The Role of Social Networking Sites in Promoting Egypt as an International Tourist Destination

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ABSTRACT

The last decades have been marked with the development of widely information and communication technology (ICT) in every field of human life. Especially web 2.0 and its technologies as social networks which consider the main component of web 2.0 technologies and which play an important role in tourism promotion in the current days. So the main objectives of this study were specially designed to identify modern technologies especially social networking sites and their role in promoting the incoming tourism, identify the views of respondents to the benefits resulting from the use of social networking sites online marketing inbound tourism, identify the views of respondents to the obstacles that prevent the effective use of social networking sites online marketing inbound tourism, identify the view of respondents to the most important information that they want to be available on social networking for good promotion to Egypt. So data was collected through questionnaires to 500 international tourists in Egypt from different regions. Spss version 18.00 programs was used to analyses the data and reach the findings of this study by using some statistical methods as regression, ANOVA analysis and frequencies. Also reality was achieved in this study the findings have been indicated very important things and results about the important role that social networking play for promoting Egypt as an international destination, and identify the most importance, advantages and obstacles of social networking from respondents point of view.

KEYWORDS: Social networking, promotion and Facebook

Introduction

The world has changed suddenly as a result of Arab Spring revolutions and the various crises and cannot be returned successive competition successive crises faced by financial systems to factors temporary periods of economic recession. You also cannot imagine economic cycles as before recession followed by a recovery and recession, and so also confirmed the environment experienced by today there is no fixed position or predictable and easily due to recovery tourist markets or adjustments made to customer requests or technological changes or the nature of
Some studies indicate that there are three strongs and is known before but change impact much it paid institutions and companies in the new trend and is seen as managers and presidents of anxiety and lack of vision, this strong three starts with letter c in English which customers, competition, and change. (Ali, 2012) And networks are online preliminary historical developments important in human life after the industrial revolution, these global networks that link between many of the local networks and international and allow many people to talk or exchange information through computers, has worked communicate rapidly to increase the value and importance of the Internet as important tools to get information. It has been seen that in the past decades the information and communication technology has been used in every area of life, especially after the emergence of the second generation of the Web (web.2.0) and called it simply a set of communication technologies social web that enables users to not only read and collect information but also contribute and cooperation and the introduction of information and partnership between various parties. (Schrum & Solomon 2007). Through this development and continuous progress in various business activities, and industrial and service, the competitive advantage has become measured by the ability to creativity, innovation and renewal in line at the same time with the requirements of foreign markets, which open broad areas of growth before the institutions and the storming of a lot of markets and this is thanks to the critical importance of marketing mail, which is specific to the organization's success in entering global markets, and institutions that possess sophisticated marketing activities can live more efficiently and effectively in the market, and this is reflected in the great success of institutions of developed countries such as U.S., German institutions, Japanese, ...Etc..(Mansour, 2012)

**Problem of the Study**

The social networks consider of advanced services known to the technological revolution of modern in recent years and these networks are more networks and interactive Most viewed in the world and in spite of this, tourism to Egypt. Besides, The scarcity of studies and researches of Egyptian library in the field of social networking in general, and in the field of applications in tourism marketing in particular, is difficult to study the current stand on the problems faced by the sector Tourism Marketing via social networking sites, so When formulation of the problem, which starts on the basis of the current study, the study followed as recommended by both (Kinnear, & Taylor, 1996) in their book "Marketing Research: An Applied Approach" - in such cases - which do conduct exploratory to determine an appropriate level of knowledge and frameworks that will pave the problem and identify key areas that can be to appear, so the researcher reconnaissance some writings and researches on the subject of study. So the problem of the study lies in the lack of awareness of the utmost importance and influence effective social
networking as well as the optimization of the emergence of social networking as an effective electronic marketing tool to stimulate incoming.

**Aim of the study:**

1. Prove the importance of the Internet on the tourism sector.
2. Know the current status of the Internet usage in Egypt in general and especially in tourism.
3. Identify modern technologies especially social networking sites and their role in promoting the incoming tourism.
4. Identify the views of respondents to the benefits resulting from the use of social networking sites online marketing inbound tourism.
5. Identify the views of respondents to the obstacles that prevent the effective use of social networking sites online marketing inbound tourism.
6. Identify the views of respondents to the proposed authorities to play a role and functions of marketing inbound tourism through social networking sites.
7. Identify the view of respondents to the most important information that they want to be available on social networking for good promotion to Egypt.

