INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TOURISM – ESPECIALLY AMONG STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

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Abstract: Derive from the characteristic, decisions connected with travelling have high risk for the travellers therefore they try to collect more detailed information and thoroughly map decision alternatives in order to decrease uncertainty.

Wide spread of the Internet and rapid technological evolution have revolutionized all industries in the World especially tourism. Platform of tourism increasingly get to the Internet nowadays which is vitally important because tourism is an information-based and information-intensive industry. Thanks to development of the internet tourists have an opportunity to access such information and purchasing opportunities which were available with the help of intermediaries earlier. Providing wide range of possibilities, Web 2.0 fundamentally changed the way of tourists' information search behaviour and travelling decision making. This article collects some of the most significant new applications (social networking sites, blogs) in tourism – examine them from the two sides of tourism (demand, supply) – which principally based on active participation of users. Furthermore an offline questionnaire was made in order to survey the social media usage of the student (University of Debrecen, Centre for Agricultural and Applied Economic Sciences) during their leisure travel planning process. Although findings of the study reveal that vast majority of students use social networking sites every day, they don't really use these platforms during their trip planning process. Among students, friends and relatives are the most important and the most trustworthy source of information due to characteristics of sample.

Key words: Web 2.0, social media, social networking sites, blogs

Introduction

Wide spread of the Internet and rapid technological evolution have revolutionized all industries in the World especially tourism. Platform of tourism increasingly get to the Internet nowadays which is vitally important because tourism is an information-based and information-intensive industry. In order to reduce the high risk of travelling which derives from the experimental characteristics of holiday travel related purchases, travellers have to collect a lot of information (*Sirakaya* and *Woodside* 2005). At the same time proper information about selected destination can enhance travellers' confidence during the decision making process, assist them to make their best decision, therefore increase the quality of the trip. (*Gretzel* et al. 2007). Thanks to development of Internet and the variety of Information and Communication Tools (ICTs) – such as web technology, mobile technology etc. – tourists have the chance to access such information and purchasing opportunities which were only available with the help of intermediaries earlier (*Buhalis* and *Jun* 2007). Providing wide range of possibilities, Web 2.0 has fundamentally changed the way of tourists' information search behaviour and travelling decision making (*Buhalis* and *Law*, 2008). On the one hand, changes lead to travellers have become more independent, experienced, flexible and sophisticated in arranging their trips and on the other hand tourists have accessed countless reliable and appropriate information provided by more and more other users/travellers (*Buhalis* 1998; *Buhalis* et al. 2011). During information search processes, consumers increasingly rely on other travellers' experiences which decrease uncertainty, therefore information search is moving to online social media where people interact freely and easily exchange information (*Buhalis* et al. 2011; *Fotis* et al. 2012; *Yoo* et al. 2009). New online trends mean that tourists are having more control over their travel decision making process and exerting an influence on tourism related businesses to take new trends into account (*Cox* et al. 2007).

Literature review

What is Web 2.0?

Derive from the characteristics of Web 2.0 – several academic literatures, blogs articles attempted to define – it is a complex phenomenon. Its' complexity shows that Web 2.0 has got different dimensions of use such as technological, business-philosophical and sociological. Web 2.0 is a concept originally coined during a conference brainstorming session between O'Reilly and MediaLive International in 2004 who described it as "an attitude rather than a technology" (*O'Reilly* 2005). The key difference between traditional websites (Web 1.0) and Web 2.0 is the participation of the users. Web 2.0 sites have the ability to be the platform for users to interact and collaborate with each other, in contrast to other websites (Web 1.0) where users are limited to the passive viewing of content that was created for them (*Cormode* and *Krishnamurthy* 2008).

Milano et al., (2011) have similar opinion with O'Reilly (2005) about Web 2.0: Web 2.0 is "not really a technological advancement … rather identifies the changes occurred in the ways software developers and people make and use the web". More detailed definition have been created by Turban et al. (2011) whom determined Web 2.0 as "the second-generation of Internet-based services that let people collaborate and share information online *in perceived new ways such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, video sharing sites, web applications, and communication tools"*.

