

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF TOURISM

Pardhasaradhi Madasu

pardhasaradhi_madasu@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the largest sources of economic activity in the world, travel and tourism generates economic activity worldwide. The industry also provides millions of jobs direct and indirect. Tourism is not only one of the world's largest, but also one of its fastest growing industries. The importance of tourism and the entry of many new tourist destinations into 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. Tourism marketing is the application of marketing concepts in the travel and tourism industry. Tourism marketing refers to the organized, combined efforts of the national tourist bodies and/or the businesses in the tourism sector of an international, national or local area to achieve growth in tourism by maximizing the satisfaction of tourists. In doing so, the tourist bodies and businesses expect to receive profits. As in case of any marketing mix, promotion of the product (destination in case of tourism marketing) places a major role. Promotions are activities such as advertising, personal selling, and sales promotion which communicate the 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 not on other forms of promotion like advertising. Word 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. Tourism industry is benefiting from Web 2.0. "Web 2.0" describes a growing trend towards online content made by web users, rather than traditional publishers. It is an umbrella term used to describe online technologies and medias that facilitate interaction and exchange of information online. ICT technologies and use of the Internet has been changing the way tourism businesses operate. Electronic intermediaries are emerging dynamically and challenge traditional distributors. Thus all tourism players are forced to rethink their business models. The present study focuses on issues relating to using social media marketing as a means of promoting tourism.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, tourism promotion has entered a new era, thanks to the web. This has mainly been a natural evolution promoted by marketing and by the new technologies of communication that became available. Information technology, particularly the web, has been used more and more in tourism promotion. As a result of this, new strategies have been created in order to use this new form of communication in a more suitable and rational way, particularly in terms of costs and actions. Consequently, it is necessary to promote the resources, the structure and the advantages of the

web, as well as the best interactive strategies that might be used. This will help tourism managers to be aware of its potential and relevancy to destination marketing.

According to Lovelock and Wright (2001), the 1990s is considered in the history of Promotion as a decade of transition to a new phase called Digital Promotion. The main reason for this was the use of digital resources, such as the Internet and the web, motivated by the changes in the consumption and communication patterns of the clients. Among the key changes of consumption are: different lifestyle (e.g. women at work, small families, active mature

* Associate Professor, Siva Sivani Institute of Management, Kompally, Secunderabad (AP)

markets), reduction in spare time, a wide range of new products and services, a decline in brand loyalty and changes in communication.

New technologies have changed the priorities in terms of promotion as, previously, it was the enterprises that established the flow of communication and used technologies only as an instrument of support. Now, with the creation of the web, the power is transferred to the clients as they have at their disposal a technology where they are able to compare prices, with support 24/7 and personalised services. Therefore, it is extremely important that tourism managers are constantly updating their knowledge in order to find out the best technological resources to develop the promotion of destinations on the web. This will lead to a better and broader communication and trade of tourism products and services through interaction among tourists, residents and enterprises.

Web 2.0 and user-generated content (UGC) are currently the biggest online developments reshaping traditional marketing methods of tourism businesses (Reactive, 2007). According to Tourism Australia (2007), the traditional method of word of mouth marketing is radically changing. The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies has played a large role in altering how consumers relate their feedback of a product or experience. Within the context of the tourism industry, this can be achieved by photo sharing, travel blogs, travel reviews and video sharing (Cox et al. 2007).

O'Connor, Höpken and Gretzel (2008) note that tourism is an information-intensive service that suits digital delivery as it is typically targeted at customers that are not local. Moreover, as travel is an intangible service that cannot be easily described, travellers often rely on word of mouth to decrease their uncertainty and perceived risk (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). It is for these reasons that Hanlan and Kelly (2005) have predicted that Web 2.0 will only grow in its influence in transforming the traditional word of mouth marketing (as cited in Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). As a result, current online technological developments have the strong potential to continue changing the tourism landscape and tourism business will need to keep up with these trends to remain competitive (Scheidegger, 2006).

