Examining the role of marketing models based on social networking in the tourism industry in Iran

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Abstract

The importance of using social networking as a marketing tool is growing rapidly and is included in many areas. One of these areas is tourism. Today, one of the largest and most diverse industries in the world is tourism industry. Due to the economic impacts of the industry, if the countries that have attractions of cultural, natural or historical, can use their capacities and correctly manage this industry, they can attain large economic growth and prosperity. The main objective of this research is the investigation of the role of a marketing model based on social network in tourism industry in Iran.

This is non experimental research (descriptive). This research is based on correlation. The purpose is a cross sectional application study. On the other hand, according to the nature of information collected, this research is a field work research. In addition, documentary or library sources are used to collect the theoretical foundations of the research. Statistical population is all tourists that are Iran Traveling followers in Instagram social network page that will be randomly used for sampling. The number of sample size according to the Cochran formula is 382 people.

The results suggest that there is a direct and significant relationship between the confidence in social networks (sig: 0.000), social networking quality to introduce tourist attractions (sig: 0.000), social networking quantity to introduce tourist attractions (sig: 0.000), consumption media generally (sig = 0.002) and plan to travel (tourism) in Iran.

Keywords: social networking, tourism, confidence, plans to travel.
Introduction

Tourism, like other industry always faces many challenges. Therefore, researchers are trying to consider this diversity of problems. While addressing the short-term current issues they do not neglect sustainable issues.

"Tourism is essentially meant to travel from an origin to a destination/target for travel or business and covers cultural, economic and social processes» (Lumsden. 2001: 15) "Many experts believe that the analysis of tourism industry is matter of system not a market industry» (Lumsden. 2001: 25).

Also, essentially, marketing is an exchange process management between supplier and customer. Marketers also, generally focus on exchange process. On the issue of tourism marketing is important. Forecasting market changes, fierce market competition, social and environmental characteristics and potential of tourists is a crucial challenge. Five important principles distinguish services marketing, industries marketing or commodities quick sale. They include: 1. intangible services 2. Unstable services 3. Heterogeneous services. Resolution services 5. Non-acquisition of services.

A marketer must analyze consumer behavior and consider their motivation to offer products tailored to their interests and wishes and meet their expectations. Market segmentation is the primary and most urgent step, the whole market to identify and separate sections divided on the basis of clearly defined features.

The principle of market segmentation should always give great interest to six features: the knowable, cohesion, measurable, availability, large and striking and passivity. Generally it can be said that «there is urgent need to plan in tourism industry marketing as the only way to improve performance in a market that is subject to rapid changes. " (Lumsden. 2001: 153).

"One of the most difficult marketing tasks is the prediction of demand" (Lumsden, 2001: 154). This forecasting method is divided into two main groups: 1. qualitative methods 2. quantitative methods. "Qualitative methods are methods that use mind detailed analysis to assess future values in demand» (Lumsden. 2001: 156). Quantitative methods are based on the analysis of current and past data and sometimes also consider future demand and potential changes.

Statement of the problem

Today, tourism is one of the largest and most diverse industries in the world. Due to the economic impacts of this industry, good management of the sector will generate great economic prosperity. Iran has great touristic attractions. International tourists whether directly and indirectly can have a crucial impact on various economic sectors. The development of tourism
industry can be used to get rid of the single oil-based economy and achieve growth and sustainable development.

Social networking is a social structure made of nodes which are generally individuals or organizations. They are interconnected by means of one or more specific types of communication such as financial transactions, friendship, business, emotions, passions, hobbies and habits. Nowadays huge volume of information on social networks, blogs, sharing sites and sites related to scenic cities and big countries are available.

