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INSTAGRAM AS A MEDIA FOR E-BUSINESS IN TOURISM

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Abstract

Driven by extraordinary growth and implementation of new technologies, the world is rapidly evolving, and customers have higher expectations. With mobile technologies being commoditised, increasing number of sales are happening online. E-business enables globalization of services and instant access to information.

This paper is focusing on how Instagram became a popular medium for promoting tourism. Tourist destinations have been advertised even before Instagram, but those conventional mediums are now overshadowed and replaced by a new form of unconventional marketing. Real experiences shared on social media, by real people, in real time, becomes the new norm for promoting tourism.

More specifically, how Instagram as a medium challenges the creativity of these actors, and how they create new branded destinations through the use of photography, video and text.

Key words: social media, e-business, Instagram, mobile applications, self-promoting tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the studies on tourism, as well as Internet research, are focused on the decision of the subject for a certain tourist destination.

From a marketing standpoint, the study of tourist destination is closely connected to the direct actors in the tourism industry, like hotels, restaurants, tourist agencies and tour operators. They act as promotional agents to the tourism corporations.

In other words, Instagram gives an opportunity to a wide audience to act as agents in the promotion of certain tourist destinations.

In order to gain insight into the Instagram's contribution to the creation of a tourist destination brand through photography, we emphasize the in-depth dialogues with the informants as crucial and important items in the research. That means that the research looks at the comments of the Instagram users, as well as the manner in which the comments contribute to the decision-making of the prospective tourists to choose that particular destination.

For this purpose, our study combines the usage of in-depth dialogs/interviews with visual methods and photography techniques.

STATISTICAL DATA

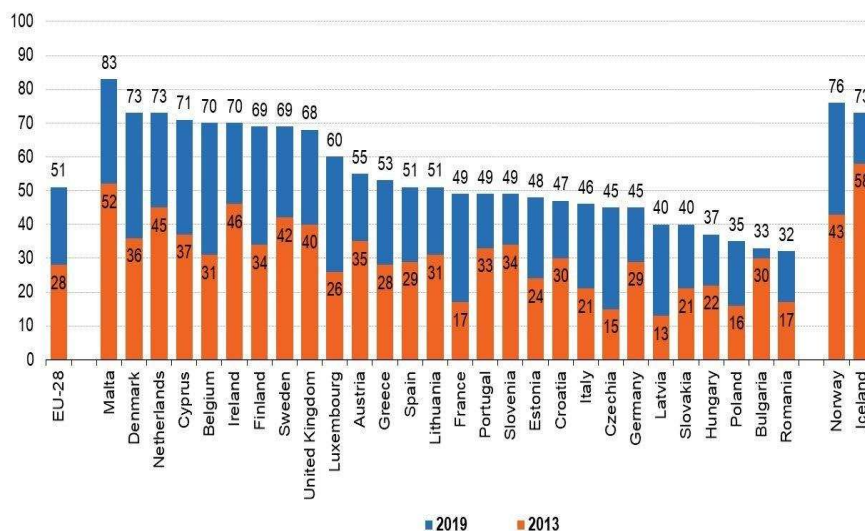
In 2019, the social networks were the most used platform of social media (51%); compared to 2013 the usage had increased by 23%.

In 2019, 53% of the EU enterprises used at least one social medium; over eight out of ten (86%) of those businesses that use social media, are trying to build an image and promote their products.

In the period between 2013 and 2019, the usage of social media was increased mainly for marketing purposes (from 22% to 45% of the enterprises) and for recruitment of workers (from 9% to 28% of the enterprises).¹

Enterprises using social networks, 2013 and 2019

(% of enterprises)



Note: Only countries with data for both years

Source: Eurostat (online data code: isoc_cismt)

eurostat

The businesses promote their Internet profiles by using social media. This article presents recent statistics of the usage of social media by the European Union (EU) enterprises.

Social media are part of the digital technologies that are used by companies to increase their online presence, to improve opportunities for marketing, to

¹https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Social_media_-_statistics_on_the_use_by_enterprises

communicate among themselves in the company, to communicate with other companies, their business partners, with clients and other organizations, and to facilitate cooperation and knowledge exchange within the companies.

Social media refers to Internet applications, such as social networks, blogs, pages to share multimedia contents and images.

In general, the companies use social media for building images or for marketing purposes, to gain insights for their clients, for communication within and out of the company or for recruitment.

These days, social media became an important tool for connecting people, building communities, expressing opinions in business, marketing and advertisement.

The survey estimates that in 2018, there were 24,6 million social media users. 97,3% of them had Facebook profiles, which makes Facebook the most desired platform of social networking in the world. This is followed by profiles on Instagram (57,0%), YouTube (48,3%), Google+ (31,3%), Twitter (23,8%) and LinkedIn (13,3%).²

INSTAGRAM BUSINESS

Social media plays an essential role in the marketing by creating a friendly and trustworthy relationship between a brand and its target audience.

In particular, Instagram, as the fastest growing and most popular platform, offers good circumstances for their business users, no matter what sector they come from and what they want to advertise.