From different point of view but with the similar conception, Sigala (2007) interpreted Web 2.0 which realise and exploit the full potential of the original concept and role of the Internet. The researcher in her article also added that Web 2.0 is the "*tools of mass collaboration*", when internet users actively participate and simultaneously collaborate with other users in order to create, use and share information.

Web 2.0 in tourism = Travel 2.0

Travel 2.0 is a term that represents the extension and customization of the concept of Web 2.0 in the tourism sector. Travel 2.0 describes a new generation of travel websites with new technologies which enable social collaboration among travellers where tourists can share their experiences with fellow travellers. Tourists regard this information as more trustworthy and beneficial rather than professional travel advice that's why travellers are becoming increasingly more interested in seeking the opinions and reviews of the fellow travellers (*Fotis* et al. 2012; *Leung* et al. 2011).

As far as the tourism businesses are concerned Web 2.0 provides unique opportunities to attain scores of people, to understand a market's reaction to their offering and to use this information in their business development (*Leung* et al. 2011).

Social media and tourism

Diffusion of the Internet and development of the ICTs contributed to the process that social media started replacing traditional sources of information. Consumers have changed they are becoming more sophisticated so they require more specialized media.

Although social media is very important all over the World there is still no agreed definition in the academic literature and it can be interpreted in many ways as we can find in the article written by Fotis et al., (2012): social media regularly identify as social software, social web sites, consumer-generated media, user-generated media, user-generated content websites, or even Web 2.0.

In my opinion Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) give a compact definition for this term involved most of the previously mentioned different interpretations: social media is "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" (videos, photos, texts etc.). "*Web 2.0 has made available some technologies that… offer new and more efficient ways of communication by enabling users to make their ideas and opinions available to a potential audience of millions of people. This information is called User-Generated Content*" (*Chaves* et al. 2012).

In tourism, consumers' behaviour has always been influenced by development of ICTs, but Web 2.0 has completely changed how consumers design and consume travel related products (*Buhalis* and *Law* 2008). During the travel planning process social media get an important role, because it gives access to other travellers' experiences as an ultimate information source (*Chung* and *Buhalis* 2008; *Yoo* et al. 2011).

However, there is not yet an agreed term to describe social media, the academic literature also evidences a disagreement on the classification of social media according to Fotis et al., (2012). They collected the different grouping from several research works and they found that some of them propose just two, five, eight, or more then ten social media types.

Universal McCann (2008) proposes ten important platforms of social media, – Figure 1 – which encourage users and travellers to post and share their travel experiences, comments, opinions to serve as a source of information for other users (*Xiang* and *Gretzel* 2009, *Universal McCann* 2008). There are hundreds of platforms where Internet users can interact and share information with other users, starting from blogs, forums, wikis, video and photo sharing to social networks, virtual communities, chat rooms and pod-cast (*Universal McCann* 2008).

Figure 1: Key social media platforms
Source: Universal McCann 2008

According to the basic idea of Sigala (2007), this article deals with two of the most important social media in connection with the impact on tourism businesses and tourists. The article supports the influence of social media on both sides of tourism with different statistics.

Social networking sites

Social networking sites (eg. Facebook or IWIW: the second most important in Hungary) have digitalized human social connections. Nowadays people have more and more friends and trying to maintain their social connections through these sites, while face to face connections permanently decrease. Plenty of social media sites exist with different purposes and functionality. Social networking sites are key platforms where users can become members, create a profile, and build a personal network connecting them to other users with whom they share their own content (*Boyd* and *Ellison* 2007; *Kaplan* and *Haenlein* 2010; *Kietzmann* et al., 2011; *Xiang* and *Gretzel*, 2010).

Facebook was a closed network for students of a university a few years ago. After some years it becomes the most important social networking service on the world for people of all ages, and a good communications platform for businesses. One of the most popular and important social networking site is the Facebook in Hungary with its more than 4 million users in the country. The site has over 955 million monthly active users worldwide – it means if Facebook was a country it would be the third biggest country of the World after China and India – 552 million daily active users on average and approximately 81% of their monthly active users are outside the U.S. and Canada. The 2.5 billion shares and the 2.7 billion likes daily support the activity of the users of Facebook who upload additional 300 million photos a day (www.facebook.com).

