

A Study On Power Of Social Media In Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Tourism industry plays an important role in boosting Indian economy. It needs more effective management of resources available in a country. It needs good infrastructure and technical support in order to satisfy the needs of the customer. Then only businesses can retain its customers in the long run. One such vital tool is social media. Social media has become an important and less expensive marketing tool among the marketers to engage with customers and thereby to build brand name. Tourism organizations have taken advantage of this amazing technology by increasing their promotions of destinations and products on Social Media with the sole aim of reaching out to the masses. Total contribution by travel and tourism sector to India's GDP is expected to increase from US\$ 156.3 billion in 2017 to US\$ 275.2 billion in 2025. Travel and tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner for India.

Key words: Social media , social media platforms, tourism industry

INTRODUCTION

Social Media has also expanded the reach of industries as now they can target consumers sitting miles away without even meeting them. Focusing on this evident nature of Social Media, this paper is aimed at studying its relative effects on tourism industry. Social Media has revolutionized the lives of people within a decade of its introduction. Social Media as a part of the digital technology revolution now connects travelers to the opinions and recommendations of millions of people, including friends in their social network and like-minded travelers they have never even met. Certain tourism organizations such as Yelp, Trip Advisor, Trip Hobo, Travel Triangle, and many more provide extensive information starting from small boutiques, restaurants, and shops to major sightseeing attractions for all tourism destinations through various Social Media tools. With more than 200 million reviews and opinions posted on Trip Advisor till date, and more than 800 million active users on Face book posting updates and sharing images of their travel destinations.

India is a large market for travel and tourism. It offers a diverse portfolio of niche tourism products - cruises, adventure, medical, wellness, sports, MICE, eco-tourism, film, rural and religious tourism. India has been recognized as a destination for spiritual tourism for domestic and international tourists. Total contribution by travel and tourism sector to India's GDP is expected to increase from US\$ 136.3 billion in 2015 to US\$ 275.2 billion in 2025. Travel and tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner for India. The launch of several branding and marketing initiatives by the Government of India such as Incredible India! and Athiti Devo Bhava have provided a focused impetus to growth. The Indian government has

also released a fresh category of visa - the medical visa or M visa, to encourage medical tourism in the country.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Oxford Dictionary (2016, electronic source) defines Social Media as, “*websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking*”. Social media includes popular networking websites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as bookmarking sites. It involves blogging and forums and any aspect of an interactive presence. Social media has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals across the planet. It has impacted many aspects of human communications and businesses as a consequence. According to Forrester Research (Kaplan, 2016), 75% of Internet users used “Social Media” by joining social networks, reading blogs, or contributing reviews to shopping sites. Social Media represents a revolutionary new trend that should be of interest to every business (Kaplan, 2016).

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED BY DMOS

Social media enables companies to Share their expertise and knowledge, Tap into the wisdom of their consumers. Enables customers helping customers. Engages prospects through customer evangelism. Thus the benefits of social media include brand reach and awareness, consumer interactions through transactions, referrals and reputation management. The social media platforms mostly used by the Destination marketing organizations (DMO) are,

1. FACEBOOK

Facebook comprises of the largest blend of demographics of any social platform. It provides an extraordinary medium for the business to connect with prospective customers all around the world. And from an advertising perspective, it's the easiest to manage and allows for the best possible targeting. Marketers use Facebook Ads to match current buyers with over two million similar prospects who possess similar characteristics.

2. TWITTER

Twitter's value lies in its ability for the posts to go viral: the more people share the posts and “retweet” the content, the more followers you will attain. Hashtags make a big difference in building momentum for the posts, the marketers should pay attention to what is trending today and include relevant hashtags.

3. LINKEDIN

Connecting with business professionals in any industry is easiest with LinkedIn as it allows you to target them by industry, job title, etc. As with all social media, LinkedIn prioritizes relationship building more than any other. One of the best features for businesses is LinkedIn Groups. Businesses should establish Groups in target niche or industry and invite others in the target market to join.

4. INSTAGRAM

It is a popular photo-sharing platform at events and tradeshow. While hosting events, provide incentive for the attendees to post photos to Instagram using the event hashtag.

