SOCIAL MEDIA IN DESTINATION MARKETING

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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 the difference in the number of social media techniques used by DMO, as well as the great diversity in the use according to the geographic area. 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
- investment 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
- development and implementation of new technologies.

Every mentioned group of factors, directly or indirectly, 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 networks generate social capital (produce useful information, personal connections, given the possibility of forming and organizing groups, allowing easy access to required information, etc.). Attitudes a constant positive or negative predisposition towards a person, object, or situation. Create a group that connects users with the same or similar interests creates a communication, the relationship between the user and the object situation that leads to data and information exchange, the basis that users will make their assessment. Facilities and individuals within the group to express their fundamental values are directed towards each other pleasurable products and behaviors. In this way creates new knowledge that leads to modification of existing, or creating a whole new attitude. Based on the socialization of online social network, based on the actual motives, users create such knowledge of the facility, individuals, or situations that enable them to maintain existing or create entirely new predisposition.

![Fig 1. Social media services (Scorpfromhell.blogspot, 2015)](image)

These strategies should be combined with other marketing strategies to succeed was complete. Precisely because of these characteristics and another social networks have gained wide popularity in all spheres of human society, including the hospitality industry which makes it ideal for the adoption of Web2.0 technologies. The following is analyzed in research of Web2.0 social networks in hospitality, as shown in 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; 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. Since the introduction of the participative web (collectively known as Web 2.0) in the early 2000s, social media has become the new normal for consumers to search for and share information,
opinion and experience with others. Today consumers planning a trip have ample-opinion-rich resources such as virtual tourist communities and personal blogs to refer to in addition to information provided by destination marketing organizations (DMOs) or other tourism providers. After the trip, the participatory architecture of social media also allows tourists to post their experience and exchange evaluation of specific destinations and brands to influence others, making social media 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 attractive tourist 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 fully embracing a social media strategy and incorporating it into every aspect of the organizational 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 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 their 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-brochures, 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 the online environment is different from the behavior of the physical environment offline. Because of this, a DMO must identify the needs and wishes of consumers and strive to satisfy them in this new market space. [9]

The pilot study will show the difference in the number of social media techniques used by DMO, as well as the great diversity in use according to the geographic area. Also, the research will present future directions and suggestions which could develop e-promotion strategies in destination marketing. In this empirical study, a framework for determining the sample list of DMOs on the website of the Croatian Ministry of Tourism. As a survey sample, 20 DMOs from the continental part of Croatia and 20 DMOs from the Adriatic coast. (n=40)

In accordance with previous primary research, authors made a comparison of the usage by type of social media. Summary of results follows below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media type</th>
<th>Level of usage in % by DMOs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkedin</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vimeo</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foursquare</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google+</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagged</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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 the behavior of consumers on the Internet in the tourism industry depends on the level of social media usage, it was necessary to evaluate the presence of DMO social profiles on Internet. In conclusion, it is necessary to summarize the technological progress as a key factor in the modern hospitality. Internet, particularly Web 2.0 technologies and social media, the most important technological phenomenon of our time, provide DMO subjects completely new competitive opportunities and new virtual market space that needs to be intensively used in practice, the above statement makes the goal of work, but also the subject of future research and professional of research. Results of research show that there is an inadequate number of DMO social sites in the hospitality industry in Croatia. Therefore, further research is necessary to focus on the macro level on other countries and continents, with the aim of comparing this with sample of DMO in Sri Lanka tourism market made by co-author.

REFERENCES


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