The Impact of Social Media in the Promotion of Tourist Destinations

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Tourist sector, Social Media, World’s GDP, ...
ABSTRACT
The study of this work is to show and analyze the importance that two key agents have today together and separately as the tourism sector that moves more than 1.4 billion people a year and social media that currently have 3.8 billion users and increasing by day.

We call them key agents since the tourism industry is indispensable to the economy given the great contribution it makes to the world’s GDP in addition to generating 1 out of every 4 new jobs and on the other hand, social media have become a key tool not only for consumers, but also for companies. In the specific case of the tourism sector in terms of promoting new destinations and to create stronger ties with costumers.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organization
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
UN: United Nations
WTTC: World Travel & Tourism Council
COVID-19: Coronavirus disease 2019
US: United States
FITUR: Feria Internacional de Turismo
ITB: International Tourism of Berlin
FamTrip: Family trip
eWOM: Online Word of Mouth.
SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ESERP: Escuela Superior de Relaciones Públicas
FUNDAE: Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo
UIB: University of Balearic Islands
APA: American Psychical Association
TFG: Trabajo de Final de Grado
1. Introduction
Tourism is a changing industry which plays a very important role in the world’s economy. In an industry that according to the World Trade Organization already moves 1.4 billion tourist a year around the world, the travel and tourism industry has been one of the pioneers in the development of new innovations, positioning itself as a leading sector in online shopping.
I believe deeply in the phrase of “renew or die” and that’s what tourism has been doing for the last few decades, renewing itself. This is where social media come in and their importance in tourism as they are a “recent” trending since their boom is less than 20 years old and everyday more and more users are enjoying them.
This is why in the so-called “Information Society” (Loebbecke & Wareham, 2003, p.166) this two factors are so important, and we can conclude that they are related since society means set of people who relate to each other, as well as information means the act of inform and that’s what both social media and tourism implies, group of people who travel around the world and share their experiences in the media thus getting in touch/communication with other people.
As a student of tourism, I love to travel and all that it implies and as young person I’m also very into social media, these two topics interest me a lot. In addition, I think they are linked to each other and they are current issues that are in the process of growing so we should bring them together to benefit both sectors.

1.1 Objectives
The aim of this case of study it’s to analyze two variables separately and together. How they appeared and how they have become important as time goes by. On the one hand, we will analyze tourism and the importance of this sector for the world’s economy and on the other hand we will talk about social media and the tool that has been made of them for the tourist sector and facilitate the promotion of tourism destinations nowadays.
This analysis will also be carried out through the study of a survey that I have created for this purpose and that includes 369 people to see their opinion on the influence of social media on our daily lives and on the tourism sector and obviously to answer the main question “Do you think social media is important in the promotion of tourist destinations?”

2. Tourism
UNWTO defined tourism as the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purpose.

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1 UNWTO is the United Nations specialized agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. UNWTO’s membership includes 158 countries, 6 territories and over 500 affiliate members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities. Its headquarters are in Madrid.
2.1 History of tourism

It has always been considered the beginning of tourism at the beginning of time since the first humans constantly moved from one place to another but they did it out of necessity (nomadic or sedentary humans) so we are talking about the first tourist “no for leisure”.

Tourism has been changing along with man, according to his needs and characteristics:

- **Paleolithic (32000 to 10000 BC):** search to cover their basic needs, water, food and refuge. The evolution of man marked by nomadism. They travelled on foot along open country trails, through forests or swamps. The discover and control of fire, tools and skills to build temporary refugees, extend the distance of travel.

- **Neolithic (10000 to 4000 BC):** During this period the primitive people established themselves in permanent areas, formed agricultural communities and developed elementary cultures. Innovations such as the creation of sailing boats and the invention of the wheel (used to move people, materials...) changed the nature of travel. The growth of agricultural communities allowed for the storage of food and water, which offered some stability to travelers. With the emergence of culture and religion, travel with religious and spiritual purpose was strengthened (pilgrimages).

- **Ancient civilizations (4000 BC to 476 AC):** Travel for business and trade.
  - **Greeks:** importance of free time and leisure, which allowed them to devote themselves to culture, sport and religion
  - **Romans:** Conquerors, which implied a constant journey. They also started the fashion of thermalism\(^2\) in common baths to increase the socialization.

- **The middle ages (500 BC to 1000 AC):** The importance that religions such as Christianity or Islam were taking on, was causing religious travel to increase more and more that spread all over Europe, starting the creation of maps showing the routes of the pilgrimages. This was where the guides started, to give information to travelers.

- **Renaissance (1300 BC to 1600 AC):** Time of change and exploration. First hotels appeared and the sea expeditions began.

(Forero, November 2016)

Then we can really date tourism to 18th century in full consolidation of industrialization when tourism practices began to become widespread and to move thousands of Europeans. These practices were linked to different activities such as rest, health and knowledge

\(^2\) The therapeutic use of hot-water springs.
and took the form of thermalism, hiking, wave baths on cold beaches or educational tours like “The Grand Tour” when wealthy British families sent their children around Europe for two or three years to further their fellowmen studies.

After the First World War, tourism was able to develop further as there were social measures focused mainly on young people in order to promote popular tourism. However, it was at the end of the Second World War with the new nature of the states, much more active and mobilizing, tourism became a mass phenomenon and an agent of national construction that the "tourist boom" appeared.

