SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES, THEORIES, AND APPLICATIONS IN CREATIONOF COMPETITIVENESSOF TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract - In just past ten years, social media have drastically reshaped the life of many internet-used people and reengineered the business process and operations, and thus attracted huge attentions from industry and academia. Social media have been regarded as tools to influence possibilities for creating competitive advantages. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to conduct a critical literature review of social media research with the aim of developing a conceptual framework to explain how social media applications in creation of business competitiveness of tourism organizations. These social media applications are supported by various social media tools and technologies and underpinned by a set of traditional theories. The paper first takes a critical literature review of academic papers in social media research, followed by the proposal of a conceptual framework that highlights the tools and technologies as well as theories and models that serves as the foundation of social media applications in creating business competitiveness of tourism organizations. The proposed framework can serve as reference for future research in the area. This study not only explains the importance of applying social media in raising business competitive advantages, but also enhances the understanding of the infrastructure of social media applications.

Keywords - Competitiveness creation, Social media technologies, Social media adoption, Tourism organizations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, with internet technologies growth and widespread application, social media have revolutionized the communication channels in people ' s lives, drastically reshaped the life of many people and reengineered the business process and operations. " Web 2.0 " , like WeChat, Facebook blogs, wikis, photo- and video-sharing sites, and online social networking sites and virtual worlds, has seen unprecedented take up. Social media are characterized by worldwide connectivity, commonality of interest, real-time information sharing, and free advertising. These features give organizations great advantages. For example, individuals use the connections to make new friends or business connections or extend their personal base by connecting and interacting with friends of friends. Social media have shaped the interactions of people through different social media platforms[1,2]. Using commonality of interest, people can arbitrarily " friend " or " de-friend " a person[3]. Using real-time information sharing and free advertising functions, business can create a set of new business models and create knowledge sharing communities[4]. The marketers can formulate their marketing strategies based on online customer reviews in order to obtain competitive advantages. Thus organizations embrace the challenges and opportunities brought by social media technologies in order to sustain the international competitive advantage.

A competitive advantage refers to developing products, services, processes or capabilities that give the company a superior business position relative to its competitors and other competitive forces. A competitive advantage exists when the firm is able to deliver the same benefits as competitors but at a lower cost, or deliver benefits that exceed those of competing products[5]. Social media networking serves as tools that facilitate numerous organizational activities to achieve competitive advantage. For example, firms use the globe connective, information-sharing and interactive nature of these digital media to build relationships with consumers[6] and with the firms[7,8], increase customer loyalty and retention[9], improve customer satisfaction through understanding customers ' ideas and needs, create brand awareness and building reputation[10,11,12,13,14], gain business value and obtain competitive intelligence.

The paper is organized as follows. First, the concepts of a competitive advantage of organization and social media are introduced. Section two, the social media technologies is discussed. Section three, the theoretic bases of social media applications in a competitive advantage of tourism are presented. Section four, a conceptual framework of using social media system to create a competitive advantage of tourism industry is proposed. The final section, the findings are concluded.

II. THE SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

CompressiveSocial media cover a wide range of technologies. Scholars in social media [15,16,17,18,19,20,21]find that social media refers to the use of the Internet, the World Wide Web and mobile apps

to communicate between organizations and consumers and to interact with current customers or partners. They are focus on two components: “ social ” and “ media. ” The “ social ” part is meant to the activities carried out among customers, whereas “ media ” refers to the internet-enabled tools and technologies used to carry out such activities. Social media are a sets of platforms-based on web 2.0 in where consumers could create, edit, and distribute to others, share with one another their preferences, bookmarks, and photos with a worldwide community, participate in virtual lives, , and setup online communities with the advantages of worldwide connectivity, commonality of Interest, real-time information sharing, and free advertising.

The term Web 2.0 was considered as a platform and regarded as the network. Web 1.0 was about connecting computers and making technology more efficient for computers. But, the web 2.0 is about connecting people, and making technology for efficient for people. It has generated a sets of applications. For example, media sharing sites allow users to upload, organize, and share multi-media materials, including videos, audio, and photos, people, and/or selected communities. They could represent a big business opportunity and thus attract interest from many researchers in marketing, knowledge sharing, collaborative activities, and other areas[22, 23, 24].

