience, resulting in two highlighted as most popular, uploading photos and videos (30.85%) and tagging friends and attendees (25.53%).

![Pie chart showing preference of techniques of expressing experience via social media platforms at an event.](image)

*Figure 8: Preference of Techniques of Expressing Experience via Social Media Platforms at an Event.*

FM1 highlights a different perspective to the other findings and literature by Seiter (2016). They believe that an individual won’t miss out if you don’t engage with social media at Royal Ascot but it will be different and influence an attendees experience, if they do.

‘if you didn’t interact or follow them you wouldn’t necessarily miss out but it can definitely influence your experience if you engage with us on social’ (FM1)
4.2.7 Social Media at Royal Ascot

It is clear, through accessing Royal Ascots’ website, that they take pride in their internet application and it’s evident they do use a variety of platforms. ‘#RoyalAscot’ titles a chapter which states what platforms are used (Ascot, 2016).

They encourage customers to connect to their free Wi-Fi when they arrive. To some customers, Wi-Fi is considered a necessity when attending an event in order to access and use personal social media accounts (Davis-Felner, 2014). Royal Ascot have highlighted and used literature to ensure more engagement and marketing through the Royal Ascot brand. ‘53% of adults who use social media follow a brand’ (Social Business, 2017: Online).

Royal Ascot uses Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vine and has Free wifi.

‘It’s really good, it totally benefits the event’ (MM2).

MM2 supports Royal Ascot and believe their usage of social media benefits the event and will help the business to impact customer experience.

‘To go to an event like the Royal Ascot that sells out, people are going to say look at me I’m here and that’s what’s social media is about from a personal level, a lot of it is a bit of showing off and telling the world where you are’ (MM2).

S2 highlights Royal Ascots encouragement to use their social media sites enable customers to express their experience and interact with staff and the event as a whole.

‘Yeah, they have big screens and occasionally it will pop up like follow us @ and their Facebook link, their Twitter link, their Instagram link’ (S2)- therefore, encouraging people to interact with the event.

4.3 Facebook
4.3.1 Characteristics of Facebook

Facebook is so big with ‘38.6% of the online population using it, worldwide’ (Smith, 2016). Facebook has a specific tool for creating events that you can use to send invitations. This tool encourages responses and shares spreading the following of the event. Facebook have many other devices and characteristics which aid its user, such as Facebook Live, tagging, uploading photos/videos, ‘feeling’ icon and like/post/share buttons.

S1 believes the ‘create an event’ tool will be highly beneficial especially because of the size and growth of Facebook.

‘I would say to market an event, it’s huge, especially through Facebook’ (S1)

Having more characteristics and devices encouraging individuals to use on Facebook, MM1 highlights a difference between Twitter and Facebook.

‘Twitter is more private, whereas Facebook people post many photos and you’re encourage to fill in all the sections about yourself’ (MM1).

FM2 and S2 identify additional characteristics and believes it benefits an individual, especially when expressing an experience at Royal Ascot.

‘I would express it on Facebook because I personally like to use it more and also they’ve got this thing where it’s like feeling happy, feeling proud, feeling whatever so you can, tag yourself at Royal Ascot, then you can say how your feeling, attach a photo, you can do everything’ (S2)

FM2 supports S2 highlighting more creativity within in this platform.

‘it’s just, I think it’s a little bit more creative in terms of what you can upload, what you can say the mood you are feeling’ (FM2).
4.3.2 Personal use of Facebook

Versatility is highly visible within the research based around Facebook, all interviewees had different opinions on this social media site. Facebook is not just for teens. Facebook’s strongest growth is coming from 35 to 49-year-olds, adding twice as many 50-64-year-olds as opposed to those under 18. This highlights Facebook having a mixture of users when it comes to demographics (Smith, 2016).

This versatility is shown by FM2 mentioning the demographic range of users in Facebook.

‘it is very very easy, people as young as 12 do and people as kind of later into their 70+ have Facebook as well, so yeah it’s very easy, very user friendly’ (FM2)

S2 highlights this versatility put to better use through personal use rather than professional use.

‘I just think that Facebook is more of a family friendly thing, it’s available to all ages, like I’ve got my whole family on there, so everyone’s got Facebook, so you can stay in contact with the people you move away from over the years’ (S2).

All interviewees said they use Facebook personally with the majority saying they use it for business purposes also, agreeing with S2.

‘I personally prefer Facebook because you’re not restricted with your word count and it seems to be more people have a Facebook account than a Twitter account nowadays as well’ (FM2)

FM2 highlights one of Twitter’s characteristics having a word limit and stating how more people may have Facebook so they are more likely to reach their target market with the use of Facebook rather than Twitter.

