



## THE ROLE OF SMM FOR CREATING THE DESTINATION IMAGE OF UZBEKISTAN

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### Abstract

*It is no secret that in today's globalized world, social networks play an important role in every aspect of life, and tourism is no exception. Social networks are used to attract tourists or to form the image of the destination in the minds of potential consumers. The aim of study: scrutinizing ways to development the image of destination in Uzbekistan through social media marketing and creating proposals and recommendations for its implementation. The article uses the method of analysis of the creating the image of destination through using SMM and also author uses foreign practice to compare and acquire proposals for improving destination image of Uzbekistan. Also graphs were used to represent the statistic dynamics. With a broad literature review conducted, it was noted that in the social media marketing mainly used as information sources in their decision-making process. The purpose of this study was to determine what role social media as an information source*

*has in the decision making of tourists when choosing the destination and how we can form the image of the destination in the minds of potential tourists. The results of this study indicated that tourists use social media as an information source to some extent when making a decision about destination. Social media was found to be a credible source of information and has a slight influence on their decision-making process to tourists.*

**Keywords:** SMM, destination image, creating image, improving number of tourists

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Social Media Marketing (SMM) is the promotion of products, goods and services on social networks. This is mainly an activity in which people spread messages through social networks without the participation of the organizers. It is believed that messages sent through social networks create more confidence among potential consumers of a product or service. Social media marketing is very important in today's global world,





which it is possible to promote goods and services to customers through social networks and bring them to the brand level. In this case, SMM often plays the role of PR namely, the promotion of goods and services, rather than advertising. That's why we call it PR, because it's known that users on social media has the opportunity to leave comments. Namely, when we post our goods and services on social media, the customer(tourist) who uses this service can leave a comment. This means that if a consumer is satisfied with our product or service, and leaves a positive feedback, it will be an advertisement for other consumers, and they will be interested in buying our product. On the contrary, if a customer is dissatisfied with our service and leaves a negative comment, we lose potential customers (tourists).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The influence of social media on tourism is growing day by day. Social media is information content, which is made by the people who use technology publishing, it is easily accessible and is intended to facilitate communications, influence and interaction with peers and the general public (Ronomenggolo, Sigit. 2013).

According to N. Morgan and A. Prichard, marketing communications, namely PR, advertising, sales promotion should be used in the promotion of tourism products, and all this should be done together (Morgan, Prichard, 2004).

Social media refers to online communities that share information with one another by having online conversations (Safko, Brake, 2009).

Social media is the shift of people's attention on the online platforms where people share, discover and read information and gain knowledge (Chen, Okumus, 2013)

According to Xiang and Gretzel, social media is an internet-based application that involves media impressions created by customers, especially informed by related experiences and shared online for access by other users (Xiang, Gretzel, 2010).

The connection between the image of the country and the image of tourism Hunmey and Lipin was studied (Hunmey, Lipin 2004). According to researchers, the image of the country is closely linked with the image of tourism, which affects the tourism product and consumer decision-making. The tourist image also has a direct impact on the level of satisfaction and consumer value.

According to Aral "Social media are fundamentally changing the way we communicate, collaborate, consume and create". This has resulted in benefits and opportunities that make SM integral to marketing strategy. Marketers are seeking to capitalise on these opportunities for an increase in quality engagement and superior communication with customers, and to deliver higher levels of customer acquisition and retention (Hettler, 2010)





A number of scholars like Evans, Hettler, Kaplan and Haenlein, Mangold and Faulds, Safko and Brake, Weinberg, Zarella emphasise the relevance of SMM as a new marketing paradigm. But there is only limited information on the use and effect of SMM practices as an influential information source for global enterprises. In terms of the benefits associated with SMM it represents an important approach in online marketing. In particular, SMM focuses on the achievement of direct customer contact through SM activities, specifically seeking product or service promotion through various platforms (Evans, Hettler, Kaplan and Haenlein, Mangold and Faulds, Safko and Brake, Weinberg, Zarella, 2010)

If we summarize the above points we can conclude that the image of the country plays an important role in decision making for travel. In this case, the tourist image, customer value relationships, level of satisfaction, previous experience, purpose of travel, the potential of cultural tourism indirectly affect the choice of a particular destination.

*The aim of the study.* Scrutinizing ways to development the image of destination in Uzbekistan through social media marketing and creating proposals and recommendations for its implementation.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

To demonstrate the essence of creating the destination image of country's theoretical research methods has been used: deduction and induction, analysis and synthesis, comparison, systematization and interpretation of results.

#### 3.1 Data Analysis and Result

In Table 1 we analyze the advantages and disadvantages of SMM.

