Investigation of an Extended Typology for Marketing Destinations with YouTube

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ABSTRACT

This article describes how YouTube has been evolving as an e-tool for marketing activities over the past decade. Utilizing YouTube for enhancing marketing endeavours is a strategy practiced by marketing professionals across a growing number of industries. The research documented in this article investigates virtual community-based destination marketing using an extended conceptualisation of a virtual community typology. A non-participant netnographic investigation of virtual communities through a content analysis has been applied in this article to investigate the research questions. The contribution includes the application of an extended typology of virtual communities to YouTube leading to a number of managerial implications for marketing practice on using YouTube as an effective marketing tool.

KEYWORDS
Destination Marketing, Interaction Design, Tourism, Virtual Communities, YouTube

INTRODUCTION

The percentage of companies using social media for marketing is increasing day by day. Recent advances in social media related research shows a significant increase of social media in marketing different types of products. Research suggests that social media plays an important role in communicating information to customers, but as an antecedent enhancing salesperson behaviours to increase customer satisfaction rather than a direct factor (Agnihotri et al., 2016). Some recent documented studies such as Lohikoski et al. (2016), Sambhanthan and Potdar (2016) deals with virtual communities and parameter based evaluation respectively. YouTube, being a premier social media platform has more than 800 million users visiting each month (YouTube, 2013). Several studies have investigated YouTube from different approaches (Rotman & Preece, 2010). However, the role of YouTube in tourism related endeavours is still an under investigated area. Studies show that YouTube videos have the potential to substantially affect the experience of tourists (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Further, this study show that these videos generate mental pleasure by stimulating the imagination of people as well as impart the feeling of travelling to destinations that the tourists have already visited in the past. To some extent, the above findings show the significance of further research on the use of YouTube platform in destination marketing. Evidently, the use of YouTube as a medium to market tourist destinations remains an open question for exploration in the context of rapidly emerging marketing models using web 2.0. Albeit, Sambhanthan et al. (2016) documented a
research, which aims to extend the Virtual community typology, propounded by Porter (2005) into another five dimensions namely potential, participation, pattern of use, pollution and power. Hence, this research aims to investigate the following research questions.

1. What is the potential of YouTube in influencing destination marketing efforts of hoteliers?
2. How user perceptions in virtual communities relating to the extended typology could influence destination-marketing efforts of hoteliers?

**LITERATURE REVIEW ON VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES**

The theoretical framework of this article relies on the extended typology of virtual communities outlined and published by Sambhanthan and Good (2016). The article discusses of five extended dimensions of the typology of virtual communities propounded by Porter (2004). The key theoretical dimensions and the sub constructs of the extended typology of virtual communities is depicted in Figure 1 in the Appendix.

**POTENTIAL**

A key contribution made by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) reports that the YouTube videos have the “potential” to substantially affect the experience of tourists. Further, the study states that these videos generate mental pleasure through generating the imagination of people. In addition, the study states that these videos impart the feeling of travelling to the destinations that the tourists have already visited in the past. The potential of these videos to get tourists re-experiencing the past is the most notable effect highlighted throughout this study.

The potential to influence the decision behaviour of users is a meaningful addition to the existing 5 Ps outlined by Porter (2004) which has been used by Sambhanthan et al. (2016) for analysing YouTube content. First, the study strongly argues that the videos are powerful tools for intensifying the interest of potential travellers. Further to this, the study argues that the nature of interactions between the directors and viewers of YouTube videos promote the development of a travel community through which the important experiential information could be effectively shared and exchanged.

While the overall contribution made by Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier (2009) is a sound combination of the experience sharing aspect related research in the tourism domain with a specific focus on technology mediated experience sharing, their research did not include any content towards the creation of dialogue among the users as a way forward to experience sharing through the YouTube platform. In addition, the authors focused more on the role of videos as the mediators of tourist experience. The method utilized in our study focuses on an analysis of videos shared by the tourists in the YouTube platform. Although, the videos are an integral part of virtual community interactions, continuous dialogues among the users’ needs follow those, which is more critical in forming purchase related impressions on the minds of travellers.

Another key contribution by Valck et al. (2009) investigated VCs from an entirely marketing perspective. These authors investigated how VC users engaged themselves as a social and information exchange network and the impact of the social media on users’ decision behaviour. The study has key implications for managers, market researchers and marketers based on two main findings: (1) the VCs function as reference groups, which are different from the traditional reference groups; (2) the VC could be utilized to produce a deep understanding about the various aspects of topics discussed, which influence the members. Together, these findings also highlighted the potential of VCs to connect people who would not have met each other during their lifetime if they have not been part of the virtual community. In other words, the VCs have the potential to tie up people who are less likely to meet each other in real-life. However, there should be a threat of anonymity inherently synonym
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