The 1950s with the generalization of paid holidays, the improvement in transport systems and the increase in per capita income in European countries were the factors that drove "tourism".

(Editorial board, 2013; Moreno-Garrido, 2012)

2.2 Importance of tourism in worlds’ economy

Nowadays, tourism industry, it is viewed as a major element for economic development and growth. This industry is seen as the most highly significant and integral part of any economy, for ninth-year consecutive it was above the growth rate of world GDP in 2019. However, the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, the collapse of Thomas Cook, the geopolitical and social tensions and the global economic slowdown all contributed to a slower growth in the year 2019, when compared to the exceptional rates of 2017 and 2018. Tourism industry is also an industry which generates employment and foreign exchange earnings, since during the last 5 years 1 out of 4 new jobs created were thanks to this sector. (UNWTO, 2020)

Despite signs of a global economic slowdown, according to a UN (2019) statement, more and more travel is taking place. In the first half of 2019, world destinations received 671 million foreign visitors, almost 30 million more than in the same period in 2018.
As we can see in the map above the top 10 tourist destinations by money spent in 2018 were the following ones:

1. United States - $214 billion
2. Spain - $74 billion
3. France - $67 billion
4. Thailand - $63 billion
5. United Kingdom - $52 billion
6. Italy - $49 billion
7. Australia - $45 billion
8. Germany - $43 billion
9. Japan - $41 billion
10. China - $40 billion

According to information collected from WTTC. In 2019, Travel's and Tourism, direct, indirect and induced impact accounted for:

- US$ 8.9 trillion contribution to the world’s GDP
- 10.3% of the global GDP
- 330 million jobs, 1 in 10 jobs around the world
- US$ 1.7 trillion visitor exports (6.8% of total exports, 28.3% of global services export)
- US$ 948 billion capital investment (4.3% of total investment)

Thanks to more information collected by WTTC, its known that 8 of 10 countries where the most money was spent on tourism (figure 1)

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WTTC is a forum for the travel and tourism industry. It is made up of members from the global business community and works with governments to raise awareness about this industry. It is known for being the only forum to represent the private sector in all parts of the industry worldwide.
are on the top 10 that contribute most to the world’s GDP, the only countries left out of this ranking were Australia and Thailand. Overall all this numbers are quite highs and show us the great contribution this sector makes to the world economy and how important it is.

**Graphic 1: Total annual expenditure of tourist travelling abroad (US$ millions)**

![Bar graph showing total annual expenditure of tourist travelling abroad](image)

**Source:** Own creation based on information extracted from “La República” newspaper from a study of GetGoing Travel Insurance

It must be taken into account that the nationality of tourists is an important factor in the study of the economy, since some nationalities spend much more when they travel than others as we can see in the graph above, depending on the standard of living they have in their country and its wealth.

As you can see in the previous graph the country that spend more on travelling abroad is China (258 000 million US$) being the leader par excellence, surpassing the U.S. and Germany together (224 100 million US$). It should be noted that this has nothing to do with the fact that its population is much larger because the total number of Chinese people who travel a year is only about 100 million.

*(Reed, Dan)*

**2.2.1 Forecast 2020**

*UNWTO (January 2020)* latest information indicates that we will have the tenth consecutive year of growth according to the first comprehensive report on global tourism numbers and trends of the new decade.

Major sporting events, including the Tokyo Olympics, and cultural events such as Expo 2020 Dubai and the Beethoven 2020 year in Germany are expected to have a positive impact on the sector, looking ahead, growth of 3% to 4% is predictable for 2020.
Impact of Social Media in the Promotion of Tourist Destinations

$$\text{Table 1: International tourist arrivals}$$

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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>+3% to +4%</td>
<td>* Provisional data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>+3% to +4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>+5% to +6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>+2% to +3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>+3% to +5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>-4.7%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>+4% to +6%</td>
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This information was estimated before the current situation of COVID-19\(^4\). Due to the number of infections worldwide, a pandemic has been declared. Most countries are under quarantine and borders have been closed. This situation will not be good for the world economy as a whole and it will take some time for us to recover. Above all the great impact that has been generated in the tourism sector, since this industry more than any other economic activity with social impact, is based on the interaction between people. The large cancellations of flights, hotels, cruises, excursions... have been a hard blow to the tourism industry.

“In these times of uncertainty and volatility, tourism remains a reliable economic sector” (Pololikashvili, 2020) these words from the UNWTO Secretary-General were true to a certain extent. The situation we are experiencing, and the pandemic could not be foreseen at all, in this kind of situation not even the tourist sector remains reliable for the economy. So, it can be concluded that there are major situations that destabilize our way of life and affects everyone.

2.3 Old ways of tourist promoting

Promotion of destination is defined as “the conscious use of advertising and marketing to communicate selective images of specific locations or geographical areas to a target audience” (Hopkins, 1988)

Previous to websites and social media there were other ways of promotion:

- **Word-of-mouth communication**

\(^4\) COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a new virus that has not been detected in humans to date. The virus causes a respiratory illness such as influenza with various symptoms (cough, fever, etc.) which, in severe cases, can lead to pneumonia. To protect yourself you can wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.
- **Publicity**
- **Flyers**
- **Multimedia/videos**
  - **Product-placement**: Negotiations for destination to be present in film, television and advertising products.
  - **FamTrip**: For opinion leaders, artists or well-known subjects.
  - **Product launch and event organization**: For new products, old proposals being re-launched, special events based on a story, launch of a communication campaign.
  - **Fairs/Buy workshop**: Aimed at professionals in the sector and the public. (FITUR\(^5\), ITB\(^6\)…)
  - **Sponsorships**: Become organizers of cultural, sports and artistic initiatives.
  - **Conferences**: Meetings, seminars, presentations in collaboration with famous local guests/leaders of opinion.
  - **Industry presentations**: Internal meetings and briefings, newsletters, public information, etc. (Castillo-Palacio & Castaño-Molina, 2014)

Many of these promotion methods are still used but in a new way, they have been modernized. For example, the word-of-mouth communication as it was known before is what is now called eWOM.

