



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE CONSUMERS' DECISION-MAKING PROCESSS

Research philosophy analysis

Table of content

Introduction.....	3
I. Literature review.....	4
1. What is social media?.....	4
2. The consumers' "decision-making process".....	6
3. The role of social media in the "consumers' decision-making Process".....	8
4. How can social media influence the "consumers' decision-making process".....	9
5. The consumer as a brand co-creator.....	14
II. Discussion and analysis.....	15
 Introduction.....	 17
I. Research philosophy.....	17
II. Discussion and analysis.....	20
III. Conclusion.....	22
References.....	23

The first section

**“The influence of social media on
the consumers’ decision-making
process”**

Literature review

I. Introduction

“Traditional marketing is not dying – it’s dead!” (Zynman, 1999)

The rapid growth in social media and networking sites, has revolutionized the way people interact and share information (Vandana Gupta, 2016). Earlier, social media was used only to make people socialize and keep them connected, with family, friends, colleagues etc. However, recently, social media has progressed from only platforms to socialize, to a tool that is influencing our lives in different aspects and supporting us in many sectors, such as education, health, business and especially marketing and advertising (Christine, A. O., 2012). It has provided the opportunity to marketers to contact and interact with customers, and offer them unlimited resources to gather information on services or products (Hu and Wei, 2013). It also enables them to share their experiences, reviews and recommendations on a product or service.

Social media is playing a significant role in the consumers’ shopping process, and can be an effective tool for companies to create their brand awareness, if used the appropriate way, to provide an exclusive customer service experience, which helps create an emotional connection with consumers (Ahmad, 2015).

This paper aims to contribute towards an understanding of the “impact of social media on the consumers’ decision-making process”. This report is divided to two main parts. The first one is a developed literature review. This includes the role of social media in the “consumers’ decision-making process”. The second part discusses and analyses one of the used articles in this paper

I. Literature review

1. What is social media?

The term social media appeared in 1980 when people started connecting and sharing private data and messages with other users, through BBS Bulletin board system (The social media marketing book, 2009). Social media is defined as “*computer-mediated communication platforms that allow users to create and share content as well as communicate with one another*” (Kim et al. 2010). In the same context Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as: “*a group of internet based applications, that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 to allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content*”.

There are many types of social media: social bookmarking, microblogs, weblogs, photos/videos sharing and many other social applications (Huang et al. 2016). As mentioned above, one of the main advantages of social media is enabling users to share their opinions and knowledge. However, there is a limited control over accuracy and the content can be changed quickly. For instance, the definition of social media on Wikipedia has been changed from 2008 to 2011. At the first place, it stated that social media is the different types of activities that involves technology and social interaction with the integration of words and pictures. Later on, the Wikipedia definition was simplified to: the use of web based technologies to create a social interaction (Daniel J. Power & Gloria Phillips-Wren, 2011). In other word social media definition, was changed from a communication activity, to tools to communicate. Joe Thornley (2008) tried to clarify this approach stating that; Social media is indeed an online communication activity, where users can easily shift from the role of audience to the author, through web based applications, that enable anyone without coding knowledge to share or comment on a content and to build communities with common interests.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) divided social media to **six categories**; “*collaborative projects, blogs and microblogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds*”. On the other hand, FredCavazza.net (2011) divided social media into **ten different categories**; “*publish (wikia), share (YouTube), discuss (phpbb, skype), social networks (facebook, LinkedIn), microblog (twitter), lifestream (friendfeed), livecast (justin.tv), virtual worlds (Second Life, HABBO), social games (pogo, doof) and massively multiplayer online games (World of Warcraft, Happy Farm)*”.

