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Effects of Social Media in the Tourism Industry of Batangas Province

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Abstract - Social Networking is a powerful medium to advertise good things about people and places. Therefore, it is now being used to promote the tourism industry through networking sites where people mostly communicate and meet new ventures. This study aimed to assess the effects of social media in tourism industry of Batangas province. Descriptive type of research was utilized in the study. Results showed that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs and Websites were the social networking site frequently used by individuals and hospitality industry. Social media applications served as an avenue to disseminate the information faster especially for the tourism establishments with lesser cost. The main problem encountered in using social media is that, customers' opinions, thoughts and expressions are not well presented that leads to bad impressions and unfair criticism. Action plan was proposed to address the problem encountered in using Social Media.

Keywords – Social Network, Tourism Industry, Hospitality, Technology, Facebook

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media tools are changing the way people communicate. Advances in mobile technology have made social media more accessible, allowing to become a part of people's daily lives and routines, (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). It is a very broad term and no universal definition among scholars and researchers exists. A commonly accepted definition of social media seems to be difficult particularly due to the existence of other concepts that came along with social media, i.e. Web 2.0 or User Generated Content. Being closely related but not exactly synonymous a distinction between all these new concepts and terms often seems to be difficult, to the extent of being used interchangeably (Morgado et.al 2011).

Furthermore, in recent year's new communication methods, known as Web 2.0 applications or new social media started to gather information and achieve great success in communicating with the consumer. Several factors facilitated that the social media applications became enormously popular among many consumers, such as the evolution of the Internet that became a very important source for information search (Arsal et al, 2008) and an essential tool to keep contact with others, through e-mails or using messengers than it was decades ago (Noone et.al 2011).

Blackshaw (2006) describes social media as the internet-based applications that carry consumer generated content that is relevant to the past experiences or any source or online information issues. The consumers create these themselves, based on the 2012 International Conference on Business and Management their experience with products and services, and share it among themselves aiming at educating about the products and services (Xiang & Gretzel, 2009).

Individuals and groups create and exchange content and engage in person-to-person conversations. They appear in many forms including blogs and micro blogs, forums and message boards, social networks, wikis, virtual worlds, social bookmarking, tagging and news, writing communities, digital storytelling and scrapbooking, and data, content, image and video sharing, podcast portals, and collective intelligence. There are lots of well-known sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram and many others (Cox, et.al 2009).

The tourism and hospitality industry is not an exception and hence a growing number of hotel professionals and researchers have acknowledged the importance of Web 2.0 for the sector and potential benefits that it provides, (Gretzel et al., 2000; Hjalager, 2010; Ruzic & Bilos, 2010).

This study aimed to lay emphasis on the part played by the social media towards the continuous progress of the tourism industry of Batangas. The researchers conducted the study to enhance their knowledge on social media and to emphasize the potential and varied usefulness of different social networking sites so as to apply in their future career.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to assess the effects of social media in tourism industry of Batangas province. Specifically, it determined the common social media application used in the tourism industry; assessed the positive and negative effects of using social media in the hospitality industry, determined the problems encountered when using social media as a medium for business activities and proposed plan of action to address the negative effect of social media.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are currently over 500 million users on Twitter and over 1.11 billion on Facebook, and these numbers are growing every second. Not engaging in social media could result in missed opportunities. The communications landscape is evolving, and social media have assumed a prominent place in the marketing and public relations equation, (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

There are several dozens of social networks and their number keeps growing by the day. The most popular ones are Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Skype, Yelp, Bing, Twitter and Trip Advisor, but there are scores of others. Managing hotel reviews, both positive and negative is certainly a priority for managers. A discussion on the positive and negative aspects is imperative to realize the extent of the impact of social media. The reviewing sites can have relatively more impact than the enhanced communications sites such as the Facebook or Twittter sites (Rowe, 2011).

Allowing two-way communication, interaction, and creation and exchange of user-generated content (UGC), the social web has completely changed the world marketing landscape by revealing some significant opportunities for word of mouth and viral marketing (Tuten, 2008).

Social media presents a golden opportunity for the hospitality industry to make greater contact with its customers, with an ultimate goal of developing a partnership for brand growth and development. Underlying that opportunity is the twin dangers that hospitality operators will mishandle their social media connections or that customer (and the media themselves) will move on, leaving the industry behind. So, just as hotels and some restaurants have built their websites, they now have to make sure that their site is optimized for search engines, have mobile apps, and, more to the point, keep customers involved in a conversation about the operation. Although many hotel chains have embraced mobile apps, Facebook, and other channels, others are hardly represented at all in the social media firmament (Withiam 2011).