FM2’s quote is backed up by the bar graph, showing the majority clearly preferring to use Facebook over Twitter when expressing their experiences.
4.3.3 Business/Professional Use of Facebook

There’s differences in a personal profile and company Facebook profile (Smith, 2016). For business and events, it is important for constant interaction enabling Facebook to seem fresh and effective to the potentially interested customers. ‘It’s important that people coming to your page don’t see a three-month lag in your activity timeline’ (Bowdin et al, 2010)

MM1 agrees with the literature, by Bowdin, et al (2010), but also favours Twitter due to this characteristic.

‘you have to sit on Facebook all the time, you need to delegate resources to it for it to be effective. So from a business point of view, I’d definitely favour more to Twitter rather than Facebook because of this characteristic’ (MM1).

But promoting via Facebook means that all your target audience need to use Facebook in the first place and have an active account otherwise they won’t access any of the information or content displayed (Browne, 2011). This encourages business to engage potential customers through promotional and informational videos to maximise interaction and engagement with the company (Smith, 2016).

‘they may be streaming it on Facebook live or they are preparing a video or putting a couple of photos up online to really show off that they are there which is great for the event because it’ll then generate further hype which you wouldn’t normally get’ (MM2).
MM2 highlights using videos and photos will create more interaction and help add hype to an event for the customer, therefore agreeing with the literature, by Smith (2010).

4.3.4 Royal Ascot using Facebook

*I think it’s definitely a good way to communicate with the masses and reaching people we might not reach previously or people that might not come to our website’* (FM2).

It is vital for Royal Ascot to be aware of and keep up with change to be competitive. Still stated as ‘new and untraditional’ methods of communication, social media of Facebook and Twitter, now known to be successful due to ‘catching your audience by surprise’ (Lee and Kotler, 2011:380).

FM1 and FM2 highlights Ascot’s awareness of using social media and the benefits it has to it’s audience, so much so they can assign some of the marketing budget in Facebook content.

‘we also on Facebook, put some of our media spend behind the post, if it’s really good content, we’ll put some budget behind it, like £500 or something like that to reach more followers’ (FM1)

‘So I think it’s definitely a very important part of our strategy and something we can continue to invest in’ (FM2)

Due to the Racecourse being an all year-round venue their Facebook needs to be up to date and interact all of the time. Their Facebook reflects this as they post regularly and have links to photos, reviews, events and other social media sites (Facebook: Ascot Racecourse, 2016).

FM2 highlights why customers use Facebook.

‘I think going back to what you said about a status thing, I think people that are coming like to share things on Facebook and proof that they are here and check themselves in because it
does have that status, which makes it desirable for those people who aren’t here and makes them want to come the following year’ (FM2).

FM2 values the benefits of Facebook so much it would be the preferred platform.

‘I think Facebook is, if you’d say which channel would you get rid of, we’d probably keep Facebook’ (FM2).

4.4 Twitter

4.4.1 Characteristics of Twitter

Twitter is quick, up to date, low cost and there’s no time lag or delay (Browne, 2011). MM1 identifies this characteristic in Twitter which supports the literature by Browne (2011).

‘Due to the nature of Twitter with quick tweets and posts to update information really quickly makes it a really good tool’ (MM1)

S2 highlights this characteristic as a disadvantage leading to preferring Facebook, disagreeing with the literature by Browne (2011).

‘Twitter is more for like one liners with hashtag whatever, which is why I prefer Facebook’ (S2)

FM2 supports S2 and sees a disadvantage to short messages and posts on Twitter, identifying another preference to Facebook.

‘Your restricted to word count with Twitter, Facebook gives you more freedom’ (FM2)

S2 mentioned the hashtag. ‘Using the hashtag # to mark out the event or key goings-on of the event’ (Browne, 2011:21) can be useful as a marketing tool.

’a hashtag makes things really simple for its users- I think that’s a really clever tool that twitter do use’ (S2)
All interviews support Browne (2011) and S2. Royal Ascot do use a hashtag as a marketing and interactive tool, it is very visible within social sites and their website. This is highly likely to benefit Royal Ascot and it’s interaction with both staff and customer experiences. FM1 identifies another use for hashtags which is highlighted why Royal Ascot use them. Current trends and popular phrases is a good way to incorporate hashtags which marketers can then play on further impacting a customer experience.

‘we sort of use hashtags more as trend lend’ (FM1)

This is supported by Browne (2011), ‘It’s a platform that lets you find out about trending topics at the very moment they are trending’ ideal for events (Browne, 2011:21).

Twitter gets a lot of attention, especially during an event. For example, during the 2014 FIFA World Cup Final, 618,725 tweets were sent in a single minute (Oakes, 2016). MM1 highlights these characteristics:

‘Also with Twitter you can already create tweets and then program them for distribution, meaning you don’t have to sit on it all the time and the buzz will be created even more’ (MM1).