In 1960, for first time, social networking was introduced at the University of Illinois of United States. Then in 1997, the first social networking site was launched to URL of Sixdegress.com. But after the 2002, there was explosion of commerce in social networking websites such as LinkedIn and Orkut, which caused enormous changes in the social networking field. In 2004, social networking of Friend Star with 7 million users and MySpace with over 4 million users had first position. Facebook also was launched in that year. (Chen, 2007)

Social networks laws emerged in 2005 to create certain rules to maintain personal information and communication. Finally, 2006 was the year of expansion of social network websites users and visitors.

From 2007 onwards with the development of web based software tool, users were allowed to share, create or use the content generated by social media. Social media became widespread for social networks.

The importance of using social networking as a marketing tool is growing rapidly. The analysis of the interdependencies between customer and consumer network can help to attract corporate customers who have been identified through traditional methods. Today, with advances in information technology, social networks are not limited to physical face to face. Online social networks have become a new interface for direct oral marketing. While direct, oral marketing has greater impact on the purchase decision of customers, in recent years, with the growth of the Internet and virtual communities, oral communication has been created in online channels.

Nowadays, customers can dramatically change their behavior in line with the technology and the world of economic environment. They gain a lot of familiar information, products and lose trust in advertising. They prefer customized products and services and change their purchase channels. So businesses are forced to survive to modify or change their advertising strategies, with behavior of their customers. Nowadays, e-commerce transact based on social network or base confidence.
Customers’ traditional offline markets, like craigslist and eBay, do transactions regularly with strangers which makes them vulnerable against forgers. Social market adds social networking features with online shopping society and allows customers to shop from friends or friends of friends. Overstock.com is an example of this auction markets based on social networks. Like other social networks, this auction also encourages users to create a profile through a dedicated page along with individual history, photos, and connect with friends. But the contrary to typical social networks, this site focuses on the priorities of the purchase and sales policy.

In the world of e-marketing, new trends are emerging and new models are introduced to business. One of the latest trends is social networks which not only attracted a large number of users and visitors but represented a space for advertising of companies and various corporations. Social networks have connected people to all different types of favorites and one of the growing areas in use of social networks is pages and issues related to manufacturing and service organizations and companies. (Pace, 2008).

Business has begun to use social networks as a way for helping the employees and customers to connect in order to learn about interests. Also, they provided customer services in an attractive technological environment.

In addition, the popular online social networks attract online advertising from retail stores and other companies. Placement of online advertising in social networking site will benefit them from advantage of high visitor volume of potential customers.

Using social networks is one method of internet marketing. In this way, marketing companies and sellers must be registered in social networks with the release of content, images, video and they get help of facilities that exist in this network. Also, networks have attracted other comments of other present members in this network and encouraged them to visit their website and the purchase of goods and services.

In this study, we will be measure the role of marketing models based on social networks in tourism industry of Iran.
Theoretical model

![Theoretical Model Diagram]

Figure 1. The theoretical model: research is made according to the theory of Pierce (2008), Keenan (2009), Boone (2008), Dietz and Hartook (2006)

Analytical results

Table 1. There is a significant relationship between trust of social networks and plans to travel (tourism) in Iran.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>confidence</th>
<th>Tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.612**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

On this basis value of Pearson test of 0.612 with a significance level of 0.000, that shows that the hypothesis is confirmed.
Table 2. There is a significant relationship between quality of social network in introduction of tourist attractions and plan to travel (tourism) in Iran.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.513**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.513**</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

On this basis value of Pearson test of 0.513 with a significance level of 0.000, it shows that the hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 3. There is a significant relationship between quantity of social network in introduction of tourist attractions and plan to travel (tourism) in Iran.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
On this basis value of Pearson test of 0.303 with a significance level of 0.000, it shows that the hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 4. There is a significant relationship between the amount of media consumption in general case and plan to travel (tourism) in Iran.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>media consumption In general case</th>
<th>Tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>media consumption In general case Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.156**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.156**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed) N</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
On this basis value of Pearson test of 0.156 with a significance level of 0.002, that show hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 5. There is a significant relationship between the amount of using the media to visit the different tourist areas and plan to travel (tourism) in Iran.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>amount of using the media to visit the different tourist areas</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On this basis value of Pearson test of 0.684 with a significance level of 0.021, it shows that the hypothesis is confirmed.

