

Chapter 3

The Role of Digital Marketing and Online Relationship Quality in Social Tourism: A Tourism for All Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The literature widely suggests that the digital media has greatly impacted the way a marketer reaches today's consumer. The adaptive process enabled by the digital technologies creates value in new ways in new digital environments. Therefore, social tourism has been defined as the effects and phenomena that result from the participation in tourism and more specifically from the participation of low-income groups. The chapter focuses on accessible tourism and tourism for all. A case study will be present. This chapter will discuss the increasing phenomena of online relationship and digital marketing in specific social tourism contexts. Based on the literature review, the authors will develop a research propositions that connect the online relationship quality dimension developed by the relational marketing (i.e., online contexts) with the consequent e-satisfaction and word-of-mouth (eWOM). The authors also considered some implications for management, as well as give suggestions for future lines of research.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9783-4.ch003

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is assumed as one of the major engines with more significant impact on the global development and growth of many economies. Year after year there has been an increase in competition in this sector, although this competition is established between tourism destinations (Becken & Simmons, 2002). Studies in tourism are increasing, although with different points of view and perspectives (Echtner & Jamal, 1997), for example on the planning of tourism destinations, local development, environmental impact, territorial brand management or even the loyalty of tourists (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Ferreira et al., 2018; Getz, 1986; Sousa & Ribeiro, 2018; Sousa & Vasconcelos, 2018). To Jafari and Aaser (1988), tourism as a study area has gained space, reflecting its increasing recognition in the academic community, an application of interdisciplinary concepts and methods. The field of tourism marketing is no exception and has faced increasing challenges caused by the diversity and demands of markets which call for new marketing approaches (Sousa & Vieira, 2018). New habits needs and trends in the global tourism creates more sophisticated consumers who systematically look for different and specific tourism experiences.

Therefore, and according to Hassan and Rahimi (2016), tourism is the world's largest industry that continuously contributing global economy. The economic and market structures of countries across the world are diverse that necessitates technology application to cater growing demands of both consumers and businesses. Technology application in tourism is said as linked with Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT has been continuously contributing business activities including tourism. The extended roles and capacities of digital marketing are also diverging traditional means of technology adoption in tourism. ICT has witnessed a sharp rise of up gradation over the last few decades where, innovations in digital marketing have contributed largely (Hassan & Rahimi, 2016). For instance, social media platforms allow potential travellers to collect a wide variety of multimedia information from different sources and use the experiences shared by others in order to prepare and sometimes enrich their own tourism-related experience. Social media are changing the way society consumes and contributes to the creation of information. Technology now allows individuals to easily contribute their thoughts, opinions and creations to the Internet. This has radically altered the way in which information is created and disseminated (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Gretzel et al., 2000; Hays et al., 2013; Senecal & Nantel, 2004; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

In this context, social tourism has been defined as the effects and phenomena that result from the participation in tourism and more specifically from the participation of low-income groups. This participation is made possible or is facilitated by initiatives of a well-defined social nature. Also, tourism for all refers to the goal to include as

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