FM1 completely disagrees and believes it’s hard to get a lot of interaction. FM1 highlights another characteristic.

‘Twitter is a lot harder work to get interactive with but you can and we tend to post more on twitter because people will either see it or they won’t, so it seems like you aren’t bothering them as much’ (FM1)

4.4.2 Personal Use of Twitter

The researcher has identified a split and varied in opinion between interviewees throughout comparing Facebook and Twitter. However, Facebook seems to be more favourable, according to FM1 and FM2.
‘We tend to see our stats much better on Facebook than twitter’ (FM1)

‘it seems to be more people have a Facebook account than a Twitter account nowadays as well’ (FM2).

However, MM1 and S1 prefer Twitter and believes customer engage more with Twitter

‘Facebook is good but I feel you can’t get the message across as well as Twitter- People seem to engage with Twitter more with Twitter campaigns and stuff’(MM1)

‘I would say I prefer Twitter’ (S1)

**4.4.3 Business/ Professional Use of Twitter**

MM1 highlights Twitter being stated to be more favourable, disagreeing with the literature shown in the table by eMarketer (2015) on page 15. Royal Ascot need to be aware of recent movements with other platforms and how they impact Facebook and Twitter.

The interviewees are split between business use with Facebook and Twitter, agreeing and disagreeing with the literature. This may be due to personal experience with using each platform. MM1 and S2 have highlighted a preference towards Facebook throughout for personal use but states the following for professional use:

‘I see Twitter as more professional’ (MM1)

‘I think professionally I would actually go to Twitter’ (S2)

‘Twitter, I think is a better tool for businesses and events to update their audience on something’ (MM2)

MM2 disagrees with eMarketer (2015) but agrees with Smith (2016, b). Companies using Twitter for customer service see a 19% lift in customer satisfaction (Smith, 2016, b). Business
have recognised these facts and see a huge benefit and reasoning to use Twitter. MM1 supports Smith (2016, b) also:

‘You see nowadays on Twitter a lot of iconic people or businesses/companies use twitter more than they do Facebook’ (MM1).

4.4.4 Royal Ascot using Twitter

Royal Ascot, (2017) uses #LikeNowhereElse as a heading for all their social media sites on their website. This is clear evidence of Twitter usage and encouragement.

All interviewees highlight this usage of Twitter and hashtags. MM1 identifies the intense encouragement from Royal Ascot to create visual evidence using both #LikeNowhereElse and #RoyalAscot.

‘they have the #RoyalAscot in a hedge that everyone wants to have a photo stood outside’ (MM1)

S1 even states this as automatic response and expectancy to have a Twitter account with trending, event-based hashtag:

‘we all automatically know that there is a hashtag #RoyalAscot’ (S1)

FM1 highlights the Ascot team identifying an increase in posts on Twitter for Royal Ascot:

‘For Royal I’d say everything just, there’s just more of it. So, I think it’s up to 5 posts a day, on Twitter’ (FM1)

MM1 supports FM1s statement and believes with the use of the hedge board, they use this platform very well.

‘Royal Ascot, as always, use Twitter really well to its full capacity to capture the consumer experience’ (MM1)
MM1 believes Twitter is used to its full capacity to influence a customer experience, the customers and participants in the questionnaire still favour Facebook to express their opinion and experience at Royal Ascot, shown in the bar graph.

![Figure 10: Expression of Experience at Royal Ascot - Facebook Vs Twitter.](image)

S1 has a different opinion.

‘I notice that’s where the communication is stronger through Twitter’ (S1)

### 4.5 Horseracing Events

#### 4.5.1 Characteristic of Horseracing Events

Roche (2000:1) suggests that mega-events are best understood as ‘large-scale cultural events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance’. Many horseracing events are mega-events according to these criteria, including Royal Ascot.

MM1 suggests mass popular appeal agreeing with the literature by Roche (2000).

‘each show day is always very busy and attendance is always spot on’ (MM1)
FM1 discusses about international significance of Royal Ascot stating:

‘you say you work for Ascot- I’d say probably 99.9% of people, even if they haven’t been, they’ve heard of it’ (FM1).

This shows how Royal Ascot is a mega horseracing event and agrees with Roche (2000).

4.5.2 Gambling and Betting

‘Gambling has long been part of horseracing with the initial form of racing being to match races to settle bets on whose horse was fastest’ (McManus et al, 2013: 65). FM2 highlights strong relations with horseracing and gambling and betting, so strong they state:

‘so I think as a sport, I think more so with horseracing and that sort of environment it sort of comes as second nature really’ (FM2)

FM2 backs up the literature by McManus, et al (2013). FM1 also agrees stating:

‘I think betting and gambling is a big part of the event’ (FM1)

Gambling and betting is clearly a very prominent aspect to horseracing events. All interviewees agree within one another and the literature by McManus et al, (2013). So much so S2 states:

‘yeah I think people wouldn’t go if you didn’t gamble’ (S2).