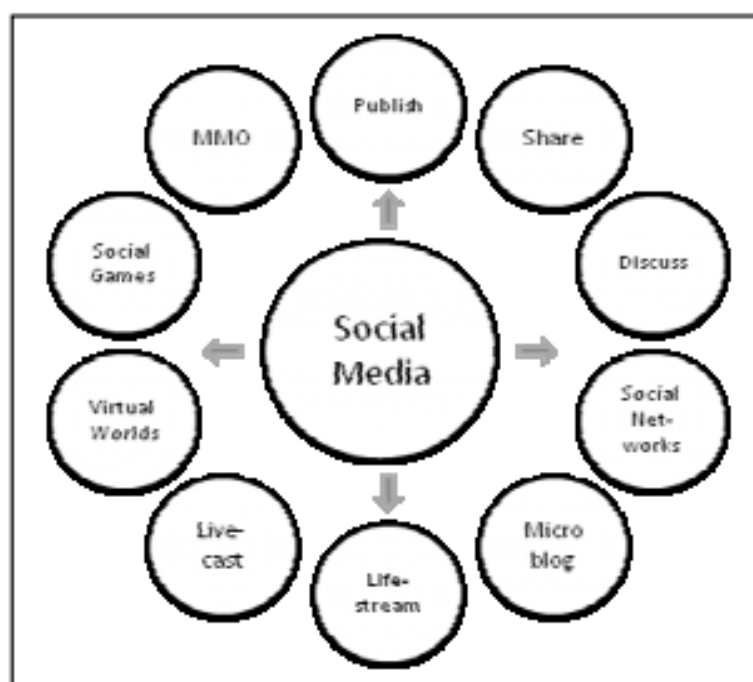


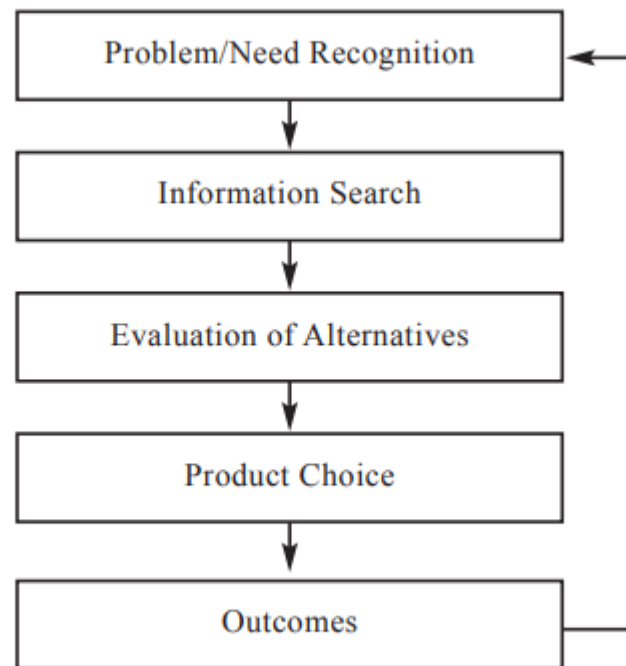
Figure 1. *Social Media Landscape (based on FredCavazza.net, 2011)*

Social media is changing with improved technologies, and so its definition. Nevertheless, the main point is that, social media is strongly powerful and influence our daily life significantly. People worldwide are spending the majority of their time surfing on social media. There are currently more than two billion users of social media, only Facebook has around one billion active users per day (Stephen, 2016). Hence, most of the companies and sectors tend to invest more on social media. For instance, the trend is that Companies have to be present on social media for marketing purposes, in order to promote their products or services, and at the same time allow their fans to share their feedback and reviews.

2. Consumers' decision-making process

The term consumers' decision-making- process, was initially presented by John Dewy (1910) which involves the five following stages:

Consumer Decision Making Model



(Solomon, 2013)

a. Problem/need recognition

Every consumers' decision-making starts with a problem or a need. That a consumer determines to fulfil something that is missing out. Therefore, businesses should identify their target market for them to develop these needs and be able to advertise their products accordingly. For instance, if THE person is thirsty, his need is to buy water, so the need can be triggered by an internal or external stimulus (Ahmad, N.B., 2015).

b. Information search

After identifying the need to purchase a product or service, information search comes second, where their decision process tends to change continually as they search for more and more information. Consumers are more careful in this stage as they want to make the best decision; they consider risk management and short list all the features of a product or service. They can obtain information through different resources such as;

Commercial resources, personal resources, public resources or experimental resources etc. It is usually conducted through either two ways, offline or online. (Gupta, 2004).