**Hypotheses of the study:**

The study tested the following hypotheses as follows:

1. Facebook and Twitter more social networking used by tourists.
2. Social networking is the main source of information about the tourist destination for tourists.
3. The information obtained by the tourist from social networking sites affect in the decision of tourists to choose whether or not the tourist destination.
4. Writing good comments from tourists on social networking about the tourism destination when they had good tourism service quality make a positive reaction and increase tourists.
5. Many of tourists who use social networking share their experiences with friends, whether positive or negative.
6. The negative experiences about the tourist destination that could change the decision of the tourist travel to this destination.
7. There is a positive effect of social networking to increase the incoming tourism, increase the loyalty for potential customers, increase the customer service and increase the importance of the tourist destination.
8. There is no significant difference statistically significant among respondents towards obstacles to the use of social networking sites in the tourism marketing.
9. There is no significant difference statistically significant among respondents towards the advantages of using social networking as a marketing tool.
Current status of the Internet in Egypt:

Recent years have witnessed a remarkable development in the use of the Internet in Egypt has reached numbers of Internet users in Egypt in 2010 about 85 million users compared to about 66 million in 2000 and occupies Egypt ranked first in using the Internet, followed by Nigeria and Morocco, in addition also to increase the number of technology clubs and also Internet service providers and Internet cafes and the following formats illustrate the extent of this development, according to the monthly report of the Center for Information and Decision Support, 2010 at cabinet.

According to Eldin, 2011 The data of the central-organ-general of statistics confirmed that the internet users at information technology clubs and training centers on the computers has increased after the revolution of 25 January with 16% from 2,5 million in 2010 to 2.9 million in 2011.

Although of this increasing numbers above, In 2009 the Economist Intelligence unit e readiness has evaluated the e readiness of the countries all over the world according to six criteria, they are connectivity 20%, Business environment 15%, Social and culture environment 15%, legal environment 10%, Government policy and vision 15% and lastly consumer and business adoption 25% and the results indicated that Egypt take the place 57 and have low percentage between the countries whether developed or developing countries but it try to increase facilities and infrastructure to implement e learning. (Maher, 2010)

E-website

Website knows as a group of web pages which are created and maintained by business organizations and individuals (Sahn, 2007) or a set of pages, images and multimedia files, which individual or group linked it to the Internet and have a specific address easily browsed and display components (Abu Nile, 2002 and So and Morrison, 2003) knows it as a powerful tool used in marketing and advertising and providing information on products, services and support communication between organizations and their currencies

Social networking and their role in promoting tourism

Social networking topped three important sites and key: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. As a result of the growth and development of these social media sites, have come more than two-thirds of Internet users.

(Richter & Koch, 2007) defined it as "applications and platforms and media via the Internet designed to facilitate interaction and cooperation and exchange of information"

Researchers can define it as an operation that contains social networks tools via internet and the shared content between individuals or organizations or individuals and organization.
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES


The social networking sites are the most prevalent on the Internet because of its characteristics that distinguish them from websites, which encouraged Internet surfers from all over the world on the increasing demand for them in time, which fell demand for websites.

The application of the second generation of the web or the so-called Web-2 uses in several areas, including health 2.0 and education 2.0 and Tourism 2.0 for its strength and its potential applications and effective, but these technologies have many benefits and advantages in the field of tourism, especially in the field of tourism marketing and considered social networking one of the Web 2.0 component, which plays an important role and a key role in the development and revitalization of the tourism and hotel sector and increase incoming tourism movement in Egypt, through the deployment of a variety of programs and services and submit it to networks and different locations. (Schrum, & Solomon, 2007)

In Egypt, Egyptian Technoyarles company specialized in e-marketing and mobile phone networks in 2011 prepared a study titled 109 million Internet users in Egypt dealt in detail with the size of the increase in the use of three locations after the revolution January 25 a Facebook and stringing was the number of users Facebook before 25 January Revolution 402 million people, but rose 23.8% after the revolution to 2.5 million users, and the tensioning was users before the revolution 26800 with later increased to 44200 as well as YouTube has been viewed 807 million pages on the site by users Egyptians Although Egyptian authorities cut Internet service. (Arab Social Media Report, 2011)

