

The Impact of Web 2.0 Factors on Tourism Industry and Customer Decision Making

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Abstract—The purpose of this article is to investigate the impact of web 2.0 factors affecting the tourism and customer decision making. The emergence of the web 2.0, it became an enormous generator of the revenues which were earned by providing facilities to the internet users. In addition to this it has also been identified that basic rational of tourism revolve around visiting to different places as tourist is to create positive impact on the environment, economy and society of the foreign country. From the review of the literature it has been analyzed that web 2.0 is the most commonly used term in the internet technology which provides a wide array of web sites and certain applications which allow the users on one platform of internet to post, share, create or inquire about anything or any material that has been posted previously. In addition to this, it has also been identified that tourism can be referred as the business of attracting the people who enjoy travelling around the world for pleasure.

Index Terms— Web 2.0, customer decision making, tourism industry, internet technology

I. INTRODUCTION

The principal section of this study highlights the basic and fundamental aspects of the study. The primary aspect in this chapter is the explanation on the background of the research. It explains the issue that is studied in this research. The problem statement of the study is also detailed in this article. Next, the research questions and objectives that drive this study will be discussed and will then be followed by scope and significance of the research. The significance of the research will explain the primary cause for this study. Finally, a brief summary that concludes every part is demonstrated.

II. WAYS TO STIMULATE TOURISM-BASED ACTIVITIES

There are different methods to stimulate tourism-based activities. According to Ashworth and Goodall (2012), tourism has become one of the profitable business of many nations; therefore, countries need to market their attractions to the customers [1].

This is done in order to increase the awareness of their country and its unique attributes. It has been further shown that through marketing, host countries can develop desired images of their country in order to reduce misconceptions due to an exaggeration of the events by media and news about that particular country. However, Goodall and Ashworth (2012) argued that even though marketing practices are continuously

improving, the marketing excellence remains rare and is very difficult to attain.

In continuation, it has been stated that marketing through advertisement and other promotional activities in the tourism industry is not very common; therefore, more development is required for improving the marketing measures of the relevant industry.

In contrast, Pappas (2015) stated that through advertising attractive places and unique experiences of the country, the performance of the tourism industry of the relevant country can be improved [18]. Ashworth and Goodall (2012) found that filming tourism is also one of the examples of marketing in the tourism industry, as it helps in promoting the country. Also, marketing in the tourism industry also enhances the growth of the entertainment industry and international travel in general.

Leung, Law, Van and Buhalis (2013) also disagreed that one of the effective marketing tools in the tourism industry is social marketing, as the emerging trend of globalization has supported the tourism industry [14]. It has been further discussed that social media has become the crucial tool for the success in almost every business today. According to Kumar, Sakthivel and Ramanathan (2015), globalisation has made the sharing of information to be more convenient and effective as well [12]. Through virtual media, the tourism industry of certain countries can directly reach to the interested customers and convince them by providing the virtual experience of their country. Social media marketing has enhanced the tourism industry by developing the awareness and increasing the knowledge about the countries. On the other hand, Cook and Marqua (2014) argued that marketing in the tourism industry is relatively different, as it involves the understanding of the unique characteristics of their tourism experiences and the response of the travelling customers [8].

Sikora and Nybakk (2012) discussed other effective ways of attracting the customers [21]. Among those include the governmental promotional policies regarding the tourism industry. It is further stated that the government support is essential in improving the tourism industry in the country. However, Bradbury (2013) criticized that an increase in the tourism industry affects the security of that country [2]; therefore, the government restricts the industry to their policies. It is further stated that the government should develop such policies that maintain the security of the country, where the lack of security measures may affect the tourism industry negatively. Sharpley and Telfer (2014) redirected this argument, stating that the government can promote its related industry by generating foreign exchange along with developing

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the local employment opportunities [20]. In reference to the above-held discussion, it has been identified that the government should take relevant measures in terms of environmental awareness.

