TEHETSÉGEK A TUDOMÁNY LÁTHATÁRÁN

BGE

BUDAPESTI GAZDASÁGI EGYETEM

ALKALMAZOTT TUDOMÁNYOK EGYETEME

RECOGNISING THE NEW TRENDS IN THE DECISION PROCESS OF TOURISM CONSUMERS

Bal Damla – Dr. Szabóné Dr. Erdélyi Éva

1. INTRODUCTION

Development in communication and information technology in our era have affected societies and economies. In the competitive environment accelerated by globalization, internet has provided an opportunity for both individual and global multiple communication. Social network and media applications are the most remarkable ones of the most effective applications in the recent years. Web-mobile applications have enabled people to control the life by going beyond the limits of time and space. The impacts of the globalization process on media and culture which causes changes in people's lives have been felt very closely both individually and socially. In our age, the media as a social entity is effective on the personality of the individual and in various ways it has become an institution that affects social life and individual's decisions. Each individual in today's internet age coincide with numerous visual and audio messages in a day, and the hours spent on the computer and phone have been becoming increasingly frequent. With the internet taking more place in people's lives, social media has started playing a very important role. Today, due to mass media, cultural products, ideas and information at all levels have become accessible for a large population of citizens in an unprecedented way which have not seen before. The new technologies of our age have opened a road to a changeover in the way of communication, especially and with advances in internet technology it has created a new form of communication which we described as virtual communication. Social media has taken its place as an interactive communication platform in individual's lives in conjunction with the use of video, blog, photograph and social networking as communication, and sharing instruments.

In the communication World of the 21th century, personal web pages have been replaced by blogs, social networking sites. Moreover, the development of instruments accompanying the new technology has enabled each user to easily access information and communication resources on the internet. Moreover, people who are the members of social networking sites have become influential in the competitive opportunities of companies through sharing their experiences about the products and services by social media. As in many areas, the new media, which creates a bi-directional and interactive area for all the stakeholders, have a considerable role in the tourism industry owing to the impacts of social media. Even if all tourism establishments do not use social media, they play a major role in the sharing of experiences of tourism consumers. The tourism related social media contents are not only directly created by tourism enterprises but also shared by individuals. It is a fact that individuals are influenced by others' ideas when making decisions. From this point of view, it should be remembered that tourism products are subjected to subjective evaluation, therefore tourism consumers prefer to

share their experiences with others and to be recommended by others. Considering that the impact of social media on the decision process of tourism consumers is an extensive topic, which it would be toilsome to gather, examine and conclude all the necessary data and findings into one research; thus, this researchr has narrowed down the focus in association with European tourism consumers.

Internet and World Wide Web

„Generally, the tourism sector has been one of the main sectors in adopting and developing ICT applications. The internet has become a key application in the tourism industry" (Noti, 2013, p.119). It has never been easier for people to communicate independently from time to time. This convenience does not mean that all boundaries for communication on earth are lifted, but these limits are reduced rapidly with the introduction of the internet, which is the system of globally leashed computer networks where a computer can easily communicate the other computers; which is the main function of internet. World Wide Web (www or web) is a domain where documents and other web resources are defined by URLs (Uniform Resource Locator), linked by hypertext links, and accessed via Internet. Three types of World Wide Web are defined in „Web 1.0 to Web 3.0 - Evolution of the Web and its Various Challenges".

Web 1.0 is the first generation of the web, also known as informational web. User only can read and share information over web pages. Web 2.0 is the read write networking platform, where the user can communicate among each other. Web 3.0 could be defined as semantic web, personalization like my yahoo, iGoogle etc. It changes the web into a language that can be read and categorized by the system rather than human. (Nath, Dhar and Basishtha, 2014, parag. 3rd-4th-5th)

When the internet first started to serve in the form of web 1.0, users were only using the internet as a user without being active. With the introduction of the internet to web 2.0, users now have the opportunity to incorporate design into their own web environment. Social media are the Web-based discussions (occurring on Web 2.0 platforms) between users, which include sharing opinions, experiences, and knowledge" (Dooley, Jones and Iverson, 2012, parag.7th).

Social Media, and tourism

When we look at social media as a term, we see that it contains areas of online tools and websites that allow users to interact with each other and share information, opinion, and interests. Social media is an umbrella concept that combines technology, social entrepreneurship with words, images, videos and audio files. Social media platforms such as blogs, RSS, social networking sites, social bookmarking, forums, podcasts, online chats, e-mail chains, virtual worlds, wikis are interactive, easy to use, and open to participation on the internet. Due to the fact that individuals are not only the listeners but also the source of information which contributes to the flow of information, the hours spent on the social media sites are increasing day by day. There exist a variety of

social media technologies within a Web 2.0 platform; it would be a challenge to analyse all types of social media, hence this study focuses mainly on five popular sites; Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Trip Advisor. Regarding information on the most popular networks worldwide as of October 2018, ranked by number of active accounts, Facebook which is the market leader, has 2234 billion monthly active users; YouTube has 1900 billion monthly active users; Instagram has 1000 billion active accounts; Twitter has 335 billion users. Trip advisor has „455 million average monthly visitors" (TripAdvisor, 2017, p.1).