The information networks and social networking sites of the latest electronic marketing strategies and digital tools to enhance the promotion programs tourism marketing as the information network and social networking sites currently leading changes in the business environment and the tourism industry is the candidate and strongly to become one of the most willing of social networks through promotional opportunities and marketing involved in using these networks to enhance services and facilities sector tourism and hotel and deliver directly to the public including the use of Facebook and straining to increase sales and bookings as well as access to the largest possible segment of interested in Egypt and the Egyptian tourism product. (Kurdy, 2011)

The travel industry has been severely Internet revolution and the tourism industry as a whole saw some changes as a result of the emergence and growth of these social networks and the emergence of the reactions of tourists candidate is on
the Internet, especially if the client experienced with bad tourist destination. (Parker, 2010)

Studies indicate that there are six ways of marketing can make social networking for the tourism industry in Egypt as Extending Concierge Services, On-Site Merchandising, Customer Service and Recovery, Last-Minute Deals, Facilitating Guest Communities, Storytelling. (Maher, 2010)

**Strengths of social networking in tourism:** (Royer, 2010)

- Social networking has the ability to reach the largest number of customers, whether existing or potential.
- Social networking allows the tourist company or hotel to set up a personal relationship between them and their customers and the exchange of experiences and information among them.
- The International Conference on e-marketing tourism in Cairo 2011 assured on the return of tourism movement to Egypt to normal rates in the case of the stability of the security situation, adding that the e-tourism is hope for the advancement of the sector, stressing the need to intensify the use of the means of social communication via the Internet.
- Prime International Organization for E-Tourism assured that the January 25 revolution white revolution did not shame any tourists and e-tourism is hope in re-attracting tourism again explaining the importance of social networking in the field of travel and tourism, aviation, hotels of folds of this industry in terms of marketing on the Internet.
- They also noted that the means of social communication are used by companies and institutions and bodies in the Middle East is widespread increasingly and rapidly Both Facebook and LinkedIn that linked and strains twitter is that the most important messages of social networks used by sections customer service marketing in companies and institutions of the region in general and tourism in particular, and in spite of that, it is essential that every company and organization of companies and institutions plan to take advantage of these tools.
- All tourist company or hotel can increase its revenue through the use of innovative social media in marketing and promotion with most of the means of social communication can be used free of charge.
- Segala, (2012) indicated also that social networking applications impacted heavily on the mechanisms and methods of marketing in business management for the purpose on the one hand, and on the tourist and the decisions of the other hand.

In terms of the impact on the tourist has contributed to; (1) providing the traveller with new ways to search for and discovery of information and evaluation
tourist destination and the journey. (2) customer transition from merely a passive consumer to positive producer and consumer. (3) provide traveller of safe channels to book and buy the products of the trip. (4) the exchange and dissemination of information on tourist trips and previous programs.

On the other hand, The tourism destinations and enterprises changed and re-formulation and definition of business models, in order to be able to meet the needs and expectations of this new type of travellers, through: (Berthon, et.al, 2011)

1. Show information, services and facilities in an attractive way and sophisticated.
2. Reformulating the traditional business system (Internal & External).
3. Looking to the client as a stakeholder and shareholder after that he/she was just a target.
4. Conviction that travellers and communicate through social networking have a high capacity to maximize the mental image of the destination and tourism product.
5. Conviction that travellers can promote destination through their interactions with others via social networking.
6. The communication with the passengers after the trip given the opportunity to improve future trips.
7. Find efficiently and service providers to communicate with existing customers, and access to potential customers.
8. Looking to the passengers as partners in the design, marketing and production of the tourist experience.

