



The Effect of Social Media Tools on Accommodation Marketing

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to show the effect of social media tools in the marketing of accommodation services by revealing the purposes and levels of using social media of accommodation businesses and their guests. In this way, it is to create an awareness of the marketing opportunities and advantages that social media will provide to accommodation businesses. For this purpose, social media perceptions of both accommodation businesses and hotel guests were determined. Quantitative research method and survey technique were applied in data collection and analysis. Two separate surveys were used for hotels and for guests. As a result of the application; social media tools contribute to the recognition of businesses and increase their competitiveness; It has been determined that it also affects the decision-making processes of the guests and the dimensions of these processes such as purchasing, interaction, intention, benefiting in hotel selection, benefiting in destination selection and informing.

Keywords: Accommodation Marketing, Internet Marketing, Social Media Tools.

JEL Classifications: M15, M31, M39, Z33

1. Introduction

The development of social networking sites has led to the emergence of a new type of internet marketing called social commerce and has had a significant impact on the performance of businesses. Social commerce facilitates the recognition and online buying and selling of various products and services through social interactions (Kim and Li, 2016).

1.1. Internet Marketing and Digital Marketing

In general, internet marketing can be expressed as making sales over the internet with the aim of making a profit (Korkmaz et al., 2009). The radical changes that emerged with the rapid development of technology have further developed internet marketing. This situation has been directly reflected in many sectors and as a result, it has opened the way for consumers to order the goods and services from anywhere and anytime they request, using various electronic devices. With internet miles, all brands can be compared from any place, and products and services can be purchased from kilometers away from production sites (Özdemir, 2010). Internet marketing includes various disciplines due to the large number of platforms created by the internet. It has an active structure covering e-mail, search engine optimization, website design and much more in order to reach a constantly evolving and growing audience (Mohammed et al., 2004). Internet and digital marketing, which uses digital media to attract, interact and convert virtual visitors into customers, has many advantages as well as challenges (Charlesworth, 2009). For example, there are many alternative goods and services on the internet, alternative products are easily accessible and comparable, and there is a possibility of making mistakes during fast communication (<https://omeryoluk.com> , 2021). In addition, digital shopping



campaigns can be easily imitated, copied and even the name of the brand can be copied by rival businesses (Safko and Brake, 2009: 189). Internet disruptions, technical problems and interruptions can cause problems for the customer (Todor, 2016: 50). Digital channels may not be attractive especially for older generations who like to shop from traditional channels or who cannot keep up with technological developments (Taken, 2012: 90).

The concepts of digital marketing and internet marketing are also confused with each other. However, there is a difference between them. Digital marketing is a broad term that describes a set of marketing strategies in which digital channels are used to promote products or services. The concept of digital marketing has replaced traditional marketing, the transition from paper and newspaper ads to digital platform campaigns. This concept encompasses anything that uses a digital platform to market businesses, from social media platforms to TV ads (Bala & Verma, 2018). Internet is not required for digital marketing activities. However, internet marketing cannot be carried out in an environment where internet is not available. Although social media was not established for marketing purposes, it has become an indispensable area for companies to carry out their marketing activities in terms of attracting many users and advantages. With the help of social media marketing, companies have advantages in reaching the market and target audience as they have many functions that cannot be performed with traditional media (Yasmin, 2015: 70).

1.2.Social Media and Tools

If we examine social media conceptually; In its simplest definition, it is a communication medium in which information on websites including social networks is shared (Elley and Tilley, 2009: 79). According to this definition, different authors have expanded the definition of social media. For example, according to Boyd and Ellison (2008), social media is a web-based service that allows individuals to create public or semi-public profiles and interact with those on the list within a limited system. Other users share their links and ideas on these platforms. Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a set of Internet-based applications created by Web 2.0 applications, based on ideology and technology that allow users to create and share content. Sigala and Chalkiti (2014) state that Web 2.0 applications provide users with the opportunity to both receive and give information over the internet. In this way, he states that it allows individuals to enter online social environments by using social media. Akar (2011: 20) defines social media as a highly accessible communication technology that enables individuals to easily influence groups.

