Discuss the role of social networking in tourism marketing

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Social networking has played a key role in the marketing of tourist destinations by having marketers make use of social networking. Through the social networks that exist, marketing in tourism is achieved, especially with the use of social media. In this case, social media act as a platform through which social networks interact. As such, this can be viewed from the perspective of social media and social networking sites, which marketers have infiltrated to put across the message to potential tourists and other players in the hospitality sector. Social media and social networking work closely together in the realization of the goals of tourism marketing to potential clients and other interested parties. Marketing of tourism has received considerable shaping input from social networks using the Internet. In this case, it has revolutionized how the world operates and receives information on different tourism destinations and services. This can be clearly witnessed in the case of travel agencies that utilize the Internet to create social networks where they exchange information on services found across different areas of the world and destinations, as well as the ratings they would like the above to receive (Hosein et al. n. d., p. 2). This has impacted to the extent that there is almost immediate feedback on the quality, quantity and terms of service from travel agents. The above is all owing to social networks functioning and participating in the activities of tourism. As a result, in marketing of tourism services, social networking has created a rich network of individuals who willingly volunteer information and deliver it for the rest to see and evaluate services while assigning appropriate ratings for the respective tourist destinations (Thevenot 2007, p. 287). Social networking in tourism marketing is also significant in financial

planning and the financial wellbeing of organizations that use or plan to use the platform. Social networking in marketing allows organizations to cut back on their costs of advertising and reaching out to potential clients, and even reaching new markets. This is because with a tight or nonexistent budget whatsoever for marketing, an organization can wage an all-out war on marketing through social networks. This is because social networks are free, and so are the means of using social networks. This is especially so with the Internet age in social media where individuals can share information and details at no cost whatsoever (Kaltwasser 2011, p. 201). With a successful digital marketing strategy, an organization can easily increase its market base at little or no cost. This especially considers the large number of people that use social media or are connected by the social networks that exist on social media. Friends pass information from one to another, and even to strangers (Goeldner & Ritchie 2009, p. 7). As a result, marketing information travels virally to all corners at a low cost since most of it is free and cheaper than conventional media such as print and other forms of audiovisual media. In addition, social networking cuts back on the use of large amounts of space considering the minimal space used in social media. This is what creates room for viral spreading of marketing news and information. With the use of attractive wording and imagery, clients and members of a social network spread news rapidly unlike scheduled media that do so only at a given rate and the discretion of the programmer (Sigala, Christiou & Gretzel 2012, p. 113). Social networking also provides convenience to marketers and institutions for their work on maintenance and updates. This is in regard to maintaining their social networks and their preferred clients. This form of

convenience works because it cuts on the time invested in creating marketing strategies and the resources invested in the maintenance and implementation of the marketing strategies (Keegan 2011, p. 11). Social networks ensure that one employee of an institution can maintain a social networking website and social media while at the same time running other institutional errands. Social networks also play a role in maintaining a client base where a given class of clients is only allowed admittance to a tourist destination done either by invitation or recommendation. This is a key role of social networking in marketing as it conveniently takes care of the needs of both clients and the institution by preventing crowding and not targeting outside the desired group. However, social networking in tourism marketing might go beyond that by passing information to the wrong or undesired parties. In addition, social networking allows room for value added services where marketing is done, including services that are not conventionally performed by the institution in question. These include tour services that are provided by organizations that primarily offer accommodation and other hospitality services. They also bring together related organizations to cater for the needs of clients in a tier or bound services ('Search for real revenue from social media' 2012, p. 8). Altogether, social networking has played a key role in tourism marketing by cutting back on costs, creating convenience, sharing information over the Internet and meeting target groups as well as increasing access to information by interested parties. As a result, social networking is a vital part of tourism marketing due to the numerous benefits it affords the users, and marketing strategies presented. References Goeldner, C & Ritchie, B 2009, Tourism: principles, practices,

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