Tourism consumers use social media before visiting different geographies in order to reduce the risks by visiting web pages and consulting with virtual communities. This increases the significance of social media in terms of tourism marketing. In tourism, consumer behaviour has always been influenced by information and communication technologies. The internet and other innovative technologies are becoming increasingly important in the tourism marketing since travel decisions require a wide (detailed) search for information, as the tourism product compound and complex; has different meanings according to the experience; and has high risks. These technological developments affect the behaviour of the tourism consumers as well as the businesses in the sector because tourism consumers „rely on online product reviews, posted online by other consumers, for their purchase decisions" (Ghose and Ipeirotis, 2006, parag.1st). The use of social media in the increasingly competitive environment is considered to be one of the most important factors for the success of tourism enterprises. Consumers find contents created by the experienced individuals more reliable and realistic than traditional marketing.

Frequent online travel review readers more likely indicate that reading online travel reviews is an efficient way of planning a trip. They more likely agree that it helps them save time, increase confidence, reduce risk/uncertainty, evaluate alternatives and provide ideas. In addition, frequent online travel review readers are more likely to view reading online travel reviews as an enjoyable process. They are more likely to agree that it adds fun, makes them excited, and helps them imagine their trip more vividly. (Tripadvisor.com, 2007, p.50)

Briefly, based on literature one can conclude that online comments on the internet helps the consumer to reduce the risk of choosing improper accommodation during decision-making process, and therefore facilitate the decision-making process. Scholars have also found that it allows to compare and share experiences after the trips.

With regard to the statistics portal, 54 percent of all individuals participated social networks in the EU in 2017, (Statista, 2018a) and the usage of social networks on a daily or almost daily basis has more than doubled since 2011, reaching 42 percent in 2017 (Statista, 2016a) that proves the rapidly increasing influence of social media. Furthermore; in 2016, 28 percent of individuals uploaded self-created content to social media in the EU (Statista, 2016b). Uploading self-created content was more common in the United Kingdom, with 51 percent of individuals using the internet in this way

(Statista, 2016b). One of the global online user surveys shows that, 36 percent of respondents from Europe pointed out that their online shopping behaviour was influenced by reading reviews, comments and feedback on social media (Statista, 2018b). Social media have started becoming a significant source of travel information; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and review sites such as Trip advisor influence European tourism consumers before, during and after trip.

2. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

In the globalized world, the tourism market is influenced by many factors such as ever-growing competition of sector, changing consumer behaviour, improving welfare level of societies and increasing leisure time; at this point, in order to be successful in this broad and complicated market and to ensure customer satisfaction, enterprises are obliged to develop tourism products in line with the needs of individuals by paying more attention to marketing activities.

There are many unique features of tourism products that make the behaviour of tourism consumers different from the behaviour of other consumers; these are the characteristics of the tourism product such as being intangible, concurrent and not stocked. Besides, the fact that tourism demand is easy to replace with another option in some consumer groups affects buying behaviour. The most important part of tourism marketing is to understand why consumers prefer any tourism product to another one.

It is a complicated process for a tourism consumer to buy any tourism product. This process includes several sub-decisions including which destination and accommodation to choose, how much the holiday will be, what kind of transportation will be better etc. The consumer has to benefit from many sources of travel information to take correct and rational decisions in the buying process and they need to make evaluations about the tourism product by the help of the information they obtain. In 1910, John Dewey first introduced the five stages framework which has remained a good way to understand the consumer's decision process:
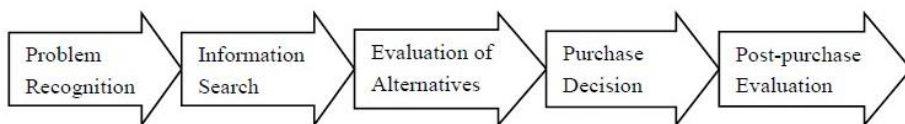

Figure 1. Five stages of purchase decision making
Source: Dewey, 1910

Problem Recognition

„Need-Problem Recognition is the first and crucial stage of the consumer decision-making process because if the need is not recognized, then the purchase will not happen" (Lee, 2005, p.7). According to Bruner and Pomazal, „problem recognition is based on the interaction between two main components: the desired state and the actual state. The former refers to the way a person would like a need to be met whereas the latter has

to do with the degree to which a perceived need is actually being met" (Bruner, 1988, p.54).