The growth of the Web 2.0 technologies has led to an explosion of social networking media sites, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Although

Web 2.0 includes other tools such as blogs and wikis, this paper will concentrate on the use of social tools. These have attracted millions of users worldwide, and offer a wide variety of methods that users can connect to others and share common interests. According to Kes-Erkul and Erkul (2009) Web 2.0 tools, such as social media have the capacity to change the relationship between the Internet and its users, and can change power structures and increase the opportunity for users to engage in greater community participation.

This paper is divided into several sections. Firstly, a literature review discusses the rise of social sites,

government usage of social media, and issues with these services. The main observation of this conceptual study would imply that governments and authorities concerned with tourism are missing service opportunities to connect with their tourists and others for effective communication and marketing. Governments and tourism authorities should consider an organised approach to utilising these new technologies and social media for promoting the tourism both nationally and locally.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In establishing a context for the research project, several theoretical areas within the literature need to be understood. Firstly, the study determined what new online trends (like Web 2.0 and Social Media Tools) were being embraced by travellers. This was followed by an understanding of the significance of these technological trends for the tourism industry. Consumer demand for new technologies was then established in order to answer the question of how businesses are adapting to online trends. Finally, the literature was used to establish whether businesses have adapted to technological developments and the reasons for doing so.

New technologies used by Tourists/Travellers

As pointed out by the UNWTO (1999, Foreword), the Internet is a must for tourism actors and has a significant role for the travel and tourism industry: "as a crucial distribution channel via which tourism organisations can promote their destinations and products offered by service providers". As mentioned previously in the introduction chapter, considering the huge number of web users, the Internet can reach more people and therefore attract more tourists than any other traditional media such as television or travel guides (UNWTO 1999 p.54).

The UNWTO (2005 p.18) highlights how significant the growth of online travel market is: worldwide online bookings increased by 59% in 2001 and by 37% in 2000. The revenue from this market in 2002 was about US\$ 42.9 billion in the US. In Europe online bookings represent 30% of the market and US\$ 8.7 billion (UNWTO 2005 p.31). According to the UNWTO (2005 p.18) big players of the online travel market are airlines, which “account for over half of the global online travel industry” and hotels as the second biggest actor, with for example a 22% share on the US market. As pointed out by the UNWTO (2005 p.31), online travel has become a global trend, which “took on even greater importance in 2004 in all the regions of the world”.

The online trends outlined above all have one underlying theme, that is, they are consumer-centric. Social media and user-generated content are all technologies driven by the consumer. For understanding this consumer-centric information age, it is required to review the literature relating to Web 2.0, Tourism 2.0, Social Media Marketing and eWOM.

Web 2.0 and Social Media

Social media can be defined as websites which are built on Web 2.0 technologies in order to provide space for in-depth social interaction, community formation, and the tackling of collaborative projects (Bruns and Bahnisch, 2009). It is definitely an activity that is based on the notion of influence. Social media can be used to gather valuable information about how a product, service or brand is perceived in the marketplace. The basic application of these media is a consideration phase tool that connects post-purchase experiences with potential customers progressing from awareness to purchase (Evans, 2008).

A discussion of social networking sites should be related by a review of Web 2.0 tools. These tools are a platform on which innovative technologies and applications where participants can be content creators to leverage collective intelligence of user groups, thus turning the web into a kind of global brain, (Cormode and Krishnamurthy, 2008 and O'Reilly, 2007). This is different from Web 1.0 where users were usually fed information with little bi-direction communication. Examples of Web 2.0 tools include: web content management systems, wikis, blogs, image and video sharing (e.g., YouTube, (e.g., MySpace, Facebook), news sharing and ranking (Digg, Reddit), social bookmarking (e.g., delicious)

and 3-D virtual worlds (e.g., SecondLife) (Mergel, et. al., 2009). Social networks are one form of Web 2.0 tools, and these types will be taken into consideration for this study.