3. **Social Media**

Social media refers to computer-based technology that allows the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information in real-time through the building of virtual networks and communities. These are internet-based and gives users efficient and quick communication of content. These can include personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Users can use social media via web-based software or web application. (Dollarhide, 2019)

3.1 **History of Social Media**

The origin of social media is known as Web 2.0 and dates back simply to 1995, these changed drastically our way of communicating. Social media are sites that allow contact between individuals with the aim of communicating and exchanging information, they can have a social purpose, a business purpose or both. Social networking has become a significant base for marketers seeking to engage costumers. This leads to the fact that today the information we read is also written by us.

The creation of the first social media dates to 1995 with classamte.com but it is not until 2003, less than 20 years ago, with the creation of Myspace, LinkedIn and Xing that it is really considered

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\(^5\) FITUR is the largest tourist fair in Spain and the most important in Europe. It takes place every year at the end of January in Madrid organized by IFEMA

\(^6\) ITB It is the leading fair of the world's tourism industry. It takes place every year in March at the Berlin Exhibition Centre and is organized by Messe Berlin GmbH
the beginning of social media, the golden age of these. In 2004 Facebook was launched for Harvard students and two years later in 2006 Twitter was created and Facebook opened its doors to all audiences, at this time there was no turning back. Facebook, the successful creation of Mark Zuckerberg surpassed all social media and became unstoppable, in 2011 the users of the social network reached 600 million and by the end of 2012 reached one billion active users. (Grapsas, 2017; Soler, 2019)

**Graphic 2: Social Media user numbers over time in thousand million (January 2020)**

![Social Media user numbers](image)

*Source: Global Digital Overview study extracted from Hootsuite*

As we can see the number of users of social media its increasing through the years and that’s something that businessman don’t miss out on, so they’ve decided to use this to their advantage. Nowadays if your company/business, no matter how big it is, is not on social medias or has its own website you should rethink things because is not being promoted correctly, since it is necessary to adapt to new technologies (that implies new ways of promotion) to be able to continue advancing. Obviously, tourism entrepreneurs are not left behind and have also joined this era of social networks, there is no hotel, travel agency, restaurant... that does not have its own page or is active in social media, or both, to promote itself.

### 3.1.1 Types of Social Media

When it comes to social media people think of Facebook or Instagram and not much more, what they don’t know is that social media encompass a much wider territory. So here I’ll put two types of classifications to make It easier to understand scope of these.

- **Horizontal Social Media:** are the type of general social media, where any type of user can enter and participate in them, without having a priori common characteristics. They are, for example, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.
Vertical Social Media: It's a little different here. Users seek or have points in common, and these social media serve one or more specific purposes at the professional level: employment, networking, travel, etc. This is where social networks such as LinkedIn, TripAdvisor, Soundcloud, Spotify, Vimeo, etc. come in. (Navarrete, 2018)

On the other hand, if you want to go deeper then the classification is divided into 10 types of social media.

- **Social Networks**: Connect with people (and brands) online. Examples: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn…
- **Media sharing networks**: Share photos, videos and other media. Examples: Snapchat, YouTube…
- **Discussion forums**: To find, discuss and share news, information and ideas/opinions. Examples: Reddit, Quora…
- **Bookmarking and content curation networks**: Discover, save, share and discuss new content. Examples: Pinterest, Flipboard…
- **Consumer review networks**: To find, review, and share information about brands, products, and services, as well as restaurants, travel destinations, and more. Examples: TripAdvisor, Yelp…
- **Blogging and publishing networks**: Publish content online. Examples: Tumblr, WordPress…
- **Interest-based networks**: Share interest and hobbies. Examples: Goodreads, Houzz…
- **Social shopping networks**: Shop online. Examples: Fancy, Polyvore…
- **Sharing economy networks**: To advertise, sell, buy, and trade goods and services between peers. Examples: Airbnb, Uber…
- **Anonymous social networks**: Communicate anonymously (gossip, vent, snoop and sometimes bully). Examples: Ask.fm, Whisper… (Foreman, 2017)

3.2 6-Degree Separation Theory:
It is a hypothesis, first formulated in 1929 by the Hungarian Frigyes Karinthy, in which it is demonstrated that any inhabitant of our planet is connected to another person of the globe through a chain of acquaintances of a maximum of 6 intermediaries.
A Microsoft (2006) study corroborates that any two individuals are connected by no more than 6.6 degrees of separation, meaning that seven or fewer intermediaries are needed to link them. To demonstrate the theory Microsoft used 30,000 electronic conversations from 180 million users of its Messenger messaging service.

