

Tourism and Social Media, Key Instruments in Market Economy

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Abstract

Being one of the “mega trends” that has significantly impacted the tourism system, the role and use of social media in travelers' decision making and in tourism operations and management have been widely discussed in tourism and hospitality research. This study reviews and analyzes all extant social media in tourism as a key instrument.

Keywords: tourism, social media

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1. Literature Review

Social media can be defined as a “group of Internet-based applications .Today there are many different types of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Perakakis, Trihas, Venitourakis, Mastorakis, & Kopanakis, 2016): social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn), social blogging (e.g. Tumblr) or microblogging (e.g. Twitter), social review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor, Yelp, FourSquare), image sharing sites (e.g. Instagram, Pinterest), video hosting sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo), discussion sites (e.g. Reddit, Quora), virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft) social bookmarking and voting sites (e.g. Delicious, Digg), sharing economy platforms (e.g. Airbnb, Pantheon, Kickstarter), and social knowledge sharing sites (e.g. Wikipedia, Wikitravel). In recent years, human interaction has been greatly facilitated through all these social media (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012; Trihas, Perakakis, Venitourakis, Mastorakis, & Kopanakis, 2013). To get a picture of the popularity of social media, active social media users have reached 3.80 billion in January 2020 (recording an increase of 9,2% over the previous year), with 3.75 billion of them accessing these platforms through their mobile devices (Hootsuite, 2020).

Social media has changed every single aspect of our lives, including the way we consume. These developments have significantly affected businesses mainly through enabling new marketing strategies. Tourism, being one of the most vibrant sectors of the global economy, is undoubtedly a part of all these.

Merging social media and tourism marketing will lead to excellent results for your business. Here we have gathered information about the essentials of social media in tourism marketing: what is the role of it and how it can be effectively used.

2.Importance of the Social Media

Social media impact on tourism is seen in the ways people research before going on a trip. Now people are encouraged to share their travel experiences. Thus, social media has transformed the way people make decisions. People build their trust in a tourism agency based on the reviews of the others.

2.1 Social sharing for better customer relations

Customer service is another essential aspect of the tourism industry that has changed with social media. Now brands and businesses can reach their customers directly through social media. When people are unsatisfied with a tourism service, they can call the companies to account for that. Thus, solving the problems of the customers in the kindest ways will lead to a better reputation for a company.

Social sharing might be the most significant factor that affected the tourism industry. Social media enables especially young people to share the most significant memories from their travels with a vast audience. Tourism companies should know that this is a more powerful way of attracting new travellers than simple advertisements and encourage people to share their real experiences online.

As seen above, the rise of social media led to the development of two-way communication between agencies and customers and customers to customers. To benefit from this impact of social media on the tourism industry, turning to social media is vital for a tourism agency.

User-generated content is one of the best ways to get people to engage with your business. Influencer marketing will help a lot to make your business visible among the others. After specifying your target location and audience, you can get in touch with tourism influencers and experts. You will not believe how fast your brand is reaching followers, thanks to influencers.

3. Importance of tourism marketing

Tourism marketing may sometimes be challenging and expensive particularly when attracting both national and international tourists. Therefore, marketers need to fully understand their customers' needs and desires so that they can devise an appropriate marketing plan. Tourism contributes a lot to a country's GDP. Consequently, countries around the world invest in tourism development and promote attractions to tourists. Appropriate tourism marketing strategies and techniques help countries and organisations achieve their business objectives.