4.5.3 Horseracing Events Expressed on Social Media

‘When social media is integrated with the company’s marketing strategy, the company’s management of its customer and brand assets is seamless’ (Moorman, 2014: Online).

FM1 highlights how social media is so integral and plays a very important part in motivation others to attend:
'I think from a business perspective, it’s so integral to the event in terms of generating not only ticket sales but raising awareness and creating that sort of atmosphere, for example, people that haven’t come before making them want to come next year and try it out for themselves’ (FM1)

MM1 highlights Royal Ascots’ usage as a horseracing event and supports FM1 and the literature by Moorman (2014).

‘They are very proactive in what they do, partly because they use social media effectively and it’s up to date and show people attending events on an interactive’ (MM1).

4.5.4 Comparison to Royal Ascot

Royal Ascot is a very prestigious event which can be comparable to other horseracing events with obvious differing qualities each one according to Festivals of Racing (2017).

Royal Ascot highlights how it’s different:

‘Each enclosure at Royal Ascot has its own individual character, and all put you at the heart of the racing action. Wherever you are, there will be delicious food and drink, from world-class Fine Dining and hospitality to many different on-the-go options around the Racecourse’ (Royal Ascot, 2017: Online).

MM2 agrees:

‘There are other comparable events for example the Grand National at Aintree or the Gold Cup in Cheltenham but I think Ascot stands to and would say they aren’t Royal Ascot’ (MM2).

The pie chart shows whether the questionnaire participants prefer other horseracing events compared to Royal Ascot. 82.50% said no, they preferred Royal Ascot, highlighting it’s an incomparable event, disagreeing with Festival of Racing (2017).
4.6 Staff Experience at Royal Ascot

4.6.1 Motivation to Work in the Industry

Mullins (2007, cited in Raj et al 2013) expresses that employees are motivated through economic rewards, intrinsic satisfaction, social relationship and needs and expectation at work.

‘I really do enjoy working at events and doing lots of different events. Obviously, finance does play a part but it’s not the major motivating factor it’s definitely more of a passion’ (MM1)

MM1 states how economic rewards does play a part but not their main motivation to work in the industry. This links with the literature as there is some overlap between the two.

Bratton and Gold (2007) highlights an issue whether employees are motivated by pay and financial rewards only.

‘I’m a big racing fan and that was probably the main motivation to switch industry and work at Ascot’ (FM1).

FM1 clearly shows their motivations are personal and not financial. This factor was so strong it was their main motivation to now work in the industry. Bratton and Gold (2007) is right to evaluate the issue of employees only being motivated by financially benefits. However, this is not apparent at Royal Ascot, highlighted within the two quotes above.
4.6.2 Technological Impact: Mobile Devices

Yueh et al (2016) suggest that using mobile technology and devices such as smartphones and tablets, in the workplace improves communication among employees to advance workflows and enhance professional image.

“We can all communicate on one group message via What’s App, we use our smart phones for that, it’s not typical of the work force as whole but management tool it’s really important, really good” (MM2)

‘if they utilise it well and correctly, that’s a massive benefit’ (S2)

MM2 and S2 support the literature identifying how the use of social media, utilised correctly, via mobile devices does benefit their operations and communication.

4.6.3 Staff Interaction with Social Media: Impact upon Experience

‘Many companies are questioning the appropriateness of giving their employees access to social media at work’ (Holtz, 2017: Online).

Royal Ascot being so high profile, S1 believes the use of social media for employees would tarnish the reputation of Royal Ascot as ‘the professionalism would just look horrendous’ (S1).

A company can solve problems, improve customer satisfaction and adapt quickly to changing customer needs and desires (Holtz, 2017).

‘you can resolve it there and then and you can turn around someone’s experience while they are still at the event’ (MM2).

MM2 highlights throughout how social media interaction from a business perspective to customers is such a benefit, agreeing with Holtz (2017). MM2 states how this interaction can change a customer experience. For example, ‘tweeting about the ques at the bars and then
that’s an indication for the event organiser to deal with that’ (MM2). It’s all about ‘managing the customer’s expectations’ (MM2). This is suggested by Holtz (2017), and MM2 as staff interaction in social media is a benefit and impact both customer and staff experiences.

4.6.4 What makes Royal Ascot ‘Like No Where Else’: From a Staff Perspective

Armstrong (2008), expresses the importance of having employees with skills, attributes and qualifications which best fit within the organisations goals, values and behaviors.