According to an article by www.europapress.es (November 2011) "Facebook pulverizes the 6-degree theory and puts it under 5". A study by the University of Milan in collaboration with Facebook states that the distance between two people anywhere in the world is reduced to 4.74 steps. The study says that the trend is that as Facebook users increase, the number of steps in the process decreases, and that if limited to contacts in the same country, the process can be completed in just three steps (four if the user who starts the process is counted). 721 million of users were used for this study (10% of the world’s population).

Thanks to this theory we can conclude that it is increasingly easier for us to be connected thanks to the globalization of social networks. In addition, this implies that it is also much easier to promote tourist destinations as it is much easier to reach a larger number of people.

### 3.3 Benefits of Social Media for your business

There are still businesses on the fence about utilizing social media. All users of social media (3.4 billion of people) can be potential customers for any company, so all those who refuse to use them are
staying one step behind. The following are some of the benefits that social networks have for companies:

**Figure 3: Benefits of Social Media for your company**

- Increased brand awareness: Increase your business’ visibility.
- More inbound traffic: Improve marketing strategy in order to increase the circle of loyal customers.
- Better consumer satisfaction: Your best consumers are your promoters.
- Improve brand loyalty: Consumer engagement.
- Social selling: Media creates sells.
- Customer service: Faster communication and feedbacks.
- Easier to do segments strategies.
- Study your competition.
- Discover new trends and opportunities in the market.
- Improve search rankings.
- Growth business partnerships.
- Lead generation.

It must be taken into account that companies not only have to use social media but also have to know “how to use them” because using them in an inappropriate way could create a bad/wrong brand image, it means to give an image opposite to what they really want or also to generate a bad reputation.

4. **SWOT Analysis**

**Table 2: SWOT Analysis of Tourism Industry**

| Strengths (internal)          | • Adapt itself to innovation (new technologies) |
|                              | • Change along with man                         |
|                              | • Important contribution to the world GDP      |
|                              | • Existence of attractive tourist destinations |
|                              | • Higher historical and cultural diversity      |
|                              | • Tourism as an engine of employment           |
|                              | • Supported by powerful associations like UNESCO & UNWTO |
| Weaknesses (internal)        | • Higher intervention of the government        |
|                              | • Highly seasonal use of facilities and labour |
| Opportunities (external) | • Continuous focus on traditional tourism product  
| | • Disparity between states  
| | • Growing income levels in developing countries  
| | • Increasing importance of environmental concerns, to raise awareness of sustainability  
| | • Potential demand for innovative products  
| | • New types of tourism are emerging over time that can help destinations break through seasonality  
| Threats (external) | • High competition between countries  
| | • Changing tourism market (changes in people tastes)  
| | • Lack of diversification in tourism products  
| | • Similar tourist destinations with better communication or more innovative  
| | • Unpredictable external factors cause the sector to plummet (I.e. COVID-19)  

Table 3: SWOT Analysis of Social Media

| Strengths (internal) | • Easy handling  
| | • Great accessibility  
| | • Diversity (specialized, help segmentation)  
| | • Tool for businesses (promotion, sales…)  
| | • Complement to other sources of information  
| Weaknesses (internal) | • Not knowing how it works  
| | • Ignore the information that flows through them  
| | • There are still so many people who are not aware of the importance of being present in Social Media  
| | • Formation is needed to make the most of these  
| | • Not all parts of the world have the same ease of access to internet  
| Opportunities (external) | • Reach a wider range of people from anywhere in the World  
| | • Look into our competition (as business)  
| | • Can help research  
| | • Check opinions about any product or service  
| Threats (external) | • Misuse of these (hoax broadcast, false information…)  
| | • No tool control possible  
| | • Dangerous if privacy is not set correctly  
| | • It takes a lot to build an online reputation, but it can be destroyed in a matter of seconds  

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5. **Survey Research**

As I mentioned previously, in order to deepen my thesis research I have made a survey that has been answered by 369 people from 34 different countries of which 219 (59.3% of the answers) have been women and the remaining 150 (40.7% of the answers) have been men. This questionnaire was very simple and quick to answer with only 12 questions that will be studied to arrive at the conclusion of the question “**How important do you consider social media in promoting tourist destinations?**”

The countries with the highest number of responses were Spain, France and Belgium with 249, 31 and 13 responses respectively. On the other side the countries from which I have received a minority of responses have been those in the American continent (except for Peru which has been the fourth highest response rate in the survey) and Eastern Europe as you can see in the following map.

**Figure 4: Number of answers per country**

![Map showing number of answers per country](image_url)

*Source: Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people*

As you can see with the previous map, there have been responses from different parts of the world and that will make the study more accurate and valid since we see the perspective of different cultures. The previous information is related to the 1st (gender) and 3rd (Where do you come from?) questions of the survey.
As we can see in the above graph most answers were from people between 18 and 25 years old (75,07% of the total answers) who are normally of study age but as you can see in the graph bellow this does not mean that the percentage of working people who has responded to the survey is much lower. As we can observe, the answers were divided into 5 groups: students that it is the highest percentage with 48,78% followed by workers with 26,29%, we need to take into account for this 2 previous results, that is not the real total of students or workers who have answer the survey since the third group include both (so we must add this percentage). The third group as we have already said its worker + student and is composed of 20,05% of the sample. The fourth and the fifth groups are the last ones, these are the unemployed and others and have a percentage of 2,71% and 2,17% respectively.
So, if we add the percentage of the third group to the first and the second, we have the following results:
Students = 68,86%
Workers = 46,43%
Having such a large number of people working (students or not) will allow us to have a more extensive and diverse view than we would have if the answers were simply from students. On the other hand, having a large number of students is positive since they are the future generations for the labour market and adapting to what they think is a way to keep moving forward, nevertheless the group that is fundamental since it has a wider vision of both worlds is the group of “students + workers”, for that reason it will be necessary to study its answers carefully.
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Graphic 4: Occupancy of the survey respondents

Source: Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people

Graphic 5: Percentage of use of Social Media by the survey respondents

Do you use social media?