When the issue is considered as a decision-making process for travel, it is seen that not only need but also desire are the main triggers of this stage. Furthermore, the holiday is an inner urge to make individuals feel good; on the other hand, some developments in the social environment are perceived by individuals as an external drive. Identifying the need is the result of an activity which is done as a remedy for the difference between the desired state and actual situation. As a result of this activity, consumers start a chain of steps towards the final buying decision and consumption takes place.

Information search

The individual who realizes his/her need in the decision process, starts determining the alternatives about the products which may meet his/her own needs through turning to internal and external sources. Firstly, she/he consults the source of internal information based on the experiences of individuals who previously bought the product. In the determination of the internal source alternatives, the satisfaction of previous purchases or the cheapness of the product is sufficient. If the product has previously created a sense of dissatisfaction for other individuals and the time difference between purchases is too long or if the product has been purchased for the first time, the individual looks for external sources of information. These external sources consist of environmental factors such as advertising, and marketing elements.

The sources of information to be used by the tourism consumer may vary depending on the reason and type of travel and the characteristics of the individual.

The sources of information to be used by tourism consumers can be listed as following:

- Past experiences,
- Recommendations of family members, friends, relatives and colleagues,
- Tour operators and travel agencies,
- Articles about the possible destinations,
- Brochures and booklets introducing the destinations,
- Ads,
- Tourism advisory offices,
- Internet based sources, social media.

Rathonyi (2013, p.111) claims that „social media has a great impact on searching hit in connection with tourism and it leads that we can find even more updated information or opinions of tourists in the searching results". „Also, the use of social media at the information search stage can be attributed to the fact that contemporarily a lot of organizations place advertisements and also have a hyper link connecting their websites to social media sites such as Facebook, TripAdvisor, etc." (Osei and Abenyin, 2016, p.281). Therefore, social media is closely associated with information search stage and

have influence on tourism consumers who seek information about possible destinations, hotels, restaurants, and any kind of tourism related services.

Evaluation of alternatives

„The third stage involves the evaluation of alternatives that is subjected to the consumer's personal criterion in deducing the preference" (Osei and Abenyin, 2016, p.267). The individual who realizes the need in the buying decision process has identified many alternatives that can meet his/her needs as a result of his/her researches by using internal and external sources. Before the consumer starts to evaluate, the she/he consults two different kind of information; the list of products that she/he plans to buy; the second is the list of criteria to be used to evaluate these products. At this stage, the individual uses both lists and pretty much concludes his/her decision-making process in accordance with their structural characteristics.

Factors such as the price of tourism product, what extent the expectations are met, the ease of purchase, and safety constitute the most basic rational criteria when evaluating alternatives. However, during the evaluation phase, tourism consumers are struggling to make a choice due to the fact that the tourism products have many different specific features, and they have an opportunity to simplify this challenge with a number of personal methods.

The importance of social media is also supported by Fotis who states that tourism consumers try to read the comments about the tourism related services on social media before the trip in order to narrow down the alternative choices that helps them to evaluate tourism destinations and products (Fotis, Buhalis and Rossides, 2012).

Purchase Decision

This stage is the purchasing stage of the product which the consumer believes will best meet his/her needs as a result of his/her evaluations. Consumers decide to choose the product or brand that best satisfies them. However, consumers' purchasing requests may not always turn into purchases. There are many factors that change the buying decision of consumers and even bring them to the point of denial. The most important one of these factors is the perceived risk factor. Factors such as the uncertainty and the multiplicity of the confidence of the consumer about the accuracy of the given product, the uncertainty about the characteristics of the product being sold and the risk factor are affected.

As a consumer, tourists are greatly influenced by factors such as the ease of accessibility of the product, the value the tourist leaves, the convenience of the travel agency or the hotel, the convenience of the holiday time, the image of the region, hotel or travel agency when deciding to buy products. If these factors have a positive impact on the consumer, the purchase process takes place.

Post-purchase Evaluation

Post purchase evaluation occurs once a purchase has been made by a customer and then reflected upon in terms of their expectations; they are either satisfied or dissatisfied. „How a customer reflects on a product greatly affects the decision process for a similar purchase from the same company in the future" (Lumb, 2014, p.6).

Post-purchase behaviours and evaluations of tourists are very important for tourism enterprises. Due to social media, tourism consumer can easily access the comments of tourism related services.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The main purpose of this research is to investigate and determine how and why social media affects European consumers' decision-making process for tourism purposes; is to ascertain how much time they spend on social media; is to examine the role and priority level of social media in their lives.

