

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TOURISM CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

The influence of social media — social networks, travel blogs and forums is growing every year. The choice of potential tourists is influenced by stories, vivid photos, reviews and other content initiated by other users. This article is relevant, as in the modern world social networks occupy a large part of our lives. The purpose of this paper is to study the impact of social networks on the consumption of tourist services.

Social media is a part of interactive media, one of the communication channels of both individual users (tourists) and entire corporations and companies (travel agencies). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recognizes the important role of social media in tourism. Tourists and business travelers use smartphones and tablets to find information or share opinions about their destination.

The World Travel Monitor study conducted by UNWTO [1] showed the following: 40 % of international travelers travel with smartphones, which have Internet and e-mail access among other convenient features; 40 % of smartphone users use them to get information about a destination; 26 % of tourists and 34 % of business travelers need smartphones to change hotel reservations and other services while traveling. More than a third of international travelers use their smartphones to access social media: they post content on their blogs, Facebook pages, share photos on Instagram while on a trip.

According to statistics, every day 95 % of all Internet users access social networks, share their opinions themselves or familiarize themselves with the opinions of others. As a result, even one member of the online community can influence the reputation of a company with a multi-million dollar turnover by giving positive or negative feedback [2]. Users, unknowingly, without compensation or reward, share posts or notes on social networks in real time and millions of readers, often unintentionally, promote one or another product or vice versa. According to the Global Web Index, the average consumer has 5.8 social media accounts and actively uses 2.8 accounts.

Most often social media include: social networks (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Odnoklassniki.ru, VKontakte), blogs (e.g., Tiktok) and micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter), forums, review sites (e.g., Irecommend.ru, Otvovik.com), photo hosting (e.g., Picasa, Pinterest) and video hosting (e.g., YouTube) and others. All social media have certain properties that determine their peculiarities and specificity.

In conclusion, if we talk in general about the use of the Internet in the promotion of tourist products and services, it is social media that give the tourist enterprise the following opportunities:

- to manage the opinions and recommendations of the target audience;
- form groups of loyal consumers, who will come back to the travel agency again;
- strengthen brand awareness;
- increase sales and improves the economic situation in the organization;
- implement targeted advertising.

In general, promotion on the Internet allows to target different groups of consumers and maximize the satisfaction of their needs through targeting and targeting at minimal cost. New social media are able to provide cheaper ways of promotion and therefore can offer a large number of new opportunities to attract potential customers.

References

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