Social media tools are communication tools that allow their members to view each other's profiles and updated address books, create links with new content, and establish online connections with others (Stone and Jacobs, 2008: 345). Today, with the intense use of internet-based social media tools by everyone, businesses carry their marketing strategies to social media. Because now all individuals and businesses have television, radio, etc. Instead of traditional communication and advertising tools, they have started to manage their advertising and promotional activities through social media. In particular, they reach their target audience in a much more convenient way by using the main social media tools such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube, which provide easy access to large audiences. (Şişman, 2020: 1). According to the information compiled from the statistics of We Are Social, a worldwide social media agency, in the first months of 2021, the main social media tools used around the world are listed as follows in order of importance: Facebook (16%), Youtube (14%), Whatsapp (12%) , FB Messenger (8%), Instagram (7%), Wechat (7%), Tiktok (4%), Telegram (3%), Snapchat (3%), Pinterest (2.6%), Twitter (2%) , other (21.4%). According to the same source, 71% of Turkey's population is social media users and 91% mobile internet users. When compared to the previous year, internet users in Turkey increased by 6%, social media users by 11% and mobile users by 3% (www.wearesocial.com , 2021). The fact that these platforms appeal to large audiences and the



increase in users will undoubtedly continue to attract internet and social media marketing activities in this direction.

1.3.Social Media Marketing

Gunelius (2011), social media marketing; To create awareness against competitors in goods and services, to ensure that the company and its products are recognized by large masses; defines it as any type of marketing activity carried out through social media. Yadav and Rahman (2017), on the other hand, defined social media marketing as a process in which companies communicate their marketing proposals to people through social media platforms.

Social media marketing; It creates an environment where many audiences, from business leaders to consultants, publishers, journalists and members of the media, change their minds (Akar, 2006: 14). Since it is a type of communication based on sharing and discussion without space and time restrictions, it ensures constant interaction (Cross and Parker, 2004: 33). Businesses, using social media; It provides various benefits such as increasing brand awareness and creating a better understanding, identifying and recruiting talented personnel, measuring customer satisfaction and increasing loyalty, getting customer opinions during product development and innovation stages (Görgülü and Görgülü, 2010: 37). Businesses that use social media to reach consumers can perform their marketing activities in a shorter time, easier and at lower cost. Thanks to two-way communication, consumers can easily obtain information such as brand, price, product, discount and consumer comments (Demir and Kozak, 2013: 124-132).

2.Literature Review

Accommodation businesses are defined as businesses that are in the group of businesses with touristic attractions and meet their guests' needs for overnight stay, as well as food, beverage and limited entertainment (Çiftçi and Küçükaltan, 2012: 2). In a study conducted on accommodation and food business managers, it was asked which technological developments they would turn to in the future. As high as 45% of the participants stated that they would focus on developments related to social networking sites, while 18% stated that they would focus on developments related to mobile phones and mobile applications. (Atadil, 2011: 58). In another study conducted with guests visiting accommodation establishments, the participants suggested that accommodation enterprises contact them more during the new product development stages and stated that they care about getting their opinions. They also stated that they found the social media manager who communicated with them to introduce themselves very positive in terms of security. In the same study, accommodation managements stated that they prefer mobile compatible web bases and that they need to develop them. In the study, it was also revealed that as the rate of social media usage of accommodation businesses increases, the purchasing attitudes of consumers towards the business also increase (Zengin and Arici, 2017: 393). In another study on accommodation establishments, the guests were asked to follow the official Facebook page of the hotel and the answer was received from the guests that they mostly follow the page to get up-to-date information about the hotel. After that, the purposes of learning the opinions and experiences of other people about the hotel, being informed about the campaigns and announcements and sharing their own opinions about the hotel with others are listed respectively (Ercan and Çolakoğlu, 2017: 619). According to the survey conducted by Four Pillars Hotels, 76% of the participants stated that they shared their related experiences on social media. 52% of the respondents stated that vacation photos shared by their friends on Facebook influenced their hotel choices. 46% of the participants stayed in the hotels; 40% commented on restaurants on social media. 33% of the participants stated that they could make changes in their hotel preferences, 7% in their travel destination and 5% in airline preferences through social media (Eryilmaz and Zengin, 2014). Another study on the use of social media as a



