IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN DESTINATION MARKETING: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract- Changing economic conditions, new ways of tourist behaviour and especially Internet technologies are likely to cause the emergence of new or growth of existing tourism market. Social media plays a significant role in many aspects of tourism, especially in information search and decision-making process, destination promotion and in focusing on best practices for interacting with tourists. It can be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content in destination marketing. In a time of economic recession, social media are having more important role as an element of destination organisation (DMO) marketing strategy when public sector decreases in their funding. According to the literature review, authors developed detailed typology of social media for the purpose of this study (social networks, social commerce, blogging, video and photo sharing, mobile apps, etc.). Empirical research will present qualitative and quantitative understanding of current use of social media on a sample of Croatian tourism destinations and tourists. The study will also show thedifferencein the number ofsocial media techniques used by DMO, as well as thegreat diversityin the useaccording to the geographicarea. Also, the paper will present future directions and suggestions which could develop e-promotion strategies in destination marketing.

Keywords- destination marketing, tourism, technology, social media, network

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is not a single phenomenon. It is the combination of social and economic relations. There are a number of factors that influence the formation, behaviour and consumption of tourist demand, which presence in the area in a certain period of time, causes many interdependent relationships. Precisely because of the above thesis, the need for applying marketing techniques and methods in tourism activity is recognized. Tourism is one of the activities based on free time. In this sense, marketing of tourism is part of broader activities, which we call „free time marketing“ (marketing of leisure).

Variable economic conditions, new forms of consumer behaviour, and especially new media and Internet technologies is likely to cause the emergence of new or growth of existing tourist market. In developed economies all the more attention is attached to the study of the role of new technologies in the field of hospitality and tourism. It is necessary to point out that technological progress is a key factor of modern world of tourism. Development of modern telecommunication and digital technologies, and ultimately the Internet and social media, provide many new marketing opportunities.

The simplest show, traditional marketing activities will receive e-features, but we can also talk about a new, special kind of - e-marketing in tourism. There are several definitions of electronic marketing. One of possible definitions is suggested: "Electronic marketing (e-marketing, telemarketing) is a means of realizing company's marketing activities through intensive application of information and telecommunication (internet) technology. [1] Social media plays a significant role in e-marketing in many aspects of tourism, especially in information search and decision-making process, destination promotion and in focusing on best practices for interacting with tourists. Social media can be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content in destination marketing. In a time of economic recession, social media are having more important role as an element of destination organisation (DMO) marketing strategy when public sector decreases in their funding. Because of these trends and reasons, empirical research will present qualitative and quantitative understanding of current use of social media among town tourism organizations on a sample of Croatian tourism destinations.

II. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF E-MARKETING IN TOURISM

Tourism bidding, its development and quality is characterized with external factors in the macroenvironment of tourism company. These factors represent “noncontrollables” that the tourism company must monitor and respond to it. They can be classified into several groups [2]:

- characteristics of social and economic country system
- accumulated economy ability of the country
- foreign-exchange policy
- investition policy
- credit policy and terms for foreign capital investment in tourism sector
- government standpoint against tourism as a part of national economy

- intensity of tourism services demand
- structure of tourism country services according to social and economical characteristics of tourism services demand carriers
- educational structure of employees in tourism sector
- input prices in tourism
- developement and implementation of new technologies.

Every mentioned group of factors, directly or undirectly, has influence on creating tourism bidding on specific market segment. In extension, the focus will be on informatic technology factor, and its influence on marketing implementation in tourism. Special attention is dedicated to Internet, which is in the tourism sector, as in other business sectors changed classic business activities, and is used as communication, transaction and distribution channel.
For every tourism destination and supplier,large and small, electronic business on the platform of the Internet offers the opportunity to undertake their business in new and more cost effective ways.For consumers, when they are planning a trip to a new destination, they face the problem of making a costly purchase without being able to see the product. The Internet provides them with the means to gain immediate access to relevant information of greater variety and depth than has been available previously, about destinations throughout the world; and to book quickly and easily.