369 respuestas

Source: Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people
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**Graphic 6: Hours per day that survey respondents use Social Media**

How many hours per day do you use social media?
369 respuestas

- 33.9% use social media for less than 1 hour per day.
- 50.1% use social media between 1 and 3 hours per day.
- 19% use social media for more than 3 hours per day.

**Source:** Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people.

Of all sample results whether they are young, old, students, workers, unemployed... the total of those who answer that they use social media is 96.7% (357 people) and only 3.3% (12 people) have answered negatively to the question as we can observe in the pie chart above (graph 5). This can also be explained by the fact that the large percentage of people, as we mentioned before (graph 3), who have responded to this survey are young people, 314 answers of the total sample have been from people of 35 years old or younger, and as many studies shows, these are the ones that use the most social media. It should be noted that within the percentage of people who responded that they do not use social media 83.33% think that they are important or very important for the tourism sector and 75% think that they are important or very important for the promotion of tourist destinations, these are curious facts because even if they are people who do not use social media they can see how important these are nowadays. Furthermore, in the previous chart (graph 6) we can see that 84% of the people uses social media between 1 hour or more during the day of which 33.9% (125 people) uses them for more than 3 hours a day. With the previous information we can conclude that among all this people at least 560 hours [(125people*3h) + (185people*1h)] per day are used on social media, and that’s quite a lot so we can gather that they are an effective tool and very popular and does not distinguish between ages since, according to our sample, 96% of the people over 50 years use them.

I would like to highlight that within the group of students + workers 89.19% use social media for 1 hour or more during the day. I highlight this because by living in the foreground what it is like to have to work and study at the same time and the hours you spend on both, free time is reduced to a minimum and if you spend 1 hour or more a day using social media it means that they have a great influence and/or are very important for people. Excluding that there are people who during working hours need to be in continuous contact with social media.
Impact of Social Media in the Promotion of Tourist Destinations

Vanessa Vidal Villavicencio

Graphic 7: Importance of Social Media for the tourist sector for the survey respondents

How important do you think social media is in the tourism sector?
369 respuestas

Source: Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people

Graphic 8: Percentage of influence of Social Media in people’s life for the survey respondents

What percentage of influence do you think social media has on people’s life?
369 respuestas

Source: Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people

Regarding to the information in the previous pie charts we can see that 96.5% of the people of the total sample thinks that social media is important for the tourist sector of which 37.4% (138 people) thinks that is really important. With this information and these high percentages, we come to the inference that these two topics are really intertwined with each other and we can also conclude that tourism today is quite dependent on social media. This led us to analyze the following question “which percentage of influence do you think social media has on people’s life?” as we can observe 167 people (45.3% of the total sample) thinks their influence in our lives is between 50% and 75% and 81 people (22% of the total sample) thinks their influence in our lives is over 75%. Again, the percentages obtained are quite high, this is also related to the use of smartphones, because thanks to them today we can have all our social media in the palm of our hand, and we do not depend on a computer as
in the past. All this previous information shows us that the relationship between these three factors (people- social media- tourism) is cyclical, people thinks that social media are important for tourism, these same social media have a very important influence on people and without people there is neither tourism nor social media, since if there were no users it would not be profitable for them to continue operating and therefore if these do not operate the promotion of tourism decreases. With this analysis we can say that they are complementary goods since with the increase of the use of one the other also increases, on the one hand the tourism increases the use of the social media sharing your experiences/photos in them with your followers and/or friends, on the other hand these same photos/experiences shared increase the possibility that new places are known and it boost you to travel.

**Graphic 9: Number of discovered new places thanks to Social Media by the survey respondents**

Have you ever discovered new places because you saw them on social media?
369 respuestas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people

**Graphic 10: Number of places visited by a picture seen on Social Media by the survey respondents**

Have you ever visited a place because you saw a picture of it on social media?
369 respuestas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people
Impact of Social Media in the Promotion of Tourist Destinations

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Graphic 11: Number of planned itineraries through information on Social Media by the survey respondents

Have you ever planned your trip itinerary because of advices that people post on social media?

369 respondents

Yea 55%  65%
No 45%

Source: Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people

In the previous three graphics we can observe that 317 people (85.9% of the total sample) discovered a new place through social media, 273 people (74% of the total sample) visited a place thanks to a pic they saw on social media and 240 people (65% of the total sample) planned their trip using advices that people post on social media.

So, to understand deeper these three previous charts, we will analyse the relationship of them together, so, in total there are 8 possible relationships between the 3 questions, as there are only two possible answers for each of the questions ($2^3 = 8$).

