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## Improvement of Digital Technologies in Marketing Communications of Tourism and Hospitality Enterprises

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### Abstract:

The article is devoted to the improvement of marketing communications in tourism and hospitality enterprises. It has been established that digital technologies used in marketing communications of tourism and hospitality enterprises will, in the nearest future, aim to create new forms of interaction with the audience. It has been proved that the crowd marketing method within integrated marketing communications, which accomplishes tasks comprehensively, could be of help in this regard. It has been determined that for the improvement of efficiency of marketing communications in the tourism and hospitality industry, it is of vital importance to invest in new digital channels of communication with the current and potential clients, to form new forms of relations for the exploration of new possibilities, to offer generous benefits for the attraction of consumers and to create autonomous and network communities for the solidification of the brand.

**Keywords:** digital technologies; marketing communications; brand; tourism; hotel business; efficiency; investment.

**JEL Classification:** L80; L83

### Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry, as a relevant sector, fulfills one of the leading functions in the global economy, providing for the generation of a substantial share of global gross product. This industry expands at a

high pace and in the nearest future, it will become one of the largest industries. The annual investment growth rate in the tourism and hospitality industry will be around 30%. Moreover, this sector has become one of the most profitable areas of business worldwide, and it accounts for roughly 6% of global capital.

The fast expansion of the tourism and hospitality industry made it necessary to develop modern information technologies for the improvement of the quality of tourism and hotel services. The use of information technologies is concentrated in the hands of tourist firms, insurance and transport companies, excursion bureaus, hotels, cafes and restaurants, and in the cases when services are provided to separate tourists and tourist groups.

The study of problems related to the development of the tourism and hospitality industry was reflected in the works by O.V. Arkhipova (2018), L.P. Voronkova (2018), V.K. Krutikov (2018), N.V. Orlova (2017), M.A. Polozhikhina (2018), T.L. Chernyshova (2017), etc. However, the use of digital technologies in marketing communications of tourism and hospitality enterprises is controversial: the methods for the expansion of companies from this sector are not sufficiently developed; separate features of marketing communications, which are typical for entities from the tourism and hospitality industry, are not fully considered when digital technologies are used. In practice, these factors prevent the industry from developing purposefully in the long term.

## 1. Methods

The study's methodological basis includes the following general scientific methods: analysis and synthesis – when analyzing the current theoretical and methodological approaches and provisions and scientific developments with regard to problems related to the improvement of digital technologies in marketing communications of tourism and hospitality enterprises; the structural logical method – when systematizing factors influencing the development of the sector's companies; the factor analysis – when determining the impact of factors on customers' satisfaction with the quality of tourism and hotel services when using digital technologies.

The study's information base consists of legislative, statutory and legal acts, statistical data from public authorities and local self-government bodies, scientific publications of Russian and foreign scientists devoted to the use of digital technologies in marketing communications of tourism and hospitality enterprises in the long term (Karaulova, Silcheva, Antonenko, Konovalova and Lebedev 2017; Nikiforov, Ryazanova, Shishanova, Lyzhin and Lebedeva 2018; Vilisov, Khristoforova, and Startsev 2013).

In the study, we plan to elaborate offers for the improvement of digital technologies in marketing communications of tourism and hospitality enterprises, to substantiate development strategies for the industry's entities and to elaborate conceptual basis for their development considering the use of digital technologies in marketing communications. Moreover, we raise the issue of substantiating the approaches to the formation of a system of indicators aimed to assess the quality of tourism and hotel services as a result of using digital technologies, as well as to determine and formulate main directions of development for tourism and hospitality enterprises in the information environment.

## 2. Results

Modern marketing activities carried out by tourism and hospitality enterprises show the dominance of the concept of integrated marketing communications. This concept provides for the planning of marketing communications based on the need for assessing the strategic role played by each of its components (advertising, sales promotion, PR, individual sales, exhibitions, direct marketing) in the promotion strategy, as well as the search for their best combination ensuring the effective impact of communication programs for the promotion of a tourism and hotel brand.