The research aims to reveal the impact of social media on the buying decision process of European tourism consumers; in line with this purpose, the basic hypothesis is assumed: *Social media has an impact on the stages of decision process of European tourism consumers.*

Data Collection

A questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument that consists of a series of questions in order to gather information from the respondents. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part has 15 questions aiming to collect information about the European tourism consumers' gender, age, and occupation; about their social media habits which aim to analyse problem recognition stage, information stage, evaluation of alternatives stage; about what extend social media influences them at the purchase decision stage of any tourism product. According to their answers, the questionnaire directs them different questions for the second part for the purpose of gathering information about post-purchase stage. Multiple choice questions, check boxes are used in this study. The main reason for the use of the multiple-choice questions and check boxes is to limit the answers and to measure what extent social media influence them for decision-process of tourism products in certain options and what they tend to do or believe in.

The main limitation of the study is to reach European tourism consumers in order to fill in it. 72 answers were collected through sharing the questionnaire on social media sites. Even though this number is not too much, this research has given the researcher an opportunity to understand the behaviour of tourism consumers and opened a road to extend the research with more precise indicators for the future researches.

Data Analysis

In order to analyse the collected date, the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 22) program, descriptive methods and cross tables are used. Results are interpreted using excel diagrams.

4. RESULTS

This part of the research includes the findings about the demographic characteristics and the social media habits of the respondents. Results help the readers to determine the role of social media on the stages of decision-making process of European tourism consumers.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents and Social Media Habits of Respondents

Based on results, 61,1 percent of respondents are female and 38,9% are male and mainly younger generations filled in the questionnaire; 40,3% of the sample group are 18-24 years old, while 34,7% of the sample group are 25-43 years old. Furthermore; Hungarian, German and British people mostly replied the questions and constitute 64,9% and 35,1% of respondents are from different European countries. In large part of the respondents are full-time employed people who comprise 51,4% and students with 33,3%.

In regard with above figure; 95,8% of respondents have Facebook accounts, 70,8% use Instagram, 68,1% have YouTube accounts. These three popular accounts play a major role in the sample group's lives. On the other hand, 30,6% of the group use Twitter and 23,6% have Trip Advisor accounts.

As shown in Figure 2, most of respondents spend more than 2 hours on social media in a daily basis. While 31,9% of respondents spend less than 2 hours; 36,1% spend 2-4 hours, 25% spend 4-6 hours and 7% spend more than 6 hours on social media.
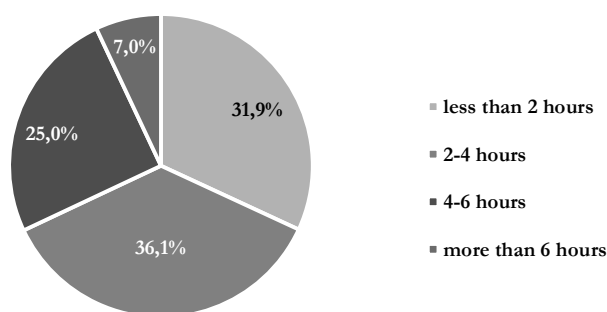

Figure 2. Hours spent on social media
Source: Own research

In order to analyse the level priority of social media, the question which is shown in the Figure 3 is addressed to European tourism consumers.
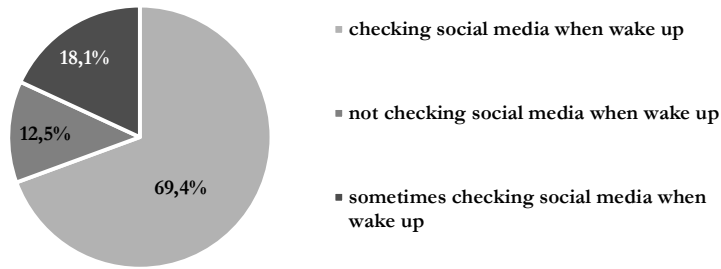
Figure 3. Priority of social media
Source: Own research

The result indicates that social media has become one of precedencies in sample groups' life; accordingly, one can say that social media takes a huge place in European tourism consumers' life. 69,4% of respondents check their accounts when they wake up while 18,1% check their accounts sometimes. Surprisingly, 12,5% of respondents do not check their accounts.

The Impact of Social Media on Decision Process
In this part, the impact of five stages of decision process are examined. As mentioned in the hypotheses, social media influences tourism consumers at these stages. It is also foreseen that the impact of social media habits of tourism consumers on the decision process varies. In this direction, the hypothesis will be accepted or rejected by the tests conducted.