Let’s say:

**Question 1**: Have you ever discover new places because you saw them on social media? (Graph 9)

**Question 2**: Have you ever visited a place because you saw a picture of it on social media? (Graph 10)

**Question 3**: Have you ever planned your trip itinerary because of advices that people post on social media? (Graph 11)

- A total of 200 people (54.20% of the total sample) answered positively to the three questions.
- A total of 57 people (15.45% of the total sample) answered positively to the two first questions and negatively to the question nº 3.
- A total of 31 people (8.40% of the total sample) answered positively to the question nº 1 and negatively to the other two questions.
- A total of 31 people (8.40% of the total sample) answered negatively to the three questions.
- A total of 10 people answered negatively to the questions nº1 and nº3 and positively to the question nº2.
- A total of 6 people (1.63% of the total sample) answered negatively to the question nº1 and positively to the other two questions.
• A total of 5 people (1.36% of the total sample) answered negatively to the two first questions and positively to the question nº3.
• A total of 29 people (7.86% of the total sample) answered positively to the questions nº1 and nº3 and negatively to the question nº2.

Regarding to the previous information there is less than 10% of the people who don’t use at all social media to plan their trips. On the other hand 54.20% make full use of social media to discover places and plan their trips, these high percentages show us once more the great importance that social media has in tourism, especially in the part before starting our trip, as these serve to inspire you about the trip, choose the best provider (hotel, transport, excursions, restaurants...) and be in touch with it. The new technologies have given the travellers the possibility of expressing their appreciation of the experience they are living in real time; this forces the industry to adapt in the way it relates to them (travellers). The influence that a post can have in just a few seconds on the networks is unimaginable, it can radically change the destination, either for good or bad, attracting / encouraging more tourists thanks to a good comment and / or recommendation or on the contrary, scaring them, making them change their destination because of a bad comment. This has made the way destinies relate to their guess more important than ever before.

**Graphic 12: Importance of Social Media in promoting tourist destinations for the survey respondents**

How important do you consider social media in promoting tourist destinations?

369 respuestas

![Pie Chart](image)

**Sources:** Own creation based on the results of a self-created survey carried out on a sample of the population of 369 people

The previous pie chart is the one that is directly related with the main objective of the essay since I asked directly the question to which I want to look for a conclusion and see what people thinks about it. As we can observe 162 people (43.9% of the total sample) thinks that social media is important for the promotion of tourist destination and 191 people (51.8% of the total sample) thinks that they are really important, it means 1 out of 2 people.
On the other hand, as you can see in the chart above, I would like to point that the sum of negative responses are less than a 5% of the total sample since 12 of the respondents (3.3% of the total sample) answered that social media are not important for the promotion of tourism and only 4 (1.1% of the total sample) answered that they are not important at all. 96.7% of people use social media as we saw in the graph and as we can see in the chart above 95.7% people think social media are important or really important for the promotion of tourist destinations, that means these two factors are related, in other words we can conclude that in general people who uses social media believe that these are important. We said “in general” considering that 13 people who use social media answered negatively to the previous question.

6. Interview

*Mireia Faugier*  
*DIRECTBeds REVENue & COACHing*

*Figure 5: Interviewee’s picture*

- Mentor and tourism expert
- Expert in hotel business strategy
- Expert in evolution of people in tourism companies
- UIB collaborator
- ESERP collaborator
- Free trainer of high-level courses in hotel reception, by FUNDAE
- Coach & speaker
- Creator of “Aula Formación para Alojamientos e Intermediación” (4 promotions – 150 students with work insertion)

This interview with a businesswoman in the tourism sector has given me the opportunity to have a small perspective from the professional view of the importance of social media in the promotion of tourist destinations and in the labour market. This tool has made it much easier for them to reach people and has also made companies strive even harder to satisfy the customer as information flows quickly, whether the customer is happy or not. Moreover, thanks to social media they can more easily research the competition to see their innovations and this encourages them to want to improve themselves more and more.

7. Conclusions

Following the analysis carried out, a series of conclusions and recommendations can be drawn in relation to the tourism sector and social media, in addition to providing a small response to our main question about the influence and importance of social media in the tourism sector.
First of all, as we can see, the tourism sector is a very important sector and in constant growth, this industry has been evolving along with the human being throughout the years and this is something that must continue to be done since it moves along with history and culture, which is why it is supported by great associations such as UNWTO and UNESCO. Moreover, evolution means innovation and that is something we all have to do today in order to continue advancing, so it is a great opportunity to develop new types of tourism (health tourism, bird sighting...) in order to break the main problem of the sector "seasonality". It should be noted that the benefit of this sector compared to others is due to the great diversity of existing destinations additionally to the new destinations that are constantly emerging. In addition, the great importance it has on the world’s economy is something that cannot be left aside since it is the sector that makes a greater contribution to it and for the ninth consecutive year it was above the growth rate of world GDP and the contribution that it makes to the same one is every time greater, being of 10.3% the one of 2019. It is also important to consider that it is a sector that generates many jobs, according to the UNWTO in the last 5 years 1 out of 4 new jobs created are due to tourism.

As we have observed, the tourism industry faces a series of threats, but these can also be a way of encouraging us to exploit our opportunities. In other words, one of the main threats is the high level of competition between countries and the constant change in customer tastes, but from these we can benefit as it forces tourism companies to improve and innovate and thus combat the monotony of "traditional tourism". As it is such an important and influential sector, we must have a global vision so that we can all benefit. For example, today people are beginning to take more account of the environment and sustainability, so we must promote sustainable tourism in order to attract consumers who take this into account, to raise awareness among those who are not yet aware of it and above all to do our bit for the planet. This sector is expected to continue growing and improving in the future and maintain its economic stability, obviously due to the current situation COVID-19 this year the expectations will not be met, as it has been the economic sector most damaged, but this will not prevent a recovery for the future, thanks to campaigns that are already beginning to plan to help the sector after this crisis, as Travel Tomorrow.