From the application point of view, the web 2.0 provides businesses new opportunities for tourism industry. First, web 2.0 applications rely on consumer-created content. These are all generated by consumers. Tourism consumers are creating, sharing, modifying, and broadcasting content to huge audiences. Second, web 2.0 gives an easy search capability to consumers. Third, web 2.0 applications are inherently highly interactive, creating new opportunities for consumers to socially connect to others. Fourth, web 2.0 relies on broadband connectivity to the Web. Fifth, web 2.0 attracts extremely large consumers when compared to the traditional web 1.0 applications. These consumer relationships are intensive and long-lasting interactions with millions of consumers. Therefore, it provides marketers with extraordinary opportunities for targeted marketing, connection marketing, and advertising..

III. THE THEORETIC BASESOF SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS

Theory and model are used to explain the foundations of social media applications, provide a framework for analysis, and work as paradigms to underpin research understanding. In social media research and applications, scholars have employed personal behavior theories, social behavior theories, and mass communication theories in social media research and applications.

Personal behavior theories utilized include Personality Traits (PT)[25], Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)[26], Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)[27], and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)[28]. PT explains how personal characteristics affect one ’ s subsequent behavior which was used in marketing study[29], TAM model explores the effect of people ’ s perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness on their attitude toward new technology adoption. Some researchers have used the model in marketing[30], in public relationships[31]. TRA model predicts people ’ s volitional behavior based on their attitudes and subjective norms. TPB and TRA are utilized in the knowledge sharing[32].

Social behavior theories employed by some scholars contains social capital[33], social cognitive[34], social power[35], social identity[36], and interpersonal attraction[37]. Social capital theory explains the influence of social connections and social relations on goal achievement. Social cognitive theory describes how individual learns from observation, modeling, and motivation of others; Social power theory enlightens and predicts one ’ s ability to influence others. Social identity theory sheds light on how categorizing people (including oneself) into in-groups or out-groups that affects one ’ s perceptions, attitudes, and behavior. Interpersonal attraction theory throws light on the force generated from the positive feelings about another people that can draw these two people together. All of them are used to knowledge sharing issues[38, 39] and marketing [40].

Mass communication theories used in this area cover the para-social interaction (PSI)[41] and uses and gratifications Theory (UGT)[42]. The former analyzes the one-sided influence of celebrities on consumer behavior in various media. The latter explains why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. PSI was used to marketing[1, 40,43]. UGT was employed to customer relationship management (CRM). Studying on customer relationship management was involved in three areas, including customer experiences[44], relationship quality and customer satisfaction[45, 46], and customer knowledge management[47].

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING A COMPETITIVE ADWANTAGE OF TOURISM FIRM THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION

From discussion in above, it is evident that social media are widely applicable to various business domains in tourism industry. In light of the purpose and nature of the applications in tourism, we have found that scholars have employed web-enabled social media tools and technologies to build many applications frameworks. We have also found that a number of personal and social behavior theories and models were adopted by researchers to underpin the design planning and development process of social

media applications. Accordingly, we propose a conceptual framework for using social media system to create a competitive advantage of tourism business (Figure 1). Main elements in this framework are infrastructure-based on web 2.0 technologies and social networking sites, information and knowledge management, theoretic foundations of social media applications, and creation of competitive advantages on social media applications. These main elements form a three-layer system.

The infrastructure architecture layer which is referred to technology architecture located in lowest layer comprises web 2.0 technologies and social networking infrastructure that are required for operations of all applications. Infrastructure building blocks contain media sharing sites, social bookmarking sites, blogs / microblogs sites, virtual /online communities, social networking sites, and virtual worlds. A variety of web 2.0-based technological platforms and communication channels proposed in the architecture could support the user-generated content, continue to shape the way travelers access to and use travel-related information. This framework also serves as a collection of interactive and user-controlled online applications that can increase in the experiences, knowledge, and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes, support the creation of informal users ' networks, and facilitate the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing/refining of the informational content .