In the tourism sector the world's largest Web 2.0 site (travel review site) is the Tripadvisor, serves more than 74 million users per month who seek advice about their travel plans and hosts more than 75 million real travel reviews and opinions. This site offers trusted advice from real travellers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features with seamless links to booking tools (www.tripadvisor.com).

These two sites connect each other through a common application so called Tripfriend. The purpose of this cooperation is that tourists could collect proper information about the selected destination from their close acquaintance.

Impacts of social networking sites on tourists

Tourists in order to decrease the uncertainty derive from the travel decisions collect more and more indispensable information in connection with the travel. Altering tourists (consumer behaviour) trust even more in other travellers' opinions rather than official marketing advices due to the spread of social media sites and user-generated contents. Many tourists need to obtain confirmation of other users that they have planned the best trip. An opinion or recommendations from an acquaintance or friend have a huge impact on the

tourists' travel decision making process (*Sigala*, 2007). An interesting study by Mandala Research LCC collected the most important surveys from different sources related to the impact of social media on consumers. The study revealed that social connection has a big influence on commerce decision; 83% of the respondents tell their friend when they get a good deal, 90% of people trust recommendations from their friends, 300% more likely to buy when recommended by friend, 1000% more likely to buy deal after seeing friend purchased it (*Mandala Research LCC*. 2010). Nowadays social networking sites have a huge impact on how tourists create, organise and share tourism experiences and to support this statement, some statistics were collected from different studies.

Funsherpa Infographics illustrated social media influence on US travellers, with more than half (52%) of travellers having changed their original plans after seeking their trip on different social media sites. 70% of the respondents updated their Facebook status during vacation, 76% post vacation photos to a social network, 55% 'liked' Facebook pages in connection with a vacation and 46% of travellers post hotel reviews after their trip (http://www.newmediatrendwatch. com/news/1065-us-online-travel-industry-to-be-worth-162-billion-in-2012).

According to World Travel Market 2011 Industry Report, social media altered the travel plans of more than half of the respondents who use it and more than a third of people changed their hotels as a result of what they found on social media networks (http://www.newmediatrendwatch.com/news/895-social-media-is-still-altering-the-travel-plans-of-more-than-half-the-people-who-use-it-in-the-uk).

According to an interesting study which revealed that 90% of pleasure travellers take photographs and that 45% of them posted their photographs online (*Lo* et al. 2011).

Király (2011) refers to a study made by Skyscannar which examined that how social network sites impact travelling attitudes. The result was interesting which claims that half of the participants select their next holiday destination by their friends' shared photographs. Furthermore, this study also revealed that 88% of the users always look at their friend's holiday pictures.

Murphy et al., (2010) examined the online sharing attitudes in general (video, text, photo etc.). 40-50% of the respondents frequently share texts and pictures while only 3% post videos. Respondents are more likely to share content on their own social media website than on a media sharing or review site.

Gretzel et al., (2007) conducted a comprehensive survey in connection with the impact of online travel reviews (user-generated content) on consumers. In order to find out the role and impact of online travel reviews in pleasure trip planning behaviour they asked 1480 users of tripadvisor.com. The key results of the study was that other travellers' opinions on online travel review sites were the most frequently used source of information (*Gretzel* et al. 2007). The below assignment contains the most important findings of the study in terms of the influence of the online travel review sites have on their users. Travel reviews have influence on respondents: (1) Learn about a destination and what it has to offer (2) Evaluate

alternatives (3) Avoid places/services they would not enjoy (4) Provide them with ideas (5) Increase confidence in travel decisions (6) Make it easier to imagine what a place will be like (7) Reduces the risk and uncertainty (8) Helps plan a trip efficiently (*Gretzel* et al. 2007).

According to Cox et al., (2009) the main limitation of this research is that the findings are connected directly to tripadvisor.com users, mostly from four countries (USA, Canada, UK and Australia) who are actively engaged in the use of user-generated contents. Examining the impacts of user-generated content on a broader range of Internet users may contribute to deeper understanding of the topic (*Cox* et al. 2009).

