

CABI TOURISM TEXTS

2nd Edition

Tourism Information Technology

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COMPLIMENTARY TEACHING
MATERIALS

Chapter 5

Social Media and Tourism



Chapter 5 Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter you should be able to:

1. understand the **types** and **functions** of social media;
2. explain why **electronic word of mouth** is important to travel organizations;
3. analyze the **advantages** and **disadvantages** of different social media platforms;
4. discuss how different **social media platforms** can be used to engage with travelers; and
5. Adopt a **strategic approach** to using social media for a range of applications in travel organizations.

Key Concepts

- ⊙ User-generated content (UGC)
- ⊙ Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)
- ⊙ Social network sites (SNSs)
- ⊙ Blogs, wikis and product review sites
- ⊙ Forums and discussion boards
- ⊙ Media sharing
- ⊙ Crowdsourcing
- ⊙ Virtual worlds



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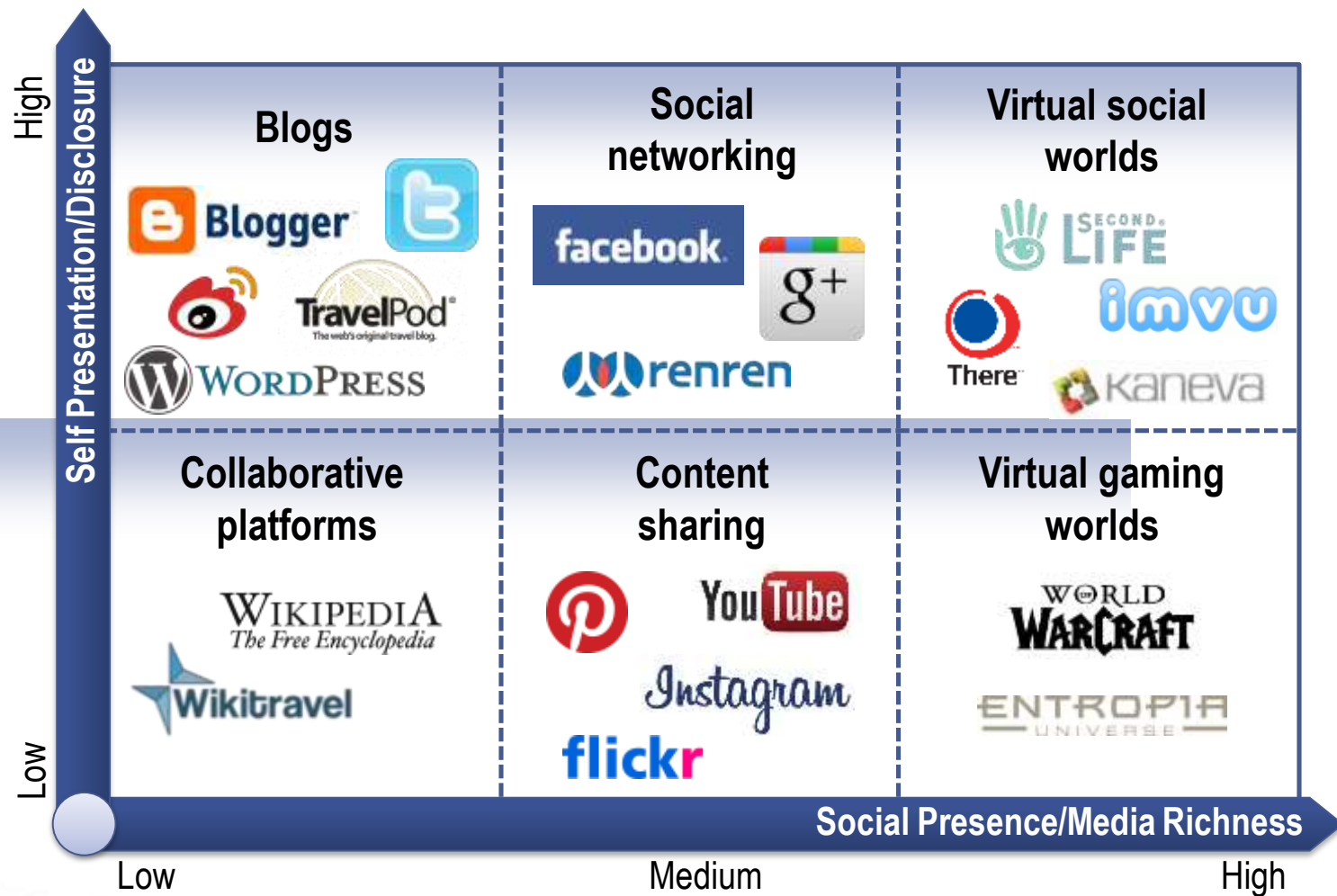


FIGURE 5.1 Classification of social media.

