Impact of Social Networking Sites on Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Pawan Kumar[1]
Research Scholar
Department of Tourism & Hotel Management
Kurukshetra University Kurukshetra

Nisha Kumari[2]
Research Scholar
Department of Tourism & Hotel Management
Kurukshetra University Kurukshetra

Abstract:- **This study provides a conceptual framework on "how social networking sites influence the traveler's decision making in tourism industry". Digital marketing through social media is today mainly about capturing and sustaining awareness and attention through involvement from online users (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). With the advent of information and communication technologies (ICT) and internet the role of social media has been increasing in every service sector and tourism is one of them. Social media is beneficial for both consumers' as well as suppliers. Social media applications helps the tourism establishments for disseminate the information faster with lesser cost. Social networking site is a type of social media platform where people connect with each other and a powerful tool for marketers to advertise their products and services where users' communicate and share information. The findings showed that from various social networking platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and You Tube) were the most widely used social networking platforms that influenced the travel buying behavior of the travelers. This study is descriptive in nature and data was collected from different research papers, articles published in national and international research journals.**

Keywords:- *Social Networking sites, Social media, Tourism Industry, Hospitality, Technology, Facebook*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of 20th century, many countries widely used the internet that has influenced their economy and social life (Milano, Baggio & Piattelli, 2011). Later on, large number of internet users' began to take part in social networking websites and that's change the social system of the society (Seth, 2012). Originally social networking sites were used for entertainment purposed but now a days with the excessive use of internet and ICT advancements it has used in many ways such as to communicate, job networking, target marketing etc. (Assenov & Khurana, 2012; Clark & Roberts, 2010). Users' of social networking sites like Facebook, interact globally such features are beneficial for companies to get quick feedback from consumers. Social media marketing replaced the traditional marketing methods. The digital advertisements on social media are most trustworthy than advertisements on TV, radio, newspapers (Li & Darban, 2012). People shared a post on social media about product or service after experienced it, so

it's easy for marketers to convince the prospective consumers to buy the products and this strategy is widely used in hospitality and tourism industry. 'Social media have been widely adopted by travellers to search, organize, share and annotate their travel stories and experiences through blogs' (Leung et al, 2013). Social networking sites also affected the consumer behavior because it provides a platform for consumers to connect with other consumers and company; they have changed the rule of marketing (Bilgihan, Peng & Kandampully, 2014). Social networking sites record the preferences of consumers; provide social communication that's creating brand awareness (Bilgihan, Peng & Kandampully, 2014). In tourism industry also social networking sites attracts the customers'. Mostly all the travel companies, accommodation establishments have their social media page to share latest offers to customers. Through the videos, photos and blogs about a destination posted on social media they attracts customers globally. Every day around 3 million of photos are uploaded on social media platforms, more than 5 million tweets and blogs are posted on twitter and other sites (Bodnar, 2010). Before taking travel services from any suppliers' consumers can also check the reviews given by previous customers who have taken services from those suppliers. A study conducted by Fotis et al, 2012, stated that more than 80 percent of US consumers check online reviews before making travel purchase decision. Trip Advisor is one of the largest travel review website, used by individuals to get advice on planning their trips (R'athonyi, 2013).

II. SOCIAL MEDIA

Obar and Wildman (2015) define social media "as an internet communication where users spread information through established online communities and networks". It includes review sites, social networking sites, blogs, internet forum, content community sites etc. It is providing a new way for firms to reach your target audience (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Wikipedia defines social media as "the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks" (Wikipedia, 2013a).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content".

A. Social Networking Sites

These are the online platforms used by people to build social relationship with other people those have similar interest. This is also known as social network websites or social websites. Some authors considered all social media sites as social networking sites. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest are some examples of social networking sites (O' Connor 2008). Wikipedia (2013b) defines a "social networking" service as "an online service, platform, or site that focuses on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people who, for example, share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections"

B. Major Players in Social Media

➢ *Facebook*

It was established in 2004, and largest social media network with 2.91 billion active users till 2021. It is the best tool to connect people worldwide and also used by business enterprises to promote their products and connect with potential customers. In tourism and hospitality business every travel companies have their Facebook page where they advertise their products and connect with them. 68 percent adults in US used Facebook and in which 52 percent active multiple times daily. In India 448 million were the active social media users out of 240 million were active on Facebook (Statista, 2022). Tourists during their tour or post tour share their photos, videos on Facebook that promote the destination and also share their views on service providers and service quality that also help the business to create brand awareness and image.