Royal Ascot is such a well-known, luxurious and prestigious event. The literature suggests that they would want the best employees to fit their culture and high quality event status. The breakdown bar chart below supports, Armstrong (2008), as 81% of customers expect a better experience as it’s a high quality.

![Figure 12: Customer Expectations of Better Experience due to High Quality Event: Royal Ascot](image)

The interviewees all agree and believe there is added pressure to provide this high-quality service at an event like, Royal Ascot.

‘I think everyone wants it to be such a success so naturally you work harder’ (FM2).

FM2 is supported by MM2, which all backs up the literature and chart.

‘anyone that’s working Royal Ascot knows there a lot of pressure but we try and maintain a high quality of service and that’s due to the success of the event’ (MM2)
Royal Ascot are known to be a forward-thinking company who are open to change. These dynamic or ‘pulsating’ workforces (Toffler, 1990 cited in Wagen, 2007) are not easily managed.

‘it’s certainly important for the team that are working in it specifically to be, have their finger on their pulse’ (FM1)

FM1 discusses how important it is for the team to keep up to date and adjust to such a dynamic workforce, ‘everyone chips in and helps one another when it comes to Royal’ (FM2).

‘I’ve had staff that have had a brilliant time working there because it’s a bit different it’s not your average event, it’s not your average horseracing event, it’s something a lot bigger’ (MM2).

‘yeah I thought it was an awesome place to work’ (S2)

Both MM2 and S2 state how enjoyable Royal Ascot was from an employee’s perspective.

4.7 Customer Experience at Royal Ascot

4.7.2 What is Royal Ascot: Product vs Service vs Experience?

Events are intangible services with tangible products which make up an overall event experience (Bowdin et al, 2010). Pine and Gilmore (1999) believe that an event has modernised further than products and services into engaging or immersing customers in experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1999), views experiences engage guests in several different dimensions, referred to as the experience realm.

MM1 has a slightly different opinion to the literature by Bowdin et al (2010). This may be because this literature is dated and events have evolved drastically within the last 7 years. MM1 identifies how Royal Ascot can be different for an employee and a customer but agrees with Pine and Gilmore (1999) of Royal Ascot as an event is an experience.
'For my job, I am providing a service but you see Royal Ascot being sold as a product, you know it’s a package and I think people that attend Royal Ascot see it more as a product, you’re selling the Royal Ascot experience which is a really good experience’ (MM1).

All interviewees had different opinions on what they thought Royal Ascot is. FM1 discussed how ‘today it is more of a commercial money making event, we have high sales targets that we have to meet but I think it’s probably more of an experience than anything else’ (FM1).

FM1 didn’t recognise Royal Ascot as a product or service just as an experience therefore disagreeing with the literature by Bowdin, et al (2010) but agreeing with Pine and Gilmore (1999).

MM2 discusses the relationship of a product to an experience:

‘Yeah, it’s a product which has the unique characteristics that is Royal Ascot, that is produced and consumed at the same time, you have to be there to experience it which adds to the exclusivity, its 100% a product, the whole thing is an experience so therefore it’s a product’ (MM2).

MM2 doesn’t agree will all elements of the literature by Bowdin et al (2010) and Pine and Gilmore (1999). However, S2 shows knowledge of what theory suggests an event is and therefore links it to Royal Ascot.

‘yeah, I see as an overall event that is a mixture of products and services within it, becoming an experience’ (S2).

The questionnaire participants also had mixed views on what Royal Ascot is: a product, service, neither or both, shown the breakdown bar below. All findings within the research shows both opinions from staff member and customers are mixed with only few individual with the understand of what an event experience is and therefore what the Royal Ascot is.
4.7 Importance of a Customer

Bowdin et al (2010: 240) states that ‘the customers, the participants, the spectators for whom the event is intended and who ultimately vote with their feet for the success or failure of an event’.

‘The customer experience is key and that is in every member of staffs eyes and they all focus on the customer, you know, going that extra mile, being original and being one step ahead of them to make sure they are having a really good time. You won’t get that experience anywhere else’ (MM1).

‘If it wasn’t for the guests, we probably wouldn’t exit’ (FM2).

All quotes support the literature discussed by Bowdin et al (2010). MM1 directly said the customer is key and relates that to staff attitudes in providing and ensure their experience is positive and enjoyable. FM2 supports the literature fully expressing how Royal Ascot would probably never exist if it wasn’t for its customers.

4.7.2 Demographic Analysis of Customers at Royal Ascot

Royal Ascot doesn’t have any age limit on who attends (Ascot, 2017). FM1 discusses how customers may be less engaging with social media and may expect paper collateral copies as that’s what they were used to and expect from Royal Ascot. Paper copies may be a part of a customer’s physical evidence and contribute to their experience at this event.
‘they’ve been coming to Royal for years so they might expect paper copies of things like it was before and they might be less engaged with social media because of such a sweeping generation’ (FM1).

