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Digital Marketing and its Importance in Tourism Promotion: Case of Southern Albania

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Abstract

The advent of new technologies such as social media have penetrated many households and have made it possible to change the way consumers seek information as a basis for their purchasing decisions. As the number of users escalates, companies are advised to take advantage of the development of these marketing channels and effectively communicate with customers. Meanwhile, the hotel industry is growing rapidly and hoteliers in general have actively tried to pursue marketing strategies that remained competitive. However, with the large number of competitors and the increase in the bargaining power of consumers, hoteliers must rethink their strategy to manage, among other things, marketing communication channels that include social media (Hennig-Thurau et at., 2010). This paper seeks to examine the relationship between social media use, and the role of social media in tourism promotion and the related consumer behavior. Primary data were collected through questionnaires. The results showed that there is a positive correlation between the research variables.

Keywords: social media, promotion, marketing communication, tourism

1. Introduction

Today, tourism companies and tourists need to reach (contact) each other. One way to establish these contacts and to nurture them is through social media networks. These networks are always the voice of the companies and the voice of the public, the audience. More than paid media opportunities such as television advertising, and traditional mass media approaches, the online world requires companies and products that build a community of people to follow them. Word of mouth marketing/advertising provides the most powerful opportunity for the organization to reach the audience and for the audience to reach the organization.

The advent of social media as a marketing channel has dramatically changed the way companies communicate with consumers. With a large number of users worldwide, social media can be a strategic marketing communication tool for service providers including the hotel industry. Recent years have seen the growth of social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, Google+, Twitter,

Instagram and Tiktok, which allow consumers to take a more active role in the market. In a recent survey of 1,700 Internet users, Nielsen Online reported that 73% of users engaged in social media at least once a week (Woodcock & Green, 2010). The older generation of consumers will join the labor market and create a new dimension of the market. In a market environment where word of mouth travels at lightning speed, companies are facing greater challenges to attract and retain customers.

The tourism system is inevitably influenced by the environment of new businesses created by the spread of ICT (information and communication technology). Information technology is one of the external elements of the environment for tourism, travel and accommodation, although in recent years technological developments have helped in the renewal of e-Tourism and vice versa. ICT has become an important partner providing more and more connections between consumers and supplier companies. Tourism is a very intensive informative activity. In few other areas of activity are products, collections, data processing, application and communication of this information, which are daily procedures and as important as they are for the tourism industry. Unlike durable goods, tourism services, which are unreal and temporary but valued by companies, cannot be displayed or physically controlled until the point of sale, before they are purchased, because services are normally purchased before the time of purchase. their use and away from the consuming country. Tourism products, therefore, are almost exclusively dependent on reviews and descriptions, such as providing this information in print or in auto-visual formats. Often these criticisms are made by friends, relatives or travel companies, but not by tourist organizations or the authorities of the host destination. So, the means of communication and information transmission are necessary for the general marketing of the tourism industry. As a result, consumers are at great risk, not only financially but also psychologically. Vacations or holidays are among the days that have large expenses in the annual family budget and as a result these days have a greater commitment from the whole family. So, the whole family is fully engaged on holidays.

The Internet has brought important changes in the Albanian media ecosystem. The number of actors and communication and information platforms in the country has multiplied. The ways of production, consumption and distribution of information have also changed. In addition to traditional media, social media are also taking an increasingly large role in the process of informing the public. For traditional media they are being outlined as new channels of connecting with the audience and distributing content. But social media also presents itself as an important channel of distribution of content produced by the users themselves and the general public.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to examine the possibility of promoting tourism through social media as well as to evaluate the current use of this method of promotion in the Municipality of Vlora.

2.1 Objectives

1. To know the relationship between tourism agencies and social media.
2. To analyze the role of marketing in the promotion of tourism.