Discussion and conclusion

Nowadays, in the age of information technology, mass communication has very important role. So, institutions have many tasks and roles to confront and deal with.

The role of awareness and filling leisure time activities of people, especially in third world countries, like Iran, is crucial.

Explicitly, concealed role of mass media is the homogenization of general public and even at an international scale. Mass media creates conformity.

Internet, in this millennium, is the most affecting and most important means of communication; it is comprehensive and its use is growing. Through all facilities, internet offers to their contacts, the use of social networks which is expanding. Therefore, in websites and blogs
interaction has been very limited and only comments are allowed. But, in the new technology-based society, where direct social interactions are declining, people take refuge in social online networks, to compensate for the missed human interaction.

Social networking sites are web-based that contribute to sharing information. Through the internet, users create profiles and signing by participating in this space and with the help of capability of multimedia site, such as sharing photos, text, content or links to external content, develop their own spaces. Currently, there are hundreds of social networking sites with different capabilities. They include visible profiles that show the user's system list and millions of users can pay attention to it. These sites constituted major part of their daily tasks and activities.

These networks have different technical features. Some of these network sites are designed based on specific categories of religious, racial, sexual, political or other cognitive indicators. But totally, these networks can be classified, in terms of the purposes of use (education, business, entertainment, politics ...), focus (coverage and specific orientation / public), as well as the extent of access (limited / unlimited).

Social networking websites were formed in 1997 with the advent of www.sixdegrees. Services of this site despite having millions of members were limited to set profiles and the ability to send and receive friend requests from other Members. For this reason, it was closed in 2000 and during this period from 1999 to 2001, other social networking websites with new features were created, like Ocean Avenue, Black Planet, Cretu, Kai World. They encourage people to create specialized, personal, career and friendships pages. But since 2001, with the rise of sites, such as Ryze (travel), LinkedIn, Friendster, Coach Serfing, My Church for Christians, Dogster, Catster and other items, specialization of virtual social network accelerated and user networks were distinct from each other. The basic difference in virtual social networks can be searched in the support of their network relationships which focused on individual issues or individual users.

This expansion and the development of virtual social network at this speed indicated the increasing interest in this service among users in the international community. Even though in Iran, more social networks including Twitter and Facebook face problems of filtering, but the number of Iranian users to these sites is increasing steadily. According to the statistics of Alexa, Facebook is one of the top ten sites used by Iranians in cyberspace.

Despite the relative novelty of those social media networks, the number of users is increasing because the various attractions those sites provide. Being engaged in spaces of this kind, offers unlimited possibilities and alternatives. Three levels of “information, communication and interaction can be examined.
It seems that Iranian users, especially young generations, often use these types of sites for facilities and making friendships.

Iranian society is in transition from tradition to modernity. New generations want to determine their way of life and follow western lifestyle and friendships. In their opinion such desire is justifiable and in the community’s opinion it is unwarrantable.

In a conservative society like Iran there is no full freedom of expression of political opinions. Young and rebellious generation try to express their views through this channel. But it should be noted that this motivation, often is not for political work but is to participate in political debates since these people do not have organized political activity. But also should not be neglected from this point, there is organized activities.

Generally, traditional marketing is about to vanish due to increasing customer behavior to television advertising and direct mailing.

With increasing the popularity of product recommendation systems, social networking websites, online chat programs and major social networks will expand everywhere. Social networks in a way have changed electronic commerce led to new marketing methods. Electronic business and electronic firms have overcome existing problems in business.

Recent research shows that oral expression with clients for the development of a company is much more positive and better. Marketing by verbal interaction has basic advantages. So recommendations from a friend or trusted authority can compensate for the lack of available credit in advertising. In future, online social network are likely to add other services, like sale goods to create new marketing possibilities and opportunities.
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