Growth of social sites has been a worldwide phenomenon. A 2009 Nielson report states that two-thirds of the global online population visit social sites and this sector now accounts for almost 10 percent of all internet time (Nielsen, 2009). . Sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube dominate the global market, but there are also a plethora of new networks that cater to specific geographical audiences. The importance of social sites has grown due to the advantages to both individuals and other entities. For individuals, these sites offer the opportunity to better network with others all over the world and organise their social life. According to Europa (2009), other groups, such as governments and businesses can benefit from social networks by serving different audiences with minimal financial effort.

Facebook is one of the largest Web 2.0 tools, and has over 350 million active users in 180 countries, with over 70 percent of these users outside the U.S. (Facebook Press Room, 2009). Twitter is a real-time messaging service that, like Facebook and other social sites, has encountered a tremendous growth in users over the past several years. Twitter's market has exploded 3,700 percent in 2009 (Cole, 2009). Twitter served as a major hub of information, and many aid and relief organisations began to use Twitter to spread the word and gather donations, augmenting their other channels (Leberecht, 2010). YouTube was established in 2005 and has become the most successful Internet site providing video sharing services, ranking second in overall website traffic (Xu, et al. 2008).

The rapid growth in the Web 2.0 technologies has given rise to a new area of interest for marketers. Tourism Marketers have started to understand the influence of eWOM on tourism industry. Researchers started to understand how destination branding can be done using eWOM and Social Media Networks.

Electronic Word of Mouth Marketing

The word of mouth (WOM) industry is experiencing massive growth—since 2004 the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) has grown from 3 to 350 corporate members (WOMMA, 2007). This growth is particularly evident in online and social networking media. Both scholars and practitioners of 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. For instance, according to ComScore Media Metrix, MySpace boasts more than 100 million member profiles, the site registers 13 million hits per day, and more than 3 million artists and bands use it to promote albums and engage fans. Google Inc. recently agreed to provide at least \$900 million in advertising revenue over 3 1/2 – years to News Corp. for the right to broker advertising that appears on MySpace and other sites (Vara, 2006).

eWOM communication refers to any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, and former customers about a product or a company via the Internet (HennigThurau et al., 2004). eWOM communication can take place in various settings. Consumers can post their opinions, comments and reviews of products on weblogs (e.g. xanga.com), discussion forums (e.g. zapak.com), review websites (e.g. Epinions.com), e-bulletin board systems, newsgroup, social networking sites (e.g. facebook.com).

While eWOM communication has some characteristics in common with traditional WOM communication, it is different from traditional WOM in several dimensions. These dimensions attribute to the uniqueness of eWOM communication. First, unlike traditional WOM, eWOM communications possess unprecedented scalability and speed of diffusion. As with WOM, sharing of information is between small groups of individuals in synchronous mode (Avery, Resnick, and Zeckhauser, 1999; Li & Hitt 2008, Dellarocas 2003; Steffes and Burgee, 2009). However, eWOM communications involve multi-way exchanges of information in asynchronous mode (Hung and Li, 2007).

Branding

A Brand, defined by the American Marketing Association, is a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (AMA, 2011).

The process of branding involves designing, planning and communicating the name and the identity, in an attempt to build or manage the reputation of the brand based on four different elements – brand identity, brand image, brand purpose and brand equity (Anholt, 2007, p. 4).

According to Nandan (2005) brand identity relates to how the company strives to identify itself and “convey its individuality and distinctiveness to all its relevant publics” (p. 265). Brand image, as defined by Kotler as cited by Nandan (2005) is the “set of beliefs held about a particular brand” (p. 266). It is the consumer’s perception of the brand. The other two elements brand purpose and brand equity refer to the goals and value of the brand (Anholt, 2007, p. 5). Baker and Cameron (2008) suggest that the goal of branding is to create an “emotional connection with consumers through the development of a unique personality or image for a product or service” (p. 86) and that it is a “two-way process that is developed with rather than to the consumer” (p. 86).