FM2 highlights vast differences in clientele who attends Royal Ascot which agrees with Ascot (2017) and FM1.

‘we are a venue where our target audience constantly changes- we’ve got a huge demographic of customer’ (FM2).

Below shows a pie chart, showing the range of ages of participants and attendees at Royal Ascot. The majority of is show in red as 18-24 year old individuals. This may be due to the distribution via online and stated above the older generations may be less open to change, this questionnaire might not have had enough reach to all generations.

![Pie Chart](image.png)

*Figure 4: Demographic Analysis via Age*

Royal Ascot do however highlight a preference in gender demographics in their audience on a certain day- Ladies Day. This day doesn’t exclude men attendees but does somewhat concentrate on fashion and women attending, ‘engaging female audiences’ (Johnson, 2017: Online).
‘it’s the only time of year I’d probably wear a hat and I know that’s quite important to a lot of people’ (FM1).

FM1 identifies only wearing a hat at Royal Ascot, highlighting fashion importance and status at this event.

4.7.3 Technological Impacts: Mobile Devices

Technology is always developing and it has permanent position in the events industry where managers can use current technology to help with involving and serving event participants to enhance their experience and to extend the reach and access to certain events (Bowdin et al, 2010).

‘it’s the way their audience is- everything is online’ (MM2)

‘they just have to submit their details once and they are permanently logged into the wifi-the main reason they do that is for data caption’ (FM2)

Royal Ascot are clearly aware of technological impacts and developments as MM2 highlights all information being accessible online. FM2 represents how connecting onto their free wifi can be a form of data caption of their customers and they have to access this by logging into their personal social media accounts either Facebook or Twitter.

As part of technological development, mobile devices are a keen medium when social networking, which has impacted the events industry and for event goers.

In 2015, 77% of individuals aged 16-24 reported using a smartphone most for social networking, while 33% over age of 55 preferred to use a laptop (Statista B, 2017).

‘they might be slightly older and perhaps less open to change’ (FM1)

‘I think if it’s good for the consumer they should adapt’ (MM2)
In 2013, 26% of UK respondents to survey, uploaded content to social media via their smartphone at a sporting event and 48% whilst ‘out and about’ (Statista, 2017).

‘Customers I found hugely where constantly on their phones- either taking a picture of the horses or of the Queen or just the atmosphere in general, like videoing or, I just found I saw customers hugely doing that’ (S1).

‘I don’t get it personally but people would rather look at an event which is happening in front of them through their phone’ (MM2).

‘If people are on their phone, it probably only to film and take picture to document their day and kind of go home and show off to their friends of how of a good day they’ve had’ (FM2)

Colier (2012) expresses how documenting and usage of mobile devices in society can have a negative effect stating, ‘technology captures life but simultaneously keeps us out of it’.

‘So the fact that people can consume it and publicise that they are there and generate their own, personal hype at the same time, it’s something that people do and people will do it’ (MM2)

S2 has a good view and argument explaining how some people may be using their phones to absorb all the experience but it’s not necessarily a bad thing either.

‘I think people are missing out on real life experiences because they are living behind their phones- I don’t think there’s problem with that- If you’re happy with that, then you’ve got the memories as well because obviously going to an event like that it’s not tangible, but taking the photos you can then take them away from the event and remember it’ (S2).

4.7.4 Customer Interaction with Social Media: Impact upon Experience

The questionnaire participants revealed 59% felt that interacting with social media, more specifically Facebook or Twitter, didn’t affect their experience while attending an event.
The literature suggests an alternative perspective. Kilkenny, (2011) believes social media does impact customer experience, ‘this is a new and powerful way to enhance engagement from all concerned parties’ (Kilkenny 2011: Online).

‘It shows that people are engaging in the event- that they are wanting to be there and be associated with that event and even taking part in competitions on social media’ (MM1)

‘interaction and letting the world know that you’re monitoring and you’re engaging in and willing to resolve any issues or even promote good things is certainly a benefit of social media’ (MM2)

All the research collected from the interviewees highlights social media benefits customer experience, whereas the participates in my questionnaire, shown in the graph, doesn’t think their experience will be affected. A reoccurring theme throughout was that if customers are enjoying their experience they will express it more, either physically or via social media on Facebook and Twitter. ‘It gives a new voice to your attendees and allows for a new dimension of communication’ (Kilkenny, 2011: Online).

‘I see a lot more people winning but they tend to a bit more vocal if they are winning’ (MM2).