“Historically, tourism has proven itself as a key driver of international recovery, and as early as now, we must begin to prepare in order to build the foundations of the future resilience of tourism” (Pololikashvili, 2020)

Secondly, as we can see, compared to tourism that can be dated back to the beginning of time, social media are quite new since their great boom can be traced back only 20 years, this has not prevented them from becoming famous, strong and influential in such a short time. There are currently 3,805 billion users on social media and growing each day. The ability to share photos, opinions, events, etc. in real-time has transformed the way we live and, also, the way we do business. These are easy to use, have a great diversity and facilitate communication in a way never seen before. Obviously, to get the most
out of them you need to know how to use them fully, which requires prior formation. The point is to use social media correctly as they can also be dangerous for your privacy, there is no way to control them and many hoaxes can be generated through them and as we have seen in the survey conducted, social media have a great influence on people (who spend many hours a day using them) so they should be used in a positive and productive way in order to benefit both if you use them for leisure (as a costumer) or for your business.

Also during the realization of this work I have been able to observe that there are many people, including entrepreneurs and not just consumers, who do not really know what social media are and think that they are simply social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter…) but these are just one type of social media and there are many more and they really cover almost every function we use the internet for whether it's for online shopping (Fancy), transportation services (Uber), finding specific information (Reddit), comparing services and search reviews (TripAdvisor) and so on. But mostly what the social media has achieved is that we have the feeling of being closer to each other, and the truth is that we are.

Lastly but not least I would like to conclude with an answer to the main question of this project which is the following one “Do you think Social Media is important in the promotion of tourist destination?” From the analysis of this work I have been able to conclude that after social media tourism promotion started to grow up in a crazy way. These are tools that help either costumers either companies, everyone get what they want in a faster way. Companies created their own accounts in social media to promote different offers of trip packages with pictures of the destination to make it more “real” as companies have begun to focus more on selling the customer experience rather than selling the destination itself since they've seen that this is more attractive for the consumers. On social media, the first promoters of tourist destinations are not companies but the users, unknowingly; each time they post a picture and tag the place where this picture has been taken a lot of people can see it and like it, so most of the people that like both the picture and the place, goes to the location to check where it was taken and even sometimes they save the place to visit it by their own in a future; as we have seen from the survey responses of a sample of 369 people, 85,9% of the people discovered a new place because they saw it on social media, 74% of the people visited a place because they saw a picture of it on social media and 65% of the people planned their trip thanks to advices they saw on social media. Furthermore, thanks to social media the relationship between the costumer and the destination has become stronger. The goal of the tourism industry is to reach as many people as possible in order to promote their product and this is much easier thanks to social media. On the other hand, from the consumer's point of view, what we like is to be informed about things and social media have made this work easier for us too, since through them we can get a great deal of information before starting our next trip. It is also first-hand information, comments from other guests who have been
there previously and leave recommendations or negative comments about the area and the surrounding establishments.

Therefore, my answer to the question, like 95.7% of the survey respondents, is that yes, social media are important for the promotion of tourist destinations.

“People influence people. Nothing influences people more than a recommendation from a trusted friend. A trusted referral influences people more than the best broadcast message. A trusted referral is the Holy Grail of advertising” (Zuckerberg)

8. Employed methodology

To carry out this essay I have use various sources of information and research tools such as google scholar, google and the UIB’s online library. Thanks to these I have been able to find different books, articles and researches from which I have been able to get a lot of information. In addition, thanks to the university’s online library I have been able to see essays from other years which I have been able to use as a guide to structure mine.

As far as the wording of the work is concerned, I have used Word and to do some of the graphics I have used Excel.

Although without a doubt the most entertaining part has been the field research, I carried out a 12-question survey, with the help of google docs., that obtained 369 answers and with the help of Excel I have been able to investigate the different answers in relation to different variables such as age, gender, occupancy... Diffusing it also took a lot of hours of work and dedication, for do this I used the following social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp, Besides I also contact with the tourism faculty and they sent an email through the UIB digital to students and teachers.

Lastly, as far as the bibliography, I used the APA style.

9. Bibliography

Books:


Websites:


Navarrete, J. (2018, September 04) Types of Social Media and their characteristics. Recovered from: https://www.inboundemotion.com/blog/tipos-de-redes-sociales-y-sus-caracter%CC%81sticas


Zuckerberg, M. Quotes. Recovered from: https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/mark-zuckerberg-quotes

10. Appendixes

Appendix 1: Survey

1. Gender
   - Male
   - Female
2. Age
   - -18
   - 18-25
   - 26-35
   - 36-50
   - +50

3. What country do you come from? (WRITE THE ANSWER IN ENGLISH AND CAPITAL)

4. Occupational status
   - Student
   - Worker
   - Unemployed
   - Student & worker
   - Others

5. How important do you think Social Media is in the tourism sector?
   - Absolutely not important
   - Not important
   - Important
   - Really important