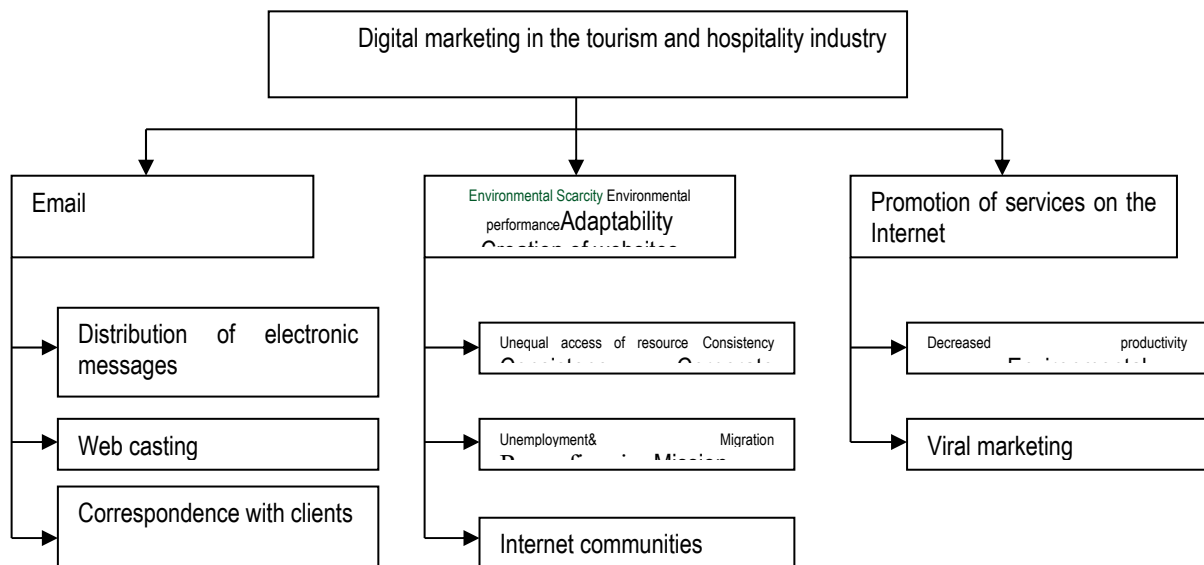
An integral part of the modern complex of integrated marketing communications in tourism and hospitality enterprises is digital marketing and its tools designed to attract all possible forms of digital channels for the promotion of a brand (Figure 1).

Digital marketing constitutes an influential area and there is no similar trend that would influence the tourism and hospitality industry so quickly and considerably as digital technologies.

Digital marketing now accounts for around 25% of marketing budgets in tourism and hospitality enterprises. Tourism and hospitality enterprises that use all digital channels and communication tools are on average by 25% more profitable than other businesses in the industry. In modern conditions, in tourism and hospitality business, marketing professionals should, therefore, be competent in digital marketing.



Figure 1. Digital marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry



It is necessary to differentiate the concepts “electronic marketing”, “Internet marketing” and “digital marketing”. In general, electronic marketing is a social and managerial process aimed at the satisfaction of tourism and hotel service consumers’ needs on the Internet when creating offers and exchanging goods or services by means of information and communications technologies.

During the initial stage of Internet marketing development, it was often defined as the building of marketing communications via the Internet. However, it is not an industry, but simply a marketing tool with special properties. Internet marketing is a tool for solving certain marketing problems faced by tourism and hospitality enterprises and nothing more. Later, Internet marketing began to be understood as a new type of marketing with triple components (product, distribution, promotion, marketing research) implemented using digital and interactive Internet tools. This makes it possible to accelerate marketing processes in the tourism and hospitality industry, reducing their costs and improve their quality.

Internet marketing is now an aggregate of measures designed to increase the rating of an Internet resource in the net, to raise the number of online visitors and, as a consequence, to draw new clients and to expand the company. Internet marketing aims to improve the efficiency of a website as a marketing communications tool. There can be various approaches to defining Internet marketing: from the approach to Internet marketing as a promotion tool to the idea of the theory and methodology of marketing activities in the new hypermedia environment.

Digital marketing has become a modern form of marketing amid the dynamic growth of marketing tools and digital technologies in tourism and hospitality enterprises. Digital marketing is a modern tool for the promotion of a tourism and hotel product, trademark or brand via all digital channels (television, the Internet, radio, cellphones).

Digital marketing is closely connected to Internet marketing. However, it already includes several approaches allowing to reach the target audience even in the offline environment (use of mobile apps, SMS/MMS, advertising screens on the streets). In addition, mobile marketing, advertising screens, POS terminals, exhibition LCD stands with presentations, QR codes in advertising signs and magazines are effectively used.

One can consider the following as the main tools of digital marketing: optimization of a website in search systems, search marketing, client-oriented development strategy of a tourism and hospitality enterprise on the Internet, contextual advertising, social media marketing, real-time trading, viral marketing, creation of a tourism and hospitality enterprise’s Internet image, marketing of video systems, partner marketing, retargeting.

According to our research, the main problems and possibilities that influence marketing communications in the tourism and hospitality industry cover such issues as the experience of customer relations, content optimization, data management marketing and mobile applications. In addition, the following results can be mentioned: 60% of tourism and hospitality enterprises that launch a blog win more clients; 54% of tourism and hospitality enterprises generate potential clients with the help of social media; 55% of Internet users watch online video daily. As for top priorities of digital marketing, one can highlight targeting and personalization (31% of the respondents), content optimization (29%) and the use of social networks (25%).