**Table1. Advantages and disadvantages of SMM**

Disadvantages of SMM	Advantages of SMM
Constant labor is required for the result	Ability to communicate directly with the consumer (tourist)
There is no 100% guarantee of the result	Big audience
Intense competition	The minimum cost is free to register and create a group on any social network
There is a risk of losing many potential consumers due to negative comments	With targeting, you can easily find your audience by parameters

Source: Compiled by author

If we analyze the advantages of SMM, first of all, it is very important to be able to communicate directly with the customer, and if our customer (tourist) is dissatisfied





with the service or product we provide and objects to it, it is personal. we can discuss it on direct messages or in the comments. The next big achievement is that the audience is very large which in a very short time, we can bring our information to the attention of a wide audience. Also, the advantage for new companies that advertising their goods or services are less expensive than other mass media which is free to register on any social networks and join groups, create your own group. The last is that with the help of targeting we can easily find our target audience by parameters. The disadvantage of SMM is that there is strong competition, which requires constant work to achieve results and there is no 100% guarantee of results.

The promotion of tourism products and the attraction of potential tourists is being achieved through social networks. Currently, travel companies and tour operators around the world are promoting their products through social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Youtube, Instagram, Tiktok. Before visiting a particular country, potential tourists first gather information about that country and then aim to visit only if that country is able to attract tourists. The development of information technology through the Internet has also influenced the way tourists plan and choose their travels. With the development of information systems on the Internet, SMM has also had an impact. In particular, social networking sites, blogs and YouTube are widely used for information among tourists. Bloggers share their travel photos, impressions and experiences on their social media pages. This information will serve as a source of information for other tourists.

Social media has changed the way potential tourists travel, from travel planning to buying and consuming tourist services. In addition, SMM has radically changed the role of mediators. In particular, bloggers are using social media as a marketing tool to build and promote the destination image. Among the potential tourists, well-known artists and bloggers’s positive opinions about the tourism product make a good impression and arouse their interest in consuming this product or service. Thus, through positive feedback on social networks, it is possible to increase the reputation of the product or service and achieve effective promotion of the destination image.

If we want to influence to the audience to form the destination image using SMM, it is advisable to use namely the social network that have the most users (Table 2).

**Table 2. Most popular social networks worldwide as of October 2021, ranked by number of active users (in millions)**

	Name of social media	Number of users (in millions)
1	Facebook	2,895
2	Youtube	2,291





3	WhatsApp	2,000
4	Instagram	1,393

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

Facebook - market leader which was the first social network to surpass one billion registered accounts and currently sits at more than 2.89 billion monthly active users. Statista places the world’s internet users at 4.57 billion people, and Facebook has 2,8 billion monthly active users – and that’s not even counting their family services like WhatsApp, Messenger and Instagram.

For attract potential tourists we need to know which country people uses Facebook (Figure 1).

According to Figure 1, the country with the most Facebook users is India with over 290 million active users, followed by US (190 million), Indonesia (140 million), Brazil (130 million), and Mexico (89 million). With this information we can know from which country our potential tourists and we can attract them with analyzing their interests.

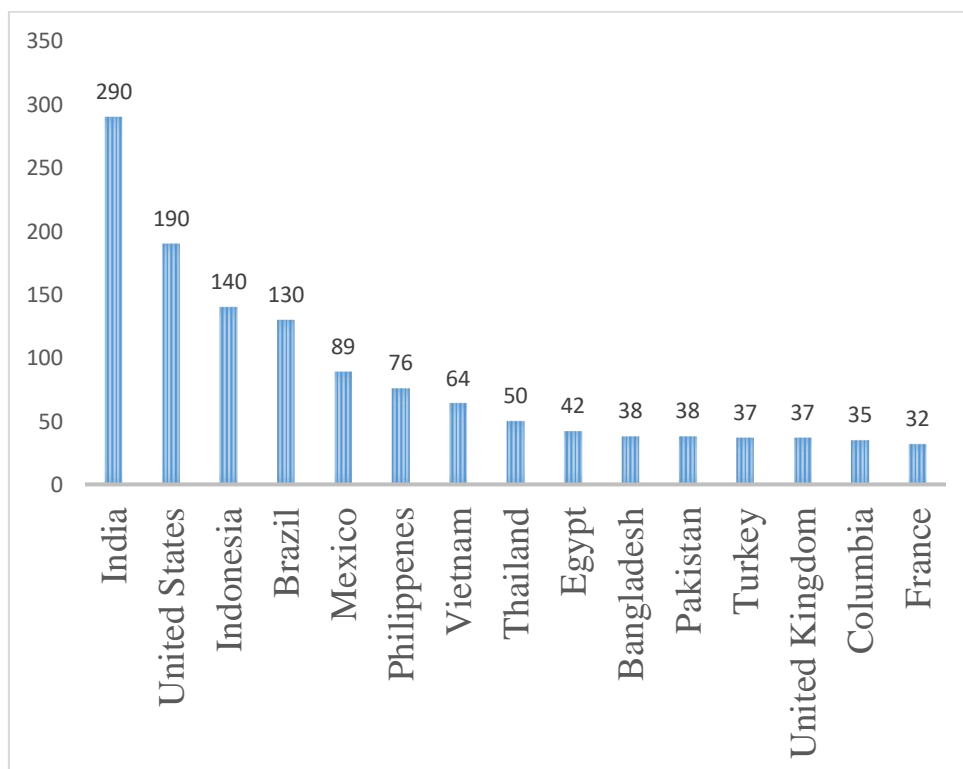


Figure 1. Most Facebook users by country (mln users)





**Source:** B.Dean “Facebook demographic statistics: how many people use Facebook in 2021? Backlinko, Apr 5,2021

According to Statista, in October 2021, 32 percent of global Instagram audiences were aged between 25 and 34 years. Over two thirds of total Instagram audiences were aged 34 years and younger and this makes the platform especially attractive for marketers.