A. Problem Recognition Stage
In order to understand the role of social media at the first stage, two questions addressed to the European consumers:
The aim of these questions is to understand whether social media is triggering factor or not.
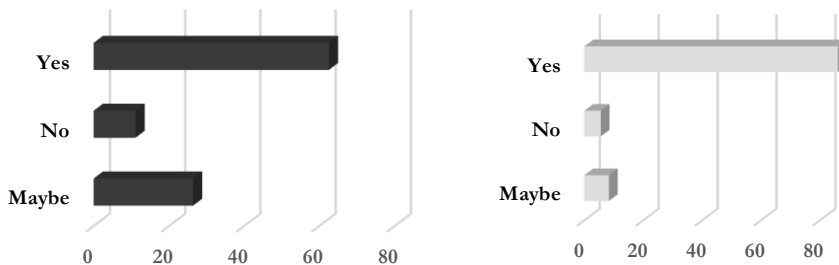

Figure 4. The triggering effect of social media
(left: considered travelling to new places, right: search for a place which you have seen on social media)
Source: Own research

On account of see the whole picture, the above graph is demonstrated. 62,5% of respondents are affected by social media that they have thought about travelling new places.

86,1% of the sample group searched for destinations that they have seen on social media. These results prove that social media plays a significant role at the first stage of decision process.

B. Information Search Stage

One question is addressed to European tourism consumer with regard to information search stage and as it is shown in Figure 5, more than half (55,6%) of respondents search for travel photos on purpose. This result demonstrates that social media has become one of the internet-based information sources.
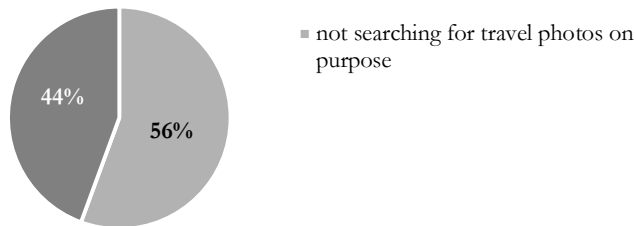

Figure 5. The importance of social media as an internet-based source
Source: Own research

The following figure indicates that there is a relationship between the priority level of social media and the information search stage. For individuals who check their social media accounts as soon as wake up, social media is a crucial source for information search stage.
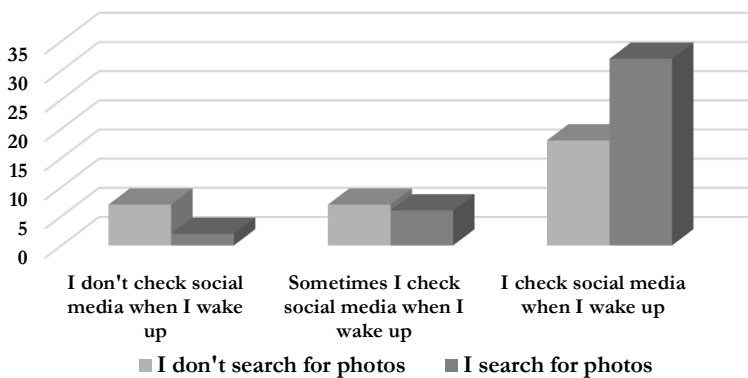

Figure 6. Correlation detected between the priority level of social media and searching for photos, information stage
Source: Own research

C. Evaluation of Alternatives Stage

During evaluation of alternatives, tourism consumers try to reduce risks of their travel plans and to find the best option for them. In order to have a general idea Figure 7 is shown below.
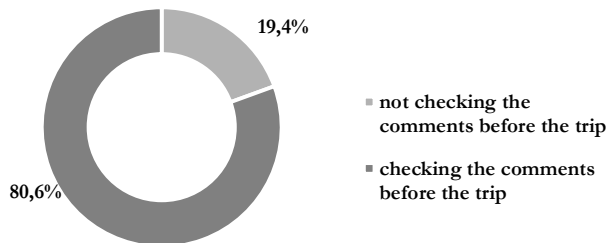

Figure 7. The importance of travel comments on social media
Source: Own research

80,6% of respondents check the comment of places on social media before the trip that proves the importance of social media sites for the evaluation of alternatives.
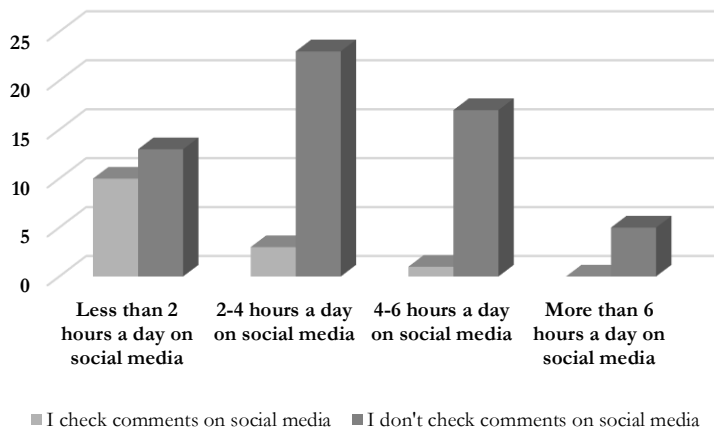

Figure 8. Correlation between checking the comments on social media before the trip and hours spent on social media
Source: Own research

Additionally, based on results it is seen that there is a strong relationship between the comments checking before the trip and the hours spent on social media. As the new generation has started using social media more, all tourism stake holders including local DMOs and SMEs must be careful about their social media sharing that they can inform possible tourism consumers about the destination, attractions and also, they can motivate them regarding sustainable tourism through social media.

