T.C.

YAŞAR UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM MANAGEMENT

MASTER THESIS

SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS IN DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS : A CASE STUDY FROM IZMIR DESTINATION

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ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans

DESTİNASYON YÖNETİMİ ÖRGÜTLERİNDE SOSYAL MEDYA UYGULAMALARI: İZMİR DESTİNASYON ÖRNEĞİ

Hande DOĞAN

Yaşar Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü
Turizm İşletmeciliği Yüksek Lisans Programı

Dünya genelinde, yaygınlaşan internet kullanımına bağlı olarak, hızla gelişen bazı yapılanmalar mevcuttur. Bunlar arasında, bir çok disiplin ile yakın temas içinde bulunan sosyal medya kavramı dikkat çekmektedir. Sosyal medya, kapsadığı geniş ağ sebebi ile her kültürden ve her kesimden geniş kitlelerin sosyal taleplerine yanıt vermektedir. Gelişen yeni iletişim platformları ve bu platformların artık bir çok disiplin tarafından içselleştirilerek kullanılabiliyor olması da sosyal medyanın önemini arttırmaktadır. Sosyal medyanın yoğun olarak kullanıldığı sektörlerden biri de turizm sektörüdür. Turizm sektöründe, sahip olduğu turizm kaynakları ve çekicilikleri açısından, birbirine benzeyen çok sayıda destinasyon mevcuttur. Benzer özellikli destinasyonlar arasından sıyrılarak, tercih edilen konuma gelebilmek için destinasyon yönetimi büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu bağlamda Destinasyon Yönetim Örgütleri ve onların destinasyon pazarlamalarında kullandıkları sosyal medya uygulamaları ön plana çıkmaktadır. Çalışma, sosyal medya ve destinasyon yönetimi başlıkları dahilinde gerçekleştirilen literatür taraması ile İzmir ilinde faaliyet gösteren Destinasyon Yönetim Örgütlerinde önemli görevlerde bulunan kişilerle gerçekleştirilen mülakatlara dayanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Medya, Destinasyon Yönetimi, Destinasyon Yönetim Örgütleri, Turizm

ABSTRACT

Master Thesis

SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS IN DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS : A CASE STUDY FROM IZMIR DESTINATION

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In relation with the growing use of the internet on a global basis, exist structures which show rapid development. Among these is the notion of social media, in close ties with many disciplines. Social media answers to the social needs of large groups from all cultures and standings, due to the large network it covers. With the new developing communication platforms and the fact that these platforms can be used by being internalized by many disciplines increases the importance of social media. Tourism is one of the fields in which social media is used most intensively. Within the tourism industry, due to the tourism resources and attractions they possess, there are many destination with similar characterictics. In order to stand out from within similar destinations and to become the location of choice, destination management is of great importance. In this context, Destination Managament Organisations (DMOs) and the social media applications they use in destination marketing stand out. This study based on literature review within headings of social media and destination management and interviews with authorized people from different Destination Management Organizations which are operating in Izmir.

Keywords: Social Media, Destination Management, Destination Management Organizations, Tourism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS IN DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

ORGANIZATIONS : A CASE STUDY FROM IZMIR DESTINATION

ABBREVIATIONS

ARPANET	Advanced Research Projects Agency Network
BBS	Bulletin Board Systems
CTC	Canadian Tourism Commission
CVB	Convention and Visitors Bureau
DM	Destination Management
DMC	Destination Management Company
DMO	Destination Management Organization
DMP	Destination Management Planning
DMS	Destination Marketing System
eWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
ICCA	International Congress and Convention Association
IRC	Internet-Relay Chats
IZFAS	Izmir Fair Services Culture and Art Affairs Trade Inc.
NTO	National Tourism Organization
PCO	Professional Congress Organizer
PR	Public Relations
SMITTY Awards	Social Media in Travel and Tourism Awards
UIA	Union of International Associations
UK	United Kingdom
URL	Universal Resource Locator
USA	United States of America
WOM	Word of Mouth
WWW	World Wide Web

1. INTRODUCTION

This study provides insight into social media applications and strategic considerations used by Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) in the aspect of tourism. The study is based on literature reviews and interviews conducted with high ranking personnel within DMOs operating in Izmir.

In the second section of the study, social media is discussed. The section is starting with the definition of social media, which possesses a great number of users at present, continues with the history of the notion. Within the same section, current social media trends, usage statistics of primary social media applications and the pros and cons of the said applications are studied. Social media applications which have a large usage network have been studied under the title "fields of usage" and the section concludes with details concerning social media applications in the tourism industry.

In the third section of the study the notion of destination management has been defined, the fields of application of destination management and its benefits have been studied. The section continues with details of organisations related to the notion of destination management.

In the fourth and final section of the study, the use of social media by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) has been discussed. Later on, the benefits of the use of social media by DMOs and the implementation trends have been highlighted. In the last part of the section, the case of Izmir is handled. Notes and comments made before and following the interviews are included in the expansive transmission of interviews conducted as part of the case study.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA
2.1. Defining "Social Media" in a Conceptual Context

The *social media* concept has not one generally established definition. Komito and Bates (2009) define social media as online applications, which provide a greater interaction between internet users through user-generated content. This content can be diverse and include photos, video and textual comments. Palmer characterizes social media as online applications, platforms and media which aim to facilitate interactions, collaborations and the sharing of content. The importance of social media lies in the interaction between consumers and the community, and in the facilitation of asynchronous, immediate, interactive, low-cost communications (Palmer & Koening, 2009). Anklam (2009) defines social media as a set of software tools and internet applications that ensure the expansion of relations between people, as well as a personalized set of online tools, where individuals are identified by name.

There are authors who separate social networking sites or social networking platforms from the concept of social media. Social networking sites are defined as internet sites that promote social interaction through the accounts of the users profiles (Keenan & Shiri, 2009). The social networking platforms in the world: (Facebook.com, MySpace.com) increase users' ability to make connections, providing two primary characteristics: 1) the ability to organize and display connections among the users, 2) renewal of the status and activities of the users (Anklam, 2009). The social networking sites are also regarded as the main operating environment for the communication of Web 2.0 (Karakulakoglu, 2010).

Web 2.0, used since 2004 is used to express social communication websites, wikis, communications tools, in short the system which internet users have created jointly. Web 2.0. equally refers to technology, to second generation web based tools and services, and jointly used online platforms.

According to Bruns and Bahnisch (2009) social media can be defined as websites which are built on Web 2.0 technologies in order to provide space for in-depth social interaction, community formation, and the tackling of collaborative projects. As we see, different authors with the terms "social media", "Web2.0" and "social networks"

tend to describe the same resources. As equal expression also is being used the term "new media". The definition for the term "social media" is: an internet resource based on user-generated content, which provides interaction and communication for the users.

Web 2.0 and online social networking websites heavily affect today most of the online activities and their effect on tourism is obviously rather important. Travel 2.0 (the touristic version of Web 2.0) has as an important set of tools in the hands of a tourist and how it affects the image and the business of destinations, companies and organisations. (Werthner & Klein, 1999) Prior to Web 2.0, the Internet functioned solely in one direction – a 'read-only' format (Borges, 2009). Published information was static and interaction with other Internet users and/or publishers was basically non-existent. Web 2.0 propelled by user-generated content through social media and social network sites (Brake & Safko, 2009; Buhalis & Law, 2008).

2.1.1. Basic forms of Social Media

There are basically six kinds of Social Media.

1. <u>Social Networks</u>: These sites allow people to build personal web pages and then connect with friends to share content and communication. The biggest social networks are MySpace, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. These kinds of sites allow people to connect with their friends and colleagues.

2. <u>Blogs</u>: This is the best known form of social media among them. Blogs are online journals, with the appearing entries.

3. <u>Wikis</u>: These websites allow people to add content to or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database. The best-known wiki is Wikipedia the online encyclopedia.

4. <u>Podcasts</u>: This is a type of social media that includes audio and video files.

5. <u>Forums</u>: Are online discussion platforms and generally topics and interests are specific.

6. <u>Content Communities</u>: Communities which organise and share particular kinds of content. That is also called as social bookmarking. It is about tagging webpages to for later use. After tagged you can easily find and

share them with your connections. The most popular content communities tend to form around photos (Flickr, Instagram), bookmarked links (delicio.us) and videos (YouTube).

Social media is not just Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter etc. It builds a community which based on their common interests and connect them each other. There are different forms of social media which are suitable for people.

2.1.2. Characteristics of Social Media

According to Adams (2011), social media is relatively economical and accessible for individuals who wish to publish or access digital content. The main characteristic of social media is **the ability to reach audiences of all sizes,** but it also boasts other traits:

- *It's **approachable***; social media technologies are capable of reaching a global audience. By their very nature they are decentralized, and they are distinguished by multiple features that facilitate productivity and utility.
- *It's **accessible***; the means of production are publically owned; social media tools are generally available to the public at low or no cost.
- *It's **usable***; most social media production does not require specialized skills or training. Anyone with access can operate these tools.
- *It's **timely***; the lag between communications produced by social media is negligible. It is capable of virtually instantaneous response time (usually, only the participants are responsible for delays).
- *It's **eternal***, yet changing; the social media landscape can be altered almost instantaneously by comments or editing.

2.2. History of Social Media

At present, new communications environments, namely the internet, are the biggest supporters of the modern communications system. The use of the internet, started in the 1970's and accelerated after the 1990's, has seen a growth in the number of users, with the increase of web sites and portals, and in the 2000's with the implementation of social media has come to a point of attraction to people from every social group.