In the tourism destination context, six benefits of branding were identified by Clarke (2000): (1) tourism is typically a high involvement activity, branding helps to reduce the choice; (2) branding helps in reducing the impact of intangibility; (3) branding conveys consistence across multiple outlets and through time; (4) branding can reduce the risk factors attached to decision making about a holiday; (5) branding facilitates precise segmentation; (6) branding helps to provide a focus for the integration of producer efforts, helping people to work towards the same outcome.

Destination Branding

In 1998, branding within the context of tourism destinations started to gain visibility with destination branding the focal topic at that year’s Travel and Tourism Research Association’s Annual Conference. Since then, this concept has been further explored in the aptly titled book, Destination Branding (Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride 2002) and in a Journal of Brand Management special issue (Hall 2002; Harrison 2002; Kotler and Gertner 2002; Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott 2002).

Even though, there is not a generally accepted definition of destination branding Blain et al. (2005, p. 337) proposed that “Destination branding is the set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk.

Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice”.

While a destination can be considered as a single product comprising of every kind of tourism operation in its geographical area. It can also be viewed legitimately as a composite product that comprises a mix of various components (the destination mix) (Morrison & Anderson, 2002:10). According to Heath (2004), a “destination represents a mental picture in the minds of current and potential visitors”. Perceptions such as cheap versus exclusive or safe versus dangerous often overshadow reality. Thus, the tourism industry operates in a complex and changing environment that is characterized by several challenges (Heath, 2007). In most cases, destination marketers have little control over the elements of the destination mix that they are branding. A destination can be affected negatively by current events such as political chaos, natural disasters, terrorism and civil unrest that can occur within its boundaries. It can also be impacted harmfully by events that are occurring elsewhere, for example, the world economic crisis (Heath, 2007). In addition, a desirable destination can also be influenced by previous events, myths or fictitious events.

According to Anholt (2005a), countries have always been brands, in the truest sense of the word. Like any brand, nations have individual identities which are unique unto themselves (Jaworski & Foshier, 2003); no two nations are alike. Based on their unique identities, many countries have been branding themselves deliberately and systematically for centuries, even if the respective vocabulary has only recently been adopted. Whereas the idea of branding nations is still questioned by most people (Olins, 2002), the notion of brand management for countries has been established as one of the key tools for attaining nation-wide competitiveness. Countries have branded themselves with qualities such as music, philosophy, trust, wisdom, beauty and peace. These brands act as a form of identity and differentiation from competitors. The branding of a destination enables the customer to readily identify it and distinguish it from its competitors. A country could be associated with particular benefits or activities that are offered by a destination. These benefits act as a cue for decision-making regarding purchases (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2003). In particular, it indicates to a prospective purchaser what level of

quality he could expect. A range of destinations that are marketed under the same category would convey similar expectations of the quality of their products, although the products cannot be seen or sampled in advance.

Social Media and Destination Marketing

Like consumer products, countries and local tourist destinations also deal with competition and therefore need to differentiate themselves from their competitors. They find themselves needing to develop a nation brand that is the “unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all its target audiences” (Dinnie, 2008, p. 15). According to Keith Dinnie (2008) in *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*, the concept of applying branding techniques to countries is constantly growing and developing as countries develop nation brands to meet three objectives. These objectives are to attract tourists, stimulate inward investment and boost exports (p. 17). The development of a successful nation brand can also dispel any misconceptions allowing the country to re-position itself favorably (p.18).

Government Usage of Web 2.0 Technologies for Destination Branding

Freeman and Loo (2009) suggest there are three categories of benefits that governments can achieve from using Web 2.0 technologies: efficiency, user convenience and citizen involvement. Cresswell (as cited by Freeman and Loo, 2009) explains efficiency is gained by obtaining increased output with lower resources. Social sites could bring this about by allowing governments to use pre-established Web services to reach their constituents rather than governments setting up their own social sites themselves, thus saving money and resources. Web 2.0 technologies can be used in a variety of government settings. Specific ministries and entities could use blogs to communicate on public hearings, wikis and RSS feeds to coordinate work, and wikis to internally share expertise and intelligence information (Mergel, et. al., 2009).