➢ *YouTube*

After Facebook this is the most used social media platform used by people. As per WordStream, 2022 report around 2.56 billion were active users on YouTube around the globe and mostly users were at the age group of 18 to 34 years. This video-based social media platform was established in 2005 and later acquired by Google in 2006. Businesses posted videos, interviews, product reviews and visually-driven instructional content on this platform that helps the business to reach the target audience.

➢ *Twitter*

Twitter is another social networking platform used by people to express his thoughts or communicate the audience in real time. It was established in 2006, March 21. Worldwide 440 million people were the active users of twitter ((Statista, 2022)). 63 percent twitter users are between the ages of 35 to 65 years old. Twitter helps the businessman to find out what your customers and competitors are saying about. On twitter also photos or videos are uploaded by users with his views.
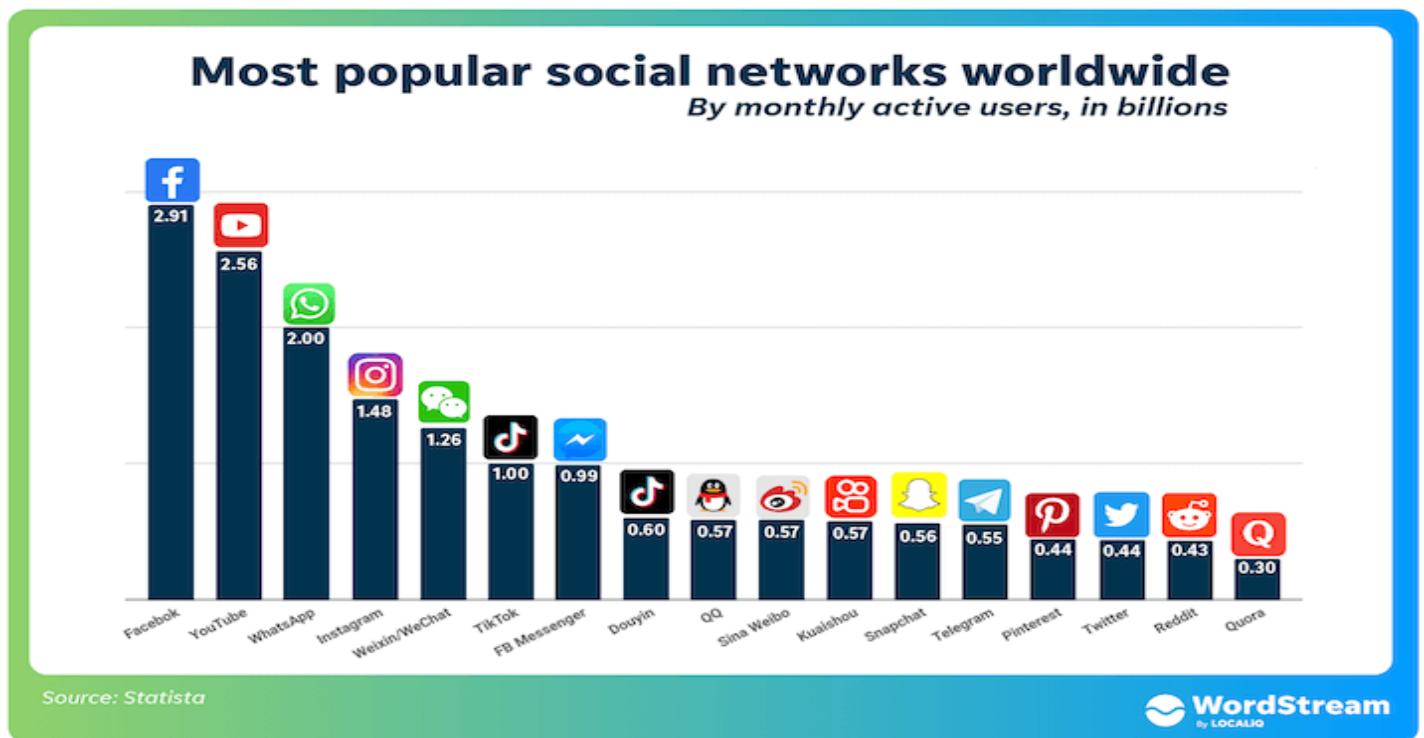