Social media is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world. However, social media is not a new concept - it has been evolving since the dawn of human interaction. In recent times, social media has impacted many aspects of human communication, thereby impacting business. Social networking has become daily practice in some users' lives. In the decade of information systems, social media has played a vital role in transforming business and communications. We believe that the fastest way to grow a business entity is through social media and networking. (Edosomwan, et al. 2011)

There are many ideas about the first occurrence of social media. "Throughout much of human history, we've developed technologies that make it easier for us to communicate with each other (Carton, 2009). The earliest information encountered by the writers referred to 1792 and the use of the telegraph to transmit and receive messages over long distances (Ritholz, 2010). Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist known by many as the father of sociology, and Ferdinand Tonnies, a German sociologist, are considered pioneers of social networks during the late 1800s. Also, in the late 1800s, the radio and telephone were used for social interaction, albeit one-way with the radio (Rimskii, 2011).

History has seen a wide range of technologies that have facilitated conversation, and in just the last 40 years there have been a startling number of innovations in this sector. People have recently begun using digital media for networking, socializing and gathering information. There are niche websites for every individual and specialized interest. There are websites for sharing photos, sharing videos, telling friends about activities, meeting new people and connecting with old friends. Celebrities regularly update their statuses and interact with fans on Twitter, Facebook and other social networks. Social media has come a long way since the days of the telegraph and even the more recent days of Internet-relay chats (IRC), and it continues to evolve. In the last few years, social media has become a convention of the online landscape. Major social networks and social media websites make changes and improvements on a fairly regular basis, so it's sure to keep evolving in coming years. (Adams, 2011)

The earliest roots of social can be traced to the first email that was sent in 1971 across the ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), the world's

first set of connected computers that would become the root of today's Internet. The next advancement came around 1977 with the rise of BBS (Bulletin Board Systems) or Internet Forums that utilized web applications to manage user-generated content to allow users to share, post and comment on particular topics. This gave us the ability to have a more group exchange and interaction. Around 1994 the Internet started to gain steam and was first referred to as the "Information Superhighway." The World Wide Web was upon us. By 1995, the Web already had one million websites. Around 1997-98 blogs began to emerge via technology tools that allowed individuals to create "weblogs" that facilitated the sharing of content and commenting functionalities. The year 1997 also saw the launch of Google, as well as numerous other prominent technology companies that would influence social media. Friendster came about in 2002 and became the first social network to gain more than one million users. (Lefebvre, 2012). After that MySpace, LinkedIn, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube were launched respectively. It can be said that late 2009 and 2010 were the years social media truly gained respect both with consumers and brands.

2.2.1. History of Social Networking Sites

Many social networking sites were created in the 1990s. In 2000 social media received a great boost with the witnessing of many social networking sites springing up. This highly boosted and transformed the interaction of individuals and organizations who share common interest in music, education, movies, and friendship, based on social networking. Among those that were launched included LunarStorm, six degrees, Cyworld, Ryze, and Wikipedia. In 2001, fotolog, sky blog and Friendster were launched, and in 2003, MySpace, LinkedIn, lastFM, tribe.net, Hi5 etc. In 2004, popular names like Facebook Harvard, Dogster and Mixi evolved. During 2005, big names like Yahoo!360, YouTube, cyword, and Black planet all emerged (Junco, Heibergert & Loken, 2011)

2.2.1.1. LunarStorm

LunarStorm can be accessed at www.LunarStorm.se, it is a commercial virtual site and it is available in Swedish language. Actually, LunarStorm started in 1996 and was design by Rickard Ericsson; it was a social networking website for teenagers and

was Europe's first digital online community. LunarStorm was officially launched in 2000. (Edosomwan, et al. 2011)

2.2.1.2. MySpace

In 2006, MySpace became the most popular social networking website in the United States but was overtaken in 2008 by its competitor Facebook that internationally became the most popular social networking site worldwide. The company employs approximately 1000 employees. A unique feature of MySpace is the ability for users to customize their profile information to give detailed information about themselves and what they are interested in. MySpace also has a special profile for musical artists were they can download their entire music into mp3 songs (Natta, 2010).

2.2.1.3. Facebook

Facebook is an online social networking service which was launched in 2004. In Facebook all users must register before using the site, after which they may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile. Since 2004, number of Facebook users increasing rapidly. Besides using the Facebook for personal connection, also it is used by brands, companies in terms of advertising tool. Facebook combines the best of blogs, online forums and groups, photo sharing, and much more. The diversity of Facebook provides business various opportunities and the popularity of the service makes it one of the most important social media tools for marketing purposes. (Huotari & Nyberg 2012)

2.2.1.4. YouTube

YouTube, founded in 2005, is the world's most popular online video community, where millions of people can discover, watch and share originally - created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a major distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers, large and small. YouTube is based in San Bruno, California and uses Adobe Flash Video technology to display a wide variety of user – generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur

content such as video blogging and short original videos. (YouTube, 2005) YouTube is nowadays a very powerful marketing tool, mainly due to its popularity, and there are various paid advertising options offered for businesses to enhance their marketing efforts. (Huotari & Nyberg 2012)

2.2.1.5. Twitter

Twitter was found in 2006. Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news about what you find interesting. Also it connects businesses to customers in real time—and businesses use Twitter to quickly share information with people interested in their products and services, gather real-time market intelligence and feedback, and build relationships with customers, partners and influencers. (Twitter, 2006)

2.2.1.6. TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor was found in 2000 by Stephen Kaufer. TripAdvisor.com is a travel website that assists customers in gathering travel information, posting reviews and opinions of travel-related content and engaging in interactive travel forums.[1] TripAdvisor offers advice from real travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features (including Flights search, TripAdvisor Mobile and TripAdvisor Trip Friends) with links to booking tools. (Huotari & Nyberg 2012)

2.3. Social Media vs. Social Networks

According to Daniel Nations (2010), social media is hard to define and is a two – way street that gives you the ability to communicate. Social Media can be called a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting, while Social Networking is a tool and a utility for connecting with others (Cohen, 2009; Stelzner, 2009).

In fact, there are several differences between social media and social networks (Hartshorn, 2010). The first one could be the definition; social media is still a media which is primarily used to transmit or share information with a broad audience, while social networking is an act of engagement as people with common interests associate together and build relationships through community (Cohen, 2009; Hartshorn, 2010).

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[1] *TripAdvisor*, Retrieved April 28, 2013 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TripAdvisor

Another difference is the communication style as it is reported by Bedell (2010). Indeed, social media is simply a system, a communication channel; it is not a location that you visit. In contrast, social networking is a two - way communication, where conversations are at the core, and through which relationships are developed (Bedell, 2010; Hartshorn, 2010). Then, the timely responses and the 'asking or telling' fact are another dissimilarity between social network and social media.

Social media is hard work, and it takes time in which you can't automate individual conversations; whereas, social networking is direct communication between the user and the people that he chooses to connect with. Despite the fact that in social networking people can write blogs or discuss anything, social media does not allow users to manipulate comments, correct errors or other data for personal or business benefit (Bedell, 2010; Cohen, 2009; Hartshorn, 2010; Nations, 2010; Stelzner, 2009).

2.4. Trends of Social Media

Social media is developing rapidly with the aid of technological developments. Some platforms stand out in terms of both number of users and in terms of field in which they are used actively. In an age in which trends change rapidly, whereas the old communication model was monologue, the current communication model is based entirely on dialogue. Social media platforms are the channels in which these dialogues are used most actively. Considering the number of users, the scope of use and benefits, Facebook stands out as one of the most trend platforms. It has the qualities to fulfill the needs of present marketing, with its scope, potential number of followers and its structure enabling the diffusion of both written and visual content. Twitter enjoys the same level of popularity. Short and effective messages of up to 140 characters are beneficial due to their catchy quality. On the other hand, the ability to follow many feeds at once is important for a follower group which wishes to be informed of all developments. Although one of the oldest social media platforms, blogs continue to remain popular.

2.5. Statistics

Since the 1990's, with the acceleration observed in internet communication, the number of users increase rapidly with every passing year. Especially the entrance of

social media platforms in everyday life, and the use of these platforms for both socializing and professional reasons reflect as a considerable increase in terms of statistics. As a result of the adaptation of social media in daily life, individuals can use social media platforms for many interactions. Therefore it can be statistically observed that platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare have a direct effect of touristic decisions.

According to a study conducted by Jooste (2012), 87% of travellers use the internet for the bulk of their travelling planning. This staggering statistic is more believable if you consider just how many online resources travellers are pulling from, and how many of them are examples of social media. Just like the quote says *"it's no longer all about advertising and search"* when it comes to the initial idea that inspires the traveller. 92% of people trust word of mouth above all forms of advertising. Digitally, word of mouth is everywhere – a friend's status on Facebook, a hotel review on Foursquare, a trend on Twitter, travel blogs, a YouTube video, and the list goes on. 52% of Facebook users say their friends' photos inspired their holiday choices. The modern traveller is not going in blindly; they've checked all their channels for reviews, tips and specials.

2.6. Benefits and Costs

At present, we come across social media platforms as a source for many forms of data. They are important in terms of evaluating the job done and the gathering of feedback. Although social media brings lots of advantages, it has also some disadvantages.

2.6.1. Benefits

Social media, as a new form of online media, encourages users to communicate and gives importance to feedback. It is also important in terms of providing two way communication and not only diffusion of content. As it enables fast and effective mass communication, sharing is easier and an interconnected communication is possible. Contrary to traditional media, social media is used with zero cost, its means of communication are easier, is user-friendly and a fixed state is out of the question due to its ease of modification. The fast feedback of social media is important for the user.

Engaging in social media will help strengthen the brand experience which will support brand building. A company becomes more attractive to the customers, and to current and potential employees, if it has a well-built brand name. As a result, social media will help in building a good reputation for a business organization. A couple of words can describe a brand whether in the consumer or in the business space. By building a brand, it helps to reinforce the brand in the minds of the consumers. Through social media, the company can repeatedly reinforce the brand name. Social media is best for the following situations (Edosomwan, et al. 2011):

- ✓ Social media also promotes better content, such as webcast and videos, than just simple text.
- ✓ Helps to communicate collaboratively between current and potential customers, in receiving feedback, product definition, product development, or any forms of customer service and support.
- ✓ Social media becomes a good venue for discussions and becomes a classic goal of marketing and communications.