The review of literature on various related issues bring us to a position where we can justify the importance of government and other stakeholder in tourism industry to start aggressive usage of new technologies (especially social media) for promoting the regional and national tourist places.

IMPACT OF CHANING TECHNOLOGIES ON TOURISM

Developments in Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), and the Internet in articular, have led to dramatic changes in the business world in the last decade. Products have been reshaped, and more importantly the nature of the competition has changed. Where ICTs have a significant role in determining relative cost position or differentiation, entire industries are affected. ICTs change the entire economic system dramatically, and organisations and governments need to constantly update their business models and enhance their competitiveness through new technological tools. The digital revolution that was introduced by the Internet, Intranet and Extranets provides unprecedented and unforeseen opportunities for

- productivity improvements
- interactive management
- dynamic marketing.

Significant developments include the proliferation of broadband connections, and the availability of wireless networks through WiFi, UMTS, Bluetooth and increasingly WiMax technologies. Adoption of these leads to a situation where technology will prevail over all organisational functions and human interactions. This gradually introduces a seamless environment of computing, advanced networking technology and specific interfaces which should:

- be aware of the specific characteristics of human presence and personalities
- adapt to the needs of users
- be capable of responding intelligently to spoken or gestured indications of desire

possibly even result in systems that are capable of engaging in intelligent dialogue.

As a result, best operational and strategic practices are changing on a global level, altering the competitiveness of enterprises and regions around the world. Destinations, governments, organisations and citizens need to appreciate these developments. They will need to undertake a comprehensive review in order to understand the potential offered by new ICTs and reengineer their offering, data and processes to enhance their competitiveness

Tourism demand is moving online and is increasing in sophistication. The Internet enables travellers to access reliable and accurate information, and make reservations using a fraction of the time,

cost and inconvenience required by conventional methods. It improves the service quality and contributes to a higher tourist satisfaction.

ICTs are needed due to the rapid growth in volume of travellers, as well as the requirements for personalised, complex, specialised and quality products. Increasingly consumers use commercial and non-commercial Internet sites for planning, searching, reserving, purchasing and amending their tourism products. Internet users can also get immediate confirmation and quickly receive travel documents, which means prospective travellers can book at the 'last minute'. The use of ICTs is therefore driven by the development of complex demands, as well as by the rapid expansion and increases in sophistication of new products, which tend to address niche market segments. There is evidence that e-tourism has already taken off in several countries.

The size of the online market has increased dramatically in the last ten years and most of the developed world is now connected. The 2007 Computer Industry Almanac demonstrated that the worldwide number of Internet users surpassed 1.2 billion at the end of 2006,

Worldwide yearly increase in Internet users is projected to be between 140 million and 145 million in the next five years, which means the 2 billion mark will be passed in 2012. As most of the developed world is reaching a plateau, with penetration of more than 70%, much of current and future Internet user growth is coming from populous countries – especially Brazil, Russia, India, and China. In the next decade many Internet users will be supplementing PC Internet usage with Smartphone, mobile phone and mobile device Internet usage. In developing countries many new Internet users will be using these technologies.

Alongside the dramatic growth of the online market has been the change in quality of consumers' interactions with it. Tourists have become increasingly demanding, requesting high quality products and value for money. New/experienced/sophisticated/demanding travellers rely heavily on the Internet to look for information on destinations and experiences, such as price and availability. They also use it to rapidly communicate their needs and wishes to tourism suppliers. The Internet provides:

- access to transparent and easy-to-compare information on destinations, holiday packages, travel, lodging and leisure services

- information on real-time prices and availability.

Experienced travellers are empowered by ICTs and use information and booking systems to improve their personal efficiency.

Perhaps one of the most interesting current developments is the development of Web 2.0, a term coined by O'Reilly (2005) that refers to a second generation of web-based services based on citizens/consumer generated content. These include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, communication tools, and folksonomies, which emphasise online collaboration and information sharing among users. Increasingly the Internet is becoming a platform of data, views, knowledge-creation and sharing which harness the network to get better information to all users.