‘If someone is recording themselves signing around the bandstand, it’s immediately showing like I’m here and I’m having an enjoyable time’ (FM2).
4.7.5 What Makes Royal Ascot ‘Like No Where Else’: From a Customers Perspective.

Royal Ascot is a unique, standalone event on the sporting and social calendar and dressing according is part of the experience (Ascot Media, 2016). Royal Ascot enforce a strict dress code onto guests in relations to the type of ticket purchased.

‘The fact you have to dress up and the rules you have to follow, people enjoy and like the chance to dress up to look fancy’ (MM1).

‘Well, I think the reason it’s an experience like no other is because of the dress code’ (S2).

The two graphs below show the enjoyment levels of attendees at Royal Ascot, questioning whether it’s a memorable experience and if customers found it satisfying. These agrees with Ascot Media (2016), MM1 and S2.

Figure 15: Royal Ascot: Memorable Experience.

Figure 16: Satisfaction of Experience at Royal Ascot.
Tradition is a huge part of the event and customers value the traditions they behold.

‘From a customer point of view, it’s one of the oldest race meeting in the world, it’s steeped in history it’s got that element of the royal family there with usually the Queen on site every day, that you don’t get very often’ (MM2).

‘I think that’s quite an important factor for a lot of people- that the Queen has attended every year since her coronation’ (FM1).

Royal Ascot is an engaging experience which is always about much more than horse racing alone (Ascot Media, 2016).

‘It’s a real spectacle and for those five days, it’s very much telling that story for five days in June, there will be some of the greatest horses, the greatest jockeys, the greatest trainers and even the greatest personality in entertainment, everything stops and everyone heads to the Royal Ascot’ (FM1)

![Figure 17: Stimuli Impact Upon Experience.](image)
‘there is enough stimuli presented to you to absorb the atmosphere and experience without social media’ (MM1)

‘I think it definitely heightens it because it’s somethings that’s so unique that we don’t necessarily have all that pedantry on any other race day’ (FM2)

Both graphs and quotes show that customers believe their experiences is impacted by 71% of what they see and 21% believing their experience is effected by what they hear. MM1 makes a statement that your senses are so stimulated with the environment and atmosphere of this event, customers don’t need to interact if they didn’t want to in social media as they believe it is not needed. FM2 believe what you see so the pedantry and theming not only adds to the customer experience of the event but also differs from other horseracing events as well.

4.8 Summary

This chapter highlights the results and discussion of six semi-structured interviews and an online questionnaire. The purpose of this chapter was to identify whether the findings within the primary research supported or provided an alternative perspective to the literature discussed within chapter 2. These key findings will be stated in the conclusion.
5. Conclusion
5.1 Introduction

This chapter evaluates all the research including the key findings and the fulfilment of the aim and objectives. Recommendations for future research and to Royal Ascot have been highlighted. Limitations and set backs were discussed to advise those completely similar studies to avoid or at least be aware of.

5.2 Aim and Objectives Revisited

Aim:

- To compare and contrast how the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter impact upon the customer and staff experience at a horseracing event, using a case study of Royal Ascot.

In order to completely fulfil the aim of this research, the following objectives were carefully chosen which will now be reflected upon:

Objectives:

- To critically review the academic literature on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter, customer and staff experience and horseracing events.

This objective was fulfilled by exploring a range of academic literature, providing a basis for the researcher to compare to and add their contribution. The six elements of social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter, customer and staff experiences and horseracing events were all explored. Some issues with accessing modern literature, for example looking into the impact Facebook and Twitter have on event experience, was highlighted but was overcome with the researcher exploring a wide variety of sources.

- To carry out two phases of primary research with the customer and staff on how social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter has impacted upon their experience at horseracing events and Royal Ascot.
This objective was fulfilled as two phases of primary research was completed with high levels of participants: six semi-structured interviews, for staff members and 46 responses to an online questionnaire, for customers at Royal Ascot. Both methods were used effectively identifying themes allowing them to be discussed and analysed further.

- To compare and contrast the findings from phase one and phase two of how the social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter impact upon customer and staff experience at Royal Ascot.

This objectives was briefly met. The researcher felt the comparative element of key findings could have been more in depth and detailed giving Royal Ascot clearer, more useful recommendations on how they can implement staff and customer experiences on Facebook and Twitter.

- To make recommendations to Royal Ascot on how to enhance the existing social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter to enhance the customer and staff experience at this horseracing event.

This objective was met as data collection, analysis and discussion highlights key findings which help identify what to recommend to Royal Ascot. The key findings are stated in this chapter, therefore fulfilling this objective.