D. Purchase Decision Stage

According to the research findings, tourism consumers were influenced by social media during purchase decision stage that 56,9% of respondents claim that they took a travel decision based on social media and 43,1% of the sample group have not made through affecting social media.
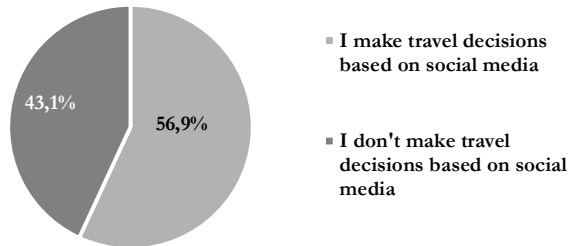

Figure 9. The role of social media at purchase decision stage
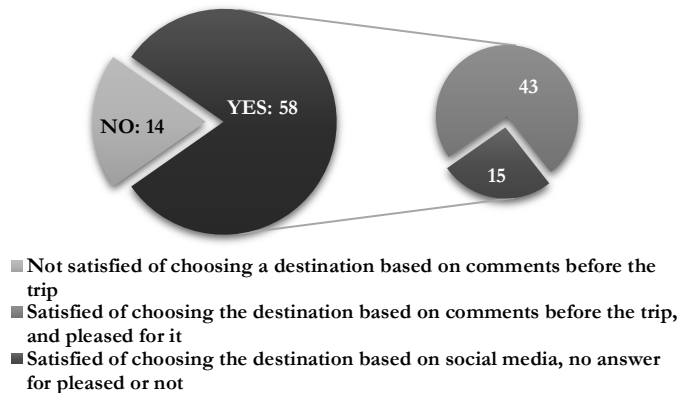Source: Own research

This result proves that social media for tourism consumers has become an important tool that affects the decisions of consumers during the travel decision process. Especially, positive online evaluations reveal the concerns of consumers who check the online comments and enable more sales for tourism enterprises. For this reason, guest relations department plays an important role to ensure maximum customer satisfaction for tourism enterprises, moreover this department can solve the customers' problems and prevent the possible negative sharing of the customers.
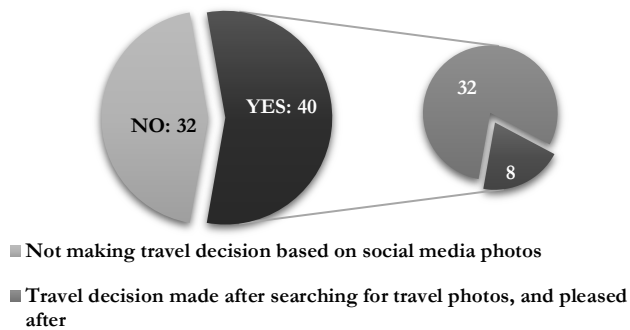
E. Post-Purchase Evaluation

In this part, the answers of respondents who had a travel based on social media are analysed. Three questions are asked to respondents related this issue:
- Were you pleased with your decision?
- Did you post a photo during and after the trip?
- Did someone ask your opinion about a place which you posted?

■ Not satisfied of choosing a destination based on comments before the trip

■ Satisfied of choosing the destination based on comments before the trip, and pleased for it

■ Satisfied of choosing the destination based on social media, no answer for pleased or not

(a)

■ Not making travel decision based on social media photos

■ Travel decision made after searching for travel photos, and pleased after

(b)

Figure 10. The impact of social media at post-purchase evaluation stage;

(a) Choosing destination based on comments before the trip (b) Travel decision made after searching for travel photos

Source: Own research

The findings show that social media has positive effects on decision making process for European tourism consumers. The correlated graphs are used to show the impact of social media. Figure 10 (a) shows the number of satisfied and unsatisfied people who made a travel decision based on social media comments accordingly 74,2% of respondents who made travel decisions based on online comments are satisfied with their decisions.

The Figure 10 (b) demonstrates the numbers of satisfied and unsatisfied people who took a travel decision based on travel photos. 80% of respondents who search for travel photos on purpose are satisfied with their final decisions.

In accordance with these results, it is proven that online travel comments and travel photos have positive effects on the decision process of European tourism consumers.