Solomon (2013, p. 310) cited, *“Whenever the information search increases then the knowledge about product also increases”*.

c. Evaluation of alternatives

After identifying the need and obtaining the necessary information about a particular product or service, the consumer starts evaluation and comparing the different available options, to be able to select what satisfied their needs the most, taking in consideration many factors like, price, quality, lifestyle or others. This can also be determined by considering others reviews and feedback (Solomon, 2013).

d. Product choice

After passing through all the previous stages, evaluating and comparing, the consumer concludes which brand to purchase. This can be based either on emotional connection with others or personal experiences or based on the influence of marketing campaigns. (Solomon, 2013)

e. Outcomes (satisfaction or dissatisfaction)

This is the key stage for the company and consumer equally. It is also called “Post purchase” stage, where the consumer analyses if the product has met and exceed his expectations or not. If the product has met the consumer’s expectations successfully, this boosts the chances for the product to be purchased again, as the consumer can be a brand ambassador and influence other potential consumers’ decision making in stage two. The same can be said if the feedback is negative (Johnston, 2013).

3. The role of social media in the consumers' decision-making process?

Social media is increasingly integrating our daily life in every way, especially because of the Web 2.0 and developed infrastructure (Daniel J. Power & Gloria Phillips-Wren, 2011) . It started as a social hub for individuals to communicate and interact with each other, by sharing messages, pictures and videos, but today it have improved to be much more impactful and powerful, for consumers as well as marketers. Sprout social states (2018), “*74% of shoppers make buying decisions based on social media*”. This is not only exclusive for B2C businesses; it has a significant influence on B2B companies too.

Two studies have demonstrate the connection between social media and consumers' decision-making process:

✓ The Harvard study

Harvard study (2012) entitled “Disclosing information about the self is intrinsically rewarding” selected a test group through “MRI scanning” for measuring the psychological impact of social sharing on people. “The study showed that the act of disclosing information activates the same part of the brain that is associated with the frontal lobe and dopamine pathway, both of which are associated with the decision-making and pleasure processes” (Harvard, 2012).

Meaning that, sharing something about ourselves triggers the “chemical reaction”, in the area of the brain where decisions are made and pleasure is felt. This, associated with the emotions involved in every social share, Reason why, social sites like Twitter and Facebook will probably always exist.

✓ The Nielsen Study

Nielsen conducted a research defining the role of social media content and the consumer is purchasing journey. The study found that 54% of social sharing contents are used for the consumers' buying decision-making. In the US, most consumers consult social media in their purchasing journey (Nielsen, 2014).

According to the two studies, social media can be extensively impactful on the consumer's personal and managerial decision-making. Therefore, the question is how can a business take advantage of social media?

4. How can social media influence the “consumers’ decision-making process”?

Most marketers and business owners are aware of the importance of social media nowadays, as they have all witnessed the dramatic growth in the use of social media. Facebook and Instagram that are reaching a big part of the world, they have been gaining users continuously. The influence is there, and the key is to discover how to leverage this influence for companies and businesses.

a. Reviews from Social Influencers

Social influencers are individuals who are regularly active on social media and have a significant number of followers. They are usually targeted by companies to promote their brands for the impact they have on audiences and their purchasing decision. They mainly contribute to the “bandwagon” effect. When influencers share their review about a product or service, their followers tend to be interested to learn more about the product. Therefore, social influencers often include the company’s details on their post to make it accessible for the followers to purchase the product. A recent survey done by PwC total retail survey (2016), shows that 45% of respondents confirmed that social influencers feedback and reviews impact their purchase behaviour.

b. Reviews from Friends and Family

Social media enable us to connect with friends and families that we may not be able to meet personally often, but with whom we can share information and purchase experiences, which may have a significant influence on them. This is the new digital form of word of mouth, the e-word of mouth.

c. The Store’s Presence on Social Media

A company’s presence on social media has become indispensable, not only for the extensive impact it has on the consumer’s decision making, but it also keeps the company on track of their consumers, in order to match their needs and expectations. It also turns visitors into followers then buyers and influencers. Even by already having a strong brand awareness and many followers and brand ambassadors, the lack of presence on social media affects the company’s credibility. Being strongly active and present on social media gives others the impression that the brand is well known, used and trusted, which boosts the probability of purchases.

