

# INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORK ON PROMOTION IN TOURISM SECTOR

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**Abstract:** *The global increase of users of social networks have big impact on way of business communications and social networks became main way of communication in all businesses, particularly in the tourism sector, as well as service activities in which the communication with consumers and clients is very important for a success of business. The aim of this paper is to highlight the importance of using social media in tourism and hospitality. In this paper we will present the importance for constant interaction with consumers and customers, in order to monitor their opinions, attitudes about the company and the quality of services provided, as well as their satisfaction with these services and thus enhance the effects and results of operations. All this is more easily with the proper use of social networks.*

**Keywords:** *tourism, social media, business*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is a media for interaction, information exchange respectively, which is used by digital technologies and internet application, with increased application of mobile technologies. The media comes in various shapes such as: internet forums, social blogs, magazines, micro-blogs, wiki, podcasts, photos, videos, pages for social networking and linking, and at the same they could have increasing application as informative, educational, professional and other features. [1] American company Nielsen published a research which shows that 67% of internet users visit social networks on regular basis. [2]

Today, marketing on social networks is almost an indispensable part of the communication strategy of all successful companies. Social network users constantly communicate about the products and services of various companies, which is the exact reflexion of their advantage. One of the principals and most important features that social networking provides is interaction with users in real time. Based on a research conducted by Digital Safari agency in Serbia in 2015, which encompassed 100 companies with business conduct in Serbia, more than two thirds of the participating companies used social networks in their daily business conduct. [3]

## 2. STATISTICAL DATA ON SOCIAL NETWORK USE IN 2017

Following research analyses social network use on the global level obtaining 4 the most popular networks.

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Table 1: Insight of trends when it comes to the use of social networks in 2017 (top 4) [4]

<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>YouTube</b>
More than 2 billion users use Facebook every month, which is annual growth of 17%	Twitter Monthly Active Users (MAU) Worldwide 326 million, out of which 68 million are from the United States	There are more than 700 million Instagram users, whereas more than 400 million are active on daily basis.	More than 300 hours of a content is uploaded every minute
There are 1.15 billion mobile daily active users (Mobile DAU) for December 2016, an increase of 23 percent year-over-year	6000 tweets are published each second, half billion each day	More than 15 million businesses have registered account, and more than a million of them are advertised every month	More than 5 billion video clips are viewed every day
Each day, users upload more than 300 million photos	83% of world leaders have twitter account	Every day, users share 95 million photos	
Average time spent per Facebook visit is 20 minutes.	66 percent of the businesses who have 100 or more employees have a Twitter account	68% of Instagram users are women, and for 17% of teenagers Instagram is the most important social network	80% of people between the ages of 18 – 49 will look for something on YouTube at least once.

### 3. USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN SERBIA

According to the latest research, most of the population in Serbia use Facebook social network (Statistics “ITMagazin”, December 2017). [5]

“Digital Safari” Agency conducted an annual research on Facebook page use in business conduct. Research included 100 Company’s representatives, and obtained results indicating that 52,7 % of subjected Companies have one Facebook page, 40,7% of the Companies have a few, and 6,6% have none. [3]

Table 2: According to the statistics, there are 4 mostly used networks in Serbia

<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Google +</b>	<b>Linkedin</b>	<b>Twitter</b>
3.5 billion users	550 thousand users	380 thousand users	280 thousand users

### 4. TOURISM AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

New wave in internet application in all aspects of life, were brought by social networks, and tourism is an activity where social networks definitely have the greatest potential. Photo sharing, video content, status, location, advice on whether it is interesting and fun, whereas fun and entertainment are the most common reasons of its presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. In that way, though interesting contents via social networks, the hotel or destination could increase its attractivity, recognition, enhance the brand and most importantly attract more guests and increase the income. All this create different customers experience. [6]

