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Article

Marketing of tourist destinations

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Marketing of Tourist Destinations: The Case of Vlora Area

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Abstract: According to the specific nature of tourism products and services, the marketing of destinations includes many features which are not shown in the company marketing in another industry. In contrast to physical products, a service product cannot be tested before it is purchased due to non-transparency. The customers must decide based on the information that they has and it carries a risk for. The decision making process is influenced by images.

1   Introduction

People think that the key to successful Social Media Marketing (SMM) regarding destinations is to select on the Internet the technologies that have the highest users number. This assumption is wrong! It is important for the success of online presence, to make a well-defined objectives and target groups and only in such cases the use the SMM will be useful and promising. It is necessary to choose the right online channels according to specific target group. SMM activities must fit with the DMO objectives (Amersdorffer et al., 2010).

The second task is to participate in these discussions to achieve the goal of becoming part of the community. Discussions between the employees, guests and other active users contribute positively to the image of a destination because they represent individual experiences of residents and visitors. A key aspect in social media destinations is the dialogue, which means further communication in providing information. Credibility is important in social webs, because if a message looks no trustable it will not be shared (Amersdorffer et al., 2010).

Support is the third new tasks; it can increase the level of trust and customer loyalty. A growing number of platforms like blogs, communities, photos, bookmark, services etc. supported by Destination Marketing Organizations help in supporting guests choosing the right destination and find the required information.

2.   Methodological approach

The methodology used in my study combines primary data with secondary ones.

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• The sample obtained in the study will be tourists and businesses in various sectors of the tourism in the region of Vlora;
• The basis of selection used for selection of samples for this study will be the number of visitors last year and National Registration Center (in Vlora region);
• The data collection tools are questionnaires, observation and interviews with business leaders and specialists in social media marketing.
• The time to complete the questionnaire and interviews is the period June - July 2015.

Sample design
Collection of data and the pilot was a two-step process.
First, here has been selected 30 hotels in Vlorë by using the regional tax office database. These hotels initially were contacted by e-mail with an invitation to contribute to the study. Further, the responses was conducted, via e-mail and through personal communication. There were 26 responses usable for our study.
Each participant filled the questionnaire designed for the purpose of study. A special feature of contacted hotels was that it were required to have a structured interview in order to identify the main features of their social media marketing model.
In the second phase of the data collection process, the same questionnaire was used to the hotels managers and the guests of these hotels.
A description of the process of sample design and data collection is given in the table below.

Table 1 The sample design

Sample	No=76
Tourist	50
Hotels' marketing manager	26

Anketimet janë kryer në qytetin e Vlorës, në periudhën korrik – shtator 2015.

The independent variables in this study were grouped into four major groups: Usage level of marketing channel, Marketing content, Marketing sales and Marketing monitoring.

3.   Data analysis

There are many challenges for the hotels industry in the use of social networks. The activity level and the content of their posts are among the

greatest challenges. In this paper, it was not possible to make an analysis of indicators such as the number of total posts, number of monthly messages, the connection between the number of messages and the number of fans, the content of the messages, the average number of the fans activities for each post. The reason for this is that these indicators are only for internal use of companies, which are using social media sites.

Despite this, regarding the 26 hotels that were part of this study, we chcked to facebook.com to identify whether they had an official site as well as to obtain other data useful for explaining the main basic characteristics that reveal of the hotels profile that were part the sample of this study.

Graph 1. Online spaces
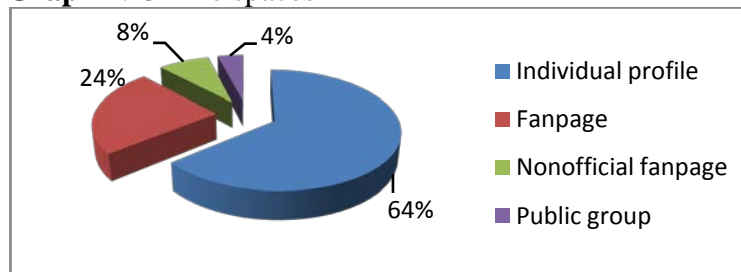
As shown in the above graph, only 6 of them have official fanpage. Furthermore, it is noted that a large number of them (16 hotels) have a social media profile that matches a profile of an individual and not that of a fanpage. On the other hand, they were observed 2 unverified fanpage and 1 set of public group as a hotel presence in social media.

The figure below shows the number of fans for each of the operators involved in the study.

