Social Media Marketing for Promoting Tourism Industry in Georgia

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Extended abstract

This study envisages the role of social media marketing strategies for the tourism development in Georgia. Georgia has been named among the top 16 emerging travel destinations not only for its fantastic environment, but due to activities undertaken by the Georgian government. The tourism sector is one of the most growing sectors of the country. Promotional marketing campaigns in domestic and international markets, press and FAM trips, participating in international travel-fairs, social media marketing and other activities Georgian National Travel Agency (GNTA) facilitate the increase of tourism flow in Georgia. Technological development and globalization of media create new possibilities for information sharing among visitors in tourism through web blogs, websites or destinations’ assessment sites (Zarella 2013). Destinations need creative and powerful social media marketing strategies to reach these potential visitors. Social media allow destinations to contact visitors at relatively low cost and higher levels of efficiency that can be achieved with more traditional communication tools (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Social media has been used as a promotional tool for interactive marketing purposes, but the constant rise of visitors that use social media applications creates new challenges for all the industry (Schmalleger and Carson 2008, Heinonen 2011, Carr and Hayes 2015).

Social media related topics have been investigated in the context of tourism marketing with the focus on both organizations and customers. But it is true that the main actor of social media marketing is a customer, the main focus should be on listening, communicating, educating and entertaining customer in order to achieve the successful communication strategy of social media (Sweeney and Craig 2011). Tourism companies in Georgia today are concentrating more on providing high quality service to their target customer, which is a key factor for a sustainable competitive advantage of companies. Georgia took an important step towards the development of tourism in Georgia, using a wide variety of social media marketing. GNTA signed a joint advertising agreement with Travel Website Trip Advisor. The campaign will include posts and detailed information about the country, which will increase the number of international tourists in Georgia.

It should be noted that the marketing potential of social media has been widely studied (Zeng and Geristen 2014, Khan and Jan 2015, Todua and Jashi 2015), but there is a lack of research looking at the of social media for Promoting Georgian Tourism Industry. Consequently, the objectives of the research are to reveal the
increasing role of social media in tourism, to find out how to satisfy variable demands of Georgian consumers.

Qualitative and quantitative methods have been chosen for studying the and respectively, the study consisted of two steps. At the first step were selected 30 local Travelling Agencies for the qualitative survey and hypothesis formulation. In the second step were conducted online and face to face survey respondents through the country. A systematic random sampling method was used and the survey was carried out to 600 respondents by using a well-structured questionnaire. The confidence interval is 95% and standard deviation is 1.96%. The questionnaire included personal characteristics of the respondents and 18 statements regarding to the impact of social media marketing in promoting tourism in the country. A five-point Likert scale was employed to measure the consumers attitude and perception toward social media. The data collected for the study were analyzed by using SPSS version 21.0. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, T-test and ANOVA were employed to analyze the respondents’ data. The reliability is tested by using Cronbach’s alpha.

The study reveals, that social media marketing activity of travel agencies increases consumer's interest and reliability which leads to customer satisfaction (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Consumers’ interest (1), reliability (2) and satisfaction (3) regarding to social media marketing provided by travel companies

One Way ANOVA F-Test was used to check, if activity of travel companies regarding social media has any impact on consumer’s satisfaction (see table 1). The result approves, that social media marketing impact on consumer’s satisfaction (F=3.668, p=0.012).
Table 1. Impact of social media marketing on consumer’s satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Marginal Means</th>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variable: satisfaction of consumer’s</td>
<td>Sum of Squares</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Mean Square</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social media marketing of travel companies</td>
<td>1.997</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.666</td>
<td>3.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>110.153</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P<0.05 means that the differences between the groups studied are statistically significant.
Source: own elaboration.

The research identified existing barriers in the tourism sector, which should be resolved by active involvement of different stakeholders. Effective marketing strategies, including regulation price policy, empower the appropriate skills of the workforce, well developed infrastructure in urban and rural areas and promotional campaigns through social network will foster competitiveness of tourism of Georgia. It is significant to encourage investigation about the positive impact of social media marketing on the development aspects of the tourism industry. On the basis of the committed research was ascertained that Georgian consumers are not satisfied with working with Georgian Travelling Agencies associated with social media.

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References


Georgian National Travel Agency. 2015. “Georgian Tourism in Figures: Structure and Industry Data.” Tbilisi: Georgian National Tourism Administration.


