

HIDDEN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract:

If one starts from the assumption that each entity in one way or another have to communicate with consumers, then opportunities offered by the Internet are endless. As such the presence and impact of social media on communication policies of the various entities can be a remarkable one. According to experts in the field, firms thinking in a realistic way try and shall try in the future to benefit from the opportunities offered by this new medium. The aim is to attract a larger number of customers. However invariably the question arises: is the social media indeed the future, and all the existing communication techniques are no longer of any value in a communication?

Keywords: social media, interpersonal communication, tourism products and services, opportunities, human resources, attributes

Introduction

We live in a world that is constantly changing, every day we are faced with new challenges that have a direct influence on both the personal life and on the commercial sphere. The force that currently produces the greatest impact on people's lives is technology. It is due to true wonders, but it also gave birth to horrors. Finally, it also lead to things that can be interpreted as good or bad (Kotler and Keller, 2006, p. 146) as the Internet.

Indeed, the Internet provides new opportunities because it works in a global and direct way and what is more important is that it offers the opportunity to react (Randall, 2000, p. 108). In this context it should be necessarily noted, however, the reality that scientifically we know very little about human behaviour and must live with assumptions. This is true in marketing as well about how people will react to what we do (Randall, 2000, p. 56).

As with all markets, with Internet too we can distinguish the segment of those who are: (Randall, 2000, p. 205)

- interested but worthless,
- uninterested and worthless,
- interested and valuable.

According to previously reported there is a segment that occasionally performs purchases through the Internet, there is a segment that cannot be convinced of the benefits offered by the Internet in terms of purchasing different products and services and there is a segment that buys repeatedly by Internet.

The objectives of this paper are:

- to capture the effects of changes in the technological environment on everyday life and the opportunities provided by Internet to hotel services providers,
- demonstrate that Internet, and therefore social media, is an effective communication tool in tourism only if the strategies related to human resource are formulated in an appropriate manner,
- to demonstrate that human resources can be an element of differentiation for hotels whose products and rates are highly similar or location is not an aspect of differentiation.

The social media in everyday life

As mentioned before, the opportunities offered by the Internet are numerous. The social media as an end product of the Internet offers many ways

to communicate, to provide information. Facebook as success representative - at least currently - of social media really offers multiple possibilities to provide personal information like: year of birth, e-mail address, city of birth, sex, marital status (Walther, Van Der Heide et al, 2008, pp. 28-49). Another more attractive aspect of Facebook is that it allows the accumulation of a large number of friends. In a research conducted at the level of students, in 2011 it was found that introverted students stay online to a greater extent than their extroverted colleagues. It was also observed that less conscientious students choose the social media because it is a much more effective, more secure, more convenient than other ways to make friends. It should also be noted here that introverts are of the opinion that they express much better online, and in this way they can build friendships with higher probability (Burke, Kraut et al, 2011).

According to research in order to know the attitude of college students in Texas towards Facebook (Valenzuela, Park et al, 2008) it was found that it plays an important role in the daily life of those involved in the research. The research included the following variables: „Facebook is a part of my everyday activity” (4.54), „I am proud to tell people I am on Facebook” (4.27), „Facebook has become part of my daily routine” (4.54), „I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a day” (3.29), „I feel I am part of the Facebook community at the campus” (3.72), „I Would be sorry if Facebook shut down,, (4.61). Respondents had to reflect their opinion for each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree). According to the results it can be concluded that students mostly agreed with the statement that they would be sorry if Facebook is no longer was part of their everyday lives. This finding is supported by the result according to which if in 2012 Facebook was ranked 69th on the list of most valuable brands made by Interbrand in 2013 it succeeded to be ranked 52.

Somewhat bizarre, people's attitudes towards foreigners and their attitude towards Facebook. If in everyday life the warning that it is not a happy thing to talk to strangers is taken into account, it no longer has any meaning if on Facebook, although cases that had an unhappy ending is high. Even Barack Obama draws attention of young people on the consequences that may arise as a direct result of the way and the amount of information that is posted on your Facebook account. Appearance of the "digital tattoo" phenomenon says it all: information posted on social networks will have a direct and irreversible effect not only on the personal life but also on career development. In connection with Facebook one thing is certain: the desire to generate excitement is high. There are not isolated cases where young people could not endure taunts of colleagues and ultimately have posted their intention of suicide, but no one responded, this attitude reinforcing the feeling that marked their everyday life, namely, recognition of the fact that they are of no importance to the society.