III. CUSTOMER DECISION MAKING REGARDING TOURISM

Fig.1 below illustrates Consumer Buying Behavior Model. According to Obenour, Langfelder and Groves (2005), the decision-making process of the customer is based on the acquisition of information from the internal or external sources [17]. Moreover, the evaluation of the information acquired from the external or internal environment is carried out through judging the authenticity of the information. When any customer acquires information from an external source (i.e. website, blogs, social media and other electronic publications), the customer must consider some of the prominent elements. These factors include destinations, the time to travel, things to do, planned expenditures, and the length of stay. Zhou (2005) disagreed with this statement and said that all of this information, when acquired from a website, the information is considered by the individual as authentic and reliable [25]. The reliability and authenticity of the information acquired from the external source (i.e. website, blogs, social media and other electronic publications) will lead the individual in making the decision for visiting the particular destination. The application of the consumer decision buying behavior model further elaborates upon the process of decision-making in terms of visiting the desired location.

According to Obenour, Langfelder and Groves (2005), the recognition of the problem in this scenario is the need of expression for visiting any locality [17]. The search of information is the next stage in which users will seek information from internal and external sources. The external sources include the websites, blogs, social media and other electronic media for the acquisition of the information. In concurrence to the acquisition of the information, the customer also assesses the authenticity of the information whether the gathered information is genuine. In contrary to this, Zhou (2005) depicted the scenario that the evaluation of the information is the following stage, in which the user compares the gathered information of the destinations with the recognized problem, and this comparison will lead to the decision-making process with regard to the particular destination [25]. Once the decision is made, the customer will visit the desired location and evaluate that whether or not the decision made on the gathered information has satisfied. Hence, it has been evaluated that a customer makes the decision regarding tourism and prefers destination for a visit on the basis of information acquired from the social media, websites, and blogs.

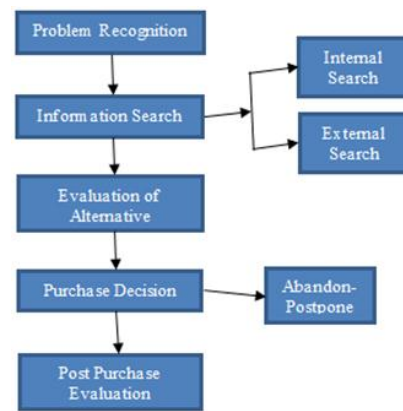


Fig. 1. Consumer Buying Behaviour Model, Obenour (Langfelder and Groves, 2005) [17].

IV. IMPACT OF WEB 2.0 ON TOURISM

The main function of the Internet is to transfer the same information around the world without any geographical limitation. It is further stated that the Internet has attracted a number of travelers by providing them with a great number of new tools and methods to find and customize the best trip with the best prices.

In addition to this, almost 60 percent of the travelers around the world use websites and Internet-based applications for obtaining the required information regarding the interested places and different packages of different companies. Moreover, the author stated that the integration of Web 2.0 has made the booking more convenient and less time-consuming (Lee, Verma and Roth, 2015) [13]. However, Chen, Shang and Li (2014) argued that although the accessibility to the required information has enhanced the interest of travelers around the world, but the information on blogs and personal experiences can affect the image of a country negatively [6].

It has been further shown that the bad experience of a single traveler can be shared with a million of online users, which may affect the tourist industry of that particular country. Thus, with the help of this discussion, it has been analyzed that Web 2.0 stimulates the development of a positive word of mouth marketing regarding a particular subset of tourism.

Davies and Cairncross (2014) stated that popular social websites, including Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace, have a great impact on the tourist industry [9]. Moreover, it is stated that these websites help in establishing the relationship with its employees by directly interacting with them and provide relevant information and suggestions to them regarding their country and packages. In support of this, Leung, Law, Van Hoof and Buhalis (2013) stated that social websites have become effective tools of marketing for the tourism industry, as they allow the company to share the information about the country and packages through videos, pictures, and customer testimonials [14]. Sotiriadis and Van (2013) criticized that even though the Web 2.0 integration has increased the productivity of the company, it has also forced the travelling companies to increase the quality of their services and to satisfy each of its customers because one unsatisfied customer may affect the perspective of potential customers. Moreover, it has

been noted that Web 2.0 has increased the markets for the tourism industry, alternatively has also increased the competition in the market [22].