2.2 Hypotheses

1. *There is a correlation between information technology and tourism.*
2. *Social media has a direct impact on marketing to promote tourism.*
3. *Social networking sites are used to inform tourists when they plan to take vacations.*

In order to test these hypotheses it has been conducted a field research through a questionnaire to tourists and tourism enterprises in the municipality of Vlora.
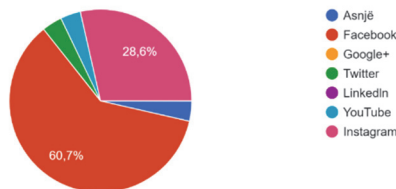
3. Data Analysis

The results for the age of the interviewees show that the largest percentage is occupied by the age category of 30-35 years with (30.8%) and an important part is occupied by the age category of 36-41 years with (33.3%).
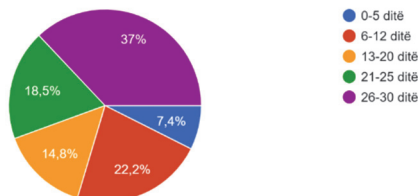
Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

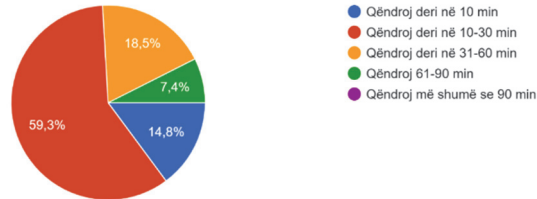| Variable	Particulars	(%)
Age	18-23	17.9
	24-29	21.4
	30-35	28.6
	36-41	17.9
	mbi 41 vjec	14.3
Gender	Male	45.7
	Female	54.3

The category with the smallest percentage is over 41 years old, with (14.3%) and this is due to the fact that this age is less active in their involvement in social networks and as a result they had less interest in being included in the study . (21.4%) is occupied by the age category of 24-29 years. The reporting between men and women has an acceptable difference where the highest percentage is occupied by women with a rate of (55.2%) and (44.8%) occupied by men. The interviewees are mainly with university education (55.2%) and the smallest percentage of 13.8% is in the high school category. We are mainly dealing with employed tourists who occupy the largest part of the report in the measure (65.5%) and in the measure (13.8%) the category of students. Tourism is an activity that requires sufficient income justifying the inclusion of tourists in the tourist destinations they seek. Referring to this, the monthly income in the families of the selected population is in the amount of 350-600 euros (39.3%) and after this category comes the income below 350 euros (28.6%). The majority use Facebook as the most popular social network among other media, led by (60.7%).

Regarding the frequency of using social networks, the following results emerged: (37%) use social networks 26-30 days and (22.2%) use them 6-12 days a month.

From these results we understand that there is a great usability of social networks based on their daily attendance. To be even more convinced of this frequency of using social networks, we also see the time spent on them: (59.3%) stay 10-30 minutes and (18.5%) stay 31-60 minutes.
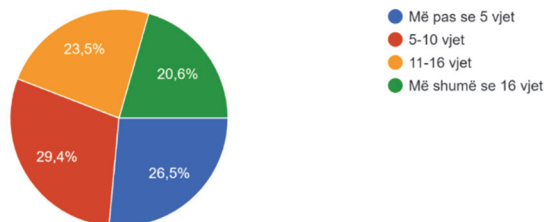

Following the results of the study, it is stated that (44.4%) think that the use of social networks will allow them to stay informed about the latest news about events of interest and about events from their friends. The satisfaction that users of social networks get is SOCIAL to the extent of 63%. The majority travel at least once a year in the amount of 48.1%, having as motivation all the indicators mentioned in the study, that is, 44.4% choose to travel for vacation, business and personal events and each has a frequency which you can find in the graphic representation of annex of the first questionnaire.

27.6% use 31-50 euros per day during the summer holidays. Most of them are influenced by friends' recommendations for choosing tourist destinations and choose to share all their past vacation experiences on social networks.

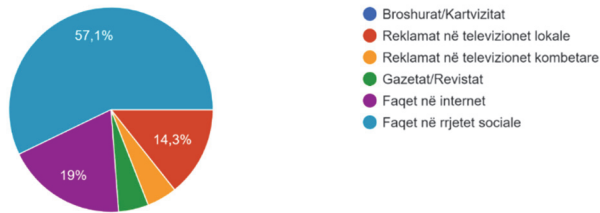Interpretation and analysis of data collected from the questionnaire for tourism enterprises.

