



## The Role of Social Media in Marketing with Special Reference to Tourism

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### ABSTRACT

*Tourism is one of the largest service industries in terms of gross revenue and foreign exchange earnings. Tourism is not only a growth engine but also an employment generator. According to the recent survey the sector has the capacity to create large scale employment both direct and indirect, for diverse sections in society, from the most specialized to unskilled workforce. It provides 6-7 per cent of the world's total jobs directly and millions more indirectly through the multiplier effect as per the UN's World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). It has the capacity to stimulate other economic sectors through its backward and forward linkages and cross-sectional synergies with sectors like agriculture, horticulture, poultry, handicrafts, transport, construction, and so on.*

*Tourism generates economic activity in worldwide and provides millions of jobs direct and indirect. The importance of tourism and the entry of many tourists entry of many tourist destinations in to the market have forced many countries all over the world to go for promoting tourist places in their respective countries. The promotion of tourism also requires the usage of marketing mix. Promotions are activities such as advertising, personal selling, and sales promotions, which communicates merits of the product and persuade target customers to buy it. Tourism promotion can benefit more from word-of-mouth marketing and viral marketing but on other forms of promotion like advertising. World of mouth (WOM) communication is a major part of online tourists interactions, particularly within the environment of online communities. Both scholars and practitioners of tourism marketing are particularly interested in WOM communication behavior in the context of online communities because of the extraordinary popularity, growth, and influence of such communities.*

**KEYWORDS :** social media, tourism marketing, Govt. bodies, business firms, India tourism, world tourism.

### INTRODUCTION

With two thirds of the global internet population visiting social networks, businesses are increasingly utilizing these platforms to engage with clients and other businesses.

Social Media is an extremely effective form of marketing which can be used to increase brand awareness, brand loyalty, customer service, and lead to increased sales. It can be used to present a business brand to millions of people worldwide.

Social media is not just for large corporations, small businesses can also reap the benefits of implementing a social media campaign and therefore for many businesses, social media is just one more buzz word they have to wrestle with. However, social media isn't just a buzz word and it's not going away social media can have a profound effect on almost any type of business.

Using social media as a marketing tool in tourism industry adds profound value to the new media trend. How tourism companies gain the benefits from social media is a worthy phenomenon to be researched.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

<http://www.webseanalytics.com/> by Evridiki Gavalaki. Evridiki is the Online Marketing & Communication Professional at Mozaik.

According to Evridiki Gavalaki, the introduction of Social Media networks has revolutionized the industry. Now it is not only the "industry experts" that publish their reviews on travel related websites and channels but also the simple internet users that rate destinations, create content, write their reviews, exchange experiences, publish their videos and photos etc.

The Evolving Dynamics of Social Media in Internet Tourism Marketing by Richard D. Parker

Richrd D. Parker highlighted in his study that in recent years the trend in Internet usage has been toward more user-driven content, specifically in the form of social media. Almost every major tourism authority or tourism related industry maintains some form of social media presence be it a Facebook page, a Twitter feed or use of blogs,

YouTube video channels or subscription email services.

The Role of Social Media Marketing in Tourism Consumer Behaviour by MR Evaggelos VARFIS Head of Search at Nudge Digital, Bristol

Evaggelos VARFIS explains social media marketing is relationship marketing online. The discipline of relationship marketing is already facing waves of changes, with social media providing a variety of new approaches and opportunities to communicate with customers. With the use of social media marketing "building customer engagement in both business and consumer markets requires adaptation of the marketing mix to take advantage of new technologies and tools to better understand and serve customers.

Influence of Social Media on Tourism by Gergely Ráthonyi : University of Debrecen, Centre for Agricultural and Applied Economic Sciences, Faculty of Applied Economics and Rural Development, Institute of Economic Analytical Methodology and Applied Informatics

Gergely Ráthonyi identified that tourists in order to decrease the uncertainty derive from the travel decisions collect more and more indispensable information in connection with the travel. Altering tourists' trust even more in other travellers' opinions rather than official marketing advices due to the spread of social media sites and user-generated contents.

### **The Social Media Marketing Book by Dan Zarrella**

According to Dan Zarrella, the Social media is best defined in the context of the previous industrial media paradigm. Traditional media, such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines, are one-way, static broadcast technologies. New web technologies have made it easy for anyone to create—and, most importantly—distribute their own content. A blog post, tweet, or YouTube video can be produced and viewed by millions virtually for free.

### OBJECTIVES

- To find out how tourism companies or Govt. Bodies are integrating social media into .marketing so as to boost awareness and generate excitement about tourism destinations
- To analyse the effect of social media strategies on tourism marketing.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND TOURISM

### The different forms of social media

Social media websites come in a wide variety of 'flavours', which are all broadly based around the premise of personal interaction, creating, exchanging and sharing content, rating it and discussing its relative merits as a community. In today's consumer's life, social media have reached the position where very fast-evolving growth and its overwhelming coverage in digital media scene have been recognized. More than 70% of companies have already used social media and many are unresisting of social media's increase. Social media is approaching to a large number of active Internet users all the time by its variety of platforms which provoke online customers' interaction, facilitate the content creation and sharing (Bloomberg Business Week 2009).

### Social media submission sites

Social media submission sites are made for submission and discussion of articles about online marketing, are rather like social bookmarking sites only instead of saving personal bookmarks users submit articles, videos, podcasts and other pieces of content they think the broader community would appreciate. The more people who 'vote' for a particular content item, the higher up the rankings it rise. Submissions that get enough votes end up on the site's home page, which can drive significant traffic. As well as the votes, of course, there also tends to be a lot of discussion and debate on these sites, which means they can offer tremendous insight into the way people think and react.