Methodology

The study used the curriculum exploratory / preliminary approach in order to determine an appropriate level of knowledge and frameworks that will pave the problem and identify key areas that can show where, has been used this style initially in setting the framework for the formulation of the problem of the study, then use more broadly to identify the concept of social networking and classifications related social communion, and how the use of social networking sites in the tourism marketing. Then using a descriptive analytical study and to test the hypotheses of the study and achieve its objectives, it includes the following stages:

1. Stage of collecting, classifying and displaying data.
2. Stage of data analysis and interpretation of results.

The data collected through books, researches and studies, journals and conferences, Reports, newsletters, and from published and unpublished data, also the data collected through the practical study which the researchers depend on for data collection during May to October 2012. Sample selection was by simple random technique with a total distribution of 500 self-administered questionnaires among
different international tourists in different tourist destinations at Cairo through direct interviews. 392 were completed and valid for statistical analysis with a respondent rate of 78.4 %. Data were collected coded and analyzed using SPSS software version 18 under windows 7, simple descriptive analysis in the form of percentage distribution, regression, ANOVA analysis and frequencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Population</th>
<th>Number of Distributed Questionnaires</th>
<th>Received Questionnaires</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Tourists in Egypt</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>78.4 %</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Results and Discussion**

This part of the study aims to provide a realistic model of the international tourists’ opinions about the importance of social networking in strengthening decisions of purchasing the Egyptian tourism product and it includes the survey analysis of the Egyptian tourism companies’ customers.

**Reliability and validity of Study**

Some define it as degree of stability measurement tools," and others "degree of interdependence of internal and credibility of the variables used in measuring instruments", the degree of reliability of measuring instruments used in the search, which can be the researcher to get the same results almost if used measurement tools alternative. In other words, to what extent can get the same results if the search is designed according to other measurement tools.

The study was based on a scale (alpha) to measure the interconnectedness and credibility of the variables used in the questionnaire showed data for the analysis of credibility and consistency, which shows that all levels of alpha greater than (0.60) and thus have every criteria research used in the study is statistically acceptable.

**Data analysis, Discussions and Conclusions**

First Personal Data: (As shown in the next sentences 1 and 2)

1. **Gender:** The analysis has explained that the percentage of the total male respondents was 76.5%, while the percentage of the females was 23.5% of the total tourists’ participation in the study.

2. **Nationality:** About 20% of the respondents were European, 30% were Asian, 10% African, 23% American, 17% Arabian.

3. **The Number of friends on social networking websites:** It was seen that, 71.4 % of the tourists confirmed that the average of their registered friends on their accounts on social networking Ranged between 100 to less than 200 friend,
while 12.2% of the tourists confirmed that the average number of their friends on social networking ranged between 200 to less than 300, finally, the percentage of tourists who have less than 100 friend on their accounts, as well as those with 300 Friend + 8.2%.

4. The use of Social networking: The results highlighted that all respondents (100%) use social networking, and the most important social networking they use as follow:
   - 93.9 % of the tourists used Twitter for social networking.
   - 88.8 % of the tourists used Facebook.
   - 43.9 % of the tourists used Encyclopaedia Wikipedia.
   - 90.9% of tourists used YouTube network.
   - 21.4% of tourists used Flickr network.
   - 15.3% of tourists used blogs.
   - This result agreed with Mansour, (2012) which confirmed that the most three social networking used by the internet users are Facebook, Youtube and Twitter.

5. Number of times uses social networking: The results explained that 87.8 % of respondents use social networking between 26 - 30 days monthly, where as 12.2% of respondents’ use social networking between 21 – 25 days per month.
   a. The purpose of using social networking, the results indicated that 92.9 % of respondents use the social networking for the purpose of communication with others, 84.7 % use it to support and maintain friends with common interest, also, 68.4 % use it to collect data and information and finally, 29.6 % of respondents use it for entertainment.

6. Reasons for using social networking to collect information: According to respondents, there are many reasons to use social networking to collect data and information as follow:
   a. The ease (100 %), get specific solutions (93.9 %), High level of confidence in the responses (92.9 %), confidence (90.8 %), and obtaining the response of similar interests, and by asking respondents wishing to travel, it has explained that 80.6 % of respondents like travel too much while 19.4 % like much to travel. According to number of times travel to spend the holiday outside the country: The results showed that 71.4 % of respondents travel more than twice per year while 22.4 % of them travel twice per year and 6.2 % travel once yearly. By asking respondents about number of times to travel to Egypt, the results showed 61.2 % of respondents visit Egypt for first time, 34.7 % of them visit Egypt for second time while 4.1% of respondents visited Egypt two times before.
7. The respondents have been asked how they get information about Egypt and the answers showed that 61.2% of tourists confirmed social networking are the main source for information about Egypt as a tourist destination, 19.4% confirmed that travel agents are the main source of information about Egypt as a tourist destination, while 12.2% of tourists confirmed that friends had a role in dissemination of information about Egypt and finally 7.1% of respondents got their information about Egypt through internet. This result confirms the second hypothesis of the study which says “Social networking is the main source of information about the tourist destination for tourists”. And accepted with Xiang and Gretzel, (2010) which approved that the social networking is the main sources for planning for trips.

