SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS IN TOURISM SECTOR:
A CASE STUDY IN ANTALYA REGION

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EXTENSIVE SUMMARY

The Internet, enables information sharing to external user groups, has a spectacular potential (Bonsón and Escobar, 2006). Traditionally, consumers used to the Internet to read, watch and buy products and services. However, increasingly the use of the Internet has changed; consumers began to use the content sharing sites, social networks, blogs and wikis to create, share and discuss something (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011).

Approximately between 1997-2000, a set of hardware and software technologies had an enormous diffusion and radically changed most of our economic and social life. In recent years, another revolution has influence on people how they communicate, work and conduct business. This revolution is the Web 2.0 term (Milano, Baggio and Piattelli, 2011). Web 2.0 technologies can be considered as an approach to create and share content. This approach gives freedom to users to share and re-use the content (Adebanjo and Michaelides, 2010; Gretzel, 2006).

The Internet has become a platform for tourism businesses and source of information for visitors (Pan, MacLaurin and Crotts, 2007). Tourism environment is also affected permanently by social media (Zehrer, Magnini and Crotts, 2012). Term of Web 2.0 is considered as “Travel 2.0” and it is stated that it has significant effects on the tourism sector. It is extremely important that the use of such development tools to improve of the tourism websites (Milano et al., 2011). When it comes to travel, the social media has been a powerful driver by “word of mouth” (Laboy and Torchio, 2007). The Internet makes it possible for tourists to share their experiences through social media and reconstruct their experiences (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Destination marketing organizations have significantly investment in the development of their web sites as part of their overall promotional efforts (Park and Gretzel, 2007: 46).

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

The starting point of this research is the internet dimensions (informational and relational web) which were developed by T. Escobar-Rodriguez and E. Carvajal-Trujillo. Based on the results of the research it was identified that there were significant relationships between the customer and marketing perspective, Web 2.0 technologies and social media presence. The conceptual framework of the authors is as shown in Figure 1.
In order to collect research data, an online survey form has been created over Google Drive. To determine which of the social media applications will be on survey, several information sources were chosen. Websites of world’s best 50 hotels, according to “Travel and Leisure” magazine, readers and social media applications which are preferred in this are listed as following: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Google +, YouTube, LinkedIn and TripAdvisor(http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/worlds-best-hotels-2014, Accessed 16 November 2014). After that, websites of hotels whom are awarded with “Social Hotel Award” in 2013 were analyzed and it is seen that these social applications were preferred: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Google + (http://www.hotelsmag.com/Industry/News/Details/45356?allowguest=true, Accessed 17 November 2014).

Concordantly, within the context of research, we tried to find hotels in Antalya, where is one of the cities there are most five star hotels are founded in the world, which uses Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Google +, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr and TripAdvisor social media applications. Content Analyses, that is a qualitative research method, is chosen as our research method.

Population of research involves all 5 star hotels in Antalya. According to Antalya Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, there are total 304 5 star hotels. 255 of these has operating certificates and 49 of these has investment certificates(http://www.antalyakulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,93462/konaklama-tesisi-istatistikleri.html, Accessed 18 November 2014).

Websites of 242 5 star hotels were accessed during this research. The SM (Social Media) applications that are most commonly used in 5 star hotels in Antalya are; Facebook and Twitter. Only 97 of 5 Star hotels in Antalya prefer TripAdvisor and give direct links from their websites where trip contents are evaluated. Video sharing site YouTube is only used by 85 hotels. The least preferred social media application is Flickr.

Usage rate of video sharing website YouTube is in the top three in Kemer, Konyaaltı and Muratpaşa. Hotels in Aksu do not use LinkedIn and hotels in Alanya and Kemer do not use Flickr. Another wondered subject within the research was to determine how many social media applications that the hotels use. According to the results of the study on this subject, we see that 29 of the 5 star hotels in Antalya do not use any social media applications. 25.6% of the sample (62 hotels) is using 2 social media applications. 5 of the hotels are using 8 social media applications.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When we look at the nations of the visitors that came to Antalya in 2014 we see Russia, Germany, Netherlands, England and Sweden in top 5. The social media applications most preferred by the first four are Facebook, Twitter and Google +. When we examine the research sample of our study we see that usage ratings of Facebook and Twitter are high but Google + is only used by 48 hotels. In England and in Sweden more than 90% of country population uses internet. The most preferred social media applications in Sweden are respectively; Facebook, Google + and Instagram. When we look at the websites of hotels in Antalya, we see that only 24.4% of the sample uses Instagram. We also could say that respective hotels do not prefer LinkedIn and Flickr much, based on the results of the study.

Awareness of the advantages of social media usage by hotels in Antalya is a perquisite. Hotels should create profiles for current and target tourists first. After that Web 2.0 technologies that are mostly preferred by them should be determined and strategic goals according to these should be established. On that note hotels can choose which of the social media platforms will be used. Another important subject here is hotels to internalize
usage of social media for the purposes they chose; interactive interaction, improvement of social relations,
publicity, marketing etc.

This study tries to present which of the social media platforms are used by 5 star hotels in Antalya. Intended use
and efficiency of social media can be evaluated in details in further researches via content analyses. So that
efficiency of social media usage by 5 star hotels in Antalya can be revealed in relational context.