For tourism destinations, it offers the potential to make information and booking facilities available to large numbers of consumers at relatively low cost; it enables them to make large-scale savings on the production and distribution of print and on other traditional activities (e.g. call centres and information centres); and it provide a tool for communication and relationship development with tourism suppliers and market intermediaries, as well as end-consumers. [3]

III. SOCIAL MEDIA CLASSIFICATION IN TOURISM

A social network is a website where people connect with friends, both those they know offline and those who are online-only buddies. Social networking sites are a hot topic for marketers, as they present a number of opportunities for interacting with customers, including via plug-in applications, groups, and fan pages. Each social network presents its own possibilities and challenges. Users of individual sites have different expectations of commercial behavior. [4]
Social networksgeneratesocial capital(produce useful information, personal connections, giventhe possibility of formingand organizinggroups,allowingeasy access torequired information, etc.). Attitudeis aconstantpositiveornegativepredispositiontowards a person, object, or situation. Create a groupthatconnects userswith the sameorsimilar interestscreates acommunication, the relationship between the userand the objector situationthat leads todata and information exchangeon the basisthat users willmake their assessment. Facilitiesand individualswithin thegroupto express theirfundamentalvalues aredirectedtowardseach otherpleasurableproducts andbehaviors. In this waycreatesnew knowledgethatleads tomodificationof existing, orcreating a wholenewattitude. Based on thesocialization oftheonlinesocial network, based on the actualmotives, users createsuch aknowledge ofthe facility, individuals, or situationsthat enable them tomaintainexisting orcreateentirely newpredisposition.

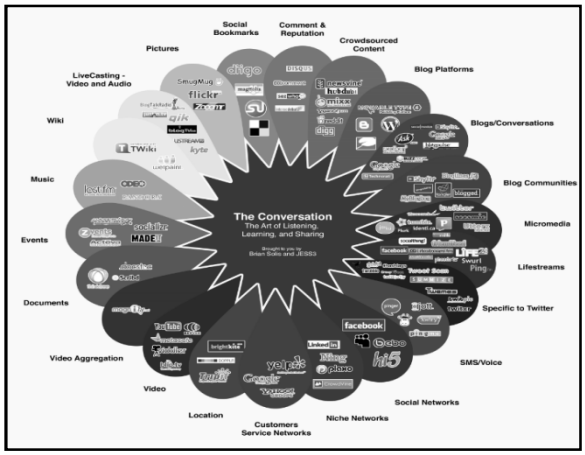


Fig 1. Social media services (Scorpfromhell.blogspot, 2015)

Thesestrategiesshould becombinedwith other-marketing strategiestosuccess wascomplete.Precisely because ofthesecharacteristics andother socialnetworks havegainedwide popularityin allspheresof human society, includingin the hospitality industrywhichmakes it idealfor the adoption ofweb2.0 technologies. The followingis analyzed in research ofWeb2.0social-networks in hospitality, as shownin Picture 1.

IV. E-MARKETING FOR DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS

For tourism destinations and businesses, Internet offers the potential to make information and booking facilities available to large numbers of consumers at relatively low cost; itenables them to make large-scale savings on the production and distribution of print and on other traditional activities (e.g. call centres and information centres); and it provide a tool for communication and relationship development with tourism suppliers and market intermediaries, as well as end-consumers.
Since the introduction of the participative web (collectively known as Web 2.0) in theearly 2000s, social media has become the new normal for

consumers to search for andshare information, opinion and experience with others. Today consumers planning atrip have ample opinion-rich resources such as virtual tourist communities andpersonal blogs to refer to in addition to information provided by destination marketingorganizations (DMOs) or other tourism providers. After the trip, the participatoryarchitecture of social media also allows tourists to post their experience andevaluation of specific destinations and brands to influence others, making socialmedia a perfect ground to foster the spread of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) [5]

A destination marketing organization (DMO) or convention and visitors bureau (CVB) is an organization that promotes a town, city, region, or country in order to increase the number of visitors. It promotes the development and marketing of a destination, focusing on convention sales, tourism marketing, and services.Such organizations promote economic development of a destination by increasing visits from tourists and business travelers, which generates overnight lodging for a destination, visits to restaurants, and shopping revenues and are typically funded by taxes. [6]

DMOs are the most important tourism marketing organizations in their attractivetourist destinations, as they are directly responsible for marketing the destination brand through travel and tourism "product awareness" to visitors. DMOs produce billions of Euros in direct and indirect revenue and taxes for their destinations' economies with their marketing and sales management. At this time, they usually use social media to achieve marketing goals and destination branding via web 2.0 tools.

A destination brand can be defined as the sum of all stories and experiences. Destination brand building has experienced a shift from using impressions to using real stories that are told and shared on social media channels. This is a scaling system that is used in practice to measure how much social media has become a part of the day-to-day work within DMOs.The five stages, outlined in more detailed classification, cover everything from not using social media at all to full embracing a social media strategy and incorporating it into every aspect of the organisational and communications mix[7]:

- - Level 1 -Ignoring social media

This level represents DMOs who are not active at all in social media. Social media is seen more as a threat than an opportunity.