Moreover, discussion forums are also one of the emerging trends in the tourism industry as it develops the customer's satisfaction and trust. In contrast, Goodall and Ashworth (2013) stated that the control of the company over these discussion forums is weak because the reactions of the customers are unpredictable; therefore, a company has to face the criticizing comments of the customers wisely to retain its market share. Furthermore, this emerging trend has made the companies more accountable for their actions because now they have to justify each of their steps and decisions to maintain the satisfaction and trust of its customers. In contrast to this, Mauri and Minazzi (2013) stated that Web 2.0 has both positive and negative impacts on the tourism industry where other than increasing the opportunities for the tourist industry, it has also increased the threats as well, as this may affect the relationship between two countries [15]. Hence, it has been analyzed that the development of trust within customers may ultimately maximize market share.

FitzPatrick, Davey, Muller and Davey (2013) argued that as the services and experience of the tourism industry are intangible, it is difficult to convince the customers that have not experienced the travelling before regarding the quality of service provided and its importance [10]. It has been further discussed that Web 2.0 has helped in podcasting the information about the travelling services, including destinations and hotel services either in audio or video format. Law, Buhalis and Cobanoglu (2014) supported the above by stating that podcasting helps in decision-making because podcasts are considered to be unbiased and reliable information [14].

V.COMPARISON OF PREVIOUS RESEARCHES

Below you can see the comparison between four studies which are similar to the current study. This list details the Advantages, Disadvantages and Conclusions for four different studies:

A. Research: 2010, A Classification Scheme for Analysing Web 2.0 Tourism Websites, (Victoria University Melbourne, Australia):

Advantages:

- Independence from shopping hours and good comparability of prices.
- Tourists have pleasant and seamless experience on 24/7 shopping through WEB 2.0 technological capabilities (Carson & Schmallegger, 2008) [4].
- This provided impeccable possibilities for thriving the tourism industry in the 21st century.
- Convenience for tourists to do hotel reservations online without any hustle.
- During this year, numerous tourists were observed with a trending behavior on convenience of servicing platforms.

- This has embarked a significant milestone for the upheaval of the increasing users on WEB 2.0 technologies.
- Tourists in particular have been signing up for these portals in huge droves believing to harness benefits of conform, reliability, convenience and usability of these portable across many platforms and devices (Benkler, 2006).

Disadvantages:

- Concerns on data security.
- Following the emergence of the Web 2.0 technologies such as Blogs, Forums, Wikis, Mashups, Hotel Rating Systems, Podcasts, RSS Feeds, Tagging, Social Media, etc. The tourism industry started to flourish, yet tourists became hugely concerned on data privacy and security to a greater extent (Chabot, 2007) [5].
- It takes a lot of the traveler's precious time to verify the websites and applications using WEB 2.0 technology when they want to make hotel reservations.
- There are many online payment gateways used for phishing and spams to breach through credit card accounts through which many users of WEB 2.0 technology were seen as ultimate victims.
- Lacking judgment possibility on product quality.
- When tourists decide to make online purchases through WEB 2.0 portals, there is a lack of judgment on product quality since physical presence is missing (Buhalis & Deimezi, 2004) [3]. Products like perfumes are of zero judgment on quality in this particular case.
- Fear of unauthorized transfer of highly classified personal data.
- During the year 2010, though there were many flagships of numerous online WEB 2.0 applications, yet for tourists, personal data protection was their ultimate concern. This leads to many of them avoiding use of such portals to avoid their highly classified personal data being transferred through mistaken clicks and other traps set by hackers (Mistilis & Bouhalis, 2012) [16].