8. Sources of information used by tourists in the last tourist journey 76.5% of tourists confirmed that the social networking were the source of their information which they used in their last journey, 11.2% confirmed that the internet was the source of information in their last journey, while 7.1% of respondents confirmed that the friends are the source of information in their last journey, and finally, 5.1% of tourists confirmed that advertisements and promotion are the source of their information in the last journey. This result agrees with the previous question and confirms the second hypothesis of the study.

9. Use of social networking in the search for tourist destinations, 72.4% of tourists use social networking in searching the tourist destination they wish to visit, while 18.4% of them often use the social networking to search the tourist destination they wish to visit.

10. Trustworthy sources of information to tourists for tourist destinations: according to the answers of respondents (tourists) about the most trusted sources of information they have about tourist destinations, the results were as: 73.5% of them depend on common experiences on social networking to get the trusted information about the tourist destination they wish to visit. 18.4% of them depend on the friends’ advice. 8.2% of respondents depend on travel and tourism companies.

11. Tourists’ opinions about how of information support of social networking for decision making showed the importance of the information obtained from social networking in the decision Support for buying the tourist trips, as 86.7% of them mentioned that this information from social networking are highly supportive, while supporting the 13.3% of tourists this view, but to a lesser degree. This result confirms the third hypothesis which says “the information obtained by the tourist from social networking sites affect in the decision of tourists to choose whether or not the tourist destination”. And accepted with Segala, (2012) which indicated also that social networking applications
impacted heavily on the mechanisms and methods of marketing in business management for the purpose on the one hand, and on the tourist and the decisions of the other hand.

12. The level of customer satisfaction with the information on social networking about the Egyptian tourist destination, the results explained that 74.5% of tourists are fully satisfied about the information on social networking about the Egyptian tourist destination, while 25.5% of tourists supported by the previous opinion to a lesser degree. This confirms and approves the seventh hypothesis which says “There is a positive effect of social networking to increase the incoming tourism, increase the loyalty for potential customers, increase the customer service and increase the importance of the tourist destination”.

13. Networking users response to the level of tourism service quality: In this study the researcher asked the tourists about their response to the level of tourism service quality on social networking, the results were as follow as 99% of them showed a positive reaction with respect to writing good comments on social networking and as well as talk to others in case of receiving a high-quality tourism services, on the other hand 100% of them confirmed that, they will warn the others and write negative comments on social networking if they get good tourism services. This result approves the fourth hypothesis which says “Writing good comments from tourists on social networking about the tourist destination when they had good tourism service quality make a positive reaction and increase tourists”.

14. The shared experiences by tourists with friends on social networking for tourist trips, it showed that 83.7% of tourists will share their friends the good and bad experiences during the trip. With a simple calculation, we conclude that when a tourist got a bad or good tourism service, there are nearly 186 prospective customers will know the standard of service that has been provided to them through social networking. This result confirms and approves the fifth hypothesis which says “Many of tourists who use social networking share their experiences with friends, whether positive or negative”, all of this affects the decision of the tourist travel. Use tourists social sites such as Tripadvisor.com or any other site for travel and 83.7% of tourists confirmed that they use as these websites when planning a tourist trip.

15. The impact of some negative comments or bad experiences about a tourist destination on the social networking sites to change the travel decision: According the results, 92.9% of tourists confirmed that, the bad experiences and comments on the social networking affect on the change of the travel decision but 7.1% of them oppose this opinion and confirmed that these bad comments or experiences don’t affect the change of travel decision to a specific tourist destination. This result confirms the sixth hypothesis which says” The
negative experiences about the tourist destination that could change the decision of the tourist travel to this destination”.

