Chapter 9
Role of Social Media in Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Revolutionary development in field of communication and information technology have globally opened new avenue of marketing tourism and hospitality products. Major shift in web usage happened when Napster in 1999 released peer-to-peer share media and then with pioneer social networking websites named ‘Six Degrees’. This kind of interactive social web was named as ‘Web 2.0’. It would create openness, community and interaction. Web2. is also known as Social media base. Social media is incudes “all the different kinds of content that form social networks: posts on blogs or forums, photos, audio, videos, links, profiles on social networking web sites, status updates and more”. It allows people to create; upload post and share content easily and share globally. Social media allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content and experiences online. Thus, social media is any kind of information we share with our social network, using social networking web sites and services.

INTRODUCTION

In the tourism industry, websites and social media provide a wealth of information with regards to experiences and review of the destination, property, facilities and restaurants (Manap KhairulHilmi A., 2013). Social media has added new channels of communication to tourists. Most tourists always use the Internet for destination information seeking to decision-making .The tourism industry value chain starting from countries Tourism boards, tourism agents, tour operators, transportations and airline companies, hotel and restaurant operators, destination management companies and

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local tourism management organisation all use social media tools to reach potential customers (Ernestad V., 2010).

The social media marketing generates more business exposure, increased traffic and improved search, generating leads and improved sales at lower cost (Stelzner, 2011). Social media or web 2.0 is changing the methods by which tourists search, find, evaluate, trust and collaboratively produce information about tourism suppliers and other members of the value chain. Consequently tourists are becoming consumers who not only participate in production but also marketing of the tourist’s products. Using social media, travellers become co-producers, co-marketiers, co-consumers by creating user generated content (UGC) and social intelligence. (Manap KhairulHilmi A., 2013). This user generated contents of the online comments, profiles, and photographs a mixture of facts and opinions shared by tourists is trustworthy for new users. UGC have AIDA effect on travellers by creating attention, interest, desire and action (Sigala M., Christou E., Gretzel U., 2012), sources of information and its evaluation, channels used for booking and buying travel products including travel itineraries and reservations and also disseminating experiences through word of mouth after the trip. The UGC content it can be in the form of any comments on Amazon, Facebook or YouTube. Nielsen (2009) argues that Internet is the mass medium used for social media marketing. However, Kessler et al. (2007) argue that social media is still in competition with traditional marketing techniques. User generated content value chain of Internet is shown below.

Consumer behaviour in tourism has always been influenced by information and communication technologies.

THEORETICAL MODELS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Research indicates that there can be multiple reasons of why people want to share online content using offline or online medias. These motivations may be narcissism, social and hedonistic reasons, pursuit of personal identity as a gratifications, status seeking self-concept, social support, selflessness, fame, having fun and passing time etc. on the other hand reasons for not sharing information may be a desire to remain anonymous due to issues of privacy, security time constraints, and anxiety, laziness, and shyness, vengeance, and

Figure 1. UGC Value Chain of Internet
Source: (The Equity Kicker, 2012)
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