Graph 2 Number of Fans
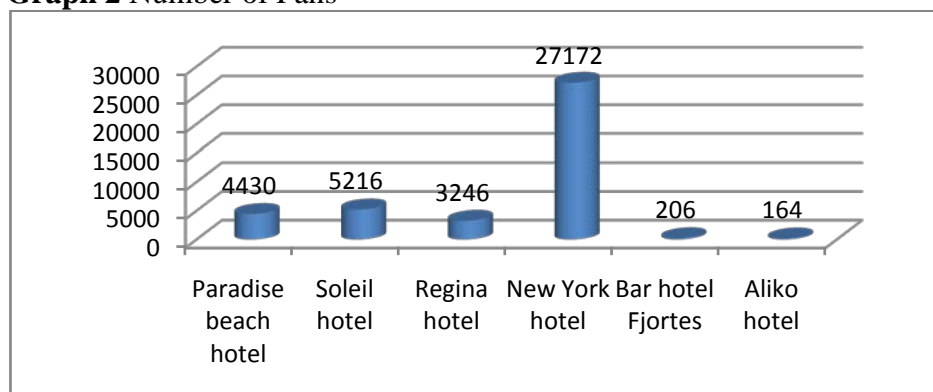
As it is shown, the New York hotel in Vlora has the greater number of fans count to 27172.This number could be considered as an exception to the rule because the graph shows that all the other hotels have average values in the range of 1000-5000.

Following the number of fans it was possible to investigate the number of persons who have made Check-In in these hotels. It is noticed that Paradise Beach Hotel lead for this indicator having 2220 visits, while Soleil has a zero check in.
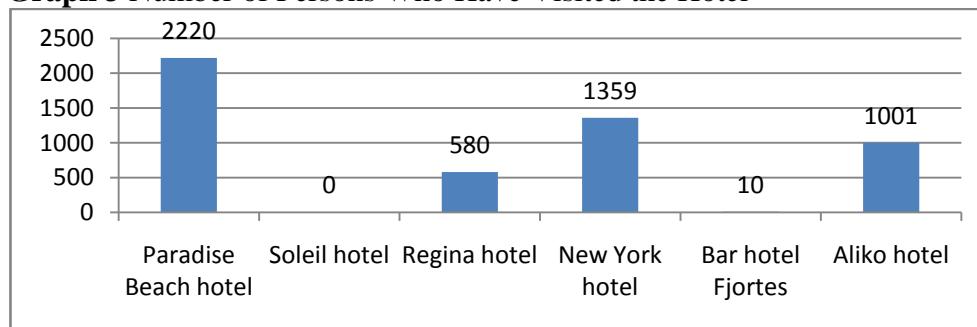
Graph 3 Number of Persons Who Have Visited the Hotel

To better interpretation of this indicator it is constructed the chart below.

Graph 4. The relationship between the number of fans and the number of Check-In
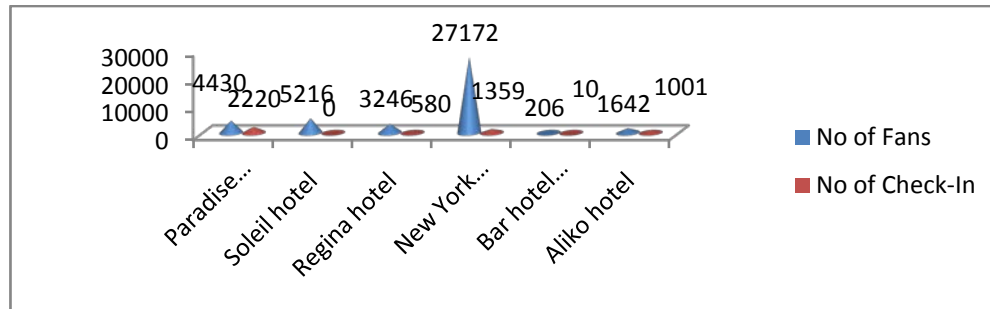
Based on the above graph it seems that there is a small commitment compared with Check in likes' activity. On the other hand, there is an imbalance between the fans and the maximum number of check in.

In the graph below it is showed the total number of persons who left a note regarding the feedback they have had from their experience in the respective hotels. There is a relatively low number of feedback on these profiles, especially when we compare this with actual visits to these hotels. This is a good indicator to measure the visits of hotels fan sites, but we have to keep

in mind that it cannot be accessed if the low number of activities feedback is due to customers not being active or due to lack of transparency of firms. This is because before you publish all feedback, it should pass filter company and they decide whether to make them public or not.

