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ANALYSIS OF INSTAGRAM ACTIVITY OF LEADING TOURISM DESTINATIONS

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ABSTRACT:

Nowadays, in any sphere of business it's highly necessary to work in scope with digital technologies and Internet in order to get high results and stay competitive. The thesis reveals top 10 countries with the highest tourist flow before the pandemic time and their Instagram page analysis with which we can learn the most applying foreign experience to boost the usage of social media in tourism.

Keywords. Social media, social networking sites, international tourist flow, Instagram, social media content, Instagram stories.

Introduction

Currently, the rise of social media with various platforms has experienced a giant leap. The high demands of information accessed quickly by the community through social media becomes a certain concern for many touristic destinations to use social media as a tool in promoting and building tourism brands. Social media is also seen as having potential benefit to increase tourism sector and strengthen destinations' branding quickly and precisely. Social media is a concept that has recently entered and developing in the international tourism market and which has no limit to the analysis of its usage indicators. In this case, in order to achieve the most effective result, it is necessary to take the countries that were in high positions in international tourism market before the pandemic.

Research methods. In this study, analysis, synthesis, comparative analysis and modeling methods were used to determine the real definition of social media today, to research leading foreign destinations.

Results. According to the indicators related to 2019, the highest number of international tourists flow in the world was related to France, with 90 million tourists. According to the world population review and UNWTO websites, the following 10 countries were the leaders in terms of international tourist visits:

Table 1. The countries that took the lead in the distortion of international tourists in 2019.

No	Countries	Number of travelers (in 2019)
1.	France	90 mln
2.	Spain	83.7 mln
3.	USA	79.3 mln
4.	China	65.7 mln
5.	Italy	64.5 mln
6.	Turkey	51.2 mln
7.	Mexico	45 mln

8.	Thailand	39.8 mln
9.	Germany	39.6 mln
10.	United Kingdom	39.4 mln

Source: according to world population review and UNWTO indicators.

There are a lot of factors that influenced these countries in the leadership of the arrival of international tourists, and social media is a part of them in the modern age of advanced technologies and the Internet. As of April 2022, the number of Internet users worldwide has reached 5 billion, which is 63% of the world's population. Among these, the number of social media users is equal to 4.65 billion⁸². This indicator is of great importance on a global scale and proves the relevance of studying tourism from the point of view of social media. The scope of use of social networks is very high on the scale of social media, among them, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram are the leaders in terms of the number of users of social networks. Nowadays, Instagram is part of Facebook, and their algorithm is the same and they are studied similarly in terms of strategies. In order to choose strategies, prepare content, and generally maintain it in these networks, it is necessary to study the audience that uses these networks. The age distribution of Instagram users is shown in the following chart:

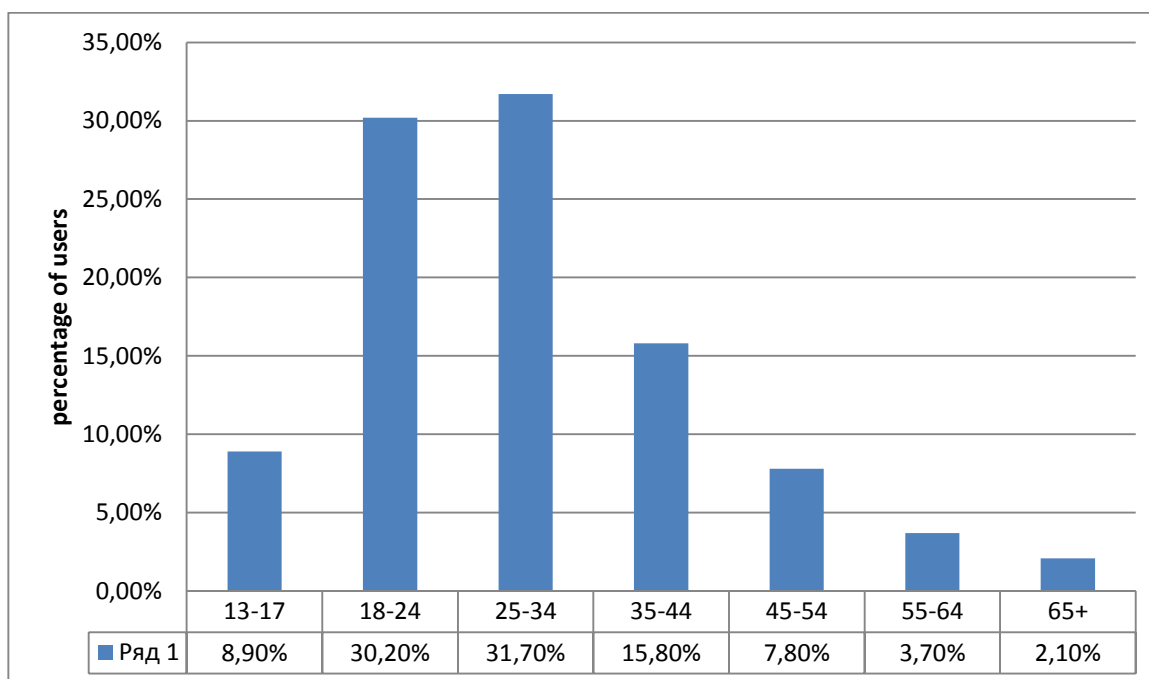


Figure 1. Age distribution of Instagram users.