Active presence on social media+ significant number of followers= high probability of purchase.

d. Advertising on Social Media

Advertising on social media is one of the most effective and low cost of marketing. Marketers can place ads with what matches with their business goals, either brand awareness or sales, a simple click on the ad leads you to the advertiser's website. It is an easy way to target and track consumers. Placing ads on social media gives advertisers the opportunity to influence the consumer at his first stage of purchase (awareness) and all the way through until the purchase decision.

e. Algorithm Updates Present “Trending” or “Popular” Posts First

There has been recently new changes on social media called +trending posts+ meaning some posts get to show up first in the new feeds and get people's attention. This happens when a post receives more comments, likes and shares. When a post gains more engagement and attention from people on social media, it tends to be an effective tool to influence the consumer's decision-making.

f. Brands Creating Discussions Among Followers

Most of the brands that are present on social media spark conversations among their followers and give the opportunity to their customers to sell the product for them.

Bellow is an example from a grill company called REC TEC. When a customer was searching for information to purchase a product, the company posted the question on their Facebook page and allowed its consumers answer it.



g. Search Engines on Social Media

In the search and discovery stage, consumers tend to type on social media sites keywords to get results about their product or service. It is necessary to work on getting to the top of Google's search results.

h. Contests Generate Awareness

It is a smart way for businesses to run contests on social media. This can be established on the company's blog or website. It is beneficial in terms of spiking interaction with consumers, increasing followers and brand awareness as well as sales.

5. Consumer brand co-creator

In the last decade Marketing literature has shifted towards a “service-dominant logic” (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This approach place the consumer into the heart of marketing theory, and indicates that the consumer defines and co-create the value of a product (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), through social connections and interactions through network relationships (Merz et al., 2009).

Huffington Post found that 70% of companies that offer excellent customer service depend on customer review (Huffington, 2016). Smart brands have finally realised that, the customer who decides if the product is going to last in the market successfully or not.

Co-creation is a stage where consumers and brands collaborate to create a better image, services and innovate better products.

The ongoing importance of Social media sites in the consumers life, has made of them effective tools for marketing. Social media have provided consumers the power to influence and co-create the brand value (McAlexander et al., 2002; Fu ¨ller et al., 2012)

II. Discussion and analysis

The use of social media has changed over the years, and the number of users is increasing in a rapid speed. Earlier they were used to make people socialise and keep them connected with each other, through different web-based social platforms. Whereas nowadays, the user base has changed all together. Social media is the playing the role of a consultant more than anything else. They enable individuals to share their experience, feedback and review on a purchased product or service. This gives consumers the opportunity to learn from others’ purchase experience. Thus, social media have a powerful influence on the consumers’ decision-making process; it can be positive or negative, depending on the content. Consumers involve social media in every stage of their decision-making process, starting from the need recognition to post purchase behaviour. As social media have become an important element in one’s life, the need recognition can easily, be triggered by an ad or a comment seen on social platforms. The first step every consumer does in the stage of information searching, is to type key words related to the desired product or service on social web sites, to get all the necessary product-related information. Afterwards, consumers prepare a list of the different alternatives, they start evaluating them based on comparing price and value on each. This stage is critical, because, one

negative review about a particular product can make the consumer exclude that option. After evaluating and comparing, the consumer is ready to decide what product (brand) to purchase. If the consumer is satisfied with the product, service or customer experience, he gives a positive feedback, which makes gain new potential customers. The opposite approach applies if the consumer is unsatisfied with the purchase experience. This may lead to missing the opportunity of gaining new customers, and loose the existing ones.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that companies and businesses should be strongly active and present on social media. This is one of the most efficient and low cost tools of advertising. Moreover, getting a higher number of followers increases the probability of purchase. It is also important to encourage positive reviews among consumers in general and social influencers in particular. Social media is then emerging an important marketing tool that influence purchasing decision of people. Here are some recent statistics that prove the importance of social media on the “consumers’ decision-making”:

- ✓ “Social Media Management 59% of Americans believe that customer service through social media has made it easier to get their questions answered and issues resolved”. (Lyfe Marketing, 2018)
- ✓ “88% of businesses with more than 100 employees use Twitter for marketing purposes”. (Statusbrew, 2017)
- ✓ “User-generated content on social networks has a 4.5% higher conversion rate”. (Sprout Social, 2016)
- ✓ “86% of consumers prefer an authentic and honest brand personality on social networks. (Sprout Social, 2016) About 3.03 billion people are on social media around the globe”. (BrizFeel, 2018)
- ✓ “Only 5% of Internet-using adults say they have a lot of trust in the information they get from social media”. (Pew Research Center, 2016)
- ✓ “96% of people talking about companies and brands on social media aren’t actively following those brands”. (Lyfe Marketing, 2018)
- ✓ “Branded content on social media is twice as likely to interest people between the ages of 55 and 64 than those who are 28 and younger”. (BrizFeel, 2018)
- ✓ “More than 50% of Internet users say they follow some sort of celebrity or influencer account on social media”. (BrizFeel, 2018)

- ✓ “Written articles, videos, and images are the three most engaging types of content on social media”. (Clutch, 2017)
- ✓ “83% of all marketers actively pursue social media marketing initiatives”. (Aberdeen, 2016)
- ✓ “2 million business are said to use Facebook for advertising in 2018”. (Hootsuite, 2018)
- ✓ “Social media and video viewing are the two most popular online activities”. (Smart Insights, 2018)
- ✓ “Nearly one-third of the world uses social networks regularly”. (eMarketer, 2016)
- ✓ “Product videos can increase purchases by 144%”. (Neil Patel, 2017)
- ✓ “Almost 50% of Internet users look for videos related to a product or service before visiting a store”. (Google, 2016)
- ✓ “41% of marketers plan to add Facebook video to their content strategy in the next year”. (HubSpot, 2018)
- ✓ “45% of people watch more than an hour of Facebook or YouTube videos a week”. (HubSpot, 2016)
- ✓ “Square videos are more effective than horizontal videos on Facebook”. (Animoto, 2017)
- ✓ 75% of millennials watch video on social media daily. (Animoto, 2017)
- ✓ “53% of smartphone users feel more favorable towards companies whose mobile sites or apps provide instructional video content”. (Google, 2015)
- ✓ “55% of marketers say blog content creation is their top inbound marketing priority”. (HubSpot, 2018) (Source: <https://www.hubspot.com/marketing-statistics>)
- ✓ “Companies that published 16+ blog posts per month got almost 3.5 times more traffic than companies that published zero to four monthly posts”. (HubSpot, 2015)
- ✓ “B2B companies that blogged 11+ times per month had almost three times more traffic than those blogging 0-1 times per month”. (HubSpot, 2015)
- ✓ “B2C companies that blogged 11+ times per month got more than four times as many leads than those that blog only four to five times per month”. (HubSpot, 2015)
- ✓ “Companies that published 16+ blog posts per month got about 4.5 times more leads than companies that published zero to four monthly posts”. (HubSpot, 2015)

- ✓ “75% of HubSpot's blog views and 90% of blog leads come from old posts”.
(HubSpot, 2014)
- ✓ “43% of B2B marketers say blogging is their most important type of content”.
(Social Marketing Industry Report, 2017)
- ✓ “43% of people admit to skimming blog posts”. (HubSpot, 2016)

The second section

Research philosophy analysis of:

“The influence of social media on the consumers’ hotel decision journey”

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Introduction

The general assumption is that research rests on numerous interconnected philosophical assumptions. This collection of assumptions is crucial to undertaking a scientific enquiry. Scientific enquiry has been referred to as pluralistic and a “collection of paradigms” (Patton, 2001). Some academics have suggested paradigms - positivism, post positivism, critical theory, and constructivism, and critical theory within the wider scopes of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This coursework focuses on research philosophy, ethics, reliability and validity of research done on the influence of social media on the consumers’ hotel decision journey by Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017.

I. Research Philosophy

It has been suggested that business research adopts top-down approach to develop an understanding of ontological and epistemological considerations before determining research methods and strategies to use (Flick, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). This approach enables the researcher to develop judiciously the philosophical position that underpins the research methodology, therefore providing perspective for the research process, data analysis and the logic for the conclusions (Saunders et al. 2007).