Impacts of social networking sites on tourism businesses

More and more tourism businesses use social networking sites to achieve better position in the competition for the grace of tourists. For instance creating a Facebook fan page enables different tourism businesses to easily, cheaply and quickly reach scores of people, interact with past and potential visitors, attend interaction with fans or even give opportunity for reserving their accommodation on the page. Almost everyone loves sharing experiences about their vacation. Past visitors' positive experiences and stories are genuine third party contributions which may encourage others to visit. It is a free of charge marketing tool for all tourism businesses (*Fotis* et al. 2012).

One of the activities that community members of Tripadvisor can do is post reviews about hotels, attractions, and restaurants. By analyzing the comments on the webpage, businesses are able to monitor and get better understanding what their guests like and dislike about them and even their competitors, which can help businesses to strengthen weaknesses and maintain and improve what visitors like (*Leung* et al., 2011).

One of the Funsherpa Infographics researches supports the power of social networking site; they found that 50% of US travel companies saying that direct bookings have been generated from different social networking sites. (http://www.newmediatrendwatch.com/news/1065-us-online-travel-industry-to-be-worth-162-billion-in-2012)

Cox et al., (2009) collected the potential benefits of consumer reviews for tourism businesses from different studies. The next assignment contains the most important findings of the studies in connection with the possible benefits that user-generated content can provide to business.

(1) Increases the likelihood of consumers having a good opinion of a business (2) Better search engine position of websites that contain UGC (3) Enhances cross selling opportunities for different products/services (4) Ability to convert consumers from 'observers' to 'purchasers' due to the trustworthiness of consumer reviews (increases in conversion up to 10% have been reported) (5) Increases consumer loyalty to websites that contain UGC to the ongoing development of content and dialogue on key

issues (6) Provides relevant and up to date consumer feedback on products and services (*Cox* et al. 2009).

Blogs or Weblogs

Blogs (Weblog) are a type of website or platform formed by entries ("posts"), which are made in online journal style published on the World Wide Web and usually displayed in reverse chronological order. A typical blog combines text, images, links to other blogs, Web pages, and different media related to its topic. Anyone can create a blog by using free software offered for free of charge at several websites nowadays. Numerous examples of the topics exist in the tourism industry and some of the most popular blog platforms are Igougo, Travelplanet, Realtravel, Tripadvisor, Twitter (*Camilleri* et al. 2007; *Nagy* 2010; *Grotte* 2010).

Impacts of blogs on tourists

Blogs are becoming a very important information source for international travellers for getting travel advice and suggestions of tourism suppliers. Gretzel and Yoo (2008) have shown that "reviews play an important role in the trip planning process for those who actively read them. They provide ideas, make decisions easier, add fun to the planning process and increase confidence by reducing risk making it easier to image what places will be like". When reading and sharing one's travel experience through weblogs, this also creates the willingness to travel and visit the same destination.

Several statistics support the influence of online travel blogs on tourist decision making behaviour. For instance Universal McCann 2010 latest "The Socialisation of Brands" survey has revealed changes in the way that people are using the Internet to create and share information. The usage of different blogs in almost every examined area – especially tourism – has increased steadily from 2008 to 2010 as we can see on the second figure. Nowadays approximately every third of the people read travel related blogs for getting trustworthy information from fellow travellers.
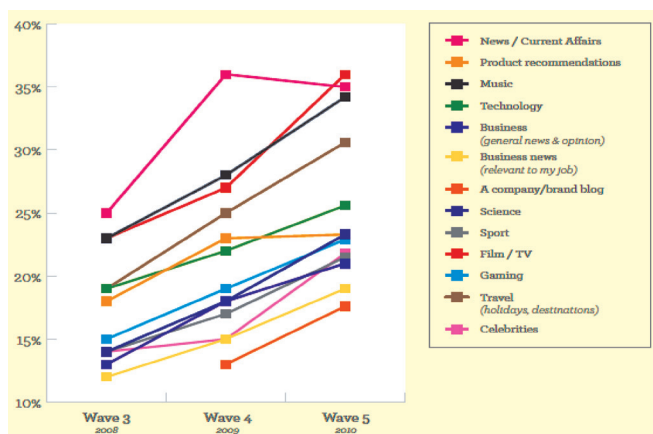

Figure 2: The most often read blogs amongst those who have read a blog in the last six month