4. Business events and tourism

Interest in the tourism value of business events, including meetings, conventions, and exhibitions (both trade and consumer shows) has a long pedigree given that almost all major cities now possess impressive convention and exhibition facilities (see Boo, Koh, & Jones 2008), along with agencies devoted to selling the space and bidding on events (see Kim, Yoon, & Kim, 2011 on the competitive positioning strategies of event convention centres in East Asia). The first convention bureau in the USA was established as far back as 1896 (Spiller, 2002) and the Destination Marketing Association International traces its origins to 1915 (www.destinationmarketing.org/) as highlighted in the *Introduction*. Often referred to as the MICE industry, that is, meetings, incentives, conventions and events/exhibitions (Schlentrich, 2008), there is some doubt about the validity of including incentive tours; Fenich (2005) prefers MEEC for Meetings, Expositions, Events and Conventions. Weber and Chon (2002) assessed this sector in *Convention Tourism: International Research and Industry Perspectives*. Other books on the subject of business-event tourism include those by Davidson and Cope (2003), Davidson and Rogers (2006), Davidson, Holloway, and Humphreys (2009), and Mair (2013).

Weber and Ladkin (2004, 2008) explored trends in the convention industry including government's increasing awareness of its economic benefits. Review articles have covered convention tourism research (Yoo & Weber, 2005; Mair 2012) and convention and meeting management research (Lee & Back, 2005) including the tourism dimension. Lee and Lee (2014) reviewed research articles on exhibitions and discussed themes related to exhibitors in particular. Lee and Palakurthi (2013) conducted research on how constraints influenced exhibition attendance. Mair (2012) reviewed 144 articles from the business-event literature for the period 2000 through 2009; the vast majority of which were published in the *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*.

5. Festivals and other cultural celebrations

Festivals in society and culture, pertaining to their roles, meanings and impacts, is the best developed discourse, rooted firmly in sociology and anthropology. Festivals and tourism has been reviewed in depth by Getz (2011) in a study that identified the following classical themes pertaining to festivity: myth, ritual and symbolism; ceremony and celebration; spectacle; communitas; host-guest interactions (and the role of the stranger); liminality; the carnivalesque; authenticity and commodification; pilgrimage; and a considerable amount of political debate over impacts and meanings. Festival tourism is a mainstream subject of research (e.g., Anwar & Sohail, 2004; Donovan & Debres, 2006; Formica & Uysal, 1998; McKercher, Mei, & Tse, 2006; Nurse, 2004; Robinson, Picard, & Long, 2004; Saleh & Ryan, 1993). Occasionally art exhibitions and tourism have been examined (e.g., Mihalik & Wing-Vogelbacher, 1992). Much of the discourse has been subsumed in the literature on cultural tourism (e.g., McKercher & du Cros, 2002; Richards, 1996, 2007). Festivals have been examined in the context of place marketing, urban development, tourism and more recently social change (e.g., Picard & Robinson, 2006a). Some of the growth in festival numbers and variety has been attributed to diaspora (Basu, 2005; Laing & Frost, 2013), that is the mass-migration of people who carry traditions with them.

6. Conclusion

Evaluation and Impact Assessment: Inevitably the rise of event tourism is generating a greater need for accountability, transparency, and comprehensiveness in evaluation of policies, strategies, investments and interventions. This applies to bidding, developing a comprehensive portfolio, and construction or replacement of venues. Researchers have made great strides in developing theory and methods for non-economic impact topics, most recently by stressing social capital, use and non-use values, footprint calculations and taking a multistakeholder approach. But full cost and benefit evaluations are rare and it is exceptional to see proper consideration of opportunity costs or key externalities like security and infrastructure costs for mega events. Long-term evaluation of leveraging and legacy effects is needed. Key indicators are being developed to both reflect triple-bottom-line thinking and encourage standardization of impact assessments and forecasts. A primary need is to focus attention on the bigger evaluation questions of what an event is worth, how to value events within a portfolio, and the relative value of permanent versus one-time events. Finally it is pertinent to conclude with a focus on education for event tourism. Event management education is now well established in many countries, but it is inevitable that event tourism will find a place of its own. This is in part a function of the increasing number of jobs specific to event tourism indicative of the potential drop in student demand for tourism and value in combining tourism and closely related studies like events more closely. The synergistic effects of

these new (or perhaps re-invented) mergers offer students more choices and bring applied management fields closer together as advocated by Getz (2014).

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