There are also 7 key benefits of using Social Media as a marketing and a branding tool;[2]

1. *It's affordable*
Social media is about developing personal relationships so even with professional help **the main cost could easily be your time.** You know how much your time costs so be efficient or it will end up costing you more than you think.

2. *It's viral*
With the right content your blog posts have the potential to spread out your brand awareness quickly and far, but **be careful with what you put out**. It can benefit you but it can also hurt your brand.

3. *Improves your brand reputation*
Putting out quality and focused content will help you establish your brand as an authority in your field. Make sure your content supports your brand position. Be

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[2] *7 Key Benefits of using Social Media as a marketing and a branding tool.* (2009) (n.d.). Retrieved April 20, 2013 from http://brandingeye.com/7-key-benefits-of-using-social-media-as-a-marketing-and-a-branding-tool/

consistent, **provide value and avoid writing self-serving conten**t, which can damage the brand reputation you are trying to build.

4. Increases traffic to you website which generates more leads and new business

A social media presence that is well integrated and consistent will generate links and improve your search engine rankings. To generate conversion **make sure your website and landing pages are optimized** and deliver what your prospects expect. Be aware that although traffic is great never do anything that generates traffic but can damage your brand. Brand is always first.

5. Helps your brand establish a strong connection with your audience

The interactive aspect of Social Media is personal by nature, so the relationships you create can be deeper and last longer than with any other media. To maintain those relationships make sure **your brand comes across authentic and transparent.**

6. Connects you with leaders in your field

With Social Media you'll have the opportunity to interact and network with leaders in your field. Comment on their posts and tweets and participate in their social media conversations. **Support them when they ask for support** and they'll support you when you need them.

7. Builds credibility

Use Social Media to create a positive perception about your brand. Your clients and prospects will believe what others say about your brand more than anything you can say about it yourself. **Track constantly what others say about you in blogs**, to make sure you can respond quickly to any potentially damaging comment.

2.6.2. Costs

Along with the benefits of the entrance of social media in our daily life, there are some disadvantages. One of these is the difficulty in tracking and control due to its rapidly spreading nature.

The major challenge for a social media is to be a reliable source for communication as it is not for damage control. Social media can be used to be realistic, transparent, and for being able to communicate issues on time; thereby

reducing rumors, negative talk, and motivating people to speak for the company (Hollier, 2009).

Despite the fact that social media is a good reference criteria, it can create negative results for tourism establishments if not used efficiently. The bad management of a customer complaint on the said platforms can negatively affect brand image and cause bigger problems. Another disadvantage is the time limit. Although the use of social media does not create costs, the time spent for usage is the biggest cost. Also, communications projects conducted on social networks are short term due to the structure of the channels and consumer habits. Therefore as the results are not long term, it requires frequent and active usage.

2.7. Usage Areas of Social Media

Social media can take many different forms, including Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. By applying a set of theories in the field of media research (social presence, media richness) and social processes (self-presentation, self-disclosure) Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) created a classification scheme for different social media types in their Business Horizons article published in 2010. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) there are six different types of social media: collaborative projects, blogs and microblogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual communities. Technologies include: blogs, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-postings, email, instant messaging, music-sharing, crowdsourcing, and voice over IP, to name a few. Many of these social media services can be integrated via social network aggregation platforms. Along with the increased use of online tools and platforms, people share their opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other through many different forms, including text, images, audio and video. In the World Wide Web (www) different types of social media channels can be found. These can be categorized in six different groups: communication, collaboration, multimedia, reviews and opinions, entertainment and brand monitoring.[3]

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[3] *Complete Guide to Social Media* (2010) (n.d). Retrieved May 12, 2013 from http://www.thesocialmediaguys.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/03/CompleteGuidetoSocialMedia.pdf

Communication

- Blogs: Blogger, ExpressionEngine, LiveJournal, Open Diary, TypePad, Vox, WordPress, Xanga
- Microblogging: FMyLife, Foursquare, Jaiku, Plurk, Posterous, Tumblr, Twitter, Qaiku, Yammer, Google Buzz
- Location-based social networks: Foursquare, Gowalla, Facebook places, The Hotlist
- Social networking: ASmallWorld,Cyworld, Facebook, Hi5, LinkedIn, MySpace, Orkut, Tagged, XING
- Events: Eventful, The Hotlist, Meetup.com, Upcoming
- Information Aggregators: Netvibes, Twine (website)
- Online Advocacy and Fundraising: Causes, Kickstarter

Collaboration/authority building

- Wikis: PBworks, Wetpaint, Wikia, Wikimedia
- Social bookmarking (or social tagging) (Golder & Huberman, 2006): CiteULike, Delicious, Diigo, Google Reader, StumbleUpon, folkd
- Social news: Digg, Mixx, NowPublic, Reddit, Newsvine, MyWeboo
- Social navigation: Trapster, Waze
- Content Management Systems: Wordpress
- Document Managing and Editing Tools: Google Docs, Syncplicity, Docs.com, Dropbox

Multimedia

- Photography and art sharing: deviantArt, Flickr, Photobucket, Picasa, SmugMug, Zooomr, BetweenCreation
- Video sharing: sevenload, Viddler, Vimeo, YouTube, Dailymotion, Metacafe, Nico Nico Douga, Openfilm, TubeMogul
- Livecasting: Justin.tv, Livestream, OpenCU, Skype, Stickam, Ustream
- Music and audio sharing: ccMixter, Pandora Radio, Last.fm, MySpace Music, ReverbNation.com, ShareTheMusic, The Hype Machine
- Presentation sharing: scribd, SlideShare

Reviews and opinions

- Product reviews: epinions.com, MouthShut.com
- Business reviews: Customer Lobby, Yelp, Inc.
- Community Q&A: Askville, EHow, Stack Exchange, WikiAnswers, Yahoo! Answers

Entertainment

- Media and entertainment platforms: Cisco Eos
- Virtual worlds: Active Worlds, Forterra Systems, Second Life, The Sims Online
- Game sharing: Kongregate, Miniclip

Brand monitoring

- Social media measurement: Attensity, Statsit, Sysomos, Vocus

Social media platforms that can be used to promote products and services form a wide range. At this point the importance is to continue on the suitable channel in order to reach the target audience.

Fotis, et al. (2012) have determined that in the vacation planning process, the reasons behind the use of social media by social media users are as follows:

Before vacation

- To search for alternatives for the question of where to go. (44.5%)
- To narrow the destinational options. (24%)
- To confirm that they have made a good choice of destination. (30.9%)
- To look for information and opinions on accommodation alternatives. (34.4%)
- To search for information and alternatives concerning trips and other recreational activities. (41.6%)

During the vacation

- To gather information regarding specific attractions and recreational activities. (29.5%)
- To share comments and opinions of the holiday experience. (16.5%)
- To keep in touch with friends. (49.1%)

- During vacations, social media sites are visited, but are not directly for information purposes. (15%)

After the vacation

- To share experiences and photographs with friends and/or other tourists. (78.3%)
- To evaluate and comment on the accommodation and holiday destination. (26.6%)
- To form an opinion as a source of inspiration for the next vacation. (29.2%)

2.8. Tourism Applications of Social Media

Social media is a notion which is in a considerably rapid development. Therefore when creating a marketing strategy it is inconceivable to not consider the use of social media. Social media tools facilitate the communication with the target audience. Especially in the tourism industry, social media forms a considerable influence at the point where potential tourists start on location research.

Before the onsite of the internet, people chose their vacation destination through photos in the travel agents office or through a recommendation from a good friend. Destinations and large hotels conducted print, television and radio advertising campaigns. The vacationer was at the mercy of the 'truth' of the photos they saw or the word of the referral. With millions of internet sites, social networks, online booking engines and review sites like TripAdvisor, vacationers and visitors can now pick and choose where they want to stay, how they want to vacation and find up to the minute tourism pictures and video that show the experience and real time view of destinations. It seems everyone has a travel blog and people want to show off their latest find for a great vacation destination. The internet and social networks have put word of mouth marketing in the forefront for tourism destinations and tourism businesses making the marketing message user defined. With forums, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Foursquare, the end user, vacationers, are actually now branding businesses through their messages they are sending on social networks. [4]

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[4] *How the social media industry is changing tourism marketing?*(2011) (n.d.), Retrieved March 28, 2013 from http://www.kaywalten.com/how-the-social-media-industry-is-changing-tourism-marketing/

2.8.1. Social Media Platforms for Tourism

By utilising TripAdvisor, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, tourism businesses including hotels, attractions, restaurants, and destinations can communicate with potential visitors and maintain relationships with past customers.

Utilising from TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel site, enabling travelers to plan and have the perfect trip. TripAdvisor offers trusted advice from real travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features with seamless links to booking tools. TripAdvisor branded sites make up the largest travel community in the world, with more than 200 million unique monthly visitors, and over 100 million reviews and opinions. [5]

Utilising from Facebook

The total number of Facebook subscribers in the world is estimated to be 1.11 billion on March 2013. [6] A Facebook Fan Page allows to users to create galleries, to interact between potential visitors and followers, and to publish entries about attractions and future events.

Utilising from Twitter

The Micro blogging site has 554,750,000 registered users.[7] Twitter can become a test tool for Tourism businesses. By running quick and short ideas through Twitter members, they can get fast and short answers to their questions. They can also promote their business in a fun manner, even offer contests on Twitter that will entice people to want to possibly visit wherever it is the business is that is trying to attract them.[8]

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[5] *About TripAdvisor*, Retrieved May 18, 2013 from http://www.tripadvisor.com/pages/about_us.html

[6] *Facebook*, Retrieved May 5, 2013 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook

[7] *Twitter Statistics* (2013) (n.d.), Retrieved May 20, 2013 from http://www.statisticbrain.com/twitter-statistics/

[8] *How Tourism Businesses Can Use Existing Social Networks to Their Advantage* (2010) (n.d.), Retrieved May 5, 2013 from http://twittown.com/social-networks/social-networks-blog/how-tourism-businesses-can-use-existing-social-networks-their

Utilising from YouTube

More than 1 billion unique users visit YouTube each month.[9] It may be true that YouTube is not the only place online that lets members post their videos, but it is however the most popular one being used, so it would make sense that a Tourism business might consider using YouTube to their advantage. Tourism businesses can upload professional videos in no time at all and all at no cost.[10]

Examples of Good Social Media Implementation

We come across social media in many platforms as an element with a wide range of use. It is observable that successful social media applications provide important gains to the implementing organisations. Social media has a considerable effect on the increase of awareness and the strengthening of brand image. We come across some examples of good applications from some organisations which are aware of this effect and use social media actively and effectively, and these examples of implementation are awarded in order to increase motivation and encouragement.