Promoting a destination is not an easy task. Its challenge and difficulties derive from the multi-attributed nature of the destination on the one hand and from a non-homogeneous demand of travelers on the other hand. It has been argued among marketers that a different approach is required while promoting a destination for the different segments of a heterogeneous market not only regarding the content of the message but also the communication channels as well (Schegg et al., 2008).

One great potential advantage of social media is that guests are willing to share information about their likes and dislikes. By using appropriate analytic methods, hoteliers can get a sense of what guests want generally and how they react to the hotel specifically. Most important right now is the development of mobile apps, since travelers expect to use their mobile devices to book rooms or other travel services on the spot, (www.hotelschool.cornell.edu).

People are motivated to use and engage in social media for several reasons (Safko, 2010). Many studies have applied the theory of uses and gratifications to explain the reasons for the use of social media .The uses and gratifications approach seems to be applicable for analyzing people's use of social media as the approach is particularly appropriate for examining the usage of new types of media such as the Internet (Muntinga et al., 2010).

There are different ways social media can be used to benefit the bottom line of an operation, whether it is food service, hotels, amusement parks, hospitals, or any other affiliated hospitality business. Rowe (2005) has listed seven ways one should be leveraging social media which include: (1) Solicit endorsements; (2) Maximize revenue per seat (3) Bond with guests (4) Manage reputation (5) Reach out to new customers (6) Recruit new staff; and Build a buzz (Payne & Frow, 2005).

Considering all the benefits that social media can provide, it has all the attributes that will be helpful in marketing and management. This is particularly important for hospitality and tourism field since they are people professions. Social media is an option for hospitality industry since it provides opportunities to manage and present business content and it helps in identifying core values that draw clients and customers to business. Most companies would benefit from a cohesive strategic plan that will integrate social media efforts with overall marketing effort. Engaged customers spend more money and return back to

business more often. It also helps in brand awareness and building brand equity (Roberts, 2012).

There has been much written on the level of activity by bloggers sharing travel experiences, recommending preferred accommodations, offering critiques of restaurant ambiance and service, as well as hospitality companies monitoring and contributing to self-sponsored sites. The attractiveness and impact of social media has exploded in popularity as consumers turn to online networking to share ideas, suggestions, photos, videos and diaries, while developing friendships within a virtual community (Lim 2010).

Leveraging of social media to market tourism products has proven to be an excellent strategy. Many countries regard social media as an important tool to promote their tourism industries (Zeng, 2013). Gilles Barbier (2007) explains that with top-down information, from the company to the consumer, the information is limited in size, with a restricted choice of destinations. On the other side, with web 2.0 other destinations could be promoted through members of hundreds of travel communities. Another key element of social media as a marketing tool is that very often it's the users themselves who create the content – lending it a community aspect that no other form of advertising and promotion can match (Zeithaml et.al 2006).

The tourism industry has changed dramatically with the overwhelming emergence of social media platforms. Due to the nature of a travel product – it is experiential, and often a material commitment in terms of money or time – people has long shared their travel experience and social media just facilitates this (Buettner 2011).

In Promoting Tourism in Abu Dhabi using Social Media (2010), it is deduced from the results that people are using social media for numerous purposes and expect more from social media than traditional media in terms of quantity and quality of information. Users are more demanding when it comes to social media and claim for customized solutions. Although the trend of promoting tourism through social media is catching up rapidly and consumers are becoming aware of it but currently some of the potential travelers are not fully familiar with its functions and applications. Marketing and promotions are changing their dynamics, moving from passive advertisements on television to new horizons of online social media. Users are becoming more mobile and their roles are getting active in ongoing relation with the media. Participation of consumers is resulting in user generated content which is tapping into new marketing dimensions (Ranjha, 2010).

Long established rule of promoting tourism through traditional media is slimming down. Now clients prefer to collect information online from various interactive web pages and networks according to their needs rather than driving to a tour operator or agency. By using these social communities, customer not only forms informational networks but social networks are also developed. These platforms allow potential tourists to collect desired knowledge from several sources as well as take advantage of other people's experience.

Social media for sustainable tourism was conducted purely on social media platforms. A consumer survey was done to understand key aspects of consumer awareness and consumer psyche towards sustainable tourism development. The study was then used to make the social media communication hexagon and broad recommendations (Kumar, 2011).