5.3 Limitations of Research

The author deemed it highly valuable to reflect upon this study to allow for improvement, growth and add realism to the research:

- An influential limitation was the lack of Royal Ascot marketers the researcher had access to. The researcher aimed for an overview of Royal Ascot employees to give their opinion referencing to their own employment experience. This lack of access was made up by AP Security management and operational staff. This did give an overview
of the event and staff/ customer experiences but from many different positions and relationships to Royal Ascot.

- The researcher would use an accessible venue. The researcher was unable to access the venue during the short time frame in which to carry out this research. Visiting the venue may have enable more access to potential research participants and would have brought more reliability and validity to this study.

- Due to exploring both staff and customer experience, two types of research methods were considered. Semi-structured interviews for staff members and online questionnaires for customers, who have attended Royal Ascot. This meant a lot of data was being collected which all had to be analysed becoming very time consuming. The researcher would advise collecting less data or exploring only one type of experience.

- Due to this research project being a comparative, of all elements (Facebook vs Twitter, staff experience vs customer experience, qualitative vs quantitative) which were discussed had to be further compared, linked and applied to one another and the case study of Royal Ascot. This limited the researcher to make clearer more accurate recommendations.

5.4 Summary of Key Findings

The data collected was all valuable information to the topic areas being studied and the researcher was able to highlight key findings:

- There were many views on what social media is used for- publishing software or channel of communication.

- Many interviewees had completely different views on how to refer to social media sites via platforms or vehicles when relating to Royal Ascot.
• Instagram is highlighted more popular than Twitter for both personal and professional use.

• Facebook was very popular throughout the research and deem more favourable for personal use, according to both methods of data collection. Facebook is highlighted as more creative than Twitter due to more posting characteristics and no restriction on word count.

• There was much debate on which platform was best suited to business use at Royal Ascot, 2 interviewees preferred Twitter and 2 interviewees preferred Facebook.

• Social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter are not use for expressing staff experiences personally due to policies and status of the event. However, these sites are used to fully impact customer experience, highlighted to help improve customer experience if they had a problem, giving staff employee satisfaction.

• 76.32% of participants said they find it easier to express their opinion of this event using social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter than any other method.

• All interviewees and participants believed social media interaction doesn’t necessarily add to their experience at Royal Ascot, if they choose not to engage, but social media will affect it.

• Many different opinions are highlighted on what Royal Ascot is- a product, service both or neither.

• Impact of gambling and betting highly recognised and fundamental to horseracing events experiences.

• Royal Ascot staff motivations are highlighted as passion and intrinsically driven rather than financially motivated. All interviewees stated Royal Ascot to be an enjoyable and memorable working experience.
A lot of discussion on customers publishing content as they consume via Facebook and Twitter impacting their experience.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher recommends the following to consider for future research:

- Conducting the research with more Royal Ascot employees to interview to gain a getter overview of the case study approach, adding validity to the research.

- The researcher would recommend focusing on one type of experience, either staff or customer experience in order to evaluate in more detail.

- As well as focusing on one experience, the researcher found one method of research more helpful than the other. The researcher would recommend using interviews.

- Due to the aim of this research, the project, if explored further could potentially be a larger type of research project, for example a PHD. This would allow the researcher to explore more depth in both experiences and social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter and make a full detailed comparison.

5.6 Recommendations for Royal Ascot

The researcher aims to provide Royal Ascot with awareness and understanding of the impact of Facebook and Twitter usage on both customer and staff experience, highlighted as an objective of this study:

- Continue to implement social media platforms within event agenda, company strategy and develop awareness of growth.

- Dedicate an investigation into business use of Twitter and its benefits as theory suggests it’s highly used by businesses despite Royal Ascot providing more support to Facebook.
• Continue development of knowledge of how both staff and customers express their experiences and utilise to their advantage.

• Identify new ways to encourage interaction and expression through the growth of Facebook and Twitter, for example Facebook Live, to positively influence customer and staff experiences at this event.

5.7 Summary

Reviewing the overall aim, this research has been able to identify the impact of influencing staff and customer experience by using social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter at horseracing events, using a case study of Royal Ascot. The researcher found a key finding very interesting, the questionnaire revealed 59% said no to the importance of interaction in Facebook and Twitter affecting their experience. It was discussed that social media interaction in Facebook and Twitter isn’t needed to boost experience at an event like Royal Ascot. It was further discussed that it will affect their experience in some way but their experience wouldn’t be any less memorable or enjoyable if there is no interaction. It was highlighted that there is enough stimuli and atmosphere at this event without relaying too much on social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter. However, Royal Ascot are aware of social media benefits and the researcher advises this event to continue to use and incorporate Facebook and Twitter usage.

To conclude, the researcher believes this project was a success and was able to add their contribution to the literature already available. However, there is still minimal research and literature on how social media platform of Facebook and Twitter impact staff especially and customers experiences at a world-famous events like Royal Ascot.