Travel + Leisure's first annual SMITTY Awards showcase the most innovative uses of social media in the travel industry. Within the assessment which includes Hotels, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), Airline Companies, Tour operators, some examples are given of successful implementation from DMO's.

Here two examples of Annual Smitty Awards in the category of Tourism Board/CVB, Global; [11]

1) VisitSweden

Social Media Platform: Twitter

Curators of Sweden: The Curators of Sweden program let ordinary citizens—a feminist blogger; a 24-year-old unemployed welder; a former Ms. Sweden—compete to control the official @sweden Twitter account for one week at a time.

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[9] *YouTube Statistics* (2013) (n.d.), Retrieved May 20, 2013 from http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html

[10] *How Tourism Businesses Can Use Existing Social Networks to Their Advantage* (2010) (n.d.), Retrieved May 5, 2013 from http://twittown.com/social-networks/social-networks-blog/how-tourism-businesses-can-use-existing-social-networks-their

[11] *Social Media in Travel+Tourism Awards* (n.d.). Retrieved May 20, 2013 from http://www.travelandleisure.com/smittys

2) Canadian Tourism Commission

Social Media Platform: Microsite, Custom App

Explore Canada Like a Local: The CTC's microsite and app allowed users to curate and share lists of destinations around Canada they'd most like to visit, as well as upload their own photos.

3. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

3.1. Defining "Destination Management" in a Conceptual Context

Tourism activities have the potential to affect millions of people worldwide and thousands of different regions. As years go by, due to the rise in the demand of people for tourism activities, the continually growing tourism industry has, because of this growth, put social and cultural pressure on countries and regions and has also left them to deal with issues such as natural factors, infrastructure systems and urbanisation. On the other hand, by their positive effect on the development of certain vocations, by generating foreign currency revenue, by reducing impoverishment and sexual discrimination, by developing infrastructure, and by increasing the level of life standards, tourism activities provide important benefits to countries and regions (Wilkinson, 2007, p. 549). For these reasons, the need to manage tourism has arose in tourism areas. In the framework of tourism management, in destinations located at the most important locations as touristic products, and where tourism activities are realized, the concept of destination management has been developed in order to conduct tourism activities in an effective manner, to decrease the negative effects of tourism and to maximize its benefits, and as a result destination management organisations have been established. (Kocaman, 2012)

Destination management was born from the need to manage all products and services forming the destination product in harmony. Among the objectives of destination management are to ensure the sustainability of destination resources, to preserve and develop the attractions of the destination, to educate locals and raise consciousness among them with regards to tourism, however the primary objective is to raise the quality of the destinational experience of tourists during their vacation. Destination management has two functions, as in destination marketing and destination development. Destination marketing consists of all activities conducted towards attracting tourists to the destination. Destination development consists of all forms of activities besides marketing conducted by the destination management organisation towards developing and preserving tourism (Özdemir, 2008).

Destination management is an issue that must be considered for a strongly brand in tourism sector. Because, a destination branding is not possible with the effort of one side as well as other products or services. Destination branding is possible with all stakeholders' joint movement and an effort (Kocaman, 2012).

One of the most important phases in destination management is the branding process. Forming an identity for the destination, to create brand value and brand awareness are crucial for all steps to be taken for the destination. In situations where an appropriate identity study is not conducted and the brand image not identified, marketing activities will not be successful, and will not result in the accomplishment of the identified objectives.

The tourism industry is one of the sectors most affected by technological innovations and developments. The rise gained in previous years provides a different depth o tourism through currently developing technology. The development of the internet and the easy accessibility to new technologies has resulted in the increase in alternatives concerning destination selection. In light of these developments destination management has gained importance. It is of great importance in the highly competitive tourism industry that the potential customers are oriented towards the right spots.

Destination management plays a key role in marketing, competitiveness, and development since destinations present complex challenges for management and development in that they must serve a range of needs of tourists and tourism-related businesses as well as the resident community, local businesses, and industries (Semerciöz, et al. 2008). The management and development of destinations and the tourist experience involves many aspects, including the ones stated below: (Ndlovu 2009:28–29; Doğanlı 2006:87)

- Coordinating the tourism services and facilities for visitors
- Increasing competitiveness
- Marketing (all marketing mix elements) of tourism and tourism services
- The provision and dissemination of destination information
- Managing the offered tourism product and services (mix of lodging, F&B, entertainment, attractions, attributes, etc.)

- Maintaining and improving the skills, training, and quality of tourism service providers

- Creating new tourism product types

- To find out new target markets

- Establishing Destination Marketing System (DMS) which is the internationally acknowledged advanced thinking on development of travel information at present which is vital to both of the development of regional travel industry and international marketing (Wei and Jiu-Wei 2009:1).

3.1.1. Destination Management Planning

In general, the goals of tourism planning and development are based on the fact that tourism increases economic benefits, improves community infra/superstructure systems, and enhances the community's quality of life (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Getz (1987) also stated "tourism planning is a process, based on research and evaluation, which seeks to optimize the potential contribution of tourism to human welfare and environmental quality" (Wilkinson, 1997). Additionally, the objective of tourism planning is focused on providing better quality and services of tourism products and activities for tourists so that it increases the average of length of stay. Thus, through the development of tourism, the destinations or regions can achieve enhancements in economic activities, community prosperity, and cultural identity. It is also possible for the destination to provide a better quality of tourism experiences and activities to tourists so that the tourism region and community take advantageous positions over competitors (Wilkinson, 1997).

One of the important points in the management of a destination is the branding process of the destination. It plays an important role in the destination becoming one with an attractive brand image. For this, first of all its strenghts must be promoted within the perception of present tourists, a certain tourist segment be gained through this perception, and after strengthening within the market, alternative aspects of the destination must also be marketed. The design of a simple, believable, differenciating image can be considered as the first step in this direction.

The image may also be classified in two part one being the basic image whereas the second one could be the special image of the destination (Özdemir & Karaca, 2009). The basic image may be based on factors such; recreational activities, general infrastructure of the destination, transport and such whereas the special image may be based on; historical, cultural, political, social, financial, climatic and natural resources of the region. If these factors may be put in an image package of the destination and communicated to the suitable market it may be used to affect the choice decisions of the potential customers (Uysal, et al. 2012).

At present, competition does not only exist between products or companies, but between countries and cities. From this perspective cities which aim to gain a competitive advantage must identify their characteristics enabling them to become a brand and exploit them (Özdemir & Karaca, 2009).

In order to market destination effectively, it is necessary to control and manage brand image continuously, which is one of the most important components of brand. This is the only way to understand how internal and external target massive perceive the destinations and keep it dynamic (İlban, 2008).

The emergeance of brand creation as an important competitive tool continues to gain importance within the tourism marketing structure in the tourism industry. Notably, the understanding that a country should be marketed as a sole destination and touristic product being abandoned, the concept of regional and local touristic promotion and marketing, by emphasizing the touristic product identies of regions and cities, in on the rise. Therefore the branding of each touristic product, the creastion of brand value and the formation of an identity means being one step ahead within the competition. As touristic products, for destinations being a brand and to create a brand image in order to impose its identity and visual characteristics to the consumer is of great importance in the acquisition of a competitive edge (İlban, 2008).

Creating and image is in reality an identity creation process. The identity created is exported to the target audience (markets). A destination may have more than one image in the eyes of local and foreign audiences. Promotional expenses made disregarding these images may lead to waste. The formation of the image is a

complex process. A persons view of a country may start to form during childhood through the education received at school or at home. Country images may stay without change for centuries (Bizay 1998). Creating a positive image on a regional basis is harder and more expansive than establishing an image for a product (Günlü & İçöz 2004). Studies regarding destination image have increased notably after the 1990's and has focused on the following subjects (Baloglu and Mc Cleary 1999);

- Differences between the image perceived by the tourist and the one which the destination aims to diffuse.
- The effect of previous visits to present perceptions.
- The distance of the tourist to the destination, the relation between geographical location and image.
- The calculation of destinational image and factors affecting the degree of the image.
- Periodical effects towards image change.
- Relations between image and travel purposes.
- Relations between the image of the destination and the socio-demographical profile of the tourist.

Another important issue in destination management is the main values of the destination. These are the primary notions in the implementation of tourism strategies, the development of competitiveness and provision of successful and sustainable destination management.