For decades in hospitality management it was used to say that once you do one thing bad ten people will know by the word of mouth. Social media has changed that proverb overnight as the "word of million mouths." So rapid is the spread of communication that it can make or break businesses, governments, or any agency. It is not plain communication but it leads to an interactive dialogue which creates a viral impact. Social media has the advantage of reaching global audience, even in remote corners of the world; immediacy with no time lag; easy accessibility by those receiving the communication as long as they can get their hands on a computer keyboard; twenty four hours, seven day operations thereby overcoming the time difference; and ubiquitous versatility for interactive exchanges (Khan, 2012).

The complexity of the Internet and social media has created some issues with the hospitality industry. Since the content of social media is largely consumer-based, it can make it difficult to filter through all the information that is available for consumers. Searching for information through the Internet has been greatly influenced by large search engines that limit search results to only include the most "popular" social media sites (Leung et.al, 2013).

The attractiveness and impact of social media has exploded in popularity as consumers turn to online networking to share ideas, suggestions, photos, videos and diaries, while developing friendships within a virtual community. While social networking can help strengthen guest loyalty and satisfaction, it can also lead to unfair negativity, inaccurate information and undue criticism (Kasavana, 2008).

Word-of-mouth is one of the most powerful tools used by advertisers to market their brand. And social

media, due to its inherent functionality, provides a great platform for consumer testimonials. The success of a message depends on the genuineness of the comment as perceived by the reader. If readers are convinced that the testimonial is by a real consumer- someone who has not been endorsed by the company for promotion, then they build a higher confidence in the brand and are more likely to form a stronger bond (Dichter, 2006).

IV. METHOD

Research Design

In order to gather information regarding the effects of social media in the tourism industry of Batangas Province, the descriptive method of research was used. This method is designed for the researcher to gather information about present existing conditions. The principal aims in employing this method are to describe the nature of a situation, as it exists at the time of the study and to explore the causes of particular phenomena.

The descriptive method of research as opposed to an experimental or normative method develops knowledge by describing observed situation, events and objects. The descriptive method is used in most branches of science, as well as in the social sciences. The goal of the descriptive method is to learn about something as it's already exists without causing any changes to it (Abraham, 2010).

Participants

Out of 100 questionnaires only 77 which was 77 percent retrieval, coming from 10 resorts, 4 restaurants, 3 hotels and 3 travel agencies from different destination in Batangas province who are currently using social media in order to promote their business.

The researchers chose these 20 establishments according to the data they have gathered from reliable sources. One of them was the tourism officer where the list of all hospitality related establishments came from. Then they chose these establishments according to the criteria's like, the highest tourist arrival among the hotels/resorts. Member of Philippine Travel Agencies Association (PTAA) for the Travel Agencies and top restaurants in Batangas according to Trip Advisory.

Instrument

The study used questionnaire as the main gathering instrument in order to obtain the necessary information that pertains to the use of social media in the tourism industry of Batangas province. Interview is also used to support and validate the data taken.

To acquire the data of information questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part is to identify which social media elements are mostly used, second part is to assess the positive and negative effects of social media and the third part is to determine the problems that were encountered in using social media.

Procedure

Data were gathered through the use of survey questionnaire made by the researchers themselves. The researchers formulated relevant questions to come up with an efficient questionnaire that help to assess the effects of social media both to the tourist and the tourism establishments. Questionnaires were personally distributed by the researches to various establishments and tourists in Batangas Province.

Data Analysis

All data were gathered, tallied, encoded and interpreted using different statistical tools. These include percentage, frequency of distribution and weighted mean which were used based on the objectives of the study. Percentage and frequency distribution were also used in first part of questions such as identifying what social applications the respondents used and the social networking websites that he used most often. Part II used weighted mean in order to assess the positive and negative effects of social media to the respondents. It is also used in Part III to determine what possible problems encountered using social media.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Social Media Application Currently Use (N=77)

Social Media Application	F	%
Facebook	67	87.00
Youtube	22	28.60
Twitter	15	19.50
Blogs	7	9.10

Table 1 shows the percentage of each social media application which is currently used by the different establishment around the province. Facebook has the highest number of users with 67 out of 77 respondents or 87 percent, followed by Youtube with 28.60 percent then Twitter with 19.50 percent and lastly the Blogs with 9.10 percent. The researcher found out that the most formerly used social media application in selected hospitality establishment in Batangas City is Facebook. According to them, the use of Facebook helps to easily

connect with their customers and build a good relationship towards them.