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FIGURE 5.2 The social media landscape.

Western and Chinese Social Media Platforms

Platform	Western Examples	Chinese Examples
Blogs	Blogger, Wordpress	Blogbus
Microblogs	Twitter	Sina Weibo, Tencent Weibo
Wikis	Wikipedia	Baidu Baike
Social Networks	Facebook	Qzone, Renren, Pengyou
Video Sharing	Youtube	Youku, Tudou
Location-based	Foursquare	Jiepang
Review Sites	TripAdvisor	DaoDao

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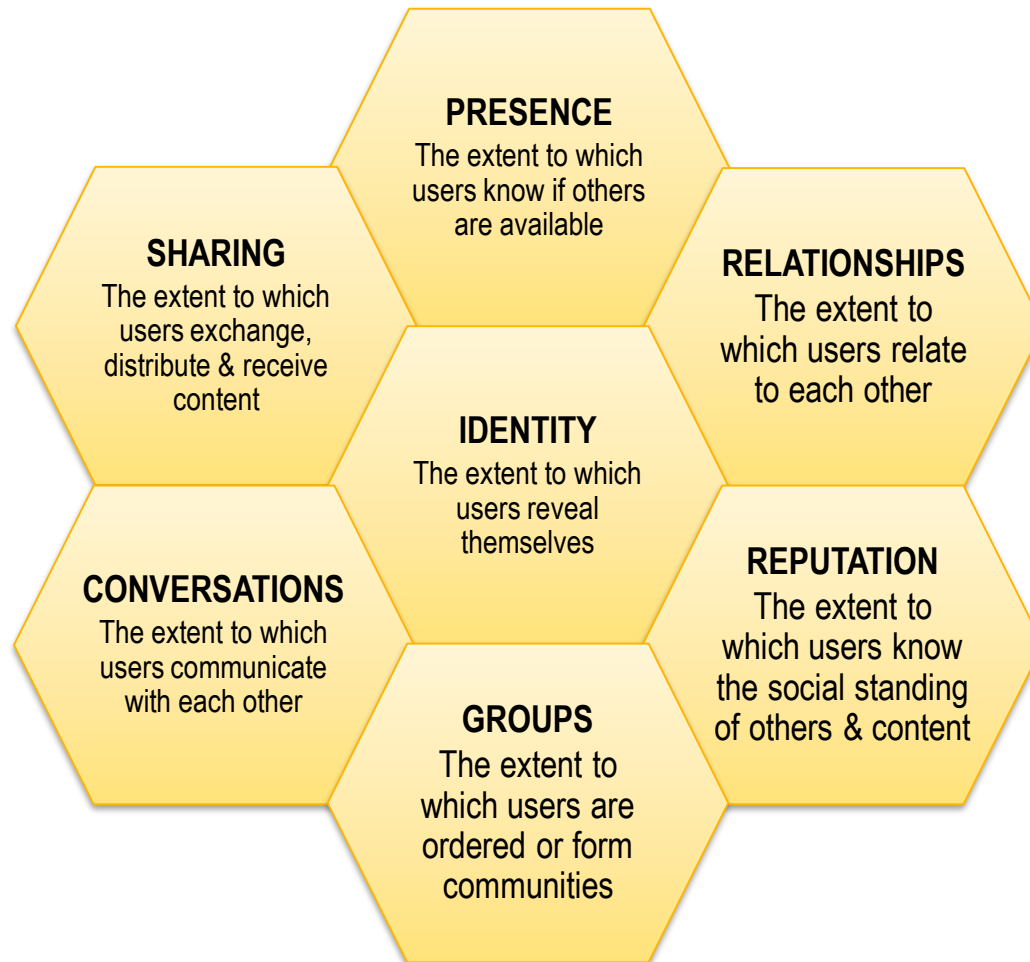


FIGURE 5.3 The seven functional blocks of social media.