In his study entitled Modelling Destination Competitiveness, Crouch (2007) has explained these primary notions as follows:

a. Organisation: the quality & strength of the destination's organisational structure

A destination that is better 'organised' is potentially more competitive. The concept of the Destination Management Organisation (DMO), where the 'M' emphasises total 'Management' rather than simply 'Marketing' is a somewhat recent conceptualisation of the organisation function for destination management. This broader view sees management as responsible for the well-being of all aspects of the

destination. It emphasises the provision of a form of leadership for destination development that makes extensive use of teamwork in all DMO-led initiatives. Destination promotion is no longer the sole purpose of the DMO. While this modified role presents many new challenges, it also provides a much broader range of opportunities for ensuring destination competitiveness.

b. Marketing: the destination's ability to attract & satisfy visitors through marketing

Perhaps the most traditional of these activities is the function of destination marketing. In practice, destination marketing has tended to focus on the task of promoting and selling. That is, the concept of marketing has typically only been applied to the destination in very limited ways. As a result, there is much scope for the application of a true marketing philosophy to enhance destination competitiveness. This broader application of marketing extends beyond promotion and selling alone to encompass all aspects of the marketing mix (i.e., the well-known marketing P's) with a focus on satisfying visitor needs and wants as the primary aim of destination marketing.

c. Quality of Service/Experience: ability to deliver integrated visitor experiences

Tourists consume individual products and services while visiting a destination. While the quality of these individual products and services plays an important part in the destination's competitiveness, more importantly the destination's ability to assemble and deliver a complete experience to the visitor is what counts most. Essentially, providing individual high-quality service transactions is not enough. To the extent possible, destination managers must attempt to ensure a seamless, hassle-free interface among all elements of the total travel experience.

d. Information & Research: effort made to gather information for decision making

The information/research component of destination management pertains to the development and effective use of information systems that provide managers with the information required for understanding visitor needs and for effective product development. This also involves the regular monitoring of visitor satisfaction and the

tracking of industry performance. Each DMO also has the responsibility to disseminate key market and performance information to its members on a timely basis.

e. Human Resource Development: programs to produce trained industry employees

Some destinations have developed programs and mechanisms targeted at producing industry-specific trained employees and graduates with management skills designed to meet the specific needs of the tourism and hospitality industries. All industries compete to attract a talented workforce. Such programs can enable a destination to better provide for its own human-resource needs.

f. Finance & Venture Capital: programs to facilitate funding for tourism development

While financial institutions will normally fund most private sector tourism development, some public sector support or programs can assist the availability of finance and venture capital to tourism developers. For example, guided by public policy, governments or DMOs can institute programs to provide seed funding, grants, loan guarantees, depreciation allowances, capital gains exclusions, taxation concessions or other such incentives to investors to stimulate private investment for tourism development. Such programs should clearly be designed to promote the achievement of a destination vision.

g. Visitor Management: programs to control positive & negative visitor impacts

As the travel and tourism industry continues to grow rapidly, some destinations, which experience large numbers of visitors, have found that they may need to introduce policies and systems required to control visitor numbers or behaviour in order to exert some influence over visitor impacts. Where this occurs, industry cooperation is important. In the absence of such cooperation, governments or other regulatory authorities may be forced to act if problems are left unattended. DMOs can play an important role in coordinating efforts to institute such industry-regulated arrangements.

h. Crisis Management: preparedness and capacity to cope with crises or disasters

An increasingly important challenge for destination managers involves crisis management. Destinations, from time to time, have to deal with various crises affecting visitors as well as the after- effects in terms of a tarnished destination image. Anecdotally, in recent years, it seems that crises have become more problematic for destinations. Crises may arise for many different causes, including the outbreak of disease, accidents, crime, natural disasters, political and social problems, union strikes, and terrorism, etc., to list a few. When such crises occur, destinations need to be able to respond in an effective way to deal with the immediate impact of the event as well as its longer-term consequences. Destinations which respond to such eventualities more effectively or, better still, act to prevent or minimise them to the extent that is possible, enhance their competitive position. Proactive crisis management or disaster planning is therefore becoming an additional challenge and responsibility for forward-thinking destinations.

i. Resource Stewardship: extent of efforts to preserve fundamental qualities & assets

Resource stewardship is a concept that stresses the importance, indeed the obligation, which destination managers have, to adopt a 'caring' mentality with respect to the resources that make up the destination. This involves the effective maintenance of those resources and a careful nurturing of those that are particularly vulnerable to damage that may be caused by tourism. The model is then not one of simple economic competitiveness but one of long term 'sustainable competitiveness' that acknowledges the stewardship of ecological, social, and cultural resources.

3.2. Usage Areas of Destination Management

Developing technologies and rapidly rising social media platforms emerge as the areas of use/implementation of destination management. Social media platforms are used intensively to complement classical management and marketng tools. Destination management is deepened with the platforms used. Twitter and Facebook are among the platforms used most actively within the concept of DM, on a global basis.

In the study conducted by Green and TIG Global (2009), the content of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook and how they can be used effectively by DMO's has been explained as follows :

3.2.1. Twitter as a Tool for Destination Management

The phenomenon known as micro-blogging that is most often associated with Twitter is an interesting one. These short 140 character messages called "tweets" may seem like an unconventional addition to the social media toolkit, but several DMOs have had strong results from Twitter to date. For the most part and due to the instantaneous nature of the application, it has been used to promote events, hot deals and, in one unique application, to provide real- time customer service.

As with other forms of communication, DMOs should consider the following when establishing a Twitter Plan:

- What am I hoping to accomplish with Twitter and how will I know if I succeeded?
- Who is my audience(s)?
- Should I maintain different feeds for different audiences?
- What types of content will be most relevant to these audiences to maintain followers?
- What is the appropriate frequency for my Tweets
- Who will monitor the tweets and do I have guidelines established for their interaction with visitors so it is clear what should be published on Twitter and what may be better done using other media?
- Should the DMO feature partner offers through this medium? If so, how will it read so it is not perceived as a sales pitch?

3.2.2. Facebook as a Tool for Destination Management

It wasn't that long ago that MySpace was the darling of social networks. Now Facebook is all the rage. Some DMOs have set up Facebook vanity URLs, but have not been able to stimulate much traffic to the site.

When establishing a Facebook page, consider the following issues:

1. What objectives do you have with a Facebook page and how will you know if you are successful? Will you judge success on the number of fans, the amount of posts on your page, or the amount of traffic delivered to your website, etc?
2. Are you prepared to develop a plan to drive traffic to the page?
3. Do you have the staffing resources to maintain fresh content on the page?
4. Do you have a content plan with a stimulus to develop fresh content from internal or external sources?

3.3. Benefits of Destination Management

The effective realization of destination management provides important benefits to the destination, the beneficiaries at the destination and visitors. Through an efficient destination management, it is possible to separate the destination from its rivals. Furthermore, other benefits can be named, such as the creation of a positive image, brand awareness and consciousness of the destination.

A good destination management starts with good planning. Lawler & Philpot (2010) have stated the Benefits of Destination Management Planning as follows;

- *Improved Destination Competitiveness*
  - Increased destination appeal resulting in increased visitation and yield
  - Advantage over other destinations
  - Ongoing investment in tourism
- *Increased Visitor Satisfaction*
  - Delivering on the brand promise
  - Increased repeat visitation
  - Enhanced destination reputation
- *Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability*
  - Increase in tourism's contribution to destination's economy
  - Community support for tourism development
  - Controlling tourism's environmental impacts
  - Long term industry viability

- *Effective Partnerships*

    Strong partnerships (community, industry, government, development agencies, etc):

    1) Avoiding duplication of resources
    2) Bringing a focus to developing the full visitor experience from arrival through to departure
    3) Increasing the profile of tourism in regional destinations
    4) Minimising conflicts between tourism and other sectors

- *Continuous Improvement*

    This Framework encourages the implementation of DMP as a process of continuous improvement rather than a once off "set-and-forget" activity.

    The benefits include:

    1) Early awareness of emerging trends
    2) Development of innovation and new technology
    3) Constant refreshing of destination brand

3.4. Related Organizations

Chambers of professions or commerce active within the destination emerge as important and effective beneficiaries for the destination. The members of the said organisations and the information, education and development activities conducted by these organisations towards their members have an important effect on the development of the quality of tourism activities within the destination. (Kocaman, 2012)

Tourism is a multi structured system consisting of public domain, the private sector and civil societies (Gunn & Var, 2002: 4). Therefore the coordinated action of all these elements during the decision process in the management of a destination is inevitable for an efficient destination management. In addition there is need for destination management organisations to unite beneficiaries.

Organisation refers to an order or grouping (Koçel, 2005: 167). The multi-dimensional structure of tourism results in a complex structure of the tourism organisations to be established. Furthermore in many countries tourism organisations are formed under the leadership of National Tourism Organisations. These

organisations are followed by semi-official and private sector organisations. All of these organisations serve to reach the objectives determined towards the developments of the countries tourism (Bhatia, 2002: 107).

Making a destination tourist friendly is the task of a central tourist agency, which may be public, quasi-public, nonprofit or private. These agencies are referred to as national tourism organizations (NTOs), convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs), or destination management organizations (DMOs) (Kotler, et al. 2009).

3.4.1. National Tourism Organization

A National Tourism Organization (NTO) responsible for marketing a country abroad as a tourism destination is, in general, either part of the national administration or an independent body.[12]

National Tourism Authorities or Organizations responsible for management and marketing of tourism at a national level. All countries which are engaged in tourism have a national tourism organization which plays a leading role in both the formulation and the implementation of the government's tourism programme. [13]

Briefly, the role of NTO is to create and communicate appealing destination images and messages to prospective visitors, mainly through advertising, PR and print. (Middleton, 2004).

3.4.1.1.   Functions of NTOs

Countries and states usually have government or quasi-government agencies that make destination tourism. On the national level, there are referred to as national tourism organizations (NTOs).

The NTO is responsible for the fallowing functions:

- Flow of research data. The NTO coordinates tourism research for the area. Information on origin visitors, length of stay, type of accommodation used,

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[12] *Structures and Budgets of National Tourism Organizations 2004 – 2005 (2006). Retrieved March 14, 2013 from* http://www.sete.gr/files/Media/Ebook/2006/2006_NTO_budget_04_05.pdf

[13] Verma, D. *What Are The Important Functions Of National Tourist Organisation (NTO)?,* Retrieved March 15, 2013 from http://www.shareyouressays.com/96168/what-are-the-important-functions-of-national-tourist-organisation-nto

and expenditures on different tourism products are collected and disseminated to members of the organization. This information helps the NTO evaluate trends and develop marketing strategy.

- Representation in markets. The NTO often has offices in major markets.

- Organization of workshops and trade shows. The NTO facilities the interaction of tourism with members of the distribution channels, such as travel agents and wholesalers.