A paradigm is "a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists, in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, [and] how results should be interpreted" (Bryman, 1988, p4). Paradigms outline, constrain, and facilitate all aspects of research Paradigms. They diverge in their assumptions about what is real, the nature of the relationship between the researched and what is known and how the researched constructs knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Research philosophy has been defined as a mental navigation where the "researcher thinks and logically reasons causal relationships" (Jenkins, 1985, p.112) while Hesse-Biber (2009) refers to it as “a theory or hypothesis”, paradigm where theories are developed, that underpins a researcher’s perspective and shapes their worldview. Within these philosophies are considerations of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Some of the paradigms are Positivism - which perceives reality in objective and measurable terms through experiment and observation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In other words researcher and reality are separable. Interpretivism on the other hand suggests that person and reality are not separable and therefore seeks to a first-hand understanding from participants experiences

(Hesse-Biber, 2009). In the article reviewed, the researchers seem to have adopted interpretivism by not separating themselves from the reality and by seeking first hand interpretation from participants rather than observing them from a distance.

Ontology - refers to the study of being, reality, and considers 'what is reality', and there are two schools of thought: objective and subjective. Objective study perceives 'reality' to be objective, measurable and observable (Bryman & Bell, 2003) while subjective paradigm "stresses the importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.3), which is subjectively experienced through ordinary experiences. Subjective study has been called constructionism as individuals construct their own meaning of their experience (Crotty, 2006).

Regarding the article reviewed, interviews were used by the researchers to enable the participants to express their lived experience about the role social media play in their decision making process, particularly regarding the evaluation stage. By doing so, the researchers adopted a subjective ontology to understand participants subjective experienced through their everyday experiences.

Epistemology seeks to identify what is acceptable knowledge in a particular discipline and it is about 'ways of knowing' (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) or what is the primary belief about knowledge. This provides a rationale for the choice of methods employed to address the research questions. "quantitative and qualitative research differs with respect to their epistemological foundations" and "give rise to different methods to be employed" (Bryman, 2003, p.25). while positivist paradigm uses quantitative study to explain reality and relationships through hypothesis and theories testing and through deductive means, interpretivism uses qualitative paradigm to develop theory through an inductive strategy (Fisher, 2004). In the article reviewed, the researchers sought meanings and interpretations through interviews - a qualitative research tool.

Ethics

Researchers are required to be ethical in their studies. The researchers in the article reviewed sought consent from the participants. They gave the participants the free will to withdraw their consent at any time before or during the research. The researchers also sought to protect the identity of the participants used in the study by providing anonymity. Finally, the researchers made sure none of the participants harmed, embarrassed or harassed during and after the study.

Reliability and validity

From the above assumptions, it has been established that the researchers in the paper reviewed use interpretivism and qualitative paradigm. Reliability in qualitative research has been argued that may not be suitable, as it seeks to provide meaning and interpretation and they are therefore subjective. Researchers such as Yardley (2000) disputed the concept of reliability and provided means to address validity in qualitative studies. Given the subjective nature of participants interpretation of their lived experience, it is very difficult to assess the reliability and validity as response cannot be reproduced.

The study results revealed that there is a difference between the evaluation stage processes now and then. Before consumers relied mainly on the official sources and travel agencies, or word of mouth. Whereas now they consult social sites such as trip advisor, being the most popular, Facebook twitter and Instagram, to check videos and pictures of the hotel, they check on Booking.com, or they simply type the hotel's name on google. Consumers confirmed that social media tend to be very beneficial when it comes to comparing quality and prices and evaluating alternatives, more than traditional travel sources. They also claimed that Social media give them the opportunity to virtualise the place by seeing people's real-life experience, their feedback and reviews which is highly relevant. Participants mentioned also about trustworthiness, they affirmed that they trust less traditional channels such as websites, newspapers, and magazines), when it comes to selecting hotels, they consider them "less objective and biased "and commercial. On the other hand, they trust social media more as it is +a"non-biased"and"honest"informationsource+. However, this level of trust changes depending on who wrote the content. Interviewees confirmed that it is more credible for them when the review is written by their personal circles. In addition, the results demonstrated that there are three factors, which influence consumers' hotel decision-journey;

- Positive content (positive reviews, comments, feedback, attractive pictures and videos)

- Negative content. Participants agreed that a negative content has more impact on their decision than a positive content; a hotel with negative comment is more likely to be excluded from the list of options.
- Inexistence of content. This one is critical, as it reflects that the hotel has no respected number of costumers, this makes them suspicious because it affects the hotel's credibility.