According to studies conducted by the Global Social Media, Facebook shall lose from popularity due to the emergence of parents on Facebook in a increasingly higher number. Young people are not pleased that their virtual life is tracked every second by adults and began to show interest in other social networks (Oremus, 2013).

The role of social media in communication

As mentioned in the marketing field, there are several hypotheses that are true or false. Just one example: so far it was considered that every brand needs advertising, but in reality it is not true. There are situations in which the level of market segment is enough if the mark comes to be the subject of discussion as in the case of United Colours of Benetton (Randall, 2000, p.92). United Colours of Benetton expresses compassion for human suffering. Some people were

excited, others were made sick, and some looked at it cynically.

Certainly service peculiarities properly mark the communication activities too. With service providers "all talks". All physical components of the serving process, visible for the customer, as well as the functioning of the provision system, constitute elements of great significance for the customer (Lefter, Brătucu et al, 2002, p. 625). At the level of service providers, we can identify two main groups of media: communication by material means (promotion through the media) and communication through human resources (interpersonal promotion through staff). Also, the marketing communications of the services provision company focus on two major public categories: current customers, engaged in the service provision process (internal communication) and current customers as the potential ones (external communication) (Olteanu, 1999, p. 262).

According to literature communication policy is for a service provider, a core element of the marketing mix. The structure of communication activity undertaken by service providers include the following components: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, marketing events, use of trademarks, sales forces, direct marketing. Internet is extensively used not only to distribute and promote touristic products and services (Balaure, Cătoiu et al, 2005, pp. 347-348 and 379). The social media, from this point of view, requires a different approach as communication technique primarily based on the type of purchase. It is an attractive hypothesis that consumers in the purchase process only bring rational decisions, but in reality things are different. The smart brands, those administered by people with most sensitive antennas open outwards to create a relationship with the society (Olins, 2003, p. 20). Instead of buying behaviour of the company resembles a rational model.

At the same time it is important to consider the contents of purchases because it has a different meaning for the

classic consumer as compared to the modern consumer. Classic consumer wants to be appreciated, also he feels the need to be strengthened in his decision by acquaintances, friends, family members and so on, while the modern consumer does not feel the need to be appreciated by everyone, but only by the reference group he is part of (Töröcsik, 2006, p. 87-90).

As mentioned, the world is constantly changing, new phenomena appear and they become trends, which have a direct influence on marketing decisions. If a trend becomes strong enough it gives rise to the emergence of the counter trend. If there were times when the ability to access the Internet has been an attractive look for accommodation establishments, accommodation today are enjoying increased popularity among tourists due to the fact that there is the possibility of accessing the Internet. According to the above, it is believed that not necessarily the accommodation unit should have for example an extremely attractive Facebook account, but rather has to offer tourism services, whose positive aspects shall be promoted through the Facebook accounts of tourists that benefited and were satisfied with the services purchased. In tourism, the promised quality become credible only when the tourist has received the offered services from a particular tourist entity. Consequently the true advertisement is the word of mouth advertising, the opinion of those who have already "tried" the tourist product. On tourism market success can only be achieved by ongoing providing tourism services and products of superior quality, backed with a proper PR (Kovács, 2004, p. 59).

Analysis of data obtained via the Internet

Tourists can express their opinion regarding the quality of provided hotel services via the Internet. Due to the fact that it is (almost) impossible to follow the opinion of those tourists who were staying at the same hotel/hotels in various social

networks, the starting point in the process of collecting of tourists opinions related to the attitude of hotel front office staff presented on the website www.tripadvisor.com. Also, due to the fact that lately there is a trend that consumers of different services, therefore tourists too, post through various social networking their experiences, it is considered that the opinions published on the website www.tripadvisor.com. have been posted, largely on Facebook too, or other social networks.

Methodology

Two hotels in Brasov have been chosen randomly, where the products offered, the prices or the location are not elements of differentiation. In total in a particular area of Braşov there are four such hotels.