marketing tool in accommodation businesses was conducted by TripAdvisor in 2012. According to this study, which included more than 1,700 participants, 76% of the participants share their experiences on social media during their holidays. 42% of the participants use social media to plan a vacation, 64% use the comments of websites to make decisions. 91% of the respondents share photos while on vacation (Civelek and Dalgin, 2013). Yoo et al., (2009) examined user-generated content instead of well-known official agency websites in their research. In the study, it has been claimed that the mention of brand names in forums, travel blogs, and social networking sites where users comment increases the credibility of those brands (Akehurst, 2009: 51). In addition, it has been stated that the use of brand names in word-of-mouth (WOM) communication, which has a significant impact on user preferences, will cause similar results (Litvin et al., 2008: 458). In another study, it was revealed that the visuals published on Facebook pages attract the attention of the audience and are a part of their holiday plans (White, 2010: 116-130).

Researches above, show that both hotels and guests use social media at a significant level and will increasingly use it. It is also understood that social media has a significant effect on the preferences of the guests.

3. Survey on the Use of Social Media as a Marketing Tool in Hotels: Case of Bodrum

As mentioned in the previous sections, it is clear that social media platforms, which have an important place in terms of rapidly increasing user base, will also provide important opportunities to accommodation businesses as a marketing tool. The social media environment also provides potential accommodation customers with important opportunities to examine businesses, obtain information, select, evaluate and share their opinions.

3.1. Purpose and Scope of the Study

The aim of this study is to show the effect of social media tools in the marketing of accommodation services by revealing the purposes and levels of using social media of accommodation businesses and their guests. In this way, it is to create an awareness of the marketing opportunities and advantages that social media will provide to accommodation businesses. Bodrum peninsula and five-star hotel managers and their guests in this region were included in the scope of the study. The research covers the year 2020.

3.2. Universe and Sample

There are two separate universes of the study. One is the five-star hotel managers and the other is their guests. It is considered sufficient to reach at least one manager from each hotel regarding social media in order to express opinions about accommodation establishments. In this case, the population of the study in terms of managers is the number of five-star hotels in the Bodrum Peninsula in 2020. In terms of guests, the universe is the number of guests coming to five-star hotels in 2020. According to Mugla Chamber of Commerce data, there are 36 five-star hotels operating in Bodrum in 2020. In this context, the manager universe should be at least 36 people. In practice, 38 managers were surveyed (two managers in two of the hotels and one manager in each of the remaining) and thus the entire universe was reached. Considering the number of guests who were included in the application, 638,505 guests visited these establishments in the same period (www.mugla.ktb.gov.tr, 2021), so this number was accepted as the guest universe. Yazıcıoğlu (2004) stated that the universe of 1,000,000 people can be represented by a sample of 384 people at $p=0.5$ and $q=0.5$ with a sampling error of $d=0.05$. According to this calculation, a minimum sample number of 384 people will be able to represent the population of 638,505 guests identified in the study. In the survey, 430 valid questionnaires obtained from participants. It is seen that this sample number is able to represent the guest universe.



