

Chapter 15

How Web 3.0 Tourism Students See the 1.0 Higher Education System

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ABSTRACT

Social media does not seem to easily fit in the higher education system. The Web 3.0 students use social networks on a daily basis, however, 1.0 higher education institutions are not taking advantage of these tools. There are some institutional constraints, pedagogical issues, and cultural resistance for its adoption. A survey directed to Portuguese Higher Education students was held, aiming to identify social networks' use either in a personal and academic context. Results show that social networks are under-exploited in the teaching-learning process, both by students and also their teachers. They are both aware of the platforms and applications but are rarely used for an academic purpose. The study raises important issues and gives practical examples for effective use of social media in education. In order to address these challenges and opportunities wisely, it is necessary an effective engagement in social media by students, professors, and all the academic staff.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the industries that most has been affected and boosted by the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The relationship between tourism and technology could be seen as a “win-win” situation. Social media platforms are a good example of it, boosted by the advent of smartphones. New disruptive technologies will arise, with significant impacts on innovation, strategy, management, and competitiveness of the entire sector, which require a different way of teaching.

Social media use for academic purposes is still rare. Pedagogical issues and cultural resistance are some of the obstacles for social media adoption in higher education institutions. Despite an extensive literature regarding the implications of the different technologies in the teaching/learning process, little is known concerning social media use in tourism higher education courses and institutions.

Therefore, the present research intends to explore this gap. Are social media technologies being used properly in tourism higher education courses? This is the main question that supports this research. The paper starts with a review of the current literature regarding tourism and social media. The literature review follows with a discussion surrounding the application of social media technologies in higher education institutions. After presenting the research methodology, we discuss our findings, and present the limitations and future research lines.

TOURISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The impact of the world wide web and other ICTs on tourism started to reveal itself in the mid-90s, and completely transformed our daily life, contributing to a growing research effort in the field (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Hjalager, 2013). The role of social media in tourism and hospitality has been a hot topic for research (Leung, Law, van Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Social media, as well as other technologies, enable a more interactive tourism experiences, as well as the co-creation of value by travelers throughout all stages of the process. Nowadays, the social web is “the right spot” to obtain and share information, experiences and preferences among consumers. The online reviews are becoming important and credible information sources for increasingly demanding tourists (Lopes, Abrantes, & Kastenholz, 2013). In terms of tourism destination promotion, the Destination Management Organizations (DMO) are giving a relevant role to social media in their communication activities, putting vital information on these platforms, in order to influence consumer behavior (Roque & Raposo, 2016). Smart tourism is also emerging as a new hot topic for research, given the impact of most recent ICTs over destinations, tourists and business (Koo, Park, & Lee, 2017).

As a matter of fact, ICTs have already provoked a tremendous transformation on tourism, boosted by the advent of smartphones, artificial intelligence, cloud computing or the Internet of Things (Xiang & Fesenmaier, 2017). Nonetheless, according to Buhalis (2019), in the future tourism will be driven by disruptive technologies, that will transform structures, processes and practices, with significant impacts on innovation, strategy, management, and competitiveness of the entire sector. The emergence and impact of those disruptive technologies in all sectors and dimensions of our everyday life, require higher education institutions to look for a different way of teaching (Peres, Moreira, & Mesquita, 2018).

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