After sharing photos during and after the trip on social media, followers or friends may ask the evaluations about that trip.
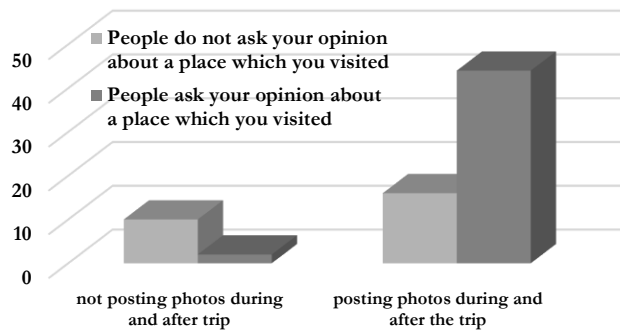
Figure 11. The importance of travel photos
Source: Own research

As it is shown in Figure 11, most people ask for opinion that creates a circle between stages. 73,4% of respondents who posted photos during and after trip are asked for their opinion about their travel experiences. This result also proves that individuals are influenced by travel photos and in order to obtain more clear information they consult the experienced tourism consumers. Accordingly, possible tourism consumers begin their decision process from the problem recognition stage by being triggered by travel photos.

Based on positive answers of the related questions the below tables are created to come up with rankings. For this purpose, the Minimum Variance Method (Cook&Seiford, 1978) was used. The first table shows the number of respondents affected by the social media sites, the second shows the separate rankings, and the results are summarized in the third table.

Table 1. The number of respondents who are affected by the determined social networking sites

	Facebook	Instagram	Youtube	Twitter	TripAdvisor
Problem Recognition Stage (A)	60	44	43	22	16
Information Search Stage (B)	38	27	31	14	10
Evaluation Of Alternatives Stage (C)	56	44	43	20	13
Purchase Decision Stage (D)	42	30	30	15	11
Post-Purchase Evaluation Stage (E)	40	30	30	15	11

Source: Own research

Table 2. Results of Separate Ranking

	Facebook	Instagram	Youtube	Twitter	TripAdvisor
Problem Recognition Stage (A)	1	1,5	1,5	1	1
Information Search Stage (B)	5	5	3	5	5
Evaluation Of Alternatives Stage (C)	2	1,5	1,5	2	2
Purchase Decision Stage (D)	3	3,5	4,5	3,5	3,5
Post-Purchase Evaluation Stage (E)	4	3,5	4,5	3,5	3,5

Source: Own research

Regarding separate ranking, small numbers mean high importance and the same numbers give the same ranking place. At the same time high numbers mean low importance. Based on above separate ranking table, Cook&Seiford method is used to reach the final results in Table 3.

Ranking the decision process stages is the following:
1. Problem Recognition Stage (A)
2. Evaluation Of Alternatives Stage (C)
3. Purchase Decision Stage (D)
4. Post-Purchase Evaluation Stage (E)
5. Information Search Stage (B)

Cook&Seiford method shows that the impact of social media is mostly seen at the problem recognition stage then evaluation of alternative stage then purchase decision stage then post-purchase evaluation stage and lastly information search stage.

Table 3. Results based on Cook&Seiford Method

	Facebook	Instagram	Youtube	Twitter	Tripadvisor
Problem Recognition Stage (A)	0*	3	8	11	14
Information Search Stage (B)	16	5	1	2	0*
Evaluation Of Alternatives Stage (C)	3	0*	5	10	15
Purchase Decision Stage (D)	8	5	0*	0	4
Post-Purchase Evaluation Stage (E)	12	7	2	0*	4

Source: Own research

5. CONCLUSION

With the emergence of Web 2.0., social media sites have become part of most individuals' life; people have started spending more time on social media because of its great opportunities such as easy access to information, creating contents, sharing posts, commenting on information, and 24h service etc. Social media, which provides great advantages to consumers and businesses, is now used all over the world and is more preferred.

Social media platforms constitute the existence of a culture which is formed by the social interactions of the members in the virtual environment. Members in this culture not only have passive identity that just obtain the information but also play an active role in the creation of information.

Developments in information and internet technologies have affected many sectors as well as the tourism sector. Most of the tourism consumers get information expeditiously, evaluate the findings and decide their final travel plans. Additionally, during the trip and after the trip they share their experiences by way of social media. Accordingly, a cycle between stages of decision-making process is created. The information shared on these platforms affects the purchasing decisions of other consumers; tourism consumers view this sharing as a recommendation during decision process.