Fig 1: Most popular social networking sites in worldwide by active users (in billions)
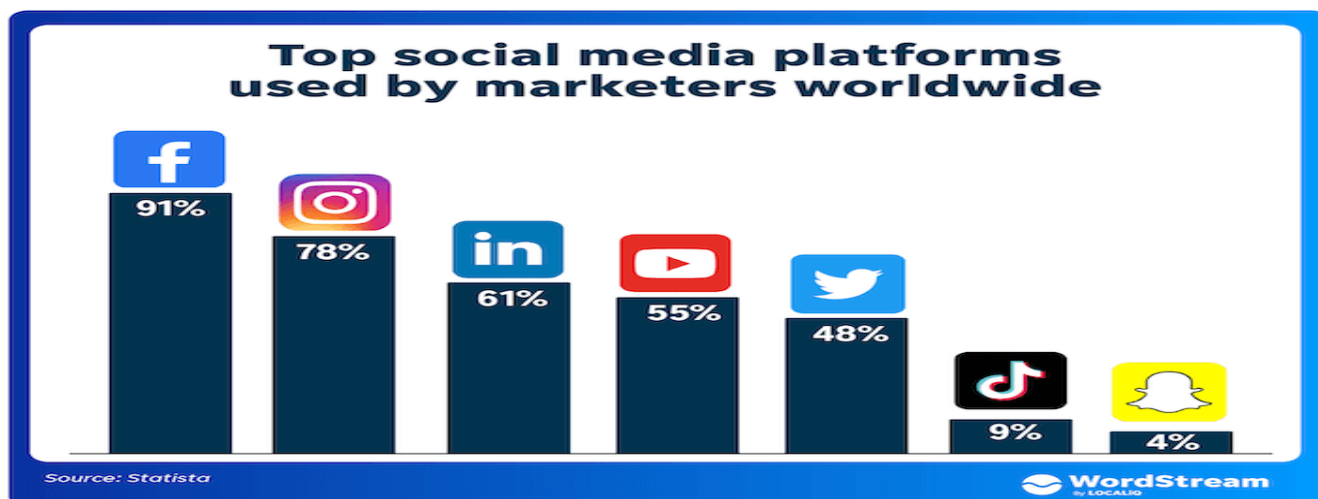
Fig: 2 Social media platforms used by marketers in worldwide
Source: WordStream report (2022)

➢ *LinkedIn*

It is the most renowned social networking site for connection professional around the globe. It was launched in May 5, 2003. It has a huge base of professional globally that is 830 million and 85 million users in India. It is helpful for job givers and job seekers also. It also facilitates groups where people sharing interests and occupations may gather. It provides the professional networking, information and marketing ideas to businesses.

➢ *Instagram*

This social media platform was established in 6 October, 2010 and is also a famous social network site with over 1.48 billion users globally. The mostly users of this platform are teenagers and young adults. So it is the best marketing tool for marketers to influence young adults. In this platform user' share information about fashion, travel, food, photographs, designs and other common interest. It is the home of influencers, brands, bloggers, and small business owners.

➢ *Pinterest*

Another social media platform launched in 2010 and it's headquarter is located at San Franscisco (USA). In Pinterest a marketer creates and share boards and pins related to your niche. This is the best tool for sharing images and GIF of your products, a study stated that 75 percent of online shoppers rely on product photos when deciding on a potential purchase. Mostly users on this social platform are women.

➢ *Snapchat*

Snapchat is also a unique tool for marketers to connect with customers started in 2011 by the students of Stanford University. Businesses can advertise their products or services on this social media platform and interact with other Snapchat users, viewing their stories and reply on it. It has a large customer base with over 400 million active users.

➢ *Whatsapp*

This is another emerging social media platform using for instant messaging for smart phone's, tablets and laptops users. This social app was launched in 2010, now acquired by Facebook with 2 billion active users. Internet access is required to send any content from Whatsapp to another. One can send reports, contacts, pictures, videos, money, voice messages to other users who have the application on their gadgets.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Role of social media or social networking sites in industries/businesses is an important research topic for researchers in recent years. A lot of work has been done by researchers but a limited work has been done in tourism and hospitality sector. So this research helps the academicians and other researchers to know the impact of social networking sites on tourism industry.