Source: Universal McCann, 2010

Impacts of blogs on tourism businesses

Tourism businesses and destination management organisations pay even more attention to online travel blogs in order to (1) communicate with their guests, and enhance their loyalty, (2) create interest and appeal to their products or services, (3) conduct an easy, free, timely and reliable market research about travellers' preferences, (4) give feedback and maintain connection with current and prospective travellers in a very personal and informal way. Weblogs are becoming very important tools affecting information search since their links, content (using keywords regularly) and popularity influence the ranking of a company on a search engines (*Sigala*, 2007). Despite search engine optimisation it is vitally important to deal with the content of the blog. Blog posts should be compact, relevant and informative because of the fact that a regularly updated blog may help promote your tourism brand through the building of a community of readers and by increasing the number of search terms that may bring visitors to the site.

Materials and methods

Data collection and measures

An offline questionnaire survey, about the usage of social media during travel planning process, was conducted in 2012. During random sampling 240 students (BSc, MSc) from the University of Debrecen Centre for Agricultural and Applied Economic Sciences completed the questionnaire. Economic faculties were preferred during the selection such as tourism and hospitality or trade and marketing. Eventually the sample of the study consists of 221 students, who have taken at least one holiday trip within 12 months previous to the study. Only 14 questionnaires were incomplete and further 5 respondents haven't taken at least one holiday trip during the last 12 months. Analyzing of this age group is a part of my PhD research work which will examine additional age groups too.

The questionnaire included measures to provide socio-demographic characteristics, usage of the internet and social media behaviour. Several instances were used for explaining types of websites in order to increase the reliability of the responses. The questionnaire used not only the most famous social media examples from all over the world but also websites operating exclusively in Hungary such as iwiw.hu or utazok.hu.

Seven point Likert scale were used to measure what extent trust of the travellers in connection with the travel related information sources. Of the seven information sources, five were borrowed from Fotis et al. (2009), of four borrowed from Cox et al. (2009). On the basis of Fotis et al., (2012) the perceived level of social media influence on destination and accommodation choice was measured a 7 point scale ranging from "Not Influential At All" (1) to "Very Influential" (7) using the same information sources.

Results

Profile of the sample

Due to opportunities of the study the sample included students from the University of Debrecen Centre for Agricultural and Applied Economic Sciences represented the age group of 18 to 25. According to the gender, 60% were females and 40% males. The over representation of female respondents has been also observed in other studies (*Cox* et al. 2009; *Fotis* et al. 2012; *Gretzel* et al. 2007). Almost every five students (18%) have got a job along his/her study. Figure 3. shows the proportion of the ages among the respondents. Most of the students (66%) are in the 19 to 21 age group.
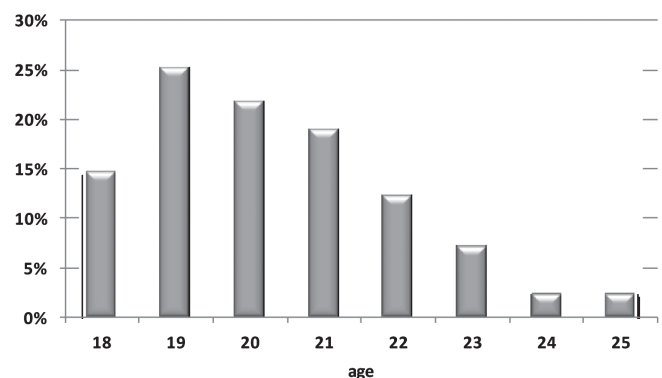

Figure 3: Proportion of ages of the respondents

Usage of the Internet and social media

As per the frequency of the daily use of the internet among the students, 58% use for 1 to 3 hours a day and almost every fourth (23%) of the students spend 3 to 5 hours on the internet every day. According to the latest survey of GfK Hungária, regularly internet users from 15 to 49 ages in Hungary use internet for 207 minutes every day. (http://www.barikad.hu/egyre_toebben_netezuenk_a_mobilunkon-20120710) Almost everybody (96%) uses the internet in their homes, and half of them use it on their mobile phone. 63% of the respondents are smartphone owner, and 86% of them use the internet on their devices for average 25 minutes every day. This is almost two times higher than the Hungarian (14 minutes) average because of the characteristics of the sample. It can be considered as a high result although the national study examined not only the age group of 18-25. (http://www.barikad.hu/egyre_toebben_netezuenk_a_mobilunkon-20120710)

Among students the most popular smartphone activities are visiting social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn or Iwiw (88%), searching information (78%) and visiting their e-mail box (65%).