- Familiarization trips. The NTO develops familiarization trips for key members of the distribution channel and travel writers.

- Participation in joint marketing schemes. Some NTOs provide cooperative advertising support to help members promote to selected markets.

- General education. NTOs conduct conferences and courses to educate travel industry providers from their nation to understand the needs of foreign markets (Kotler, et al. 2009).

3.4.2. Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB)

Convention and Visitor Bureaus are not-for-profit organizations charged with representing a specific destination and helping the long-term development of communities through a travel and tourism strategy. Convention and Visitor Bureaus are usually membership organizations bringing together businesses that rely on tourism and meetings for revenue. For visitors, CVBs are like a key to the city. As an unbiased resource, CVBs can serve as a broker or an official point of contact for convention and meeting planners, tour operators and visitors. They assist planners with meeting preparation and encourage business travelers and visitors alike to visit local historic, cultural and recreational sites. [14]

A CVB does not actually organize meetings/conventions/events. It does, however, help planners and visitors learn about the destination and area attractions and make the best possible use of all the services and facilities the destination has to offer. [15]

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[14] *What is a Convention & Visitors Bureau?,* Retrieved March 14, 2013 from http://www.ransonwv.us/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7B3123B828-4A37-420D-84B3-BCC35A99E5D2%7D

[15] *What is a CVB?,* Retrieved March 15, from http://kycvb.com/what_is_a_CVB.htm

3.4.2.1. Functions of CVBs

CVB has four prime responsibilities:

- To encourage groups to hold meetings, conventions, events and tradeshows in the city or area it represents; to assist those groups with meeting/event preparations and while their meeting/event is in progress.
- To encourage tourists to visit and enjoy the historic, cultural and recreational opportunities the destination offers.
- To represent a specific destination and help the long-term development of communities through a travel and tourism strategy.
- To serve as a community's marketing agency by promoting the city's/county's assets to visitors with the objective of increasing the economic impact to the local economy via the greenest and cleanest of economic strategies - people visiting, spending money and leaving the community intact.[16]

CVBs can access important information concerning visitors through the use of different communication channels (social media being one of the most important) This data may provide an important source of information within the implementation plans of the CVB. This type of study has a great importance in the management of the destination. Information such as where the visitors live, their expenditures, types of activity preferred, duration of stay, travel purposes, locations preferred for accomodation, general travel intervals may prove to be the basis of action plans created by the CVB.

3.4.3. Destination Management Organization (DMO)

Destination management calls for a coalition of many organizations and interests working towards a common goal. The Destination Management Organization's role should be to lead and coordinate activities under a coherent strategy. They do not control the activities of their partners but bring together resources and expertise and a degree of independence and objectivity to lead the way forward. It follows that DMOs must develop a high level of skill in developing and managing partnerships. The actors that are suggested to play an increasingly critical role in the challenge to

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[16] *What is a CVB?,* Retrieved March 15, from http://kycvb.com/what_is_a_CVB.htm

manage and organise destination resources are the Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) (Pike 2004; Presenza et al., 2005). DMOs work closely with governmental development agencies, local authorities, and other destination stakeholders to facilitate sustainable development practices (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003).

It is important to stress that the main aim of DMOs is enhancing sustained destination competitiveness. The World Tourism Organization (2004) defines DMOs as the organizations responsible for the management and/or marketing of destinations (Pırnar & Günlü, 2012).

DMOs have several main functions: (1) the coordination of marketing strategies, including the destination brand, and the management of information and knowledge about the tourism destination; (2) the establishment of networks and initiatives to improve the destination offer; and (3) the coordination of tourism planning and development. DMOs often have a holistic approach to the management of tourism destinations, including a wide range of responsibilities beyond destination promotion (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

DMOs play a central role in marketing activities. Therefore they assume all responsability of tourism promotion towards attracting visitors to the region or city concerned. This is a demanding task especially for organisations on a low budget. Destination management organisations must act to the benefit of many beneficiaries scattered within the destination and surmount many obstacles (Elbe, Hallen ve Björn, 2009).

The management and promotion of a mechanism encompassing such a vast community can only be successful through professional organizations and destination management organisations (DMOs) are founded in many parts of the world. These organisations, focus notably on the marketing of the destinations and are active regarding the implementation of long term planning activities. Countries such as Spain, the USA and Australia carry out their touristic destination marketing and promotion activities through their regionally established destination management units.

In our country such organisations are not common, and these activities are carried out by bodies such as governors offices, municipalities and chambers of commerce and industry (Kocaman, 2012).

3.4.3.1. Functions of DMOs

As for the more specific roles of the DMO, one of the pioneers in the field of destination marketing (Gartrell, 1994) has identified the following areas of activity:

- The **coordination** of the many constituent elements of the tourism sector (including local, political, civic, business, and visitor industry representatives), so as to achieve a single voice for tourism;
- The fulfillment of both a **leadership and advocacy** role for tourism within the local community that it services. The DMO should be a visible entity that draws attention to tourism so that residents of the destination understand the significance of the visitor industry;
- Helping to ensure the **development** of an attractive set of tourism facilities, events and programs—and an image that will help position and promote the destination as one that is competitive in the experiences it offers;
- Assisting visitors through the provision of **visitor services** such as pre-visit information, and additional information upon arrival;
- Finally, the DMO also has another important role, serving as a key **liaison** to assist external organizations, such as meeting planners, tour wholesalers, and travel agents who are working to bring visitors to the destination. In summary, the roles of the DMO, in the broadest of terms, are: to work towards enhancing the well-being of destination residents; to do everything necessary to help ensure that visitors are offered visitation experiences that are at a minimum, highly satisfactory, and where possible, highly memorable; and while doing so, to ensure the provision of effective destination management and stewardship.

Some examples regarding the execution of destination management through the active and effective use of social media channels are as follows:

First, BRITAIN, the 'official people for tourism in the UK' according to their Twitter bio: @VisitBritain. By playing around on one website (http://www.visitbritain.com), people was able to plan an entire trip, create an itinerary on their trusty notepad, and decide on everything from accommodations to how they best want to get around when they visit.

Another great decision by VisitHolland, was their choice to ask visitors to their website (http://www.visitholland.nl/) to take a brief survey asking basic questions such as what brought you to their site, to how likely would you be to subscribe to a newsletter, and even asked if you liked the colors chosen on the website. Visitor feedback is just as important to a website as it is the physical location.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS AND IZMIR

4.1. Social Media Usage in DMOs

The creation and accessibility of the Internet have fundamentally changed how travellers access information, the way they plan for and book trips, and the way they share their travel experiences (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Senecal & Nantel, 2004; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). One significant development in the evolution of the Internet is the increasing preva- lence of social media platforms that enable Internet users to collaborate, communicate and publish original content such as blogs, videos, wikis, reviews, or photos (Boyd and Ellison, 2008).

In promoting destinations, events, attractions, or websites, social media is also in the best interest of the DMOs to provide as much information as possible.

Consumer technology is changing traveler behavior and expectations. Organizations and companies try to keep up with the latest advancements focusing on cost optimization and performance enhancement while they also need to increase their focus on how technology can better meet their travelers' needs. [17]

Hence, a clear understanding of why and how social media function is vital to tourism destination marketing. One sizeable gap in the existing literature is research examining the use of social media by tourism DMOs. There is a lack of understanding of social media platforms and usage related to tourism (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

The planning of DMO's which use social media channels and some points which need to be integrated to their work plans have been listed by Tuten (2010) as follows;[18]

- Build brand awareness

- Drive traffic to websites

- Improve search engine rankings

- Promote a brand message

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[17] *TrendSpotting 2013*, Retrieved May 12, 2013 from http://www.aboutourism.com/trendspottinglist/
[18] Tuten, T. (n.d.). *Social Media Marketing in Tourism Industry*, Retrieved May 12, 2013 from http://www.slideshare.net/brandacity/smmtourism-tuten-nctourismleadership2010

- Build reputation and image

- Develop/maintain a network of prospective clients and colleagues

- Distribute news/PR efforts

- Communicate

People think the key to successful social media marketing for destinations is to select the online technologies which have the highest number of users. This assumption is wrong. it is crucial for the success of the online presence to well define the objectives and target groups, only then the utilization of social media marketing will be useful and promising. It is necessary to choose the right online channels for the specified target group. The social media marketing activities should be adapted to the objectives of the DMO (Amersdorffer et al., 2010).

We see that the use of social media by DMO's and other tourism organisations are increasing day by day. With the expansion of social media at this rate, DMO's have started to adapt to digital marketing strategies. However when considering Turkey, we see that social media platforms are not used actively enough by DMO's. Social media based campaigns conducted successfully at foreign destinations can be seen frequently, whereas in Turkey the necessary steps have not yet been taken towards this purpose.

When the scope of usage of general social media platforms is considered, we can see that these platforms are used both in the tourism industry and other industries in the areas of Marketing, Customer Service, Communications / Public Relations, Market Research and Recruitement. Especially in the tourism industry they should be used formost in the Marketing and Communications / Public Relations domain.

4.2. Benefits

Tourism is a service industry. Therefore tourism products have different qualities compared to physical products. In this context the effects of anothers experiences and advice are frequent. On the other hand in tourism, consumption for prestige purposes is considerably widespread. This reflects another dimension of being affected by social media in touristic consumption. Therefore, the experiences sharde and the advice of others are considered more trustworthy by consumers. The use of social

media is very important at this point. The benefit for DMO's of social media platforms, where the preferences and comments of individuals can be seen transparently, is considerable.

Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are tourism organizations responsible for managing the promotion of a destination. Increasingly, DMOs, are challenged to respond to the electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) phenpmenon; that is, the potential for Internet users to easily share and participate in online conversations (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

In the use of social media platforms, it is not important to be a follower or to attract followers. The important point is to ensure the continuity of this bond. For example, in order to form a community within Twitter, the pursuit of a process chain such as 'Connect, reciprocate, follow, retweet, link' should be fruitful. Therefore, the bond created will be more active and effective.