Parikshat Singh Manhas (2014) conducted a study on foreign tourist who came India about how they know about India and found that mostly foreign tourist know about Indian tourist places through social media and then they collected information and plan tour for India. **Jay P. Trivadi (2019)** in his study found that social media communication formed positive attitude towards tourist destination among the user. **Honoria Samson (2017)** found that travelers more rely on reviews and experience shared by other travelers rather than websites or media advertisements. **Suresh Sharma and Swati Mishra (2020)** studied the role and impact of social media in international pilgrimage tourism and found that Sri Lanka tourist used the social platforms for collecting information about Indian pilgrimage places and reservations. **Yadav and Arora (2012)** also studied the social media impact on tourism and founded that it can enhance the reputation/image of a destination. **Pergolinoet al. (2012)** believed that a tourist place will be effectively visible by using the social media. It creates

brad awareness by word-of mouth of electronic word-of mouth (Kiráľová (2014). **Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)** discussed the benefits of using the social media for marketers and found that social media platforms are the economical and efficient marketing tool to reach their prospective customers. **Anwesha et al. (2016)** in their study found that various social networking sites have changed the tourists purchasing behavior. **Elvis Madondo (2016)** found that Facebook and Whatsapp were the leading social networking sites used in South Africa and helpful in promoting tourism. **Anja Pabel and Bruce Prideaux (2015), Benxiang Zeng (2013)** stated that limited research studies were conducted on social media usage in tourism sector, and found that tourists are using social platforms for evaluate the alternatives and purchase decision. **Neeraj Gohil (2015)** studied the impact of social media on tourism in Madhya Pradesh and found that around 30 percent online travel bookers were used the social media and expected rise in future. **Androniki et al (2014)** found that social media is useful for businesses to effectively use their resources. Apart from positive impacts of social media, it has negative impacts on businesses **(Khan et al (2014).**

➢ *Objectives of the study*

This study is conducted to explore the effects of social media on tourism and hospitality industry by assessing the positive and negative impacts and various social networking sites used by the consumers to make their purchasing decision.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Previous research studies on social media and tourism & hospitality were identified and gathered from various tourism databases, Science Direct and Google Scholar to attain our study objectives. To identify the articles the key words such as social media, social networking sites were used in different hospitality sectors like hotels, travel and tourism. Identified studies were comprehensively studied and draw a conclusion and suggestions for further studies on this topic.

➢ *Social Media in Tourism Industry*

Social media plays an important role in many aspects of tourism and hospitality industry. Prior to internet invention travelers collected information about a destination from travel agents or from the persons who visited that place. However some researchers found that some travelers do not consider social networking sites as an information source, they were looking for home page of the service providers, guidebooks, and magazines for gathered information (Jacobsen and Munar, 2012). But now after the internet and social media platforms came in existence the information about any tourist's destination come across on a click of mouse. Apart from information search social media also, influencing the decision making behavior of the travelers. 69 percent of the worldwide travelers used social media platforms for travel related needs. Interactions with the customers help the company to make a positive image and build trust among the other customers. 53