As far as the social media are concerned the vast majority of respondents (96%) have visited at least one social media website during the last 12 months. 77% of the respondents visit some social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Iwiw) every day, 18% of the students several times a week. 82% of

the respondents visit photo and video sharing sites every day (41%) or several times a week. Analysis did not reveal any significant difference in gender, job and faculty of the students in connection with social media usage.

Additional interesting finding of the study is that significant difference was found between the level of use of different websites (visiting news websites and websites in connection with studies of the students) by gender. Men frequently visited websites for reading news (χ^2=15,559, p=,004) while women rather visited those websites which are needed for their studies (χ^2=14,986, p=,005).

Information sources of the travel planning

Students had to mark at least one information source what they used during the travel (leisure) planning process. As it can be seen in the following figure, friends and relatives are the most important source of information (84%), followed by information provided by travel guide books or travel magazines (47%) and only the third most important source of information is the opinions and reviews of other travellers (tripadvisor.com; utazok.hu), whereas social media sites are the least important among the information sources. Analysis did not reveal any significant difference in gender, job and faculty of the students in terms of information sources.
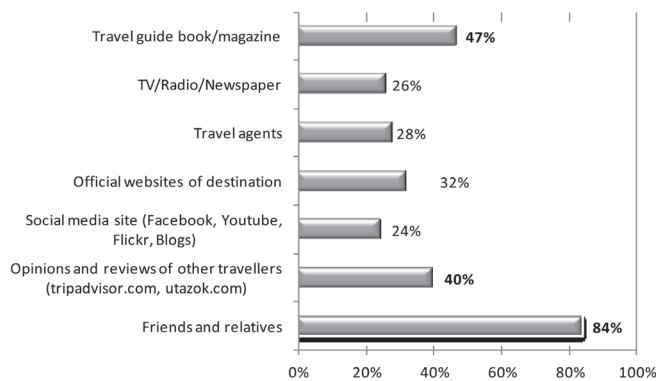

Figure 4: Information sources during the travel planning process among students

Trust of the students in social media and traditional sources of information

Students were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with seven statements in the form of 'I trust information about holidays provided by...' followed by the information source. As it can be seen in table 1. friends and relatives are the most trustworthy source of information, followed by information provided by official websites of the destination, whereas social media sites are the least trustworthy among the information sources. Fotis et al., 2012 in their study found that friends and relatives are the most trustworthy source of information, followed by information provided by other travellers in various websites and social media. According to Cox et al., (2009) in disagreement with the previous findings,

the most trustworthy sources of information are the official tourism websites and travel agencies (*Fotis* et al. 2012).

Table 1: Level of trust of students in information sources

Information source	Mean	SD
Friends and relatives	6,18	1,13
Official websites of destination	5,07	1,36
Travel agents	4,78	1,51
Travel guide book/magazine	4,77	1,57
Opinions and reviews of other travellers (tripadvisor.com, utazok.com)	4,30	1,37
TV/Radio/Newspaper	3,96	1,51
Social media site (Facebook, Youtube, Flickr, Blogs)	3,76	1,23

The reason of the difference findings among studies is that the samples are different. Present survey deals with people age between 18 and 25 and most of them don't have an own earnings, and they don't have a great experience in travel planning process. In case of Cox et al. (2009) the sample was taken from the database of e-mail subscribers of a destination's official tourism website while in case of Fotis et al., (2012) sample of the study was taken from internet users residing in 12 F.S.U. Republics.

Social media influence on holiday plans

Students were asked to evaluate the level of the influence of information sources on holiday planning in connection with destination and accommodation choice. The perceived level of influence on destination and accommodation choice was measured on a 7-point Likert scale, where: 1 = Not influential at all, 7 = Very influential on the basis of Fotis et al., (2012). As means can be seen in Table 2., friends and relatives are the most influential sources of information at both planning process (accommodation, destination). Influence of each source of information in connection with accommodation choice is at higher level among students except social media. The reason of this result is that students rather use the information of these sites for selecting the destination than selecting the accommodation of their holiday. This result is in agreement with of Cox et al. (2009) who found that social media are predominantly used for information search purposes before the trip. As regards the official website of destination, the difference is significant, statistically support. It means that students rather use this source of information during the selection of accommodation. Analysis did not reveal any significant difference in gender, job and faculty of the students.