3.3. Data Collecting Method

Questionnaire technique was used to collect data. The questionnaires were applied to both managers and guests between 15 June - 15 September 2020. Due to the pandemic period, the questionnaires were sent to the participants via e-mail and whatsapp and were collected in the same way. Simple random sampling method was used in the selection of the guests included in the application. Within the scope of the study, separate questionnaires were created for managers and guests. The Social Media Scale in Tourism Marketing, which developed by Civelek and Dalgın (2013) consists of 21 items, was used to determine the perceptions of social media in the creation of the questionnaire for hotel managers. Considering the current period, six more items related to the pandemic have been added to this scale. These items were determined by a literature review on the subject. For guests, a separate questionnaire was applied to determine the effect of social media on guests' preferences for hotels. The Decision Making Process Scale (DMPS) developed by Kütük (2016) was used in the creation of the questionnaire. The questionnaire basically consists of six parts. In the first part, there are questions about demographic information of participants. The second part collects data regarding the impact of social media on the buying of accomadotion services. In addition to the 32 items of the scale, 10 more items on the pandemic period were added as a result of the literature review. The Likert Scale was used for both scales used in the study. There are six sub-dimensions in the DMPS: Purchase, Interaction, Intention, Benefit in hotel selection, Benefit in destination selection and Informing. The purchasing dimension is related to the extent to which social media shares affect the purchasing decisions of the guests. The interaction dimension is related to the extent to which potential guests are affected by the social media comments of previous customers about hotels or the destination, and to what extent the guests who receive service share their views about the hotels on social media. The intention dimension expresses the reaction of the guests to the posts on social media. The benefit in hotel selection dimension is related to the extent to which the guests benefit from the shares in social media in choosing the hotels. The benefit in destination selection dimension is related to the extent to which the guests benefit from the posts shared in social media about the destination selection. The informing dimension is related to the level of information the guests receive from the social media posts (Figure 1).

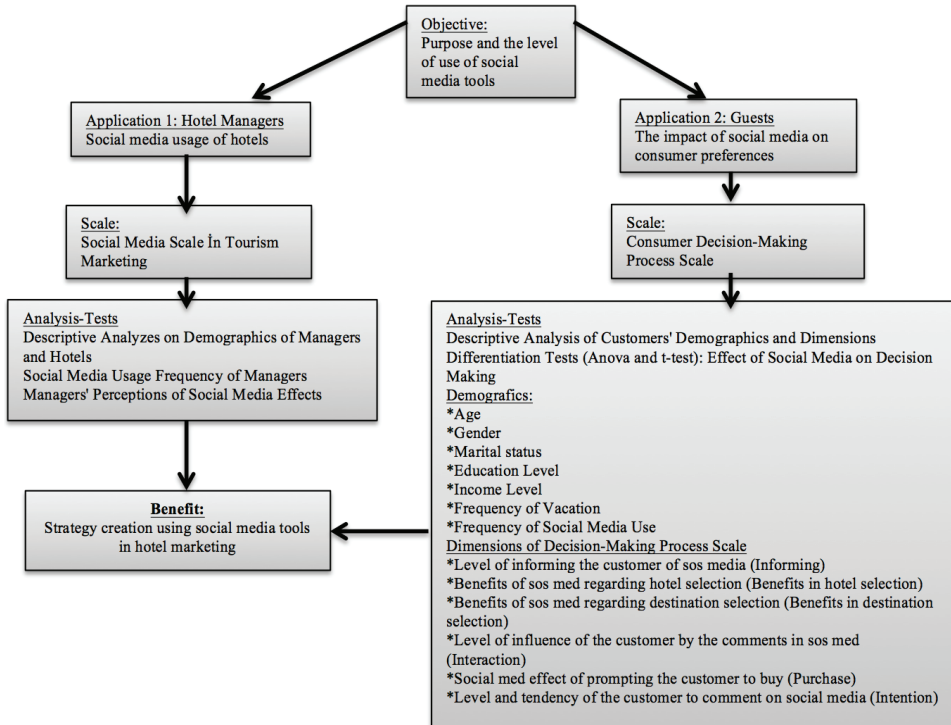


Figure 1: Data Collecting and Analyzing Process

3.4.Data Analysis Method

The scale structure was created with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the Decision Making Process Scale (DMPS). Whether there is any inconvenience in terms of using the scales within the scope of the study was determined by performing internal consistency analysis. Then, it was determined whether the DMPS applied for the guests showed a normal distribution or not, according to the kurtosis and skewness values. Factor analysis was performed to test the validity and reliability of the study. According to the descriptive statistical values obtained from the DMPS, in determining the differentiation of the groups formed by the personal information of the guests and the decision-making processes, according to the number of groups; independent sample t-test or Anova was used. All obtained results were analyzed at 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