Generally, the study found that social media strongly influence consumer's hotels decision-making, especially in the evaluation stage. Consumers get to connect with people from different destinations, and read their reviews. Moreover, they get the opportunity to evaluate alternatives by comparing value and price

II. Discussion and analysis

In this study, the researchers implemented Epistemology as a research philosophy. Where they almost relied on all the different resources of knowledge such as Intuitive knowledge, Authoritarian knowledge, Logical knowledge and Empirical knowledge. They started their research by believing that social media influence consumers decision-making as a fact (Intuitive knowledge), based on information that has already been obtained, from the previous studies and research papers (Authoritarian knowledge). According to their logical reasoning, The writers wanted to develop a new understanding and create a new knowledge that have not been demonstrated before (logical knowledge). In other word, these facts have been discussed but never been proved (Empirical knowledge).

In this study, the researcher used interpretivism, which is based on subjectivist epistemology. They involved their knowledge and interpretations, in the literature review and results analysis. The purpose of the study is to understand how social median impact consumers hotel decision making, and what are the advantages and disadvantages they encounter in the evaluation process. Hence, they emphasised qualitative analysis over the quantitative one. They conducted interviews data collection, where the researchers were cooperative and participative as well. they focused on narrative stories through participants real-life scenarios, where they involved his interpretations and perceptions. Especially when participants claimed that they trust social media more than the traditional channels, but they trust their friends and families feedback more than strangers, the researchers interpreted their answer as the following; even though social media influence consumers' decision-making process, there are still different factors that may influence their trustworthiness towards social media.

Validity and reliability were not required in this research as it was based on a qualitative analysis. The research handled nonnumerical information and their phenomenological interpretation, which inextricably tie in with human senses and subjectivity. Therefore, there may be a lack of compromise for assessing its quality and robustness, as well as consistency and neutrality and applicability.

Overall, the research was well specified and targeted. It has developed a new knowledge that has not been demonstrated before. Hence, the researchers in this study explained and discussed how social media influence consumers' hotels decision journey, in the evaluation stage. They also used the most recent references from 2009 to 2017, which makes this research more credible and reliable. As social media is an ongoing topic that changes and progresses day by day, the use of recent references in this research was unquestionable.

However, there are few challenges and limits to discuss in this research. The researchers could have used a mixed method, quantitative and qualitative analysis. A data collection that is based on a sample of 12 participants is not enough to prove how social media influence consumers' hotels-decision making, in the evaluation process. Considering that, people's perspectives change depending on their environment and many other internal and external factors. People in Saudi Arabia for instance do not have access to many social media sites, compared with people from other countries. It is necessary for marketers in tourism and hospitality industries, to know how to target consumers from different backgrounds through social media. In addition, the interview targeted only participants of specific age group, from 18 to 33. We are in a digital era and no doubt that people of different age use social media, especially for travel purposes. Moreover, the research is based on interpretations and more subjective.

This study could stimulate further research in the future that develops various content levels, analyses social media, and consumers' decision-making in tourism across different countries. Considering the social media domain as a fast evolving one, the further research could focus on videos and live-streaming networking sites (e.g. Instagram Boomerang, Periscope, Vine) to understand their influence and effect on hotel- and travel-related decision-making, through conducting a quantitative and qualitative analysis.

III. Conclusion

From the report's analysis it can be concluded, that social media has a powerful impact on the consumers' decision-making. There is an undeniable relationship between the two. Unlike earlier, social media is no longer available only to make people socialise and keep them connected to each other. Nowadays social media is the most effective marketing and advertising tool. They have placed consumers in the centre of interest for marketers. Companies and businesses are aware that social media influence the consumers' "decision-making process", in all the five stages, from the need recognition until the post-purchase. Therefore, every business priority is to be strongly present and active on social media. Many studies have been conducted on this topic, and more to be carried in the future.

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