According to the basic idea of Fotis et al., (2012) – in order to survey changes in original leisure travel plans (destination, accommodation) – students, who visited social media websites while they were still planning their holiday trip, were asked in connection with their final decisions about their last holiday. Were there any changes in their original holiday plans (destination, accommodation) because of information found in social media websites?

Information sources	Destination	Accommodation
Friends and relatives	5,75	6,01
Official websites of destination	4,00	4,53
Travel agents	3,30	3,55
Travel guide book/magazine	3,96	4,16
Opinions and reviews of other travellers (tripadvisor.com, utazok.com)	3,88	3,85
TV/Radio/Newspaper	3,32	3,33
Social media site (Facebook, Youtube, Flickr, Blogs)	4,01	3,89

In both cases – destination and accommodation choice – only 16% of the respondents claimed that there were few or significant changes in their original holiday plans. Vast majority of the students didn't make any changes or couldn't remember if they made any changes.

These results show that social media sites influenced almost every fifth of the students who used social media during the travel planning process. Although this age group of people "live" on social media sites, the usage of this platform – in order to planning their trips – is at low level. The two reasons of this result, which was not surprising, are (1) that they are inexperienced in organising their trips, because of their age group and (2) only a very few of them have a job, so they are not independent from their parents financially.

Summary

All in all, results of different studies show the importance of social media in tourism. On the one hand these platforms offer opportunities for tourists to express themselves, share opinions, reviews and experiences which other tourists may use as a reference in their travel planning. An opinion or recommendation from an acquaintance or friend has a huge impact on the tourists' travel decision making process, which even more alter the original plan of tourists.

Although findings of the study reveal that vast majority of the students use social networking sites every day they don't really use these platforms during their trip planning process. Among students, friends and relatives are the most important source of information (84%), followed by information provided by travel guide books or travel magazines during the travel planning process. The third most important information source during the trip planning process is the opinions and reviews of other travellers on travel review sites such as tripadvisor.com or utazok.com. Reliability of user-generated contents of these sites among students not as good as an information source.

In terms of reliability information provided by official websites of destinations, travel agents and travel guide books/magazines are more trustworthy for students than information provided by other travellers. During the holiday planning process the most trustworthy information for students is the information of friends and relatives.

In connection with the level of influence of information sources on holiday planning (accommodation, destination) only 16% of the students claimed that there were few or significant changes in their original holiday plans.

On the other hand social media and different Web 2.0 applications provide tourism companies, unique opportunities to easily, cheaply and quickly reach scores of people, understand a market's reaction to their offerings and use this information in their business development. Travel businesses use social media to achieve better position in the competition for the grace of tourists. According to Chaves et al., (2012) hotels need to monitor regularly the reviews on Web 2.0 sites which can serve as a useful decision support tool for the management. Thanks to the monitoring, experts can measure the perception of customers' satisfaction, and their expectations of the service provided by the hotel. Hotels "*can identify gaps and strengths in customer service, identify new ways to increase customer satisfaction and adjust operational strategies to minimise the differences between the expected and received*" (*Chaves* et al. 2012). Social media have a great impact on searching hit in connection with tourism and it leads that we can find even more updated information or opinions of tourists in the searching results. Opinions, reviews and recommendations of millions of (potential) tourists in different travel related social media web sites have exert an influence on the tourism industry to adapt to the Web 2.0 effect and to deal with the new needs and expectations of tourist.

Research Limitations

There are limitations in the study because findings on the one hand apply only to the specific geographical context (Hungary) and therefore cannot be generalized especially to other national markets with distant cultural characteristics (*Fotis* et al. 2012) and on the other hand a specific age group (18-25) were surveyed. It means that they are inexperienced in organising their trips, because of their age group and only a very few of them have a job, so they are not independent from their parents financially. As far as the sample size is concerned it will expand in the future in order to conduct a more exact analysis of the influence of social media on tourism.

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