For some establishments here in Batangas City, which use social networking site such as Facebook and Blog, they have affirmed that from the feedbacks and opinion they get from it, they continue to improve their services to satisfy the needs of their guests. And also using social media, it is easier to connect with their clients.

According to some respondents, by using Facebook they can easily review and look for the best destination that can give such satisfaction they need, it is because through Facebook, they can view some pictures, feedbacks and opinion about a certain destination and the establishments found in it.

Table 2 presents the ranking of Social Media which is used most often by the management of various establishments within Batangas province.

Table 2. Social Networking Websites Use Most Often

Social Media Applications	Mean Rank	Over-all Rank
Facebook	1.16	1
Youtube	2.92	3
Twitter	2.78	2
Website	3.14	4

The respondents were asked to rank the following Social Media based on how often they are being used, 1 as the highest and 4 as the lowest.

Upon examining the results it was found out that Facebook is the most often used social media application with a mean rank of 1.16. It was followed by Twitter with 2.78 as its mean rank. Then, Youtube with a mean rank of 2.92, and lastly the Blogs with 3.14 mean rank. Facebook creates a great advantage with other social networking websites, because on it people can easily share ideas, opinions, feelings, suggestions and feedbacks.

In support with this, from the opinion of some respondents, this internet site serves as a way for people to interact freely, share, and discuss information about each other in their lives, using a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, videos and audio.

The researchers believed that using Facebook as an advertising or promotional strategy helps one single firm to lessen their expenses in promoting and showcasing the service or destination they offered. Facebook is extremely cost effective compared with other promotional campaign and can be a successful way to increase customer reach. It was found out that travelers who are referred to a hotel or tourism booking site by Facebook were more likely to book travel than those who are referred via search engines like Google.

Table 3 shows the effects of social media in the Tourism Industry of Batangas.

Table 3. Effects of Social Media in the Tourism Industry of Batangas

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Social media helps a tourism establishment in disseminating information faster.	3.51	SA	1
2. Social media is a popular tool among consumers in sharing personal experiences, comments and opinions.	3.47	A	2
3. Social Media has been proven to be an excellent strategy rather than any promotional campaign.	3.04	A	12
4. Hospitality management can also use social media as a means to analyze performance and consumer satisfaction	3.21	A	6
5. Social media can be an advantage to reach global audience even in remote corners of the world	3.30	A	3
6. Social media can also be the ultimate tool for word of mouth.	3.18	A	7.5
7. Social Media gives opportunities for hospitality management to improve service recovery.	3.22	A	4.5
8. Social Media provides opportunities to manage and present business contents.	3.22	A	4.5
9. Social Media can easily ruin a business reputation.	3.16	A	9.5
10. Social Media helps to overcome the distance barriers and other communication obstacles.	3.16	A	9.5
11. Social media can disclose confidential information.	2.91	A	13
12. Social media can easily expose confidential information and could go viral resulting to loss of privacy.	3.06	A	11
13. Social media can spread bad comments easily and go viral which can harm a business.	3.18	A	7.5
Composite Mean	**3.20**	**A**	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA); 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree (A); 1.50 - 2.49 = Disagree (D); 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

It was found out that the over-all assessment was agreed with a composite mean of 3.20. Social media helps a tourism establishment in disseminating information faster ranked first with a weighted mean

score of 3.51 and rated strongly agree. It was followed by Social media is a popular tool among consumers in sharing personal experiences, comments and opinions with a weighted mean of 3.47. In the perspective of the researcher, Social Media tools are really changing the way people communicate, so the result did not come as a surprise.

The researchers, themselves as tourism students are aware of those benefits that social media can contribute to the tourism and hospitality industry.

Social media is not just for social interaction, but most probably becoming the best form of promotional campaign for all the hospitality establishments wherein they can review all the comment and opinion that will help in improving their services to satisfy customers. One good thing that social media can provide is that customers no longer need to go at a certain place or destination before deciding whether to stay or not.

On the other hand, social media has been proven to be an excellent strategy rather than any promotional campaign (3.04) and can disclose confidential information (2.91) got the lowest mean value. Mrs. Chona Adajar Andal (Administrative Officer V of Tourism Office in Batangas Province), they are already starting using social media in promoting the Tourism of Batangas, because they have noticed that by using social media it will be easier for them to encourage more tourist to visit Batangas Province, but they need to further utilize the continuous usage of social media. That is the reason why social media has been proven to be an excellent strategy rather than any promotional campaign.