Web 2.0 and Web 1.0

Web 2.0 is a buzzword introduced in 2003/04 which is commonly used to encompass various novel phenomena on the World Wide Web. Although largely a marketing term, some of the key attributes associated with Web 2.0 include the growth of social networks, bi-directional communication, various 'glue' technologies, and significant diversity in content types. While most of Web 2.0 runs on the same substrate as 1.0, there are some key differences. A precise definition is elusive and many sites are hard to categorize with the binary label "Web 1.0" or "Web 2.0". But there is a clear separation between a set of highly popular Web 2.0 sites such as Facebook and YouTube, and the "old Web Sites".

At the outset distinction has to be made between the concepts of Web 2.0 and social networks. Web 2.0 is both a platform on which innovative technologies have been built and a space where users are treated as first class objects. The platform sense consist of various new technologies (mashups, AJAX, user comments) on which a variety of popular social networks such as Facebook, MySpace etc. have been built (we adopt the convention of referring to sites by name when their URL can be formed by appending .com to the name). Inter alia, in all these social networks participants are as important as the content they upload and share with others. However, the essential difference between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 is that content creators were few in Web 1.0 with the vast majority of users simply acting as consumers of content, while any participant can be a content creator in Web 2.0 and numerous technological aids have been created to maximize the potential for content creation.

Deciding whether a given site is considered Web2 or Web1 can be a difficult proposition. This is not least because sites are dynamic, rolling out new features or entire redesigns at will, without the active participation of their users. Some sites are easy to classify: social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace are often held up as prototypical examples of Web2, primarily due to their social networking aspects which include the user as a first-class object, but also due to their use of new user interface technologies (Facebook in particular). Many sites are hard to categorize strictly as Web1 or Web2. For example, Amazon.com launched in the mid-1990s and has gradually added features over time. The principal content (product descriptions) is curated rather than user-created, but much of the value is added by reviews and ratings submitted by users. Profiles of users do exist, but social features such as friend links, although present, are not widely adopted. Each product has a wiki page associated with it,

Some of the important site features that mark out a Web2 site include the following:

- Users as first class entities in the system, with prominent profile pages, including such features as: age, sex, location, testimonials, or comments about the user by other users.
- The ability to form connections between users, via links to other users who are "friends", membership in "groups" of various kinds, and subscriptions or RSS feeds of "updates" from other users
- The ability to post content in many forms: photos, videos, blogs, comments and ratings on other users' content, tagging of own or others' content, and some ability to control privacy and sharing.
- Other more technical features, including a public API to allow third-party enhancements and "mash-ups", and embedding of various rich content types (e.g. Flash videos), and communication with other users through internal email or IM systems.

ADOPTING WEB 2.0 FOR PROMOTION OF TOURISM IN INDIA

The Ministry of Tourism, is the nodal agency for the formulation of national policies and programmes and for the co-ordination of activities of various Central Government Agencies, State Government/UTs and the Private Sector for the

development and promotion of tourism in the Country. The Ministry is headed by the Union Minister for Tourism and supported by Minister of State of Tourism. At present, the Ministry of Tourism is carrying out its Promotion and Publicity through two schemes viz (i) Domestic Promotion & Publicity; and (ii) Overseas Promotion and Publicity, including Marketing Development Assistance. Besides releasing advertisement in print and electronic media, including internet in both the domestic and overseas markets, organization of fairs & festivals is also encouraged by the Ministry, and Central Financial Assistance for two local fairs and/or festivals.

The Ministry of Tourism is still using the traditional methods for promoting tourism. We have to move from unilateral information providing to a stage of favorable content development on social media by the tourists who have visiting India. The Ministry of Tourism should take e-tourism initiatives. While taking e-development initiatives by tourism industry, it is recommended that a broader tourism promotion policy has to framed. E-tourism strategies should be integrated with broader framework of national ICT policies. Contributions and involvement of public authorities is essential in providing infrastructure and human capacity, which encourages the ICT usage. Tourism Niche products should be identified as a part of national tourism development plans which can be easily and effectively marketed using ICT tools. A long-term sustainable tourism industry cannot be developed without government's support and cooperation. Developing countries especially should develop an ICT environment, which involves multiple factors like access, infrastructure, education, capacity building, legal framework etc. for a promotion of ICT enabled tourism industry. There is a need for better public and private partnership to be established in the country like India for e-tourism to actually flourish. The Ministry of Tourism should move from information providing age to creating knowledge on digital media.