Online word-of-mouth comes in various forms, such as comments on discussion boards or interactions on social networking services. With its convenience, safety, and trustworthiness, this approach is considered to assume greater validity and thus a better reflection of consumer product evaluation compared with traditional information sources. [7] Prior experience facilitates the entrepreneur's inclusion in social networks, subsequently fostering opportunity discovery. [8] Social networks have the potential to unite groups of people within a global network to solve fundamental problems. [9]

Tourist organizations, hotels, apartments and travel agencies slowly comprehend the importance, and especially the great benefit they could achieve by using social networks in their business. Many agencies are very successfully conducting business as online agencies, such as Trip Advisor, Booking.com and others. Many hotels use social media for various purposes, such as promotions, advertising of services and products, attracting more guests, establishing and fostering ongoing relationships with members of online communities, creating image, and others.

Following information were obtained by researching on-line market: [10]

- more than 20% of time spent on internet, people spent on social networks
- one in five social network users posts photos and comments from the trip, while half of them claim that they have decided on at least one trip under the impression of pictures and comments of their Facebook friends
- 68% tourists use mobile devices for maintaining contact with their friends during the trip
- in average, hotels have an average on 240 comments on their sites
- 57 % of tourist sites visitors read comments of the travelers
- 97 % of the readers believe in everything that was written
- 87% claims that the comments from the site influenced on selection of the hotel
- 49% of tourists won't book the hotel without guests' comments on the website
- the more pictures and comments, the site / profile is more successful, sites / profiles with more than 20 photos of the property are rated as the most reliable
- 84% of users find on Facebook basic source of ideas and useful travel information
- 52% of social network members post their travel photo on profile
- 50% is willing to change the travel plan under the influence of comments
- the most read tourist sites / profiles are the ones containing travel books and advices from professional guides or experienced travelers

Reasons for using social networks in order to promote tourism, travel agencies and organizations are the following: [11]

- High targetizations,
- Measurability,
- Accessibility and low prices.

What is very important for tourist subjects is that they can promote their offers free of charge and reach the widest group of potential guests. It is especially important that they have the opportunity to get in touch with foreign guests and expand their area of operation.

The tourist and catering offer should be presented on social networks for three main reasons, which are: [11]

- Increasing the recognition and creating image,

- Increase in turnover and revenues,
- Gathering feedback and improving business conduct.

## 5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL NETWORK USE BY TOURIST AGENCIES IN SERBIA

### BIG BLUE

Besides the package tours for attractive resorts around the world, this agency offers in its portfolio well-known European ski centers during winter months, as well as group and individual arrangements for European and world metropolises, distant destinations, islands, cruises ... Also, Big Blue provides the service of hotel reservation system on its site. As far as social networks are concerned, they use: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. **Facebook page** of this agency is up to date. They publish, on daily basis, current offers with detailed information on destinations. The page is followed by a large number of people, about 25,000. **Instagram** account is also actively used, but is based exclusively on their package tours, while on Facebook page they also publish some information about specific destinations. They have around 24,000 followers on this network. There is lesser activity on **Twitter** account than two aforementioned networks, but it is not left behind. What they publish predominantly are the texts about the destination offered in group package tours. There are about 3400 followers on this account. This agency has active accounts on 3 social networks only, but all three accounts are updated and used actively, providing enough information to parties of interest. [12]

### GLOB METROPOLITEN TOURS

This agency from Belgrade organizes trips, excursions, and also in its portfolio provides transportation service and airplane fares. It uses following social networks: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Their Facebook page is not up to date. They publish their offers occasionally, 3-4 times a month. They have small number of Facebook follower, about 3200. **Instagram** profile is a bit more active, they publish offers and events; however they don't have many followers, more precisely around 2000. Great deal of posts is not related to tourist offers, but to some events members of the agency participated to. As for the **Twitter** account, it is also more up to date than Facebook page. However, insufficient attention is dedicated to providing proper information, when posting a photo, which is the main role of the Twitter. Usually, there is a contact phone number for all information, above the picture where certain package tour is offered. They have around 1000 followers. **YouTube** channel is activated, but neglected. There are 6 videos only, and the last one was published 2 years ago. By analyzing social networks this agency uses, it can be concluded that there are many active accounts, rarely or never used. [13]