Based on analysis of peculiarities of tourism and hotel service consumers' behavior, it was found that they spend much more time on the Internet, especially in social networks. Information that users obtain in social networks starts playing a bigger role. While in 2015, 31% of users wrote reviews about tourism and hotel products, the indicator increased to 58% in 2018.

For this reason, reviews and recommendations of one's own consumption experience can prompt other users to actualize their purchasing needs or to urge them to reassess the importance of attributes of a tourism and hotel product and to actualize a new need, *i.e.* information circulating on the Internet and social networks substantially influences the purchase of tourism and hotel services.

The exploration of possibilities for the application of Internet technologies in marketing activities of tourism and hospitality enterprises stipulated the appearance of such a phenomenon as crowd technologies, formed as a result of activities carried out by the communities on the Internet. Crowd marketing, in turn, is a method for the stimulation of tourism and hotel services among the target Internet audience based on recommendations.

Crowd technologies can be defined as tools for the organization and the use of activities carried out by communities and other non-structured groups on the Internet based on the economic interaction of members of these communities. After studying the peculiarities of behavior of tourism and hotel service consumers, we saw a bigger role played by social networks and communities in consumers' buying behavior: the average number of communities, in which users participated in 2015, totaled 4.5, and the value increased to 38.7 in 2018. Social network sales jumped from 12% in 2015 to 39% in 2018.

However, the main task of crowd marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry is the management of Internet users' reviews and recommendations so that they eventually promote sales of tourism and hotel enterprises. Moreover, crowd marketing substantially improves the reputation of tourism and hospitality businesses and raises the place of the website in Google's search results.

Accordingly, crowd marketing is a hybrid of several types of Internet promotion: reputation management and stimulation of sales through a union with the audience. It is difficult enough to use crowd marketing for a local tourism and hotel business with a narrow business focus because the number of platforms and reasons for the placement of reviews is simply not sufficient. There are areas of business, for which crowd marketing is not only a complicated but often an inefficient process. This concerns vendors of specialized tourism and hotel equipment, which is considered by a small group of professionals.

Consumers are not only those who are satisfied with tourism and hotel services but also those who want to receive interesting information about the business, brand and management of a company. Tourism and hospitality enterprises successfully use social networks when promoting their own brands. If one looks at the use of digital marketing tools by tourism and hospitality enterprises, for marketing activities to be successful, digital services must stipulate that their users can be all market participants. They should have possibilities to find for themselves the best service or the best combination of services.

The creation of digital services allows using the following possibilities for marketing activities carried out by tourism and hospitality enterprises:

- efficiency of information. Buying a periodical, even when it contains market information, a consumer pays for what has already become obsolete as it takes at least three days (sometimes a month) to draft, print and deliver a magazine even via an express delivery service. A company that makes decisions fast and efficiently wins in tourism and hotel business. For instance, one can get information about relevant prices for all types of tourism and hotel services through digital services. One can also see real-time offers made by market participants.

- quality and complexity of information. Often, periodicals do not offer a complex analysis of a situation surrounding the tourist and hotel market. All information should be based on daily analysis of all consumption channels.

- comprehensive promotion of tourism and hotel services. Often, conventional means of mass information can at best guarantee the placement of advertisement for money, but information can become obsolete before it reaches the potential buyer. If digital services are used, no advertising fees are charged. More often, it takes a few minutes from the placement of information to a direct call of the potential buyer.

### 3. Discussion

The reliability of the presented approaches is confirmed by the fact that digital technology tools in enterprises' marketing communications make it possible to expand their business from the local market to the national and international markets of tourism and hotel services (Konovalova, Yudina, Bushueva, Ukhina and Lebedev 2018; Nikolskaya, Lepeshkin, Kulgachev, Popov, Romanova and Lebedev 2018; Zavallo, Kozhina, Kovaleva, Kolupaev



and Lebedeva 2018). Both small and major tourism and hospitality enterprises stand an equal chance for competition in the market.

As opposed to traditional advertising media (printed media, radio, television), the entry into the market via the Internet does not cost much. Unlike traditional marketing methods of promotion, digital technologies give a clear statistical view of the effectiveness of marketing activities. They become more popular not only among tourism and hospitality enterprises but also among ordinary consumers who want to promote their website or a blog and to make money on it.

Mobile information services show strong potential both as a source of information for clients about the territory and as a high-quality communication channel with providers of tourism and hotel services. Such systems make it possible to highlight more detailed information about sights, residential facilities, events, restaurants and weather and to give recommendations to the relevant categories of visitors by means of SMS.