- - Level 2 -Experimenting with social media

DMOs experiment with social media without a specific strategy through random tactics.

- -Level 3 -Social media supporting marketing campaigns

Due to a lack of strategic knowledge, DMOs incorporate social media in paid, outbound marketing campaigns. Often this is an add-on to traditional marketing campaigns, such as a YouTube channel showing videos originally made for TV or using Facebook and Twitter to broadcast campaign messaging.

- - Level 4 -Following a social media strategy

This level is typified by a DMO having a social media strategy in place or having social media integrated into its marketing strategy. The DMO still believes that it is in full control of the destination brand.

- - Level 5 -Embracing the social media strategy

The level five DMO starts with the core of the passions that make a destination relevant and leads all partners that have an impact on those experiences. The sole focus is on delivering outstanding visitor experiences that are unique to the destination, and then making it easy for visitors to share these experiences in their own voices.

V. SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING STATISTICS IN EUROPEAN UNION

This recent secondary research statistic shows the travel information sources that residents of Croatia consider to be the most important when making holiday plans in 2014. Based on figures from the European Commission, recommendations of friends, colleagues or relatives were the most considered sources for 62 percent of respondents, while 12 percent contacted travel agencies or tourism offices. [8]Internet and social media sites are used in lower amount, so there is a lot of space for development.

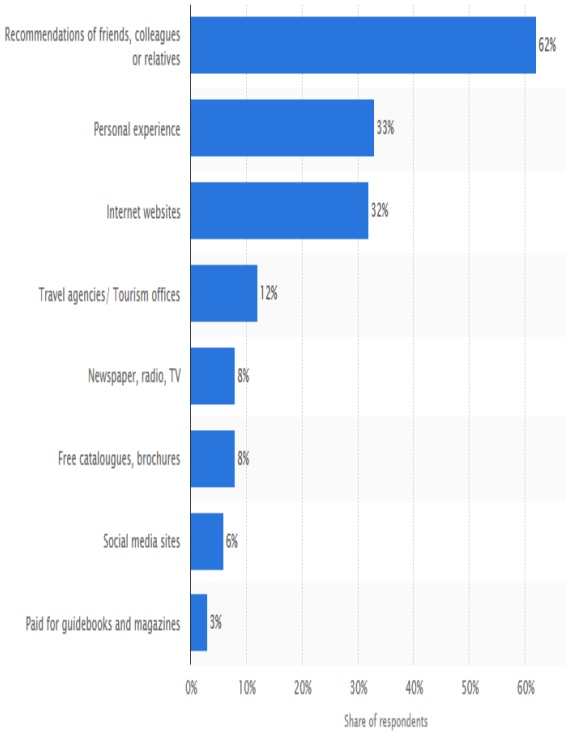


Fig 2. Sources of travel information in Croatia (Statista portal, 2015)

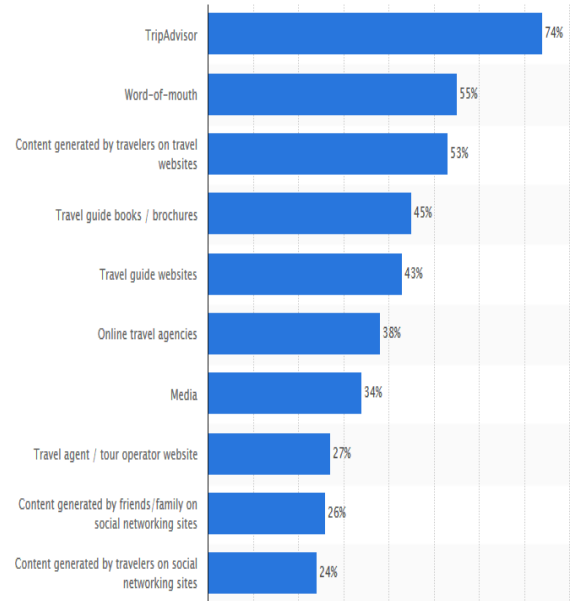


Fig 3. Sources of travel information in European Union (Statista portal, 2015)

Another study on Figure 3. analyzes which of the following sources of information tourist use to gather ideas and inspiration for your vacations. This statistic shows the resources travelers used for inspiration worldwide as of February 2014. During the survey, 55 percent of the respondents stated that they used word-of -mouth as inspiration for their vacations.

