

The Social Selling Gateway for Hospitality VSE's & SME's

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Abstract

The face of business has changed the world over as social networks have taken the upper hand providing on-demand instant knowledge. Ask a four-year old child what he would like for his birthday and he'll reach out for his 'x'-pad and tell you where to find it. This paper examines how consumer empowerment via the social media should actually lead us to reconsider the meaning and methods of tourism research today. It contends that the long-standing supply and demand approach is no longer adequate to deal with the world as we know it today. Indeed, as the French philosopher and social researcher, Michel Serres, pointed out as early as 2012, the world has been totally transformed over the last 50 years so many of us are lost in transition. Consequently, to our mind, one of the central issues is to ascertain whether hospitality research is currently providing the keys to a better understanding of how to cope with on-demand instant consumption?

We will address three questions:

1. How does the sharing economy affect our understanding, as researchers, of supply and demand?
2. Is the availability of instant knowledge an opportunity for the development of VSE's and SME's in the hospitality sector?
3. Whose needs should hospitality research be addressing today and how?

Our analysis and proposals are based and derived from an empirical research initiative on the organization and implementation of international business networking in Lyon. We have limited our data collection to the observation and use of three on-line social networks:

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn with occasional references made to Viadeo, Scoop-it and PinInterest. This on-line data has been further crossed with the observation of face-to-face networking and used to measure the readiness to respond and/or initiate on-demand knowledge for instant consumption.

Keywords: social selling, networking, sharing economy