This section will examine all the results found by the questionnaire addressed to tourist companies, all the results will be expressed in percentage, reaching some conclusive conclusions.

Regarding the form of ownership in the interviewed enterprises, we can say that 71.4% of the enterprises are individual businesses and only 28.6% are jointly owned. So, we can say that enterprises in the region of Vlora are mainly individual businesses. Mostly these businesses were created 5-10 years ago in the amount of 29.4%, businesses created in less than 5 years are 26.5%, businesses created 11-16 years ago are 23.5% and with enterprises that have existed for more than 16 years are 20.6%.
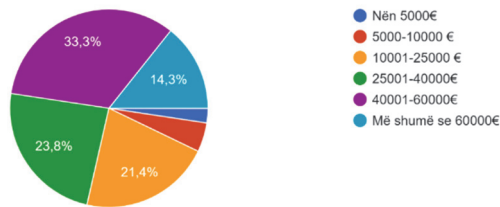

Mostly, these enterprises are self-managed to the extent of 56.5% and 30.6% have employed managers. Management boards are only 12.9% of enterprises in the southern region.
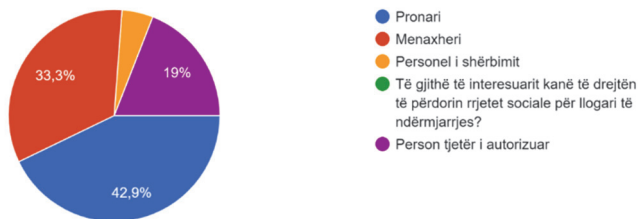
Referring to the use of social networks in the promotion of businesses, social network pages, brochures/business cards and websites are the most used communication by businesses.

Regarding the income of tourism businesses in the southern region, we can say that the largest percentage is occupied by the category with the highest income of 40,001-60,000 euros, which is 33.3%, and the category with 25,001-40,000 euros is 23.8%.

Now we will see what percentage of the total annual budget is occupied by promotional expenses during a year. The collected data show that 38.1% of enterprises have annual expenses for promotion above 400 euros. The rest of the businesses use different incomes to promote their businesses. However, the majority, 75%, think that social networks are an efficient tool in promoting businesses. Facebook is the platform most used by business for promotion and occupies a % of about 33.3% compared to other social networks. From the results of the study, it can be seen that the person who administers the social networks the most are the owners at the rate of 42.9% and then the managers at the rate of 33.3%.

4. Conclusions

This study aimed to examine the possibility of promoting tourism through social media, as well as to measure the actual use of this method of promotion, considering the involvement of social media users as much as possible. Based on the reviewed literature, social media brings a number of promotional advantages and this is due to the fact that social media enables the combination of several elements such as: text, video, audio and photo. This communication brings an advantage to

KIM. Also, social media is a new and rapidly growing trend, so it must be managed well. Among other things, social media has disadvantages, referring to the brands that are promoted, it requires commitment and requires a good management of negative comments.

Social media is considered important in achieving promotional objectives and the importance of this means of communication is greater mainly in increasing awareness of the enterprise or the destination as a whole, as well as providing basic information about the enterprise as well as ensuring a strong engagement of the audience.

In conclusion, regarding the use of this communication channel to promote the tourist offer, we can say that there is interest and trust on the part of companies, but there is a lack of involvement and periodic commitment.

The role that social media plays in promoting tourism lies mainly in awareness, encouragement and persuasion to choose a particular destination or enterprise. Specifically on these social networking platforms information is sought for criticisms that may have been made in relation to a particular enterprise, price comparison is quite used by information seekers. Tourists before taking the travel decision would look to consult their social media sites and virtual friends.

5. Recommendations

- It is recommended to use social networks to improve and strengthen connections in the business market.
- Distributing as much information as possible to the audience and staying in virtual contact with them.
- For small companies with few resources, it is recommended to use social media as an efficient promotion tool.

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