Instagram is one of the most popular social networks worldwide which, particularly popular in India and in the United States, which have respectively 201 million and 157 million Instagram users each.

**Table 3. Distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of October 2021, by age group**

Ages of instagram users	13-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Procents of instagram users	8%	31%	31,2%	15,9%	7,9%	3,9%	2,2%

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/>

From the Table 3, we can conclude that the most Instagram users are age of group from 25 to 34. Thus, with this information we can enclose that if we want to attract age of groups from 25 to 34, undoubtedly we need to use Instagram.

In recent years, the number of users of social networks, news sites, messengers and applications for smartphones in Central Asia is growing. We believe that we should pay special attention to further improving and promoting the image of the destination of our country. That is, we need to use social networks to accurately convey the image of our destination to our neighbors. In order to achieve effective results, we need to study the social networks that have the most users. Below we examine the number of people using social networks in Central Asia.

Considering the fact that the population of each Central Asian country uses different social networks, we consider each country separately

**Table 4. Number of social network users in Central Asia (January 2021)**

Name of country	Number of Instagram users	Number of Facebook Users	Number of LinkedIn users	Number of Twitter users
Tajikistan	490 thousand	240 thousand	53 thousand	6,8 thousand





Kyrgyzstan	2,7 million	790 thousand	140 thousand	34,8 thousand
Kazakhstan	11 million	2,3 million	1 million	128,4 thousand
Turkmenistan	130 thousand	17 thousand	33 thousand	400

Kazakhstan has a population of 18.89 million (as of January 2021), an increase of 221,000 over the previous year. The number of Internet users amounted to 15.47 million, an increase of 741,000 over the previous year. The number of users of social networks is 12 million. The number of social network users in Kazakhstan is 63.5% of the total population<sup>1</sup>.

Analyzing Table 4 Kazakhstan ranks first in the number of users of all social networks, behind the rest of the countries. The most popular social network is Instagram, which has 11 million users. It is followed by Facebook with 2.3 million users. LinkedIn and Twitter have 1 million and 128.4 thousand users, respectively.

After Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan has a population of 6.58 million as of January 2021. The country has 3.32 million Internet users, which is 260,000 more than in 2020. The number of social network users in Kyrgyzstan is 50.4% of the total population. It is also the most popular social network in the country - Instagram with 2.7 million users. The next places are occupied by Facebook - 790 thousand, LinkedIn - 140 thousand, and Twitter - 34.8 thousand users.

2.42 million people in Tajikistan use the Internet (as of January 2020). The number of users of the social network is 660 thousand people. The most popular social network is Instagram, which has 490 thousand users. Facebook has 240,000, LinkedIn 53,000, and Twitter 6,800 users.

Due to Turkmenistan's unique policy, there are limits to the use of the Internet among the population. Due to this, it is the country with the lowest number of social networks in Central Asia. The population in January 2021 was 6.07 million, an increase of 88,000 over the previous year. The number of Internet users is 2.01 million, which is 459 thousand more than in 2020. The number of social network users is 150,000. Compared to January 2020, it increased by 78 thousand (+ 108%). The number of Instagram users is 130,000, Facebook - 17,000, LinkedIn - 33,000 and Twitter - 400<sup>2</sup>. It is obvious that the ratio of the number of users of social networks to the total population of the country is very significant. In particular, the following social networks are used by the entire population of the country:

- a. Instagram - 2.1%
- b. Facebook - 0.28%
- c. Twitter - 0.006%

<sup>1</sup> www.dataportal.com

<sup>2</sup> Source: We are social





- d. LinkedIn - 0.54%.

Taking into account the data in Table 3.1, we can direct the information about our destination through the same source of information, depending on which network each country uses the most. In this way, we can easily separate our segments, study the tastes of each group segment and involve them in our destination accordingly.

#### **4. RESULT**

Our analysis shows that through the study of social networks, we have the opportunity to directly influence our potential customers, and thus to divide them into segments and, accordingly, to involve them in our destination. For example, when we studied and analyzed the countries of Central Asia, we came to the conclusion that the country with the largest number of users of social networks is Kazakhstan, followed by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In the last place is Turkmenistan. From the above, we can conclude that if we want to develop the image of destination through social networks, the most potential tourists will be from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and on the contrary we will have the least potential tourists from Turkmenistan.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

In developing the image of Uzbekistan's destination, we can make the following suggestions:

- a. Considering that Facebook is the most widely used social network in the world, it is important to promote the image of our country's destination through this social media.
- b. Influencing a potential customer by studying the age segments of the social network on Instagram.
- c. Third, the establishment of tourism cooperation with neighboring countries we will increase the flow of tourists through cooperation with Central Asian countries.

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