Characteristics of eWOM

eWOM differs from traditional WOM in the following ways:

- ⦿ Scale
- ⦿ Relationships
- ⦿ Anonymity
- ⦿ Durability
- ⦿ Variety



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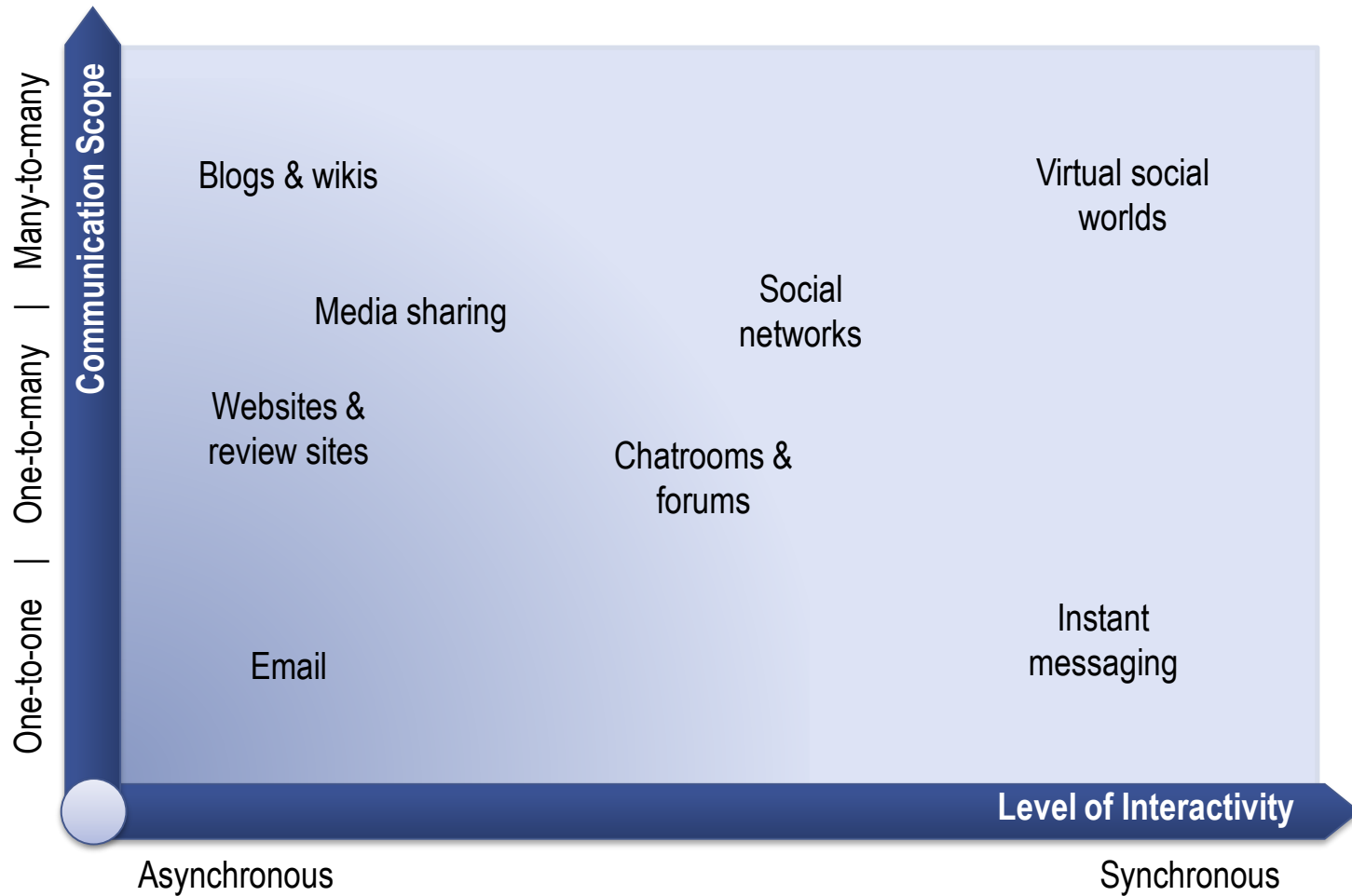


FIGURE 5.4 Typology of various eWOM channels.