Due to the fact that among the views expressed by tourists negative aspects appear a well concerning the attitude of the front office staff the name of the hotels included in this analysis shall not be disclosed,

In the case of hotel "A" the opinion of 269 tourists was processed from July 2007 - August 2014, and with hotel "B" 181 views were processed, the period considered being December 2006 -

August 2014. In many cases front office staff was characterized using several attributes, but not every tourist appreciated the performance made by the front office staff,

The analysis included all the opinions that were made in English, Russian and German. The fact that the views expressed in other languages, like French, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Swedish, Dutch and Hebrew were not included in the analysis is a limit to this research.

Attributes whose frequency was small were included in another attribute group whose frequency was higher. But the content of these attributes was very similar. For example, the attribute "excellent" was included in the attribute group "great".

Within the following table (Table no. 1) the distribution of those attributes that define the front office staff of the hotels included in the analysis can be observed.

Both with hotel "A" and with hotel "B", the number of employees who were characterized as "friendly" and "helpful" is the highest.

It also should be noted that the difference is substantial on the attributes that define the front office staff with the hotels included in the analysis.

Table 1

Crosstabulation (Staff attributes*Hotel)

Staff attributes	Hotel		Staff attributes	Hotel	
	"A"	"B"		"A"	"B"
Kind	9	5	Great	16	6
Friendly	68	39	Polite	2	7
Attentive	13	2	Uninterested	9	8
Efficient	9	2	Smiling	5	9
Helpful	82	50	Professional	6	9
Informative	7	1	Amusing	5	0
Nice	15	6	Total "A"=246 Total "B" =144 Great total=390		

Deciding on the relationship between the two variables included in the analysis only based on the contingency table is difficult and fraught with a strong bias (Constantin 2006, p. 154). In order to take a correct decision the test χ^2 shall be further applied. Statistical assumptions

made are: (1). H_0 - there is no link between the attributes that define the front office staff and the hotels included in the analysis, (2). H_1 – there is a link between the attributes that define the front office staff and the hotels included in the analysis.

Table 2**The critical ratio for χ^2 test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.929(a)	12	.008
Likelihood Ratio	29.255	12	.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.299	1	.069
N of Valid Cases	390		

(a) 5 cells (19.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.85.

In Table no. 2 we can see that the critical ratio is 26.929. For making the decision this value was compared with the theoretical value of the table for a significance level $\alpha = .05$ and a number of degrees of freedom $df = 12$. The critical value from the table $\chi^2_{.05;12} = 21.026$ therefore the hypothesis H_1 can be accepted.

In conclusion, there is a connection between the hotel and the attributes that define the personnel working in the front office. Consequently staff in hotel front office gives that specific feature that makes it become "legendary".

Conclusions

Following the data obtained it can be concluded that hotels cannot differentiate by classical elements of the marketing mix, they can differentiate for example through human resources. The level of information, humour and efficiency, courtesy, attention, etc. of the front office staff represent those characteristics of the human resource that allow differentiation from the competition. This conclusion can also be supported by the following remarks coming from tourists who stayed in one of the two hotels included in the analysis: (1). "What really impressed me was the staff." (2). "Front office staff was available to help us in every moment. A

very important factor for a hotel, and the hotel did meet this expectation with flying colours." (3). "I must confess that I have travelled a lot, but this is the friendliest hotel I have ever stayed in." (4). "The friendliness of the hotel was without precedent." Also with tourism service providers communication is of course very important in creating the ethos of the brand, but the brand is represented by people and how they behave, because even if communication make statements about the brand, human behaviour is what confirm or infirm them. Is considered that just like with United Colours of Benetton brand where advertising is not just about selling clothes - in fact, the clothes appear, if appearing, only on the background - the same is with the tourism sector, the Internet, therefore social media is a secondary communication technique as extended elements of the marketing mix as people, physical evidence and customers are actually the basic pillars of communication policies of any touristic entity. In other words, the Internet, therefore social media adds value to communication only if the human resource exhibit appropriate behaviour according to tourists expectations but also it must be unique to surprise tourist in a pleasant way.

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