4.Findings

The data obtained from both hotel managers and guests about the use of social media were analyzed and the findings were revealed.

4.1.Hotel Managers

A total of 38 managers, 11 women and 27 men, participated in the application. According to the



data obtained, the majority of the participants (73.6%) are undergraduates and 55.3% of them work in the sales and marketing department and 63.2% of the participants were department managers.

4.2.Social Media Use in Hotel Managements

According to the results obtained, it has been determined that the department that employs the most personnel related to social media activities in the enterprises (55.3%) is sales and marketing. Other departments that have a personnel density within the scope of social media activities are Social Media and Communication, Guest Relations, Front Office and Head Office departments in order of importance. The weighted use of social media tools by businesses was calculated as follows: Weighted Usage Score = Number of Hotels Using the Social Media Tool x Average Frequency of Use. Average Frequency of Use: Responses of business managers regarding the frequency of use of social media tools were evaluated on the Likert Scale (1: Very little, 5: Too much). The numerical average of the answers given for each social media tool is the Average Frequency of Use.

Table 1: Use of Social Media Tools in Hotel Managements

Social Media Tool	User Hotel Number (A)	Average Frequency of Use (B)	Weighted Usage Score (AxB)
Instagram	38	3,76	143
Facebook	29	3,86	112
Linkedlin	27	4,04	109
Youtube	27	4,00	108
Twitter	22	3,82	84
Other	5	4,80	24
Blogger	1	5,00	5

As can be seen from the Table 1, although the frequency of use of Instagram as a social media tool is not higher than the others, the fact that it is used (widespread) by all participating businesses brought the weighted usage score to the first place. When calculated in this way, after Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube and Twitter are the preferred tools to use, respectively. Although Blogger's average usage frequency was the highest, only one business used it, which lowered the weighted usage score to the last.

4.3.Perceptions of Managers About Social Media Effects

In the questionnaire directed to the managers, questions were asked about the effects of social media on businesses. According to the averages of the answers determined in the Likert Scale; the contribution of social media tools to the popularity of the business name is high (4,79); It has been understood that it is an important factor in attracting potential tourists (4,63) and provides a more comfortable reach to past guests (4,47). In addition, the managers stated that the rapid competition that emerged with social media did not negatively affect the profit margin of the enterprises (2,89). In addition, from the answers given, it is understood that businesses provide high level (4 and above average) advantages from social media marketing during the pandemic period. However, managers have some reservations about the negative effects of social media on businesses. These; Unreal negative comments shared on social media tools are the effects of losing potential customers (3,47) and misdirection (3,55).



4.4. Guests and Decision-Making Processes

Responses to the questionnaires applied to the guests are evaluated in this section.

4.5. Validity Analysis (Confirmatory Factor Analysis - CFA)

CFA is a dimension reduction technique that provides the opportunity to work with fewer sub-dimensions than the number of items in scales containing many items (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2011). Average, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were determined for each sub-dimension of information, social sharing, destination utilization, interaction, purchasing and intention factors in the Decision Making Processes Scale. Factor analysis was performed to determine the validity of the scale for the relevant sample. According to the principal components analysis applied to the data obtained as a result of the answers given to the questions in the DMPS, it was understood that the sample size was sufficient (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin=0.86) and the Barlett test was also significant ($X^2 = 9994,271$; $p < 0.001$). The CFA results of the DMPS show that the scale is valid for the sample used in the study. As a result, 35 sub-dimensions were gathered under 6 factors and explained 68.93% of the total variance.