In this study, the impact of social media on the decision-making process of European tourism consumers is examined through analysing of collected data by questionnaire. The questions are addressed in order to find out the role of social media at the five stages of purchasing decision. In compliance with results, at the problem recognition stage 62.5% of respondents have been influenced by social media that they have considered travelling to new places owing to the virtual world and 86,1% of respondents have searched for places that they have firstly seen on social media; at the information search stage 55,6% of respondents have intentionally looked at travel photos on social media; at the evaluation of alternatives stage 80,6% of respondents check the online travel comments; at the purchase decision stage 56,9% of respondents claim that they have made travel decision based on social media; at the post purchase decision more than 75% of respondents have been satisfied by their decisions and they were asked by others about their travel experiences after sharing photos. Based on results, the impact of social media is mostly seen at the problem recognition stage and the evaluation of alternatives stage comparing the other stages. As tourism consumers would like to reduce the risks of their travel plans, they consult social media as an internet-based source. Even though social media can lead many problems, fake news and crisis, it is also proved that social media affects decision process positively.

In the light of these findings, it can be said that the importance of social media in terms of tourism enterprises will increase steadily because tourism consumers are positively affected by social media at the stages of decision process. Tourism enterprises have opportunity to reach more people expeditiously through social media. From a different viewpoint, the current development brings with its opportunities and dangers for tourism enterprises because tourism consumers share all the positive and negative experiences of tourism products on social media. Tourism enterprises which use social media ethically right and strategic will undoubtedly benefit from its opportunities in the long term; addition to this tourism enterprises which aim to maximum occupancy rate should ensure the maximum customer satisfaction as well and ought to motivate customers to share their positive experiences on social media.

For the future researches, choosing more specific group and one of social networking sites can help getting deeper understanding of the impact of social media on the stages of decision process. In order to compare the demographical characteristics, more respondents are aimed to reach. In addition, further research can be made by examining the effects of social media on tourists' choices about holiday destinations, travel agencies and accommodation establishments and the factors that affect the decision-making process. Moreover, the negative effects of social media can be considered as well as the positive effects.

REFERENCES

1. Bruner, G. (1988). [online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Gordon_Bruner/publication/235253191_Problem_Recognition_The_Crucial_Firs t_Stage_of_the_Consumer_Decision_Process/links/02e7e53b32d9c9e28c000000.pdf [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

2. Cook, W. D. and L. M. Seiford (1978), "Priority Ranking and Consensus Formation, " Management Science, Vol. 24, No. 16

3. Dooley, J., Jones, S. and Iverson, D. (2012). [online] Ro.uow.edu.au. Available at: http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=sspapers [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

4. Fotis, J., Buhalis, D. and Rossides, N. (2012). [online] Eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk. Available at: http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/19262/1/Fotis_et_al_2012_-_Social_media_use_and_impact_during_the_holiday_travel_planning_process.pdf [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

5. Ghose, A. and Ipeirotis, P. (2006). *Designing Ranking Systems for Consumer Reviews: The Impact of Review Subjectivity on Product Sales and Review Quality*. [online] Pages.stern.nyu.edu. Available at: http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~aghose/wits2006.pdf [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

6. Lee, S. (2005). [online] Summit.sfu.ca. Available at: http://summit.sfu.ca/system/files/iritems1/4741/etd1559.pdf [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

7. Lumb, C. (2014). *The Customer Decision Process and User Interaction in E-commerce*. [online] Minerva.leeds.ac.uk. Available at: https://minerva.leeds.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/orgs/SCH_Computing/FYProj/reports/1314/Lumb.pdf [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

8. Nath, K., Dhar, S. and Basishtha, S. (2014). [online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269310255_Web_10_to_Web_30__Evolution_of_the_Web_and_its_various_challenges [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

9. Noti, E. (2013). *WEB 2.0 AND THE ITS INFLUENCE IN THE TOURISM SECTOR*. [online] Eujournal.org. Available at: http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/1565 [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

10. Osei, B. and Abenyin, A. (2016). *Applying the Engell–Kollat–Blackwell model in understanding international tourists' use of social media for travel decision to Ghana.*

11. Ráthonyi, G. (2013). *Influence of social media on tourism – especially among students of the University of Debrecen*. [online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305301835_Influence_of_social_media_on_tourism__especially_among_students_of_the_University_of_Debrecen [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

12. Statista. (2016a). *Uploading self-created content in the EU 2008-2016 | Statistic*. [online] Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/384780/uploading-self-created-content-in-the-eu/ [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

13. Statista. (2016b). *Uploading self-created content in European countries 2016 | Statistic*. [online] Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/384271/uploading-self-created-content-in-european-countries/ [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

14. Statista. (2018a). EU social network penetration 2011-2017 | Statistic. [online] Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/271430/social-network-penetration-in-the-eu/ [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

15. Statista. (2018b). *Social media shopping influence by region 2018 | Statistic*. [online] Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/244403/online-users-influenced-by-reading-social-media-region/ [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

16. Tripadvisor.com. (2007). [online] Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/pdfs/OnlineTravelReviewReport.pdf [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].

17. TripAdvisor. (2017). Investor Relations | TripAdvisor. [online] Available at: http://ir.tripadvisor.com/ [Accessed 5 Nov. 2018].