

Chapter 5


Deepening the Use of Social Media and Tourism Travel Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has transformed people's daily lives, not only in the search of information but above all giving the possibility of buying several products and services in a quick and easy way. Social networks have emerged as the quintessential medium for sharing experiences and communicating tourist information to all players in the tourism distribution chain. Today, we can sell, search, consume, connect, and share experiences related to our travel or services on different social media platforms and some online communities that share the same interests. The focus of this chapter is to point out the use of social media along the travel process in order to understand the behaviour of tourists before, during, and after trip. Having in mind the travel decision-making process the authors prepared a questionnaire with several questions spread through Facebook and answered by 95 people. The authors present the results and main conclusions in the chapter.

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet and all the applications that have sprung up within it have helped to change the paradigm of travel for both tourists and holidaymakers (Xiang, 2018; Xiang, Magnini & Fesenmaier, 2015), changing the challenges associated with buying and advertising tourism products.

The new paradigm contributed to the disruption in the communication and marketing of tourism products (Vargas-Sanchez, 2019), making it felt at all stages associated with making a trip, but with more impact when deciding what should be part of the trip through of your purchase.

Information and communication technologies are essential today for those who want to travel, visit a place and learn what the tourist destination offers its visitor. In addition, within ICT, social media has emerged as one of the most useful and widely used platforms for travellers to consult and learn from other tourists' views on the most visited, most recommended locations and the reasons for this recommendation with a view to support the decision making process (Femenia-Serra, Neuhofer, & Ivars-Baidal, 2019).

During the travel decision making process (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), people use social media for different propose, as for example to collect and share information about places, services, to make comments about different realities but above all to be in contact with others. Besides the importance that social media have at this moment, there is a limited prior research investigating how the enterprises use it to influence the consumers' decision-making process.

In this chapter, the authors focus their attention in the travel decision-making process and above all in the way that a person use the social media during this all process.

Authors divide this chapter into four parts. First part focuses on the literature review that discuss some findings related to travel behaviour and travel decision-making process. Second part present the methodology used to design the proposed questionnaire and the explanation of the application through Facebook. Third part present the results of the questionnaire and the fourth part the main conclusions and some information regarding future challenges and lines of research.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Social Media in Tourism Sector

Social media is part of our daily life and many persons use it to search, to share and be in contact with others, and as stated by Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008), transformed the nature of communication among people, particularly travellers. Munar and Jacobsen (2014) states that social media are increasingly relevant as part of tourism practices affecting destinations and businesses. Nezakati et al. (2015) refer that recently social network websites have played a significant role in marketing and tourism promotion in the travel industry worldwide.

Social media creates opportunities for tourists to participate in the production and consumption of travel experiences, the so-called "prosumers" by Sigala, Christou and Gretzel (2012, p. 7), which allow a more active relationship between industry, destination and traveller. According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), internet-based social media has made possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the companies that provide them. The same authors consider social media as hybrid element of the promotion mix as it enables companies to talk directly to their customers as well as customers directly to one another.

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