Another situation resulting from the highly developed status of social media is the growing importance of visual communication along with oral and written communication. When using social media, besides the contents of the text, its visual qualities and presentation also become important. It is observed that visuals created for a specific purpose can be very attractive and useful tools for DMO's.

In Turkey well prepared active social media campaigns are fairly low. DMO's at foreign destinations have more activities regarding visual campaigns distributed via social media.

A good example of a business that has embraced social media is a Cape Town Tourism initiative called #LoveCapeTown, a campaign that encouraged travel bloggers to share their experiences in real-time on this hashtag, acting as digital ambassadors of Cape Town. The response was astounding and the trend will remain as a testament to what this destination has to offer. [19]

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[19] Jooste, L. (2012). *Tourism Industry getting to grips with Social Media Technology*, Retrieved May 14, 2013 from https://www.realmdigital.co.za/post/tourism-industry-getting-to-grips-with-social-medi/

In addition, the efficient use of social media increses the notions of credibility and trust with regards to the destination. Other positive effects exist due to the presentation of the transparency of the organizational structure and its accessibility.

4.3. Trends

With the new trend in destination management and the changing role of destination management organizations, the promotional and developing efforts for destination are maximized with additional benefits of gained synergy (Genç & Pırnar, 2008:128; Wang, 2008).

Word of mouth, one of the most important marketing notions in the period before social media platforms, has ceded its place to comments in electronic environments.

When considering social media platforms in the field of tourism, some of the platforms enjoying high usage and brand awareness are as follows;

- Tripadvisor (www.tripadvisor.com)
- Concierge.com (www.concierge.com)
- Wayn (www.wayn.com)

In the listed websites in Turkey only Istanbul is included and this reflects the low awareness regarding Turkey as a country within the global social network.

Besides platforms dedicated to the tourism industry, the social media platforms used most intensively and to which tourism applications are adapted are Facebook and Twitter.

4.4. A short reflection on Turkey

When observed as a website, the website that stands out in terms of presenting Turkey and different locations within the country is www.goturkey.com (official tourism portal of Turkey). The mentioned website has been established in relation with the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and all applications are presented in Turkish and English.

General information and Turkey and destination based information is provided to visitors with rich content. Different types of tourism in Turkey are also presented

within the website (eco tourism, convention tourism, alternative tourism, health tourism etc.). Direct access to social media plugins are also included from the website. Under the name GoTurkey, access is possible to the social media sites with the most number of users in Turkey, such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. On the Facebook channel it has approximately 6.000 followers.

The list of projects concerning the future of culture and tourism are found in the 2023 Strategic Plan created by the General Management of Promotion. In this plan, it is mentioned that the promotion of touristic regions and the establishment of market analysis will be based on research and scientific methodology. It has been touched upon that after the analysis and interpretation of the research conducted, the strenghths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the market will be identified. As part of the mentioned promotion and marketin activities, full advantage will be taken of technological developments, necessary investment will be made through public and private funds on developing technologies which affect tourism such as e-promotion, e-marketing and e-commerce. The policies envisioned in the said long term strategic plan are the establishment of coordination between organisations sharing the promotion function, ensuring the participation of parties which attract revenue directly or indirectly from tourism to the financing of these activities in order to ensure a more professional and financially stronger promotion, encouragement of commercial entities which form the marketing network to strengthen through mergers or joint ventures within the open market framework, allocation of 1% of tourism revenue every year to promotion, in order for Turkish tourism to attract a higher percentage of international tourism.[20]

As seen in the current applications, the policies conducted and the 2023 strategic plan established by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the scope of social media use is still fairly limited in Turkey.

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[20] *Türkiye Turizm Stratejisi 2023*, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Tanıtma Genel Müdürlüğü, Retrieved May 12, 2013 from http://www.ktbyatirimisletmeler.gov.tr/Eklenti/906,ttstratejisi2023pdf.pdf?0

4.5. Izmir Case

In respect to its population, Izmir is the third largest city in Turkey. It is a cultural destination that is trying to acquire a significant and growing market share. It is a strategic site for all kinds of cultural activities with its universities, museums, concert halls, cultural and art associations. As such, it is home to many national and international festivals. Izmir is a five thousand year old city, situated on the west of the Anatolian peninsula. There are many historical sites throughout the city of Izmir. Despite its location and historical and cultural attractions, Izmir has been unable to consistently achieve its tourism goals. A country's image results from its geography, history, proclamations, art and music, famous citizens and other features (Kotler & Gertner, 2002: 251).

When considered as a destination, Izmir contains many attractive elements at once. Its geographical location, cultural riches, advantagoeus climate feed these elements. Culture tourism, religious tourism, health (thermal) tourism, cruise tourism and congree tourism are the most important branches of tourism in Izmir. As a requirement of the said touristic variety, promotional activities are of utmost importance. In this context, as with all destinations, the importance of destionation management organisations are can not be disregarded for Izmir.

General notes and findings related to meetings held with DMO's, which play an important role in the promotion of Izmir as a destination, the increase in brand awareness and the strengthening of brand image, are given below in detail. Interviews have been made with responsables of related departments within three destination management organisations of importance to Izmir, and the information gathered has been arranged and presented.

The DMO's interviewed are as follows;

- Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism
- Izmir Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Izfaş / Izmir Fair Services Culture and Art Affairs Trade Inc.

4.5.1. Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism

Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism (www.izmirkulturturizm.gov.tr), acting as a subsidiary of the Izmir Governors Office, which can also be visited by redirection from the Izmir Governor's Office website (izmir.gov.tr), has started service under this name in 2003. As stated in the website, as the Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, its objective is to bring forth, preserve, develop the cities natural, cultural and historical values, to transmit these values to future generations and to enable the access to information for the establishment of social consciousness, market, encourage, supervise tourism, to add touristic variety, to increase the cities share in domestic and international tourism through dynamic culture and tourism policies and to promote Izmir's culture to the world.

4.5.1.1. Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture And Tourism: General Assessment

Through the observation of the website, it is observable that even though the aim is to present Izmir as a touristic destination, all content within the website is only available with a Turkish language option. This situation renders the effectiveness of the website inexistant with regards to foreign tourists.

The only content accessible in English within the website is the Izmir Culture and Tourism Magazine. The magazine published monthly is an important promotional element due to the information it provides on general touristic activities in Izmir.

When the website is observed, no content regarding social media exists. Any promotional activities conducted through the use of social media are non-existant.

4.5.1.2. Interview Results from Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism

In light of pre-study related information obtained from the website, an interview has been conducted with authorized person, who works as Promotional Responsable within the Promotion Department. It has been learned that within the Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture And Tourism, there are 8 main departments. Within these departments two serve promotional activities and tourism consultancy. All

activities regarding the promotion of the destination is carried out through the Promotion Department.

The relation between the Promotion Department and social media has been questioned, and the lack of any social media platforms within the website and in promotional activities has been confirmed. Five people work within the Promotion Department. She has stated that they are responsable for work distribution and written and visual equipment, that they respond to the equipment requests from other DMOs, civil societies or other organisations working in relation with the tourism industry.

It has been asked whether a plan exists to incorporate the use of social media in the content of their work in the coming period, and the answer has been negative.

When reviewing the results of the interview, important deficiencies can be observed in the website and the promotional channels of the Izmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, which is one of the most important official promotional organisations of the city. The lack of a foreign language option within the said website renders the observation of the destination impossible for tourists on a local basis. On the other hand the lack of social media activities creates difficulties in the access of tourists trying to be informed through the website to detailed information on the destination and follow related content.

4.5.2. Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB)

Established by the İzmir Promotion Foundation in 2007, The Izmir convention and Visitors bureau is a non- profit information exchange and destination marketing organization aiming to improve Izmir brand perception worldwide.

The primary objective of the CVB is to act as leader in order to obtain international meetings to the city. In this context, stimulating associations, organizations and civil societies which can work on this platform is among its most important activities.

It's partners have a great importance for CVB. The Izmir CVB co-operates with the leading hotel groups, travel agencies, PCOs (Professional Congress Organizers), and DMCs (Destination Management Companies).

CVB has three offices in Turkey. Within its offices located in Istanbul, Izmir and Antalya, it has a total of 10 employees.

4.5.2.1. CVB: General Assessment

The website of CVB, which operates with the aim to develop Izmir especially within the scope of congress and meeting tourism, and as a result to increase the destinational awareness and brand image of the city, has been studied. The website proposes content in English on the adress www.izmircvb.org.tr. Within the mentioned website, besides information on the CVB, some sections which may serve Izmir with regards to destination introduction are also included. Within the website, Izmir is presented in sections such as discover İzmir, where to stay, where to eat, things to do, getting here.

Social media applications can also be found within the website. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are included within the website.

It can be observed that the CVB activities on Facebook and Twitter are insufficient. Despite the fact that Facebook is among the most active branches of social media which can reach very large masses and has been embraced on a worldwide scale, it is not used effectively by the CVB. It has a follower profile limited to only 36 people. The website is organized in English and proposes information and announcements on activities and events.

Twitter usage is equally insufficient. Neither the number of people subject to interaction or the number of tweets is at a level sufficient to attract attention.

To summarize, despite its capacity as a website to provide quality information to visitors, the fact that social media channels are not used actively nor effectively has a negative effect on the foreign visitors access potential.

4.5.2.2. Interview Results from CVB

In light of information obtained from the CVB website, an interview has been conducted with authorized person, who works as Marketing & Foreign Relations Responsible at the Izmir Convention & Visitors Bureau.

He is mainly responsible for Coordinating the planning and designing processes of various promotional materials (meeting planners guides, usb sticks, e-mail templates, brochures, etc.) and the izmircvb.org.tr web portal.

Creating multi-touch leads by uniting online and offline mediums after conducting targeted online research through the use of ICCA, UIA, and major search engines. Efficiently and effectively assisting meeting planners and organizers in staging high-spirited meetings and incentive trips in the most rewarding city of the Mediterranean. Attending various trade shows, education programmes and summits to leverage networking opportunities, get target audience know what the city has to offer, create and sustain long-term relationships and strategic co-op agreements with meeting planners and organizers, PCOs and DMCs, and CVBs.