The Chhattisgarh Tourism Board (CTB) has taken to social media to promote tourism in the state and strike a chord with people by highlighting its natural beauty and architecture of the state. The board has initiated a campaign tapping various social media platforms like Facebook, You Tube, Twitter and many more with the aim of highlighting the lesser known facts of Chhattisgarh. With a 24-hour watch on the activities on the social media, a special team engages

with audiences online to give instant feedback for their queries. In addition to the social media, CTB has also rolled out a 360 degree campaign, in print, television, OOH, radio and web.

Risks with social media usage in Tourism

While media has contributed positively to the development of the global tourism industry, there have been occasions where media publicity has adversely affected tourism in several countries. Media, when not handled well, can have disastrous effects on tourism. For example, when there is bad news or a crisis the impact on tourism can be devastating. We can draw our attention to a number of events which got widespread negative publicity directly affecting the tourism industries of respective countries

- 2001 - the 9/11 attack on World Trade Centre, USA
- 2003 - SARS Outbreak in China
- 2004- Indian Ocean Tsunami · 2008- Mumbai terrorist attack
- 2011- Japanese Tsunami and Nuclear crisis, to name a few.

But on the other hand it is important to mention here that there are also examples where media directly helped destinations effected by disasters to bounce back. The only worry is that all positives do not emerge from the use of social media. The racial riots in London in 2011 were evoked by the use of private Blackberry messaging. It was the most popular medium through which the rioters communicated. Keep in mind that social media technologies today mean more than just text messages and tweets.

CONCLUSION

India is currently in a position where it can make a cash cow out of selling customized experiences, luxury spa sessions, rare animal sanctuaries, religious pilgrimage tours and extreme Himalaya tours. With too many points of differentiation available, Indian tourism should focus on how it has something on offer for everyone in every category with all budgets. India on shoestring, India in luxury, the royal India, urban India, the common man's India, historical India and much more. The way information is packaged and distributed can go a long way in improving tourist traffic in the country. Although the government has already started making a lot of improvements in this area, we still have a long way to go to let tourism alone generate significant

revenue for the country. Many people seem to be having a problem with exoticizing India to the West but at some point if that strategy allows for the raking in of moolah, then why not? We're not promoting India as the land of snakes and charmers anymore, but the tourism ministry should surely pursue aggressive online and other marketing strategies to promote India as a must-visit location. Whether it is broadcasting 'Incredible India' campaigns abroad, holding tourism seminars or offering Indian locations with facilities to promote foreign film productions in the country. Aggressive marketing is absolutely critical to be seen and heard well.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

The present study is conceptual in nature. The paper focuses on the linkage between the social media and tourism marketing. The further studies can focus on the ascertaining the effectiveness of various social media tools in respect to tourism marketing and also look into the tourist preference for various social media sites in soliciting the opinion about a destination.