(Source: Litvin *et al.*, 2008)

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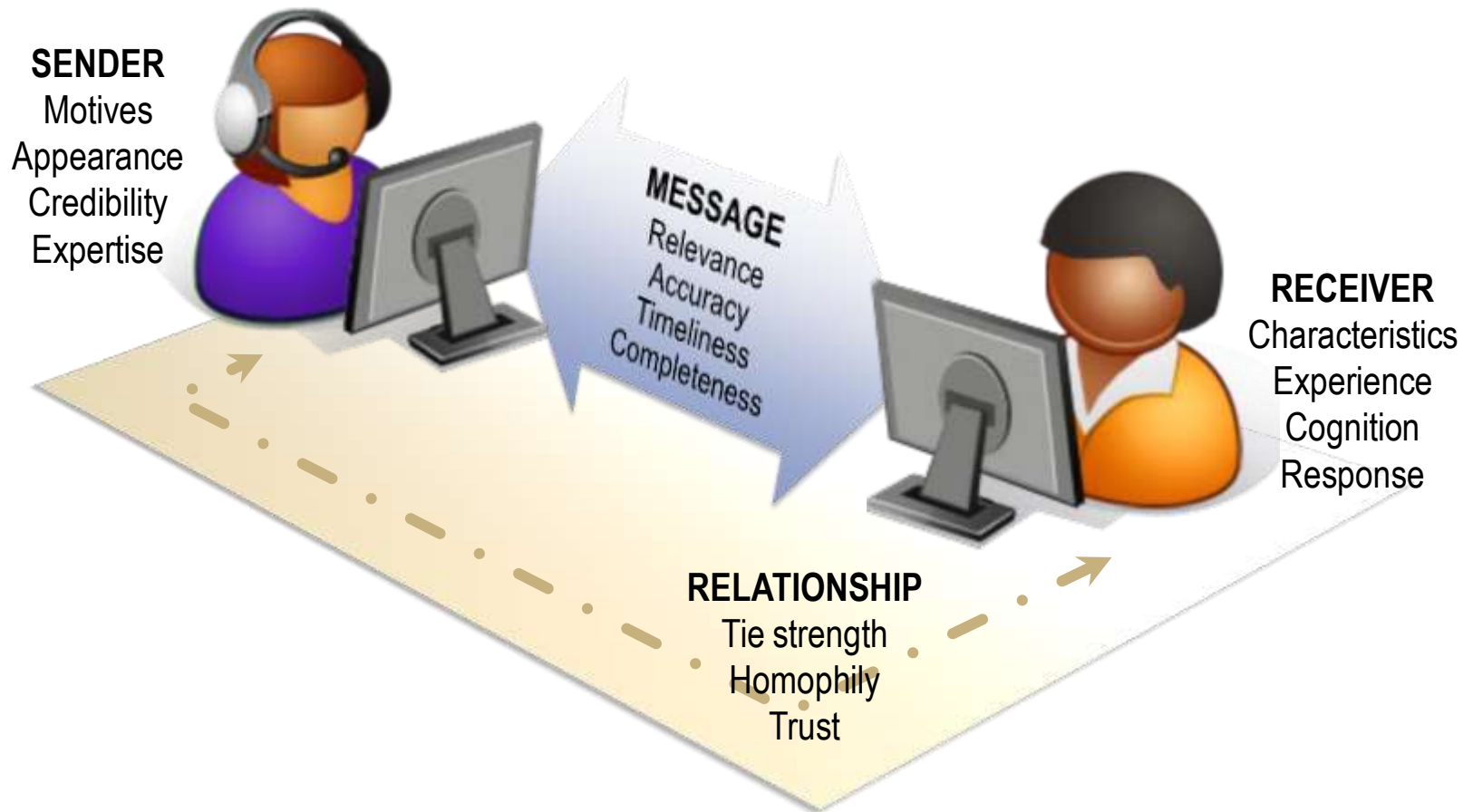


FIGURE 5.5 Communication factors influencing eWOM.

Social Media Platforms in Tourism

- ⦿ Social network sites
- ⦿ Wikis, blogs and product review sites
- ⦿ Forums
- ⦿ Media sharing
- ⦿ Crowdsourcing
- ⦿ Virtual worlds



Social Network Sites

Social network sites (SNSs) are defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to:

- ⊙ construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system;
- ⊙ articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; and
- ⊙ view and traverse their connections and those made by others within the system.” (boyd and Ellison, 2007)

Types of SNSs:

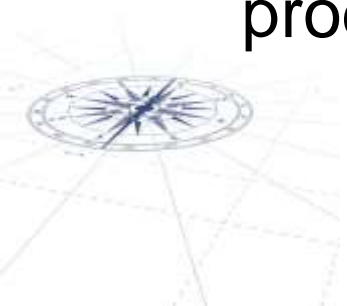
- ⊙ Universal
- ⊙ Professional
- ⊙ Regional
- ⊙ Niche