Graph 5 Number of peeople who have left Feedback For Service
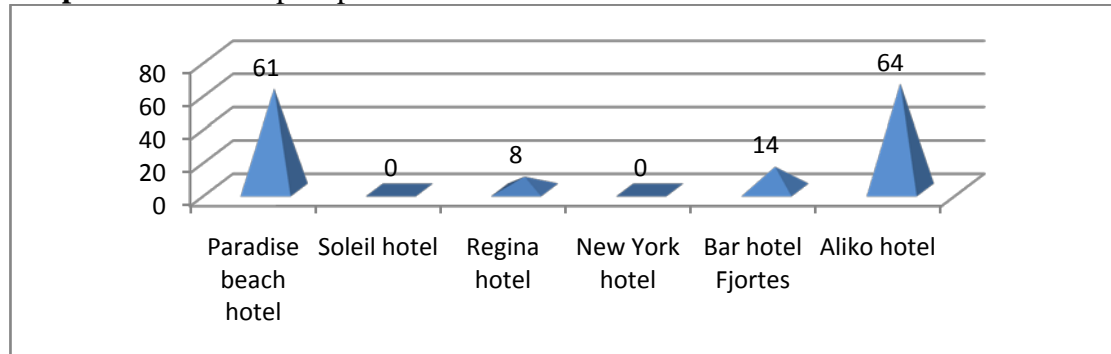
Data from the hotels industry was received not only by questionnaire but also by interviews. There are many interesting passages that help in terms of statistical results and their interpretation. An extract of information collected t` presented in the following paragraphs.

"I think we managed to understand our customers and will do even better in the future." Such an affirmation from the hotels perspective argues the conclusions of the current analysis. According to this deduction, hotels understand the importance of standards set by customers and further recognize the gap they have to meet these standards showed by their affirmation the will and objectives for future improvement.

The results from the question: "Do you want to be represented in higher level in social networks?" shows that companies are unfocused in their strategies. The goal is just to be visible in social marketing networks but they do not have a fixed purpose and well-oriented.

In order to explore the advantages that enables multiple linear regression, paper derives an equation, which incorporates four most important elements of social media marketing. This will link the performance of social media marketing to the level of consumer loyalty to test whether there is a significant link between them in the four most significant variables verified by literature.

Firstly if β_{ij} shall mark X_i level effect of Y_j, then the probability that Y_j will have succees for a given level of Xi will be given by:

$Y = B_0 + B_1 X_1 + B_2 X_2 + B_3 X_3 + B_4 X_4$

where:

Y-Consumer loyalty

X_1 - Level Usage of Marketing Channel
X_2 - Marketing Content
X_3 - Marketing Sales
X_4 - Marketing Monitoring

In this research are included four independent variables.

Table 2 Indicators of statistical significance of the model

Statistical Significance indicators	
R Square	0.90
Multiple R	0.84

Source: Authors SPSS calculations

Once the regression is tested as a whole, we have to test the significance of all regression indicators one by one. The procedure followed along with interpretations is showed below:
Y = 6587.54 + 0.987X1 +0574 +0358 X2 X3 + X4 0482

Table 3. The variables significance

	Coefficients	*t Stat*	*P-value*
Intercept	6587.54	59.5856	0.0054
X Variable 1	0.987	4.8574	0.0045
X Variable 2	0.574	4.6584	0.0084
X Variable 3	0.358	5.6748	0.0368
X Variable 4	0.482	5.4818	0.0497

Here also we are presenting a summary of survey results regarding customers and to businesses. What are the commonalities and differences between the results of two kind of stakeholders who were subjected to the same questions? What show these data regarding the relevance and contribution of the most important elements of inbound marketing to consumer loyalty?
Below is a comparative table of similarities and differences.

Table 4

	Businesses	**Customers**
Regression equation	Y=2126.7365+ 2.7323822X_1 +0.4281209 X_2 +0.392307X_3 + 0.019012 X_4	Y=6587.54 + 0.987X_1 +0.574 X_2 +0.358 X_3 + 0.482 X_4
General test of	The connection between	The connection between

linkage	consumer loyalty and marketing various elements of inbound social media, is statistically significant	consumer loyalty and marketing various elements of inbound social media, is statistically significant
Multiple Linear Regression Power	65% of consumer loyalty is explained by inbound marketing.	90% of consumer loyalty is explained by inbound marketing.
Usage Level of Marketing Channels	An increase (decrease) in one unit of the usage Level of Marketing channels have an increase (decrease) to 73.23% of Consumer Loyalty, when the other elements of social marketing are kept unchanged	An increase (decrease) in one unit of the usage Level of Marketing channels have an increase (decrease) to 98.7 % of Consumer Loyalty, when the other elements of social marketing are kept unchanged
Model Calculation and Interpretation		
Marketing content	An increase (decrease) of Marketing content with 1 units goes to an increase (decrease) of Consumer Loyalty by 42.8%, when the other elements of social marketing are kept unchanged.	An increase (decrease) of Marketing content with 1 units goes to an increase (decrease) of Consumer Loyalty by 57.4%, when the other elements of social marketing are kept unchanged.
Marketing sales	An increase (decrease) of the Marketing sales with 1 unit goes to an increase (decrease) 39.2% to Consumer Loyalty, when the other elements of social marketing are kept unchanged.	An increase (decrease) of the Marketing sales with 1 unit goes to an increase (decrease) 35.8% to Consumer Loyalty, when the other elements of social marketing are kept unchanged.
Marketing Monitoring	An increase (decrease) of the Marketing monitoring with 1 units goes to an increase (decrease) 1.9% to Consumer Loyalty, when the other elements of social marketing are kept unchanged.	An increase (decrease) of the Marketing monitoring with 1 units goes to an increase (decrease) 48.2% to Consumer Loyalty, when the other elements of social marketing are kept unchanged.