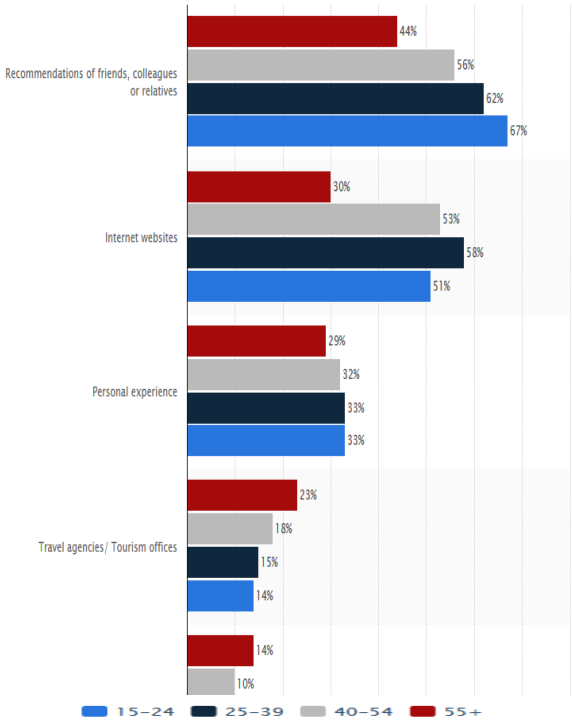


Fig 4. Most important travel information sources for residents of the European Union (EU) in 2014, by age(Statista portal, 2015)

This statistic shows the travel information sources that the residents of the European Union (EU) consider to be the most important when making holiday plans in 2014, by age group. Recommendations of friends, colleagues or relatives were considered important when making holiday plans across all age groups, the most among 15- to 24-year-olds (67 percent).

If we see this research in global, we can conclude that leading media for travel information and communication is Internet, especially web site slike Tripadvisor, e-broschures, travel guide web sites, travel agent web sites, social networks, mobile applications.

VI. EMPIRICAL PILOT RESEARCH

Comparatively with changing tourism behavior in travel planning it is very important to research level of usage of social media by DMOs in Croatia. However, consumer behavior in theonlineenvironmentis differentfrom the behavior ofthephysicalenvironmentoffline. Because of this, a DMOmustidentify theneeds and wishesof consumersand strive tosatisfy themin this newe-market space. [9]

The pilot study willshow thedifferencein the number ofsocial media techniques used by DMO, as well as thegreat diversityin the useaccording to the geographicarea. Also, the research will present future directions and suggestions which could develop e-promotion strategies in destination marketing.Inthis empiricalstudyas aframework fordetermining thesampleis used list of DMOs on thewebsiteofCroatian Ministry of Tourism. As a survey sampleis used 20 DMOs from continental part of Croatia and 20 DMOs from Adriatic coast. (n=40)

In accordance withpreviousprimary research, authors madeacomparison ofthe usage by type of social media. Summary of resultsfollowsbelow.

Social media type	Level of usage in % by DMOs
Facebook	83%
Linkedin	21%
You Tube	91%
Instagram	19%
Flickr	9%
Vimeo	11%
Twitter	18%
Pinterest	25%
Tumblr	2%
Foursquare	38%
Google+	45%
Vine	0%
Tagged	0%

Table 1. Usage of social media by DMOs in Croatia (author research)

The authors claimed that Web 2.0 is in its early stage of adoption by DMOs. The aim of the present research was to update those figures in order to show the evolution of this adoption over the last one year. The Web 2.0 techniques included in the analysis have also been updated and recategorized in light of the last of technological progress. Finally, the present study shows that, for some techniques, the take-off phase is finished (Facebook, You Tube); whereas some new techniques such as Vine or Tagged are still at the very beginning of the adoption process.

CONCLUSIONS

Since thebehavior of consumerson the Internetin the tourism industrydepends on the levelof social media usage, it was necessary toevaluatethe presence of DMO social profiles on Internet. In conclusion, it is necessary tosummarizethetechnological progressis a keyfactor inthe modernhospitality. Internet, particularly Web2.0 technologies and social media, the most importanttechnological phenomenonof our time, provide DMO subjectscompletely newcompetitiveopportunities andnew virtualmarket spacethat needs to beintensivelyusedin practice, theabovestatementmakesthe basicidea andrealizedthe goalof work, but alsothe subjectof futureresearch and professionalof research.Resultsof research showthat there isan inadequatenumber of DMO social sitesin thehospitality industry in Croatia. Therefore,further researchis necessary tofocus onthe macro level on other countries and continents, with the aimof comparing this with sample of DMO in Sri Lanka tourism market made by co-author.

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