

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The rise in popularity of social networking sites has led social networking to become a global phenomenon. After many countries gained Internet access, the increase in the use of Internet started influencing the economy and social life at the beginning of 20th century (Milano, Baggio & Piattelli, 2011). Later on, in the era of Web 2.0, as social networking advanced, an increasing number of users on the Internet began to participate in social networking websites and this has resulted in the system of social networking to change (Milano, Baggio & Piattelli, 2011; Seth, 2012). According to Clark and Robert (2010), social networking sites are now mainly used for “job networking, targeted marketing, and entertainment”. (p.507).

Social networking is a type of social media; social networking sites allow Internet users to connect with people and create information. Social networking sites are originally used for entertainment purposes however an increase in the use of Internet and information communication technologies has shifted the way people communicate with each other, mainly in the hospitality and tourism industries (Assenov & Khurana, 2012; Clark & Roberts, 2010). For instance, social networking sites like Facebook allow registered users to interact globally and freely with people who share the same interest by uploading photos, sharing posts, chatting, commenting on the posts and also getting replies, such features allow companies to get quick feedback from consumers whereas consumers are able to receive responses immediately. These software and technology features which are available on social networking sites are also part of the Web 2.0 system (Seth, 2012). “Web 2.0 has also given popularity to user generated content (UGC) where information is gathered from different online sources all of which collaborate to form the final source” (Seth, 2012, p. 9). UGC has replaced traditional marketing in terms of media advertising. The advertisements are often sponsored posts promoted by people on social networking sites and these online advertisements appear to be more trustworthy than advertisements from mass media like televisions, radio, newspaper and magazines (Li & Darban, 2012). Manap and Adzharudin pointed out that consumers were more likely to be convinced to buy a product that

is recommended by people who had experienced it (experience good) rather than a search good, the researchers also stated that it is possible to frequently utilize this strategy in the tourism industry. (2013)

The change in consumer behavior is majorly affected by the social networking sites which provide platforms for consumers to connect with the company and other consumers (Bilgihan, Peng & Kandampully, 2014). The explosive growth of the population of Internet users on social networking sites has had a huge impact on hospitality and tourism industry whereby consumers are changing the rule of marketing. In order for a company to be successful in business, it is necessary for marketers to make decisions based on consumer needs, changes in society and also the development of technology. By doing, it not only satisfies consumers but also strengthens the relationship with customers to ensure they make a comeback. In addition, social networking sites also help to record the information of consumers so that it is easy to be obtained whenever needed (Assenov & Khurana, 2012). In addition, social networking sites also provide social communication services which could create brand awareness and build a good image for the brand (Bilgihan, Peng & Kandampully, 2014).

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

The emergence of Web 2.0, allows one with unlimited amount of things the individual can do on the internet these days. The individual is not just restricted to emails or passively absorbing the static information that is available on the web pages when browsing. It used to be one-way but now the web is the platform where people can share information, hold a decent dialogue, build both social and business connections.

Social media has recently been adopted by a small group of organizations' integrated marketing plans. There by infusing a mix of advertisement, public relations, their sales promotion to produce a customer focused message. With the evolution of platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, we have the opportunity for exceptional access to the guest (Lanz, Fischhof, & Lee, 2010). Since social media is so available to anyone with an internet connection, it should be a platform that can be recommended to the hospitality industry to increase their brand awareness and facilitate direct feedback from their customers.

A business that understands the advantage of social media is well aware that social media is essential in developing new business in the current competitive and online driven marketplace.

Marketing is an important aspect for any company involved in business. As such, it is a competitive world out there, and social media marketing is the 'new kid in town' and it can reach out to the people accessing these social media platforms regularly. Communication is essential for any corporation and business, therefore either they change the way information is conveyed or be prepared to lose some of the audience. It is imperative for marketing managers to continuously find a solution to appeal, keep new and current consumers (Schneider, 2009). Social network is the ideal platform for communication that applies perfectly with marketing in the virtual world. Social networks are groups of individuals who prefer to communicate with one another through a preferred site based on the profile created for themselves (Laudon and Traver, 2007).

1.2 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The hospitality industry tends to be very customer-centric and also one that prides itself by reaching out to its guests and providing a personalized experience. In traditional marketing, our lives are saturated by print media, radio and television. The downside of traditional marketing is the high cost and it is a one-way communication. Social media encourages customer engagement, and it being on Web 2.0, promotes two-way traffic. It allows for a faster response and a low cost investment than is typically achieved with traditional marketing.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of social media networks in the hospitality industry. Social media is relatively young and the objective for corporations to invest and participate in social media platform is to offer an alternative mode of communication and also it helps to cultivate long term relationships with their guests; Such as promotional campaigns and new information can be pushed through social media channels. Also, to give a descriptive overview of the state of social media in the hospitality industry.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Currently the hype surrounding social media strategies for marketing is on the increase,

but hotel industry is still trying to cope and see the advantage from the latest trends on the internet. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter is growing daily. Challenges faced by hotels is the 'how to' engage the consumers and to lead them towards becoming a guest or share their experience for the hotel within their virtual network. For the past decades, the Internet has gradually changed to a stage where the search engines take control of website traffic. Therefore, businesses that jumped onto the social media wagon earlier see the pay off, as they have established their relationships and viral networks (Walsh, 2010). The research conducted in this manuscript will attempt to give an insight to the hospitality industry on the effects of social media, furthermore to establish if social media is effective and recommended, and if so, provide an insight and proposition for adopting social media as a platform for marketing purpose.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

For the course of this research work the researcher framed out some research question which shall guide the researcher to carry out this research work successfully, the research question will be administered to the respondents and samples of the research question are.

1. Have you ever been able to use the social media network in reaching out to target customer?
2. Can the social media be a source of advertisement for your industry to the people?
3. The number of guests turned in how many are from the source of the social media?
4. Do you have an official web address/website where commerce can be carried out?
5. Apart from the social media, which other means does your industry use in reaching out to people as a promotional scheme

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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