Statistical analysis as noted above gave an important contribution to determining that: (1) The relationship between customer loyalty and elements of social media marketing is statistically significant, (2) level of use of Marketing channels, Marketing content, Marketing sales and Marketing monitoring are important elements of social media marketing itself, (3) two variables that influence more on the consumers loyalty are

Level Usage of the Marketing channel and Marketing content, and (4) variables of social media marketing which have lower impact are: Marketing sales and Marketing monitoring.

Instruments used more frequently on social networks marketing
Below are the frequencies of instruments use on social media marketing by hotels.

Table 5. The usage weights on social networking channels of marketing communication

Marketing instruments on social media	% of the hotels using it
Facebook	93%
Twitter	65%
LinkedIn	20%
Youtube	29%
Google	58%
Pinterest	33%
Instagram	79%
Total	**54%**
Blogs	15%
Seo	17%
Website	46%
Total	**26%**

Graph 6. The scheme of weights used on social channels of marketing communication
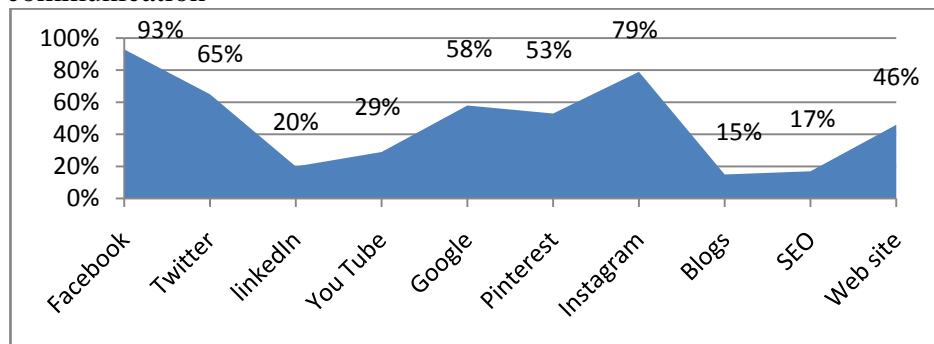
It is noticed a growing of usage of social networks, but a very low level of knowledge and usage of other instruments of inbound marketing.
Among the seven social networks studied in this paper, the three most commonly used networks are: Facebook maximum 93% of the sample, Instagram with a value of 79% and Twitter with 65% usage rate. On the other hand, the highest value use of Linkedin network marks valued at 20%, followed by Youtube of 29% and 33% Pinterest value.

Furthermore, if we refer to the demarcation line between social networking and other instruments of inbound marketing, it is noticed a relatively deep difference between the two categories. While we have a level 54% usage of social networks, regarding blogs, SEO and websites the usage level is 26%. If we would make an average of these two values, we could achieve to the usage of inbound marketing instruments as a whole. This value is 41%, which means less than 50%. But despite this it is a relatively satisfactory level of use of social networks.

4.   Conclusions

1. Four the most important statistically elements for the performance of social media marketing at the tourist hotels are: level of use of Marketing Channel, Marketing Content, Marketing Sales and Monitoring Marketing. These variables have been measured by data indicators in this paper.

2. From the first two steps of statistical analysis can be concluded that the elements of social media marketing to hotels are important and moreover they all significantly contribute in the level of consumer loyalty.

3. Linear multiple regression equation is: Consumer Loyalty = 2126.7365 + 2.7323822 level of use of Marketing Channel +0.392307 Marketing Content +0.4281209 Marketing Sales + 0.019012Marketing Monitoring

4. Use Level of Marketing Channel is the element of social media marketing that most influences consumer loyalty and it is als the element that has the greatervacuum to knowledge / use / initiative / innovation in tourist hotels.

5. Marketing Content as the level of utilization of social media is at very high levels and shows that social media has useful elements that can increase the level of consumer loyalty at much higher levels than any other inbound or outbound marketing instrument.

6. Sales opportunities through social media marketing are the third element of social media marketing that contribute positively to the strengthening of consumer loyalty to the brand.

7. The impact value of the marketing monitoring has smaller size, but again is a positive contributor for building and strengthening consumer loyalty.

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