4.6. Reliability Analysis

DMPS consists of a total of 35 statements. According to Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values of 0.80 and above obtained for the DMPS indicate that the scale reliability is high (Özdamar, 1999). For this reason, it was concluded that the scale is reliable and can be used in analysis.

4.7. Demographic Findings

As a result of the frequency analysis of the data about the guests, the majority of the respondents (28%) are people aged 41 and over. The youngest group is between 20-25 years old (19.5%). 61% of the participants are male and 39% are female, 60% of them are married. In case of education, the highest rate belongs to those with undergraduate and associate degree education (70%). Those with a master's degree or higher are 17%, high school 11% and those with lower education are 2%. The vast majority of guests (81%) go on vacation once a year, 14% twice, and the remaining 5% more. When the level of use of social media is examined, 34% of the participants have 60-120 minutes a day, 19% 45-60 minutes, 15% 120-180 minutes, 11% more than 180 minutes, and the rest it was determined that 21% of them used less than 45 minutes. 62% of the participating guests have a higher income than 4000 TL, 14% have an income between 2501-4000 TL and the remaining 24% have less than 2500 TL.

4.8. Differentiation Tests

Differentiation scores between demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, education, income level, frequency of going on vacation and frequency of social media use of the guests and the average scores of the decision-making processes were tested with the Anova or t-test according to the number of groups. Then differentiating dimensions according to demographic characteristics was determined (Table 2).



Table 2: Anova and T-Test Differentiation (p) Scores of Groups (p<0.05)

Demographic Characteristics	Decision Making Dimensions					
	Purchase	Interaction	Benefit in Hotel Selection	Benefit in Destination Selection	Intention	Informing
Age	0.710	0.660	0.520	0.700	0.830	0.390
Gender	0.710	0.990	0.170	0.360	0.130	0.007
Marital Status	0.170	0.960	0.410	0.860	0.500	0.910
Education	0.700	0.150	0.390	0.370	0.530	0.390
Income	0.027	0.230	0.056	0.059	0.021	0.020
SM Usage Freq	0.001	0.016	0.000	0.004	0.003	0.059
Vacation Freq	0.120	0.002	0.014	0.470	0.180	0.021

According to the results; It was understood that the age of the guests did not make a statistical difference at the 95% significance level in the decision processes, and similar decisions were made in all age groups. According to the gender of the guests, the decision processes were subjected to the t-test and it was determined that the male and female guests thought differently about informing dimension only. The decision processes of the guests were subjected to the t-test according to their marital status and no difference was found. Regardless of whether they are married or single; It has been shown that they have similar thoughts in all dimensions. The decision processes of the guests were tested with Anova according to their educational status, and there was no significant difference in their decisions either. Decision processes according to the income status of the guests were tested with Anova; and purchasing, intention and informing scores differed statistically according to income ($p < 0.05$), while other scores did not show a statistically significant difference according to income level. In other words, guests are making different decisions as income levels change in terms of purchasing, intention and informing. Regardless of their income level, they make similar decisions in terms of interaction, benefiting in hotel selection and benefiting in destination selection. Decision processes were evaluated with the t-test, depending on whether the guests went on vacation once or twice a year. According to the results obtained; the decisions of the participants on interaction, benefiting in hotel selection and informing differ according to the frequency of going on vacation. Decision processes according to the frequency of using social media were tested with Anova. It has been understood that the purchasing, interaction, intention, benefit in hotel selection and benefit in destination selection decisions differ according to the frequency of social media use. Regarding the information decisions, it has been determined that the guests have similar views regardless of the frequency of social media use.