The personalization of access to information and the filtration of content in accordance with users' features are key requirements when constructing a system. This is especially relevant when providing mobile services with limited possibilities of data display. A system can use generally recommended methods, allowing to consider feedback from users as sources of information and to increase accuracy when the reliability of data is low.

## Conclusions

Overall, in the nearest future, digital technologies in marketing communications of tourism and hospitality enterprises will aim to build new types of interaction with the audience. Of help could be the methods of crowd marketing within integrated marketing communications, help to solve problems comprehensively. A tourism and hotel product should be original and stand out, have a good price and, most importantly, positive reviews. This contributes to the creation of a final product that a consumer will want to buy.

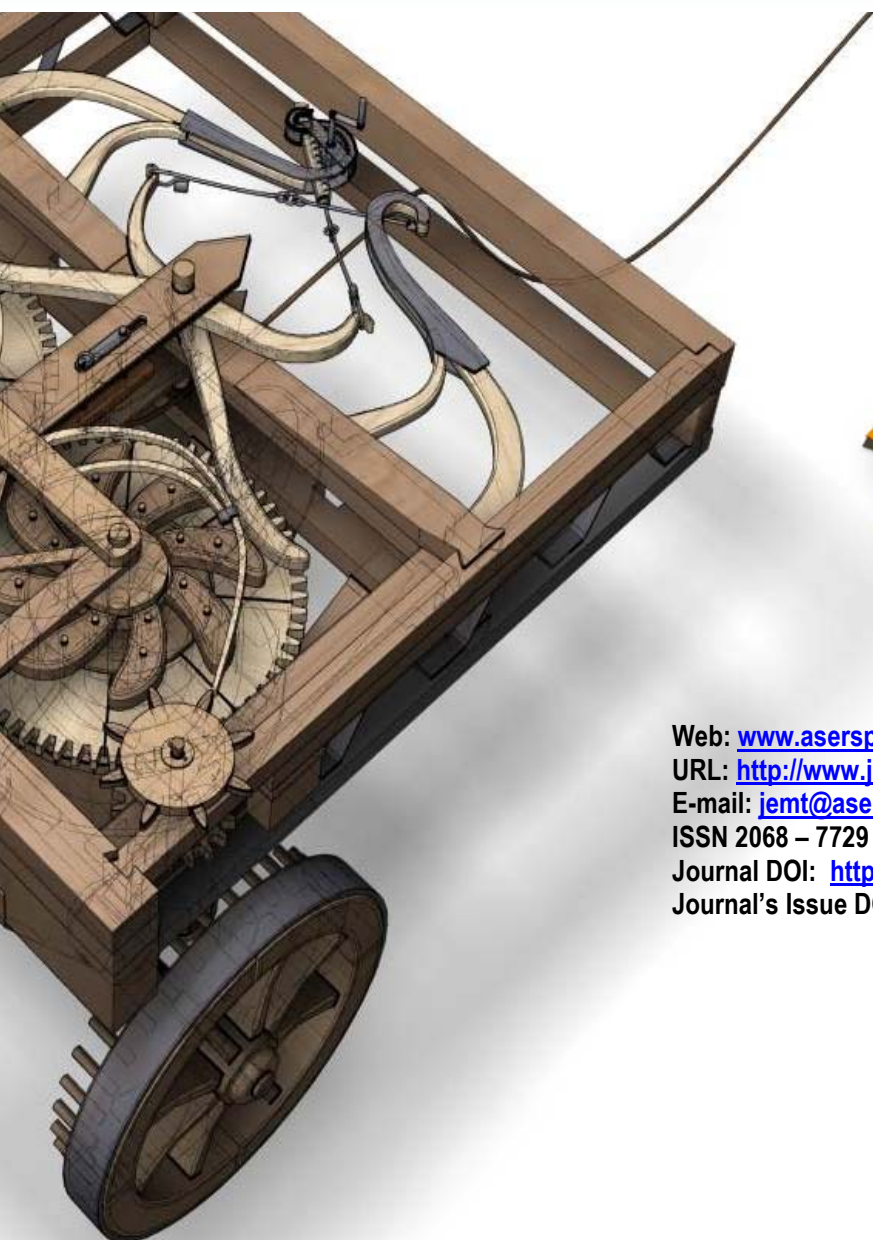
To improve efficiency of marketing communications in the tourism and hospitality industry, it is crucial to invest in new digital channels of communication with current and potential clients, to build new types of relations for the discovery of new possibilities, to offer generous bonuses for the attraction of consumers and the creation of autonomous and network communities for the solidification of the brand. Dynamic development of digital technologies and the Internet, as well as the higher level of importance of high-quality information for the successful conduct of tourism and hotel business, make it possible to expand the range of information services and make them much more efficient.

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