The authorized person is the only employee at the CVB Izmir Office. He is therefore responsible for all aspects of the Izmir organization. In Turkey, CVB organizations are active in Istanbul, Izmir and Antalya. It works as a team of 10 members. The use of social media, as in Izmir, is considerably low in other CVB offices.

For CVB Izmir, gaining the rights to host meetings of an international nature and therefore adding to the destinational awareness of the city and its brand image are the primary objectives. Especially concerning congress tourism, Izmir aims to take an important slice of the pie, following Istanbul which enjoys a considerable part in this field.

He underlines the fact that Izmir has a very important place in this context. He states that congresses of a foreign origin are now in the search for alternative locations to Istanbul. Izmir is among the preferred destinations especially with regards to congress tourism.

Underlining the fact that the positive effects of recent investments in cruise tourism, promotional activities and studies on the issue have been visible, he states that the acceleration achieved by Izmir in cruise tourism can also be achieved in congress tourism.

He states that, having hosted 128 international events in 2012, Izmir must focus on plans to develop the related infrastructure. The establishment of new congress centers, the amelioration and development of those currently available is of utmost importance. Despite its location in Kuşadası, the high capacity Ephesus Convention Center, operational since 2013 (www.ecc.com.tr), is important due both to its proximity to Izmir and its capacity, and is expected to make an important contribution to congress tourism.

The most important supporter of CVB Izmir is the Izmir Chamber of Commerce. Stating that there are close to 60 members either as executive or supporter, he also adds that they are affected by budgetary difficulties as a result of being a non-profit organization. He states that due to budgetary and personnel related restraints, the necessary infrastructural activities cannot be conducted by the CVB, that they especially can't make any progress concerning the very important case of social media usage.

Stating that the inactive use of social media channels is the general problem of the sector, he underlines that their lack of use of social channels such as Facebook and Twitter sufficiently is in reality a very important deficiency, that it renders Izmir's brand image incomplete and also constitutes a deficiency in terms of measuring the feedback related to the activities organised.

The points resulting from the meeting with authorized person are as follows :

- The primary objective is for Izmir to gain the hosting rights to international organisations and to increase destinational awareness towards the city.
- Turkey has an important part in congress tourism. Despite Istanbul's standing as the most important location, foreign followers are at present searching for alternative destinations.
- As CVB Izmir, the attention of foreign participants are sought by activities such as e-mailing, foreign DMO, promotional activities on the website and participation to organisational events.
- Social media activities are not conducted effectively. Turkey has not yet developed sufficiently concerning social media, and social media channels

used actively in daily life are unfortunately not used efficiently in professional environments.

- The low usage of social media has a negative effect on both the seizing of new opportunities and gathering feedback on present applications.

4.5.3. Izmir Fair Services Culture and Art Affairs Trade Inc. (İZFAŞ)

The Izmir Economy Congress held in 1923 laid the foundation of the İzmir International Fair. Izmir Fair Services Culture and Art Affairs Trade Inc. was founded in February 1990. İZFAŞ is an organisation which serves as the heart of trade fair activities in Izmir. Even though the numbers fluctuate between the years, it hosts approximately 15 fairs, many of which have developed into traditional events. 16 fairs are included in the İZFAŞ 2013 events program.

Within the fairs listed are many large organisations, with international participants and visitors, and which contribute greatly to the industries, which they serve. The most important, with the highest number of participants and visitors is the MARBLE / International Natural Stone and Technology Fair. On it's 19. anniversary in March 2013, many domestic and foreign participants and visitors have attended the fair. While the number of participants was 182, it is stated that close to 60.000 people from 85 countries have visited.

When the said figures are considered, it can be observed that the percentage of foreign visitors is considerably important. At this point, the visitors are of great importance in projecting an image of Izmir as a preferable future destination to visit.

Another fair, which is of great importance for Izmir, is the International Travel Turkey Izmir Fair and Conference, an event which has played an important role in Izmir becoming a congress and fair city. One of the most important gatherings within the global tourism industry, Travel Turkey Izmir will be held on the 5-8 December 2013. With 778 participants and over 25.000 visitors from 47 countries, its role in Izmir's destinational promotion is undeniable. Therefore this opportunity must be seized by the authorized parties, and through the efficient use of social media, the effects of the event must be amplified and its contribution to destinational awareness ensured.

It is highly important that an image of Izmir is formed in the minds of the visitors. Even though the fair plays an important role in the forming of the destinational image, the effects of social media activities conducted before and after are also of great importance.

4.5.3.1. İZFAŞ: General Assessment

At this point one of the most pertinent questions is the following: What does İZFAŞ do as a destination management office?

It is undeniable that a website is one of the most important and correct locations to acquire information for these organisations. İZFAŞ has a website for this purpose (www.izfas.com.tr).

The website mentioned is published both in Turkish and in English, and orients the visitor with a separate link to specific websites dedicated for each organisation hosted by İZFAŞ. For example: http://marble.izfas.com.tr

Within the main website are Facebook and Twitter plugins. However on both platforms entries are only made in Turkish. Therefore a diffusion of content that can be followed by foreign followers does not exist. No other social media channel besides Facebook and Twitter are found on the website. Through the İZFAŞ main website, along with Facebook and Twitter plugins, connection can be made to special Facebook and Twitter accounts dedicated to specific events, again through websites dedicated to each event. However there are no language options besides Turkish.

The number of entries, the number of followers and the number of users followed on all Facebook and Twitter accounts are fairly low. These figures confirm that the mentioned branches of social media are not used actively.

4.5.3.2. Interview Results from İZFAŞ

In light of general observations and consideration prior to the meeting, an interview has been conducted with representatives of related units at İZFAŞ.

The interview has been conducted with authorized person, who works as Public Relations Supervisor and another officer, who works as Project Supervisor within the Publicity and Organisation Management Unit.

Within the organisational layout, underneath Publicity and Organisational Managements are Public Relations, Press Consultancy, Arts and Culture and Graphics units.

All units operate in a coordinated manner both in the preparation of the events calendar and during all phases of the fair. Whereas the Press Consultancy Unit is charged with the preparation of web bulletins, and event pictures, the recital of the event texts and their transmission to the Public Relations Unit, the Arts and Culture Unit is responsible for the organisation of events such as panels and conversations. The Graphics unit is responsible for the preparation of promotional equipment for all departments and the establishment of all visuals to be used in promotional activities. The Public Relations Unit is charged with the establishment of protocols, event plans for the city, the execution of all announcement and awareness activities for all prior and forthcoming events and the management of social media.

She is responsible for Public Relations activities as well as the management of social media. In light of the questions we have asked during our interview, we can summarize İZFAŞ's use of social media as follows:

Firstly, the necessary importance is not accorded to social media by İZFAŞ. Despite being one of the organisations hosting events, which most attract both domestic and international visitors, the use of social media is insufficient. The Facebook and Twitter plugins found on the website are not managed correctly, content in Turkish and low entry numbers prevent the management of foreign visitors' connections in particular.

Direct communication with participating companies and visitors is carried out by the Visitor Relations Unit, which in itself does not have a social media policy in application. She states that they require the said structuring, that they are aware of their deficiencies concerning social media however that they haven't yet been able to start on a project to develop this aspect. She states that they will start work next year on the active and effective use of social media, which they currently use only as a

local announcement channel, for their objectives concerning İZFAŞ and also to make Izmir an attraction for foreign visitors and to strengthen the Izmir concept.

5. CONCLUSION

Internet usage, which continues to increase rapidly on a daily basis and the resulting changes in internet usage habits are the main supporters of the expansion of social media use. Social media which started as a communication tool between individuals today nourishes communication between masses. The ease in accessibility, the rich content it possesses, the lack of extra costs, the ability to unite people from different cultures, disciplines and most importantly different geographies all increase the lure of social media. However, the extra work load, the time limit and the difficulty of a control mechanism stand out as negative aspects.

Tourism destinations have a much more difficult marketing structure than many other sectors due to the complexity of the product content. Therefore a great responsibility falls on DMOs in managing destinations with different characteristics in a planned and proactive manner, and in differenciating with regards to their competitors.

The support to traditional management and marketing conceptions with innovations brought forth by social media is important. Most tourists currently create their vacation plans online. At this point, destinations which conduct their promotion activities in an integrated manner with social media edge their rivals. The easy access to social media brings forth many advantages. Through an active and effective use of social media, faster and more successful results can be obtained compares to many other marketing applications. Eventually the vast access and the variety of platforms renders tracking difficult. The risk of negative experiences also arises as a result. Therefore DMOs must be very vigilant in using social media applications.

There are websites which are used specifically in destination management. However due to the masses they effect, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can create more attention to tourism than private websites. Written, visual and video content can instantly reach a large group. At this point, DMOs should show special sensitivity to the management of the mentioned platforms, and through their active and effective use should integrate them in their management and marketing instruments.

Based on the interviews conducted in light of research made in the framework of the study, it is clear that Izmir cannot be sufficiently efficient with regards to destination management. None of the destination management organizations, which hold great importance for the city, can provide an active and efficient use of social media. Those responsible state that they cannot enter an active and effective social media study due to reasons such as time limits, budget limits, general management policies and lack of specialist manpower on the subject.

In conclusion, in light of the assessment of the study, the effects of social media applications on destination management are considerably important. While there are examples of successful social media applications conducted for foreign destinations, these applications remain insufficient in Turkey. In current conditions where competition between destinations increase, social media policies applied to reveal Izmir's potential, to increase the attraction of tourists, to solidify its awareness and brand image are of great importance. The identification of a joint policy by all destination beneficiaries, the higher consciousness of current destination management organizations concerning the power of social media and the organization of educations concerning the applications will, as precautions firstly applicable on a local basis, contribute to awareness.

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