Wikis, blogs and product review sites

Definitions

- ⦿ **Wiki:** is a real-time editable website that helps users create content through cooperative development and ownership (Bean & Hott, 2005)
- ⦿ **Blog:** a personal website or web page which allows an individual to present content and opinions
- ⦿ **Product review site:** a website devoted to providing subjective consumer feedback on products and services



Wikis, blogs and product review sites

Types of Blogs

- ⦿ Traditional blogs
- ⦿ Microblogs
- ⦿ Multi-author blogs
- ⦿ Video blogs
- ⦿ Curated blogs



Other Social Media Platforms

- ⦿ **Forums:** a website where members can post comments and respond to posts from others
- ⦿ **Media sharing:** platforms that allow users to to share, rate and leave comments about visual content
- ⦿ **Crowdsourcing:** using the Internet to “find people to perform tasks that computers are generally lousy at” (Howe, 2006, p. 5)
- ⦿ **Virtual worlds:** three-dimensional, computer-based simulated environments through which users can interact using avatars

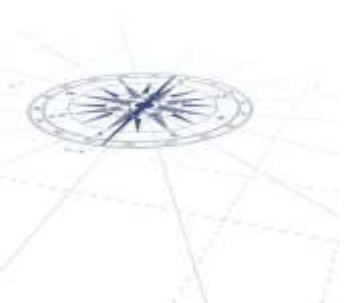


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FIGURE 5.6 Strategic social media framework.

Strategic Applications of Social Media



Strategic use of different media

Strategy	Objective	Media
Exposure	Generate awareness	Traditional media, blogs, microblogs, media sharing
Engagement	Connect with travelers	Social network sites, microblogs, forums
Influence	Change attitudes	Social network sites, blogs, media sharing, reviews
Acquisition	Facilitate bookings	Website, booking engine



Discussion Questions

1. What features of social media make them different to other media? Provide some examples to illustrate your answer.
2. China has a number of parallel social media platforms that serve the same purpose as mainstream social media in the Western world. What are the implications of this? If you were working for a destination keen to attract the Chinese market, how could you harness the potential of these sites?
3. Brainstorm as many examples of social media as you can and write these down in a list. Use Cavazza's (2012) Social Media Landscape model to categorize each of the examples you have listed. Which of these platforms do you use the most? Why?
4. Use the honeycomb model to map out the key strengths of SNSs, blogs, wikis, product review sites and media-sharing sites you are familiar with.

Discussion Questions

5. Form a group with 4-5 other students and create a list of different ways in which you have used electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) to find out about places and destinations. Compare your group's answers with the rest of your class. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the eWOM information sources you have identified for (a) travelers and (b) travel organizations?
6. Visit TripAdvisor and search for five-star hotels in London that would be suitable for a business trip. Read some of the reviews for these hotels and summarize the most common positive and negative themes. Do you think any of the reviews are fake? Take a look at some of the images that accompany the reviews. Observe whether management has responded to some of these reviews. If you were the GM of a hotel, how would you respond to some of the negative themes you have identified? What strategies would you use to deal with fake reviews? How would you encourage positive reviews?
7. What is your opinion about the role of virtual worlds in travel? Do you think they offer a supplement or substitute for real travel experiences? How can travel companies use a virtual presence to enhance their reputation?

Useful Websites



TripAdvisor
www.tripadvisor.com



National Geographic Intelligent Travel
intelligenttravel.nationalgeographic.com



Travelpod
www.travelpod.com



LonelyPlanet's Thorn Tree
www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree



WikiTravel.com
www.wikitravel.org



SecondLife
www.secondlife.com

Case Study The Best Job in the World

- In 2009 CumminsNitro were employed to run a campaign to raise international awareness of Australia's Great Barrier Reef islands.
- "The Best Job in the World" – six months as the "caretaker" of Hamilton Island.
- The campaign:
 - Video entries from 35,000 contestants in 200 countries
 - 50 shortlisted contestants
 - 16 finalists flown to Australia
- Myspace, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and blogs allowed fans and followers to engage with the competition and its contestants.
- Campaign website attracted over 8 million unique visits and the contestant videos generated over 600 hours of content on YouTube.
- The \$1.2 million investment generated over \$160 million in global publicity.