percent travelers avoid hotel bookings that don't have review on social media. 38 percent Americans use social media blog to share their travel experience. 72 percent people upload their photos on social media after their tour. It is also beneficial in promotion of companies' products or services (Zeng, 2013). Many times a special offer was provided by companies for the users of social networking sites. Customer relationship management (CRM) can also improve with the help of social networking sites between the customers and marketers. Almost all travel companies creating their websites to attract customers. To promote destinations in remote areas online services are provided by Indian travel companies. There are many benefits for marketers for using social media or social network platforms such as cost effective and widely reach in minimum time, a communication tool, promotion, targeting the customers and create brand awareness. Assenov & Khurana , (2012) conducted a study in hotel industry to know the benefits of social networking sites and found that social networking sites are very helpful for hotels in brand awareness. Instagram and twitter were the most used social media platforms by US consumers to follow brands/companies. Tourism companies often have to stay active online to not to miss any post. Therefore "hotels are working on investing more in social media in terms of personnel and time as currently for them it is not a very high investment" (Assenov & Khurana, 2012). The excessive use of smart phones and mobile social networking applications increased the use of social networking sites, that's help the tourism suppliers ((Dimitris & Vasiliki 2013). Social networking sites also affected the consumer behavior because it provides a platform for consumers to connect with other consumers and company; they have changed the rule of marketing (Bilgihan, Peng & Kandampully, 2014). Social networking sites remove the complexity of accessing other people's travel experiences (Litvin et al., 2008). Social media is not only beneficial to endorse selling but also used to announce the latest promotions and offers (Zeng, 2013).
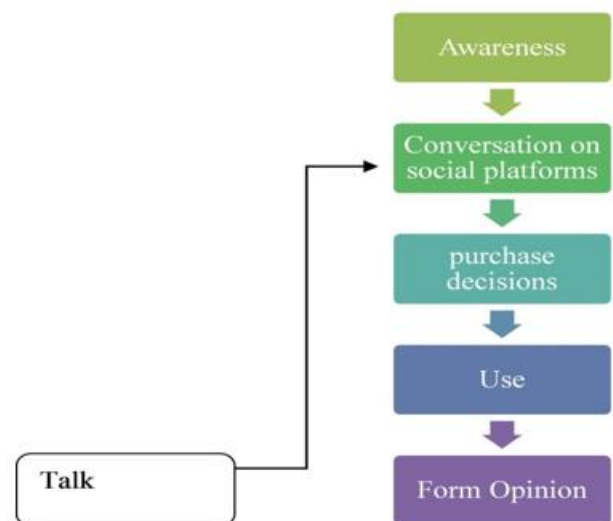

Fig 3: Purchasing process
Source: (Turner and Shah, 2011)

> *Issues in social media use in tourism*

Apart from advantages that social media provides, it also raised some issues for marketers and customers also. Consumers unfollow brands on social media because of irrelevant content, too many ads or promotional posts, poor customer service and they use influencers to sell their products/services. From the viewpoint of the marketers, language is a barrier on information sharing between users of social media (Hsu, 2012). Multiple language platforms or websites for tourism participants might be beneficial for both supply and demand. As we know social media is a powerful tool for marketing and influence the buying behavior and behavior can be negatively influenced if the previous customers are not satisfied and review negative about the service quality of service providers. So there is always a possibility of influenced in both directions (Hede & Kellett, 2012; Thevenot, 2007). Another issue with social media is lack of trust, as many researchers found that many customers do not trust on social media platforms and information on it, they believed that social media platforms are not authentic source of information (e.g. Bray et al., 2006; Burgess et al., 2011; Chung & Buhalis, 2008; Fotis et al., 2012; Munar & Jacobsen, 2013; Tham, 2013). Internet facility is also required to access social networking sites, so through social media companies can't persuade those customers those don't have internet access.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through this study we try to find out the various social media platforms used in tourism sector and benefits or drawbacks of social media for tourism business. The study found that social media is an effective marketing tool for promotion of tourism destinations of other services. With the internet accessibility the users of social media platforms are growing day by day. In 2022 the active users of social media were crossed 4.62 billion marks they are using one or another social media platform to share and collect information from one another. Previous studies also acknowledged that businesses used social media platforms perform more effectively as compare to its competitors. Now they have potential to reach large customers in minimum time and cost and build a relationship with potential and current customers. All travel companies be it online or offline have create their social media pages to launch their latest offers and packages. While some travel companies reluctant to use social media platforms due to lack of knowledge and resources to manage their social media.

VI. CONCLUSION

The social networking sites are helpful for travelers to make better travel decisions and supported in increase number of visit to a website (Milano et al. (2012). Now they can evaluate each and every components of travel before purchase. They collect information from internet, websites and social media also. Travelers check the reviews, feedback, rating through the various means of social media. However, it is remain a question for researchers whether social media can really drive conversion in the tourism industry and boost the number and length of visits, as well as visitor satisfaction and number of return visits.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is based on literature from the previous studies on social media and tourism and find out the effect of social media in tourist's decision making. For further studies scholars can use the primary data through survey and interview methods for authentic results. Role or impact of social media in Indian tourism industry is also a researchable topic for researchers. Social media impact on business performance can also be a research topic.