REFERENCES

- Avery, C., Resnick, P. & Zeckhauser, R. (1999). The market for evaluations. *American Economic Review*, 89(3), 564-584.
- American Marketing Association. (2011). *Brand Resource Library Dictionary*.
- Anholt, S. (2007). *Competitive identity: the new brand management for nations, cities and regions*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Baker, M., Cameron, E. (2008). Critical success factors in destination marketing. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*. 8(2). 79 -97.
- Blain, C., Levy, S. E., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (May 2005). Destination branding: insights and practises from destination management organizations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43, pp. 328-338.
- Cormode, G. and Krishnamurthy, B. (2008). Key differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, *First Monday*, June 2008, 13(2).
- Clarke, J. (2000). Tourism brands - an exploratory study of the brands box model. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 6(4), 329-345.
- Cole, R. (2009). Social Media: What Does it Mean for Public Managers?, *Public Management*. October, 2009. 8-12.
- Cox, C., Burgess, S., Sellitto, C. & Buultjens, J. 2007, *Consumer-generated web-based tourism marketing*, CRC for Sustainable Tourism, Australia.
- Europa, (2009). *Social Networking Sites: Commissioner Reding stresses their economic and societal importance for Europe*. 26-September, 2009.
- Facebook Press Room. (2009). *Facebook.com*.
- Freeman, R. and Loo, P. (2009). *Web 2.0 and E-government at the Municipal Level*, In; 5th International Conference on e-Government, 19-20 October, 2009, Boston, MA.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G. & Gremler, D. D. (2004). *Electronic Word-of-Mouth Via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?* *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18, 38-52.
- Hung, K. H. & Li, S. Y. (2007). *The Influence of eWOM on Virtual Consumer Communities: Social Capital, Consumer Learning, and Behavioral Outcomes*. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(4), 485.
- Kes-Erkul, A. and Erkul, R. (2009). *Web 2.0 in the Process of e-participation: The Case of Organizing for America and the Obama Administration*, National Center for Digital Government Working Paper Series, October 2009, 9(1), 1-19.
- Leberecht, T. (2010). *Twitter grows up in aftermath of Haiti earthquake*, CNET News.19 January, 2010.
- Lovelock, C., & Wright, L. (2001). *Marketing e gestão*. São Paulo: Saraiva.
- Li, X. & Hitt, L. (2008). *Self-Selection and Information Role of Online Product Reviews*. *Information Systems Research*, 19(4), 456.
- Mergel, I., Schweik, C., and Fountain, J. (2009). *The Transformational Effect of Web 2.0 Technologies on Government*, Social Science Research Network., 1-June, 2009.
- Mergel, I., Schweik, C., and Fountain, J. (2009). *The Transformational Effect of Web 2.0 Technologies on Government*, Social Science Research Network., 1-June, 2009.
- Nandan, S. (2005). *An exploration of the brand identity - brand image linkage: a communications perspective*. *Brand Management*. 12(4). 264-278.
- Nielsen Company. (2009). *Global Faces and*

Networked Places. Retrieved March 3, 2010.

- O'Reilly, T. (2007). What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software, Communications & Strategies, First Quarter 200, 1(17).
- O'Connor, O. 2008, "User-generated content and travel: A case study on Tripadvisor.com", Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2008, Springer Wien, Vienna.
- O'Connor, P., Höpken, W. & Gretzel, U. 2008, Tourism in OECD countries 2008: Trends and policies, information and communication technologies in tourism 2008, OECD, Innsbruck.
- Reactive, 2007, Web 2.0 for the Tourism & Travel Industry, Reactive, Australia.
- Scheidegger, E. 2006, Innovation and growth in Tourism, OECD, Switzerland.
- Tourism Australia, 2007, Word of web: How the internet has supercharged word of mouth recommendation, viewed 3 August 2009, at http://www.tourism.australia.com/content/Research/Factsheets/Info_Sources_07.pdf

UNWTO

- 1999, Marketing tourism destinations online: strategies for the information age. Madrid: UNWTO.
- 2005, World overview and tourism topics. Madrid: UNWTO.
- 2007, The travel industry's business model is broken. What's next? Madrid: UNWTO.
- Vara, V. (2006). MySpace, ByeSpace? Some Users Renounce Social Sites as Too Big. Wall Street Journal, 26 October, B1.
- WOMMA (2007). Press Release: Word of Mouth Marketing Is Here to Stay: WOMMA Reaches Membership Milestone, Looks Forward to Industry Growth. Retrieved February 15, 2007, from <http://www.womma.org/news/008905.php>
- Xu, C., Cameron, D. and Jiangchuan, L. (2008). Statistics and Social Network of YouTube Videos,
- In: 16th International Workshop on In Quality of Service, University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands, 2-4 June, 2008. pp. 229-238.