16. By asking the tourists about the most important information they want to be available on social networking for good promotion to Egypt, 73% of them indicated that the social networking site have to obtain information about suppliers, while 56% tourist statistical about the destination, 90% information about the security status in the destination, 62% information about Customs and traditions of the community, 66% information about economic, social, literature in the destination, 95% information about travel agents and tourist companies and hotels. It has been shown from this statistics that tourists opinions agreed with Berthon, et al., (2011), that social networking must contain variables as economic, statistics, social, security, and others.

17. The Tourists have been asked about what are the advantages that can be achieved using social networking sites to market Egypt as an international tourist destination, the results showed that 98% indicated spread of information about tourist destination among the millions of individuals, while 96% dissemination of information about the destination more easily, 98% Rapid feedback from tourists, and 88% for Predict the characteristics of the expected demand and contribute to the development of existing products, and this agreed with the second international e tourism conference in Cairo, (2011) and Segala, (2012). By making regression analysis between nationalies as independent factor and the advantages as dependent factor, the results showed that $t$ value = 0.066 as less than 0.05, this is an acceptable level of significance for this study. This value indicates that the differences between the views of the respondents to these variables is a moral there any differences between a real phenomenon in the views of respondents to these variables and $R^2 = 0.093$ that there is little impact of the independent variable on the dependent variables, and emphasizes the value of the coefficient of determination rate = 0.06 which mean that 6% of Changes that occur in the views of respondents to the three dependent variables due to a change in an independent factor. Besides, by making ANOVAs analysis, the level of significance F (0.069), indicating that there was no significant difference in the average views of respondents on their opinions toward the advantages to use social networking sites. This also proves positively the 9th hypotheses that there is no significant difference statistically significant among respondents towards the advantages of using social networking as a marketing tool.

18. The researchers asked the respondents about the obstacle which could prevent the successful use of social networking sites (on a national scale) to market Egypt as an international tourist destination. 45% told us that Some officials believe the irrelevance of such tools in the marketing, while 60% said
Adherence to a number of current officials with traditional marketing tools without other, 90% said that lack of qualified human resources for the implementation consider one of the most obstacles for using social networking as using these website need trained and skilled human resource that can deal and interactive coefficient with clients especially in tourism sector. 75% consider that massive Financial and administrative burdens necessary for the application may hinder using this website in promotion especially in the third world. And finally 80% told that the inability to define accurately target market and this agreed with Magloire, (2009). By making regression analysis between nationalies as independent factor and the obstacles as dependent factor, the results showed that t value = 0.095 as less than 0.05, this is an acceptable level of significance for this study. This value indicates that the differences between the views of the respondents to these variables is a moral that there any differences between a real phenomenon in the views of respondents to these variables and R2 = 0.067 that there is little impact of the independent variable on the dependent variables, and emphasizes the value of the coefficient of determination rate = 0.04 which mean that 4% of Changes that occur in the views of respondents to the dependent variables due to a change in an independent factor. Besides, by making ANova analysis, the level of significance F (0.058), indicating that there was no significant difference in the average views of respondents on their opinions toward the obstacles to use social networking sites. This also proves positively the 8th hypotheses that there is no significant difference statistically significant among respondents towards obstacles to the use of social networking sites in the tourism marketing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study revealed that, Facebook and Twitter are the most social networking used by tourists, social networking play an important and positive role in the promotion tourism to reach a large numbers of customers with low costs; social networking is the main and important source in obtaining all information about the different tourist destinations, bad experiences and comments about the tourist destination on the social networking cause negative impacts for the customers and let them change their decision to travel to this destination and finally 186 of potential customers will know the level of the service that has been presented to the customer through social networking. The researchers recommend that there is a need for a continuous inspection on the services suppliers to assure the customers will get high quality of services because the customer will make a good promotion for the destination through social networking and word of mouth, encourage the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism to be a member in specialized international sites for planning trips such as Travelmuse, Tript, and Trip Planner to enable the tourists to choose their trips, we recommend also all the specialized ministries and associations put and support the social networking with specialized videos and
pictures to attract the customers and finally there is a need to train human resources to have many skills to know how to deal with customers through social networking.

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