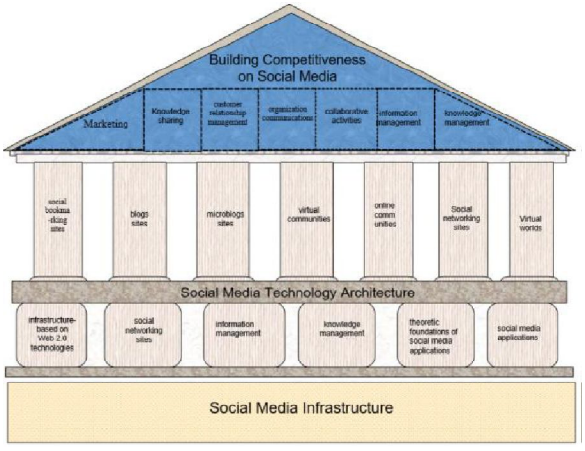


Fig.1. A conceptual framework for creation of firm competitiveness through social media adoption

Generic Framework for social media applications includes information and knowledge management, and theoretic foundations of social media applications. Information and knowledge management referred to management strategies for effective management of information and knowledge in order to obtain sustainable competitive advantages. The company that know how to effectively acquire, capture, share, distribute, and manage this information and how make the information into the knowledge be used in creation of competitive advantages will be the leaders in tourism industry. We have moved into a period where competitive advantage is gained not just merely through access to information but also more importantly from new knowledge creation and management. Knowledge management in social media applications is an emerging, interdisciplinary tool that can deal with all aspects of knowledge within the context of the firm, including knowledge creation, codification, sharing, and using these activities to promote learning and innovation.

The theoretic foundations of social media applications in this framework includes personal behavior theories, social behavior theories, and mass communication theories. They can be utilized to evaluate, motivate, and manage user behavior in social media applications. Both TRA and TPB allow firms to develop effective plans that utilize volitional behavior to improve customer engagement with social media applications. Tourism firms can employ these theories to identify key social factors that stimulate users to participate in collective actions in their social media platforms. This theory is particularly useful in the areas of CRM and knowledge sharing to analyze the socio-psychological and volitional behavior of social media users. Theories of mass communication theories can help in the use of social media for communication and marketing. Many studies have been conducted to develop theories to understand the characteristics and patterns of social communications[48, 49].

The top layer of the framework is referred to creation of competitive advantages on social media applications. Competitive advantage is built slowly over time from a number of different aspects. Competitive advantage can be created by developing the social media marketing strategy since social media technologies and applications affect consumer attitude and behavior[50,23], consumer communication and recommendation[40], marketing management[51,52,24,53], customer experiences sharing, and branding building[54,1,43]. Take company branding as an example, it is vitally important for competitive advantage, as it conveys to the public not only the identity of a product or service, but also a relationship of trust. A successful brand is a good indicator of competitive advantage and longevity. Social media is extremely powerful that can be used to establish s strong brand. Therefore, there is certainly some imaginative use of branding to gain competitive advantage.

CONCLUSIONS

The arrival of social media has changed tourism business operations tremendously, which has led directly to the increase of academic research and studies on social media adoption. First, this paper

provides an intensive review on 81 selected articles in the extant literature to understand how previous researchers developed their models and theories to explain the company to get competitive advantages through social media adoption. Second, this paper discusses three theoretical perspectives to explain user behavior and the development of social media applications. These three foundations, namely personal behavior theories, social behavior theories, and mass communication theories provide managers to understand how social media can create the value in the context of a company competitiveness. Competitive advantage is built slowly over time from a number of different aspects. One of the most important is organizational image. This research provides evidence that social media can help organizations to get the ability to gain strategic competitive advantage. Therefore, finally, the paper have proposed conceptual framework of the competitive advantages through social media application that may provide a holistic view and form a basis for the design and development of social media applications in improving creation of tourism company competitive. This study will be useful to managers and researchers who intend to improve organizations competitiveness through social media adoption.

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