5. PINTEREST

Quality images are likely to go viral on this site due to its visual nature. If an image is pinned by a highly-followed member, it has the potential to be viewed by millions. It's also great for promoting products

6. YOUTUBE

YouTube is owned by Google. So when it comes to search engine optimization, videos are more likely to appear in search results than other websites. With Google's acquisition of YouTube, using Google Hangouts on Air to do interviews with travelers. Then the interview is automatically posted to YouTube for added visibility.

NEW TACTICS FOR DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS TO ATTRACT MORE VISITORS USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Wherever travelers go, they'll be using social media to discover the best spots, plan their itinerary, and share their memories with friends. The challenging part about social media is that it doesn't sit neatly in one place of the visitor's journey. The following tactics will help to build a successful tourism marketing strategy.

1 – FINDING VISITORS BEFORE THEY ARRIVE

Visitors are not visitors anymore. They don't arrive one day and disappear two weeks later. Destination marketing organizations build relationships with visitors long before they arrive. Creating a mini-campaign that helps traveler's common questions such as 'where to stay, the best local spots to be covered in a short span of time. DMO's should guide tourists to different regions by giving a Surprise and delight at airports, when a visitor arrives at an airport, they'll often take an Instagram photo or post a Twitter update. This is another good opportunity for tourism marketers to connect with visitors. That way, DMO can direct them towards their different local visitor centres. For example, you could ask—what are you most excited to do on your vacation. If they mention that they love wildlife, the agency could tell them about remote villages and give them the Twitter handle to a local visitor centre. It's simple to monitor a specific location for Tweets. Create a search stream for each of the airports. By adjusting the geographical filter, restricting to 25 kilometers around the airport. Teams of DMOs will see new Tweets and social updates from new arrivals.

2 – SUPPORTING LOCAL VISITOR CENTERS WITH A DASHBOARD

If one of your cities struggles to attract visitors. While a city isn't well-known, they are famous for sport fishing and hiking trails. The central team monitors visitors posting on Twitter in the airport. If visitors post fishing or hiking-related questions, the team can assign a local expert to answer. Extend this strategy to other regions as well. Each visitor centre can have a local social media dashboard, showing them the new questions, Tweets, and tasks assigned to them.

Creating local social media dashboards for each visitor center. That way, different visitor centers can see new questions and Tweets assigned to them.

3 – TRAIN AND PLAN FOR NEGATIVE TRAVELLERS

Many destination organizations are unsure of the best way to deal with negative visitors. Develop more training and formalize a plan for how to deal with negative visitors. Responding early can mute negative experiences, minimizing their impact. Often, angry visitors can be turned into brand advocates with early attention.

Questions help to think about new training and processes to develop

- What types of negative comments do you ignore?
- What types of comments need to be escalated and responded to?
- How does frontline staff pass these comments higher up your social chain of command?
- What processes do you have in place for real-time social media crisis monitoring?
- Do you conduct regular simulated crisis management training? This can help your social media teams refine workflows and better understand approvals.
- Does your social media policy include guidance on dealing with negative comments?

4 – USE SOCIAL DATA TO BETTER UNDERSTAND OUT-OF-MARKET VISITORS

Using deep social media listening to better understand what out-of-market visitors think of their destination will help to understand the customer's need. For example, let's say you are planning an advertising campaign to attract visitors. Your destination offers skiing, and a coastal wildlife. What attracts the visitors? It's easy to see what attractions out-of-market visitors' best associate with the destination. The marketers can gather insights from millions of social media data sources including YouTube comments, blogs, Twitter, and online discussions. The marketers can use the information to develop more effective advertising campaigns.

CONCLUSION

Social media continues to grow. It increasingly influences on many social and economic aspects. The tourism industry is primed to take advantage of social media outlets, as the industry has long relied largely on destination reputation, consumer opinion, spread of information, and positive word-of-mouth advertising. Social media plays a very important role in the tourism industry. Research on social media in tourism is still in infancy. While case studies focusing on qualitative discussion of the impact of social media in tourism are needed, it is critical to encourage the comprehensive investigation into the influence and impact of social media on all aspects of tourism industry, and to demonstrate the economic contribution of social media to the industry

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