Here, we would just mention few aspects that make Instagram climb the pedestal:

- Instagram features the visualization at the forefront.
- Instagram is not cluttered; each business will find their target group.
- The length of the text is not a decisive factor.

The following data from our research confirm the great role of Instagram in the development of the business, especially of the e-commerce in the tourism and hospitality industry:³

- It has been estimated that in 2020, 75,3% of the business activities in the USA will be on Instagram.
- Currently, Instagram has over 2 million monthly advertisement posts and 25 million business profiles.
- In 2019, Instagram generated 20 billion American dollars revenue from advertisement.
- Over 200 million users visit Instagram every day with at least one business profile.

²<https://www.mcmc.gov.my/skmmgovmy/media/General/pdf/Internet-Users-Survey-2018.pdf>

³<https://www.omnicoreagency.com/instagram-statistics/>

- 70% of the shopping enthusiasts turn to Instagram to discover new products.
- There are over 500 000 influencers on Instagram.
- 69% of the American sales are planning to spend most of their influencer budget on Instagram.
- Instagram is expected to reach 14 billion dollars revenue this year.
- 1/3 of the most viewed stories are from the business Instagram.
- 89% of users indicated that Instagram is the most important channel for social media when it comes to marketing and influence.
- 55.4% of the influencers use Instagram stories for sponsored campaigns.
- It's projected that 849.3 million users will use Instagram for advertisement.

INSTAGRAM USAGE AS A TOOL FOR SHARING TRAVEL STORIES

Instagram has been created for showing images, photos, videos and other affluent visual media. The combination of a high-quality visualization and intricately-designed description would help increase the influence of the posts. The visual nature of Instagram creates ideal opportunities for the business of tourism. As with any other media channel, the business operators should bring into focus their posts that portray the successful stories from previous travelers.

The purpose of creating a relevant and unforgettable content on Instagram is to inspire the potential clients that are in a process of making plans, to take into consideration the destination that is favored by the advertising company.

The human eyes react better to social media that is visually consistent and can easily move through more photos and videos. The users would be satisfied with serious posts that tell a story. The story telling on social media requires a clear understanding from its audience. If possible, the posted content should convey a positive message to the users, in order to attract their attention toward the destination or the offered service.

USAGE OF INSTAGRAM FOR A SELF-PROMOTIONAL TOURISM

Social networking has become an important method of communication and connection of individuals and organizations in an effectual manner. On personal level, this is a popular social online platform where we can communicate with our friends.

Instagram users consider that social networking is mostly useful for sharing information and for social interacting with friends. Web pages for social networking like Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and Instagram, are more and more used as a meeting place to implement and share ideas, where decisions are brought for supplies of certain products or travel to certain destinations or hospitality establishment, regardless of whether we are attracted by the ambiance, the food or something else.

Instagram presents an online photo album that was launched in 2010 and to the present date it has been experiencing strong and stable daily growth by the increase of its users. Instagram can be accessed from a smart phone, with an iPhone and Android platform.

For example, the company Apple provided this application in their Apple Store so that their clients can download it for free, similar to Google Play for the users of Android smart phones. In the tourism sector, Instagram plays the role of a network photo-album that can be accessed by its users, but it can also be used as a promotional channel.

However, it is important to point out that the process of promotion on Instagram is different from the conventional media like the press and electronic advertisements. The strong point of Instagram, as “help for self-promotion”, is the opportunity to influence the users and to become potential sellers of any of the posted visual content. Based on our observation, we conclude that Instagram is becoming one of the most preferred channels for promoting photos of destinations by the tour operators.

The conventional promotion is quite expensive, but yet, it has less influence, unlike Instagram where one can gain greater influence for a lower price.

In mid 2015, Instagram launched a new function called Instagram Direct, incorporating sending chosen contents as a direct message. When users post new photos or videos the themes of conversation build on the people in the post rather than starting a new conversation. This makes the dialogue with the people you get engaged with, much easier.

Instagram also provides a place to name users' groups, function for camera to react fast with a 'fast selfie' and wider range of emoji images to choose from in order to replace words. It is easier to connect with the feature for direct messages concerning places, nature, building, cultural events, festivals and human nature.

Instagram has been featured as a valuable tool for communication and marketing with presentation of products through visual description, since it is used as an application for sharing images. Thus, Instagram became a useful social networking platform that reaches individuals and companies.

SUMMARY

Over the past decade, we have observed that online presentation of services and products has increased many times over. With the development of technology, which gets more sophisticated every day an increase of promotion of tourist destinations and tourist services is anticipated. Given the fact, that people more frequently do online research on future holiday destinations, the chance to visit destinations that were never offered before is enhanced.

The social networks like Instagram bring the reality of certain destinations closer that we have visited in the past or will visit in the future. The opportunity that the users have for adequate search in the sector of tourism they are interested in and the offers by the tourist agencies that can satisfy our needs creates a 'win-

win' situation for all the Instagram users. Instagram and all the other social networks are ideal for promoting any sector of tourism.

In summary, Instagram, as a social medium, enhances the tourism e-Business for the users as well as for the business owners. In support of our assertion we provided statistical data as a support to our claim.

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