6. Do you use Social Media?
   - Yes
   - No

7. How many hours per day do you use Social Media?
   - Less than 1h
   - Between 1h and 3h
   - More than 3h

8. Have you ever visited a place because you saw a picture of it on Social Media?
   - Yes
   - No

9. Have you ever planned your trip itinerary because of advices that people post on Social Media?
   - Yes
   - No

10. Have you ever discovered new places because you saw them on Social Media?
    - Yes
    - No

11. How important do you consider Social Media in promoting tourist destinations?
    - Absolutely not important
    - Not important
    - Important
    - Really important

12. What percentages of influence do you think Social Media has on people's life?
    - Less than 10%
    - Between 10% and 25%
• Between 25% and 50%
• Between 50% and 75%
• More than 75%

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1g2XXCA3HI4S57Bq1jckUU9-BaevP9SQYj0xfvaiK59w/edit

Appendix 2: Interview

1. Tell me about your profession. How does your profession relate to the tourism sector?
   - I am an entrepreneur, my company is called Direct Beds Coach & Revenue, is a company focused on the search and mentoring of middle managers and executives in the tourism sector based in Palma-Mallorca and reaching the national, European and Latin American markets. I am also an assistant at the UIB, in the faculty of tourism
   - So, as you can see, all my work is completely related to tourism.

2. Do you use social media in your business/work? If yes, how would your business/work be different if you did NOT use social media?
   - Yes, because nowadays as I say, if you are not on social media, you are nobody, that is, they do not know you, today on average we are about two and a half hours on social media then it is a lot of time that people spend on them and it is one of the best ways to promote yourself and make you known.

3. What social media do you use in your professional life?
   - I use all the social networks, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn...
   - But professionally speaking the most important one for me is LinkedIn, but I also find that the others are very important.

4. Before interviewing a person, do you look for their profile on social media? Why?
   - Yeah, I always do. Because a CV is a letter of introduction of a person and thanks to the social media, we can therefore verify this content a little. I mainly look for them on LinkedIn to see their work history better and then also depending on the age range on other media, if they are under 30 on Instagram and if they are over 30 on Facebook, to see a little bit of the profile person gives and the image he/she’s trying to give.

5. Would you recommend the use of social networks to people and/or professionals who do not yet use them? Why?
   - Yeah, totally. As I mentioned before social media are a very necessary tool and nowadays all the people before going somewhere look for it in the social networks, therefore, if they don’t find you directly they probably won’t go because we like to know other people’s opinion before going, we like to inform ourselves.
6. For what kind of jobs/businesses do you think the use of social media is necessary?
- For any type of work and for any type of sector, today they are fundamental. If we focus on the tourism sector then for all types of business from a physical travel agency, an airline, a hotel chain to a bar or restaurant. As I said before people like to be informed and the first thing they do before going to any establishment is to look for it in the networks and compare it with another

7. Do you think it is necessary to have a Social Media Manager position within a company? Why?
- Yes, totally, as I said people spend many hours a day on social media and it is necessary to be in continuous contact with these. Then to make them work properly in your company you have to devote many hours to what the organization of the social network is to reach the customer to make a proper promotion and this information has to be updated regularly therefore you need a person who is dedicated full time to them within the company.

8. Could you name 5 things that are positive and 5 things that are negative about the use of social media in the labor market?
- Positive: Creating an image, making yourself known, reach more people, make your brand stronger.
- Negative: Misleading advertising, e.g. hotels putting up a picture of a room and when the customer arrives it is nothing like that; bad comments, which make other potential customers not come to your business/establishment.

9. Do you think that social media influence people? In what way?
- Yes, a lot. People are very influential since always and with social media exists even more, if a club is fashionable or a restaurant… well that's where we go and the best way to know which place is fashionable is through social media.

10. Do you know the meaning of "online reputation" and how this can influence tourism in a country or a city?
- For me online reputation is to be known on the media, to be among the first to appear, as I said before people like to inform themselves before going anywhere and of course if you have a good online reputation/ rating you will always appear on the first pages, which is where customers look, because, let's be honest, beyond the first pages we don't really look. Also if you have a good reputation customers will choose you over another competitor, unless they see an offer that is a bargain and say "this bargain I cannot miss" but otherwise what they are looking for is the one with the best score and comments.

11. Do you think that thanks to social media the link with the client/tourist is stronger? Why?
- Yes, as I said, people are increasingly using social media.
Then, thanks to social media, the promotion of hotels, bars, restaurants ... have as their main objective the experience that a customer receives, as it is the best way to attract new customers, as they will want to live this experience, therefore the promotion in the media are addressed directly to you (as a customer) and you feel more connected to the destination.

12. **Do you think that social media influence the prices of the way of "doing tourism"?**
   - I wouldn't know the answer to this question. If what you mean is that now you can compare prices more in reference to what each person is looking for, go to the best within your interests, because I would say that yes.

13. **Do you think that social media influence the promotion of tourist destinations? How?**
   - Yeah, totally. Thanks to social media you can reach a greater number of people around the world and this has facilitated the way to promote yourself.

14. **How has the tourism sector changed globally since the existence of social media?**
   - Tourism has changed radically thanks to social media and has also changed the thinking of entrepreneurs, now instead of selling destinations is trying to sell experiences as they bring us closer to the customer, without social media this would not be possible.

*(The interview was in Spanish; it has been translated by me)*

*(Some answers are incomplete as there was a small glitch with the recording of the interview)*