Table 4. Problems Encountered in Using Social Media in the Tourism Industry of Batangas Province

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Social media can be possibly abused by the tourists and employees in exposing an employer's trade secrets or business proprietary information.	3.01	A	5
2. Social media can also lead to unfair negativity, inaccurate information and undue criticism.	2.90	A	6
3. Social media can spread false information like wildfire.	2.88	A	7
4. In Social media consumers are not always presented a good representation of the opinions, thoughts and expressions of consumers because only the popular social media sites are represented well in the internet.	3.25	A	1
5. Companies find ways to abuse social media without anyone truly knowing and without any real consequences.	2.86	A	8
6. Companies can have bad publicity of using social media.	2.74	A	9
7. Social media holds your business as you go online.	3.04	A	4
8. The trend toward social networking offers an extraordinary opportunity for hospitality firms to garner a competitive edge by analyzing submitted feedback, contemplating constructive advice, and determining how best it is.	3.21	A	2
9. Web sites catering to industry employees can be harmful to the success of a single firm or industry segment.	2.73	A	10
10. Spammers can really make social network a problem for new users and people new to the social media scene.	3.08	A	3
Composite Mean	**2.97**	**A**	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA); 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree (A); 1.50 - 2.49 = Disagree (D); 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 4 shows the problem encountered in using Social Media in the Tourism Industry of Batangas Province. It was found out that the over-all assessment was agreed with a composite mean of 2.97. Among the problems mentioned, Social media consumers are not always presented a good representation of the opinions, thoughts and expressions of consumers because only the popular social media sites are represented well in the internet, with a weighted mean score of 3.25 and rated agree.

From the researchers point of view, who always use different social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Blogs, it is true that sometimes using social media, users experience or received some bad representation of information, ideas, comments , that in result can harm one individual's credibility and reputation. Social media is open to public and no one

can control over what people say. One reason why customers and guest experience those negative effects of social media, is because they only depend to those popular websites and networks like Facebook and Twitter.

On the other hand, respondents believed that companies can have bad publicity of using social media with a weighted mean of 2.74, being second to the lowest and that websites catering to industry employees

may not be too harmful to the success of a single firm or industry segment, with a weighted mean of 2.73 got the lowest mean rank.

Therefore, the study shows that everyone cannot expect that the outcome of social media is always positive, sometimes it can lead to false assumption, critiques and opinion, so there's still a need to consider different sorts of aspects.

Table 5. Action Plan

Objectives	Action and Activities	Persons Involved
1. To eliminate a bad representation of opinions, thoughts, and expressions caused by the social media users	• There are certain buttons and procedures that omit unnecessary comments, photos, and videos that can affect your reputation.	Establishment
2. To prevent a spammers from being a cause of delayed transaction and operations of the tourism business activities	• There are certain ways to avoid spammers such as the use of filter folder wherein spam messages will be directed to it.	Establishment
3. To be aware and cautious in using social media for their business activities.	• Implementation of policy among the employee on how to use internet or social media. • Provide a seminar and orientation to all the staff of an organization regarding social media usage.	Establishment
4. To evade from abusing the use of social media caused by exposing employers trade secrets and business proprietary information	• All employers should implement a strict policy on internet/ social media use	Establishment
5. To prepare for the negative comments or information and undue criticism that may arise while using social media	• Individual and establishment should be advised not to easily accept a friend request particularly from people you do not know.	Establishment

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs and Websites were the social networking site frequently used by individuals and hospitality industry. Social media applications served as an avenue to disseminate the information faster especially for the tourism establishments with lesser cost. The main problem encountered in using social media is that, customers' opinions, thoughts and expressions are not well presented that leads to bad impressions and unfair criticism. Action plan was proposed to address the problem encountered in using Social Media.

One must be familiar with different social media applications to avoid the negative usage of social media. Social media application users must utilize filter folder against spammers to reduce unnecessary messages. The establishment should conduct meeting with their employees regarding rules on the use social media and how it may affect the company's reputation. The establishment should implement strict rules that will

protect the company can be considered and by keeping them informed and posted with all the guidelines using social media in regards with the company's privacy. Tourism industries may continuously use social media as their promotional tool but they should be ready for an immediate action to the problems that may arise. Future study may also be conducted using other variables to further confirm the result of this study.

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