5. Conclusions

Social media has become a part of the daily lives of users from all walks of life and has facilitated and increased their interaction with each other. This interaction can transform the social media environment into a large market where businesses can showcase their products and so customers can easily access these products and compare them with similar ones. Social media tools have played an important role in this regard. The factors that increase the importance of social media tools in marketing the services of accommodation businesses are encountered in terms of both customers and businesses. Customers intensively share their experiences about hotels and vacations in the social media environment. This



ensures that the business is promoted effectively and that potential customers get information about the business from the users' point of view. In addition, the social media units created by the accommodation enterprises themselves or the social media services they receive from outside; It is possible for them to reach more people by promoting the business with various visual, audio and written narratives they prepare on the internet. However, the fact that social media users share negative or untrue comments about the hotel they stay in shows that social media provides opportunities for accommodation businesses as well as some threats. In order not to miss these opportunities offered by social media and not to encounter negative results, it can be recommended that accommodation businesses pay attention to the quality of service, manage their social media shares well and constantly improve themselves in order to use social media tools effectively.

According to the order of importance of social media tools in terms of widespread use from the findings; It is listed as Instagram, Youtube, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Blogger. In terms of frequency of use; Youtube and LinkedIn seem to come to the fore. When evaluated in terms of its effects on accommodation businesses; It has been determined that social media tools contribute to the recognition and popularity of business names. In addition, it has been determined that it plays a very active role in attracting potential tourists to the establishment and maintaining customer loyalty by maintaining communication with previous guests. When social media tools are examined in terms of their impact on the competitive environment, it is understood that businesses are very positive. Managers stated that they are not disturbed by the competition in the social media environment, on the contrary, this competition creates an increase in the realized profit rate. The main reason for this is that the shares on social media encourage even those who do not think about touristic travel.

When social media is examined in terms of guests visiting accommodation establishments, it is understood that guests affect their decision-making processes in various ways. Effects on decision making processes; purchase, interaction, intention, benefiting in hotel selection, benefiting in destination selection and informing. It has been revealed how the guests' age, gender, marital status, educational status, income, frequency of going on vacation and frequency of social media use are affected by these six dimensions in the decision-making processes. When analyzed according to the age of the participants; Guests gave the same answers in all dimensions of the decision-making processes. This situation reveals that guests do not have different demands according to their age and accommodation businesses do not need to use different marketing strategies for each age group. On the other hand, when the decision processes are examined according to the gender of the participants; It has been determined that female and male guests think differently only in the dimension of informing and women attach more importance to being informed. For this reason, the presence of parts that will appeal to women and attract their attention within the information shared on social media will make the marketing activity more effective. According to marital status and educational status, no difference was detected in any dimension of the decision-making processes. This shows that whether people are married or single or their education level is not effective in their decision processes. On the other hand, when the decision processes are examined according to the income status of the guests; It turns out that it is effective only on purchase, intention and information desire. It can be said that these three dimensions should be taken into account in the marketing strategies to be applied according to the income levels of potential guests. In the decision-making processes according to the frequency of people going on vacation; interaction, benefiting in hotel selection and informing group average scores are differentiated. This result reveals that, interaction, benefiting in hotel selection and informing dimensions are important for tourists who go on vacation frequently. In this direction, it will be possible for accommodation businesses to increase interaction with applications that increase social media sharing. As a result, it can be ensured that potential guests benefit more from social sharing by increasing their awareness of information. According to the frequency of social media usage, while



there is a difference between the group average scores of purchasing, interaction, intention, benefiting in hotel selection and benefiting in destination selection. There is not differentiation found among the information group average scores. This is a result of the fact that those who use social media extensively are more effective in decision-making processes than those who use social media less, since they have access to more information. For this reason, they can make quicker and more effective decisions in the process.

In this study, it has been determined that social media tools play an important role in marketing accommodation services, both in terms of the level of use of hotel managers and in influencing the decision-making processes of the guests. Consequently hotels will be able to increase their marketing activities if they use social media tools correctly. In order to achieve this, it would be beneficial for them to have units in their organizations that will manage social media tools effectively. It is believed that this study will shed light on research on the use of social media tools in strategic management.

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