REFERENCES

[1]. Alghizzawi, M., Salloum, S. A., & Habes, M. (2018). The role of social media in tourism marketing in Jordan. *International Journal of Information Technology and Language Studies*, *2*(3), 59-70.

[2]. Assenov, I., & Khurana, N. (2012, September). Social media marketing and the hospitality industry: Evidence from Thailand. In *The 2012 International Conference on Business and Management, Phuket-Thailand* (Vol. 252).

[3]. Androniki, K. (2014). Damascius and the practice of the philosophical life: on the impossibility of communication about and communion with the first principles. *Scholae. Философское антиковедение и классическая традиция*, *8*(1), 34-49.

[4]. Bilgihan, A., Peng, C., & Kandampully, J. (2014). Generation Y's dining information seeking and sharing behavior on social networking sites: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

[5]. Clark, L. A., & Roberts, S. J. (2010). Employer's use of social networking sites: A socially irresponsible practice. *Journal of business ethics*, *95*(4), 507-525.

[6]. Chung, J. Y., & Buhalis, D. (2008). Information needs in online social networks. *Information Technology & Tourism*, *10*(4), 267-281.

[7]. Chung, J. Y., & Buhalis, D. (2008, January). Web 2.0: A study of online travel community. In *Enter* (Vol. 70, p. 81).

[8]. Fotis, J. N., Buhalis, D., & Rossides, N. (2012). *Social media use and impact during the holiday travel planning process* (pp. 13-24). Springer-Verlag.

[9]. Gohil, N. (2015). Role and impact of social media in tourism: a case study on the initiatives of Madhya Pradesh State Tourism. *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences*, *5*(4), 8-15.

[10]. Hsu, Y. L. (2012). Facebook as international eMarketing strategy of Taiwan hotels. *International journal of hospitality management*, *31*(3), 972-980.

[11]. Hede, A. M., & Kellett, P. (2012). Building online brand communities: Exploring the benefits, challenges and risks in the Australian event sector. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, *18*(3), 239-250.

[12]. Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business horizons*, *53*(1), 59-68.

[13]. Khan, G. F., Swar, B., & Lee, S. K. (2014). Social media risks and benefits: A public sector perspective. *Social science computer review*, *32*(5), 606-627.

[14]. Li, W., & Darban, A. (2012). The impact of online social networks on consumers' purchasing decision: The study of food retailers.

[15]. Leung, D., Law, R., Van Hoof, H., & Buhalis, D. (2013). Social media in tourism and hospitality: A literature review. *Journal of travel & tourism marketing*, *30*(1-2), 3-22.

[16]. Madondo, E. (2016). *The influence of social media in promoting the tourism industry in Durban, South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation).

[17]. Munar, A. M., & Jacobsen, J. K. S. (2013). Trust and involvement in tourism social media and web-based travel information sources. *scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, *13*(1), 1-19.

[18]. Milano, R., Baggio, R., & Piattelli, R. (2011, January). The effects of online social media on tourism websites. In *ENTER* (pp. 471-483).

[19]. Obar, J. A., & Wildman, S. (2015). Social media definition and the governance.

[20]. O'connor, P. (2008, August). User-generated content and travel: A case study on Tripadvisor. com. In *Enter* (Vol. 2008, pp. 47-58).

[21]. Ráthonyi, G. (2013). Influence of social media on tourism–especially among students of the University of Debrecen. *Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce*, *7*(1), 105-112.

[22]. Seth, G. (2012). Analyzing the effects of social media on the hospitality industry.

[23]. Thevenot, G. (2007). Blogging as a social media. *Tourism and hospitality research*, *7*(3-4), 287-289.

[24]. Tafesse, W., & Wien, A. (2018). Implementing social media marketing strategically: an empirical assessment. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *34*(9-10), 732-749.

[25]. Yadav, V., & Arora, M. (2012). The product purchase intentions in Facebook using analytical hierarchical process. *A Journal of Radix International Educational and Research Consortium*, *1*(4).

[26]. Zeng, B., & Gerritsen, R. (2014). What do we know about social media in tourism? A review. *Tourism management perspectives*, *10*, 27-36.

[27]. Zeng, B. (2013). Social media in tourism. *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, *2*(1), 1-2.