### FILIP TRAVEL

Filip Travel is tourist agency with seat in Belgrade. They have in their portfolio various destinations for summer holidays, winter holidays, cruises and excursions. Clients can also book airplane fare, as well coach and minibus transport. Social network accounts they have are: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+ and LinkedIn. **Facebook page** of this agency is very well designed. They are active on daily basis, publishing offers with detailed information. There are shortcuts for users' support and fast contact. They have huge number of followers, around 71000. **Twitter account** is also up to date, but to the lesser extent than the Facebook page. The most important information are highlighted and a link to more detailed

offer. They have around 1200 followers. **YouTube** of this agency is not much utilized. Occasionally, 3-4 times a year, they publish one of videos with description of the offer or destination. **Instagram** account is up to date; they publish offers 3-4 times a week, providing information about destination, package deals and prices. They respond to the comments of interested clients on time. They have 6600 followers. **Pinterest** account was active until the last year. They were posting pins regularly, but as of spring 2017, they weren't active. **Google+** account is also inactive as of last year. It is noticed that this agency has many accounts on various social networks; however the accounts are rarely used. Most of the attention is focused on Facebook page and Instagram profile, but they do not provide sufficient information. [14]

#### CLOCK TRAVEL

Clock travel is tourist agency with seat in Niš. They organize summer holidays, winter holidays, graduate excursions and one day trips. They also have in the offer gift vouchers that client can send as a gift to someone. They use Facebook and Twitter. **Facebook** page is up to date. They publish current offers and their travel packages, but without any information on popular destinations and events. They have 20300 followers. **Twitter** account that is a follow up short cut on their web site, that hasn't been used since 2014. It could be concluded as far as Clock Travel is concerned that, although they list 2 social networks as active, they have one useful account and that is Facebook. [15]

#### BALKAN FUN

Balkan Fun is a travel agency that, in addition to organizing classical trips, it is popular for its travel packages for young people, where they organize parties. They also offer air tickets, and on their website they post a blog-magazine about every interesting trip and destination. Social networks they use: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. **Facebook** page is used on daily basis. They publish package deals, information on destinations, as well as photos from past trips, which has a very good impact on potential clients. According to the number of followers, they have better popularity than previously analyzed agencies. It is followed by 132 400 persons. **Instagram** account gets equal attention. Everything they publish on Facebook page is also published on Instagram. They provide information on regular daily basis on offers and number of remaining deals. They have around 12000 followers. **Twitter** account is a bit less used than the previous two. Most important information is highlighted with link to more detailed information. Videos are rarely posted on **YouTube** channel; however, they are very useful as presentation of certain destinations which are provided to the clients. [16]

Comparing to the 4 previously analyzed agencies, Balkan Fun agency has the best approach in social networks promotion. Facebook and Instagram are very active, providing necessary information. Other two accounts are not regularly updated; however they could serve clients to choose destination and agency.

Table 3: Comparative presentation of tourist agencies in Serbia and social networks they use

Name of the tourist agency	Social network they use
Big Blue	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
Glob Metropolitan Tours	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube
Filip Travel	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, LinkedIn
Clock Travel	Facebook, Twitter,
Balkan Fun	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube

## CONCLUSION

Main topic of the paper is research on the use of social networks in order to promote tourism in Serbia. Modern marketing strategies are increasingly focused on improving the relationship of business organization with clients. As social networks play an increasingly important role in everyday lives of all of us, they are also positioned in playing an important role in business conduct. Social networks in tourism have changed the way people research and make decisions. By using them, tourists explore content, offers, accommodation, tips and useful experiences of other users. Therefore, good promotion on social networks is a very important reference in tourism. From results obtained from this research, it can be concluded that all agencies analyzed in the research have accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which are used by 4 out of 5 analyzed agencies, following YouTube, which is used by 3 out of 5 analyzed travel agencies. Social networks that are also used, but rarely, are Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn.

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