Conclusion:

- As a conclusion, there are always two sides, the benefits and the adverse effects of using Web 2.0 technology. Hence, tourists can benefit from such technology by weighing the pros and cons and using it wisely with extra awareness on existing spams, phishing, hacking, etc.
- Besides, the use of such technologies provides unequal possibilities and convenience, which brings more positive than negative if utilized in the rightmost manner.

B. Research: 2013, Web 2.0 and its influence in the tourism sector, (Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, Albania):

Advantages:

- Access to information is instant and super-fast.
- WEB 2.0 has the provision of ultimately fast access to information that is very critical to tourists' decision-making (Vrana & Paschaloudis, 2006) [24].
- Tourists also acquire full access to abundant resources and information at their fingertips while planning for important family trips all year round.
- Tourists have seamless experience across many devices for using social networks provided by the Web 2.0.
- WEB 2.0 also provides seamless experience, user-friendliness and synchronization across multiple devices.
- Tourists can have full-fledged access to all web 2.0 portals via multiple platforms such as Windows, Linux, Mac, etc., which streamlines the capabilities offered in this technology.

Disadvantages:

- Information obtained from search engines may not be fully reliable. This affects your decision-making capabilities.
- On the other hand, tourists are pretty much concerned on the reliability and trustworthiness of the information extracted from portals using Web 2.0 technologies (Grimes, 2010) [11].
- Tourists sometime access false information which misleads their decision-making due to the existence of numerous competitors in the tourism (Paroutis & Saleh, 2010) [19].

Conclusion:

- The implementation of Web 2.0 applications in hotel tourism as a method in communicating correct information and service in order to enhance the amount of bookings.
- Thus, hotel chains who have initially tested Web 2.0 electronics and services are one step ahead of their competitors.

C. Research: 2015, Web 2.0 and Impacts in Tourism, (Elisabeth Kastenholz):

Advantages:

- Provide communication to tourists and keep them connected.
- Tourists can communicate among themselves and with their peers and family members through instant messaging platforms (Tiedemann & Semeijin, 2009) [23].
- Web 2.0 portals engage tourists and keep them connected while they are in adventurous trips away from families and friends.

Disadvantages:

- Reduced human interaction.
- Web 2.0, on the other hand, gets Tourists to get hooked up on their devices rather than having pleasant time with colleagues and family members.

- This negative impact of the Web 2.0 technology platforms such as use of social networks such as Facebook and Instagram makes many tourists have reduced social interactions with the peers around them.

Conclusion:

- Precisely, while Web 2.0 technological advancements provide all the necessary means to stay connected all times, there has been an increasing concern when it comes human interaction and sociability.

D. Research: 2014:

Advantages:

- Constant updates on news and weather on travel destinations by Tourists.
- Live access to worldwide maps.
- WEB 2.0 Technology allows Tourists the possibility of extracting abundant information from various sources for good comparison (Constanzo, 2009) [7].

Disadvantages:

- Overload of information that is least useful.
- Influence on decision-making by competitor bad reviews.

Conclusion:

There are always more benefits as compared to the negatives, hence, if tourists utilize web 2.0 capabilities to get instant updates and online navigations, they will need to avoid the negativities and capitalize the positivity to maximize utilization

VI. CONCLUSION

Web 2.0 is defined as international-based websites and applications that provide a virtual platform accessible to a broad audience. There are different media in Web 2.0, such as blogs, and social media. A wiki is a website that shares detailed information while providing the option of adding, removing, and updating the information. Blogs are similar, with the main difference being that blogs involve higher-level discussions on a relevant topic. Social networking sites involve informal discussion and personal experiences. Tourism involves the travelling into different countries for different purposes. Web 2.0 has been adopted in the tourism industry in order to gain customers' trust and improve the performance of the company. Through different marketing strategies and tools such as social marketing and governmental policies, tourism-based activities can be stimulated.

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