### Forum discussions

The advent of forums and discussion sites comes at very early in the days of Internet development. Some of most popular discussion boards come up such as Yahoo Groups and Google Groups. Those groups are created with public or only-member access which allows users to post messages and to discuss within the forum. (Ryan & Jones 2009, 159)

### Media sharing sites

Media sharing sites are incredibly popular it allows communities of members to upload, share, comment on and discuss their photographs. YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), Y! Video ([video.yahoo.com](http://video.yahoo.com)), MSN Video Soapbox ([video.msn.com/](http://video.msn.com/)) and others do the same for video content. The sites typically allow you to make content publicly available or restrict access to the people you specify, to send content to your 'friends', and even to 'embed' (seamlessly integrate) the content in your blog post or website for others to find it, distribute it and discuss it.

### Micro-blogging

Micro-blogging is a relatively new craze that's sweeping through online early adopters, and looks set to explode as more people embrace social media and learn of its existence. It is essentially a short-message broadcast service that let's people keep their 'friends' up to date via short text posts. Some favourite micro blogging sites are Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)) is the biggest player in this space. The real value of micro-blogging isn't necessarily in the individual posts; it's in the collective aggregation of those mini-posts into more than the sum of their parts.

### Wikis

Wikis are online collections of web pages that are literally open for anyone to create, edit, discuss, comment on and generally contribute to. They are perhaps the ultimate vehicle for mass collaboration, the most famous example, of course, being Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)), the free online encyclopaedia. (Ryan & Jones 2009, 168-169)

Wikipedia has become the largest encyclopaedia in the world with more than 3 millions articles in English, reaching the visitors number of 68 million every month. In comparison with Encyclopaedia Britannica – an English encyclopaedia published by experts, Wikipedia has surpassed to be the leader in this field (Wikipedia n.d).

### Wikis for marketers

The concept of using wikis as a marketing tool is a very new phenomenon, and their value may not be as readily apparent as with some other forms of social media. However, they are a powerful collaborative tool and, with collaboration between companies and their

customers in the ascendancy, look out for increasing use of wikis by innovative organizations in the very near future.

### Blogs

In the space of a very few years the widespread popularity and adoption of the blog as a medium of self-expression and communication have caused one of the most fundamental shifts in the history of modern media. Barriers to entry have come crashing down, and easy-to-use blogging platforms have liberated millions of individuals, giving them access to a global audience. People all over the world are using blogs to report local news, vent their frustrations, offer their opinions, share their visions and experiences, unleash their creativity and generally wax lyrical about their passions.

## MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF TOURISM IN INDIA

### Incredible India Campaign

To promote India as an ultimate tourist destination on the global tourism map, in 2002, GoI promoted the "Incredible India" campaign in the overseas markets. The campaign was an integrated marketing communication effort to attract tourists to the country. It projected India as an attractive tourist destination by showcasing different aspects of Indian culture, history, spirituality, and yoga. This campaign included visible branding in the outdoor media such as advertising at airports, on trams, taxis and buses and through the print, online and electronic media as well as via participation in travel fairs and road shows. The campaign was conducted globally and received appreciation from industry persons and travelers.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES(BASED ON SECONDARY DATA)

### Research approach

Due to nature of the study the study a qualitative research approach was used to examine the study. A qualitative method as pointed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) allows respondents freedom of expression, opinion, views, and arguments that might not have been attained explicitly through other approaches. Qualitative research according to Collins and Hussey (2003) also helps the researcher to discover different aspects during the interview and investigates answers in details.

"A major strength of the qualitative approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation."

"The ultimate aim of qualitative research is to offer a perspective of a situation and provide well-written research reports that reflect the researcher's ability to illustrate or describe the corresponding phenomenon. One of the greatest strengths of the qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions." Myers (2002)

## DATA COLLECTION

### Text books

Text books are written by different professionals and academic staff. They mainly do not have a specific reference to a certain areas and few of them are recently published however, the merit of using text books is that they basically contains general ideas and a researcher can compare different authors on different topics.

### Newspapers and related journals

The journals used were current or archives. Newspapers contain information researched by journalist who might be biased. Attention was paid to newspapers articles used. Journals have more tendencies to be biased even though they are more practical in orientation. The journals used in this research were mainly in electronic format and downloads via the internet.

### Past research

Past research constitute research conducted by other students in the past years. In the this researcher, past research was used mainly to gain ideas on how past research was conducted and format of the research

### Electronic sources

Internet contains the most updated information about the area of researcher. Even though the internet has much information regarding the researcher area, Collins and Hussey (2003) argue that researchers

have to be careful that they do not become victims of information overloads where they can spend long time searching for irrelevant information from the internet. The internet was used to retrieve up-to-date information as well as achieves relating to the researcher areas. The researcher was aware of information bias and information overload as the main disadvantage of using the internet. As a result of this, Web address from newsgroups, companies' Web pages and established search engines were the only ones used.

### CONCLUSION

It is evident that the generations are becoming more and more at-tuned to surfing for the needs rather than to physically look for them. The pace of life has become so fast paced, that very few have the leisure time to interact socially physically and it has become more convenient as the communication is immediate and rapid which saves time, money and the wait period. As a result it is evident that the costs have been reduced for the tourism industry. The study has shown that there is significant scope for marketers to embrace the concept in this way, developing strategy which can potentially have powerful impact within this rapidly changing in Indian tourism. The results of this study suggest that Govt. Bodies or private tourism firms can successfully engage with travelers via social media, with clear potential for building a strong business.

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