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

With nearly one billion monthly active users, Instagram is one of the most popular social networks in the world. The app is particularly popular in India and the United States, with 201 million and 157 million Instagram users each, respectively. According to the graph above, the largest share of Instagram users worldwide is between the ages of 18 and 34. Representatives of this age group are active in terms of travel and tend to choose their destinations mainly through Internet networks, social media, in particular, social networking sites. Therefore, analyzing the Instagram network of tourist destinations that are mostly chosen and visited by international tourists is very useful as of learning a foreign experience of using social media. In addition, one of the most popular features of Instagram

⁸² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>

is stories. Users can post photos and videos to their Stories stream, and the content can be viewed by others for 24 hours before it disappears. In January 2019, the company reported that Instagram Stories had 500 million daily active users. The largest part of these stories is the daily life of users, and among them, travel-related content has a very large index and power. Because travelers are not interested in advertising, but in the real opinion of travelers about the tourist destinations they want to visit.

Table 2. Analysis of Instagram activity of destinations.

№	Tourist destinations	Name on the platform	Number of followers	Posts	Number of posts in 5 months (January, February, March, April, May 2022)	Number of stories in 1 day
1	France	francefr	218000	2532	153	1
2	Spain	Spain	829000	4836	333	2
3	USA	visittheusa	259000	2671	57	-
4	China	visitchina	10000	526	(In 2018)	-
5	Italy	visititaly	322000	2840	249	2
6	Turkey	goturkiye	1600000	5897	327	3
7	Mexico	visitmexiko	707000	3402	264	4
8	Thailand	tourismthailand	166000	2579	78	1
9	Germany	germanytourism	553000	3071	87	24
10	Britain	lovegreatbritain	426000	2557	96	-

Source: based on author's research.

The above table shows the analysis of the tourist destinations that led in terms of the number of international tourists in 2019 on Instagram, one of the most active and popular social networking sites. Among these countries, the Instagram page of Turkey is the most followed in terms of users, and this destination regularly delights its followers with high-quality and useful content. Turkey is the most active destination among the top 10 countries in terms of the number of visits by international tourists, both in terms of the number of posts and the number of followers. It can be proved that the aspect of activity in social media is one of the indicators that affect the visit of tourists to this country.

Nowadays, Asian countries play leading role in promoting their tourism and hospitality sector through social media platforms. One of the active user and promoter touristic destinations via Instagram account is Indonesia which is known with its own brand “wonderfulindonesia”. It covers big auditorium equal to 769000 and has released 3536 posts until now. When compared with 10 leading tourism destinations, it would be in the third place after Spain and before Mexico. To excel among competitors and to show influential brand, Indonesia worked out the strategy that takes it to the next level. Tourism strategy in Wonderful Indonesia's branding through social media was carried out in several stages; the first stage was planning. In 2015, re-branding was conducted with the addition of typography and touches on Wonderful Indonesia's logo. Then the second stage was the design of the program by placing the right positioning for each Indonesian tourism destination which includes three elements of tourism products, namely natural, cultural and man-made with marketing strategy programs that are carried out namely BAS (Branding, Advertising and Selling) which refers in major cities of the world such

as Berlin, New York, Amsterdam, Madrid and Paris. The third stage was the performance of the Ministry of Tourism, which according to the Central Agency Statistics, foreign tourist arrivals to Indonesia in 2017 increased rapidly to 14.4 million tourists. In addition, another proof of performance was Wonderful Indonesia's physical branding ranked 42nd in 2018 set by the World Economy Forum. The fourth stage was to grow and maintain brand equity. This was achieved by Wonderful Indonesia by gaining 46 awards in 22 countries in 2016. Then in 2017 Wonderful Indonesia received 27 awards in 13 countries, whether in 2018 won "Brand of the Year Indonesia 2018" by Philip Kotler Center for ASEAN Marketing. Moreover, at the end of 2017, the growth number of foreign tourists was recorded at 22%.

Conclusion.

In today's global world, if touristic destinations want to be on the top and have good advertising from user-generated content, they should be active user of social media, mainly social networking sites. According to the statistics of 2022, one of the most used social networking sites is Instagram which has colorful opportunities for its users to show the most beautiful sites of touristic destinations. Therefore, learning from the experience of destinations with high tourist flow gives best results for developing tourist countries in the beginning of long way.

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