THE SOCIAL ROLE OF MEDIA IN KNOWLEDGE, PROMOTION AND VALORIZATION OF CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL HERITAGE – SNAGOV, ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a widely used way of promotion in recent years, including in the field of tourism, facilitating fast communication between users, being available to anyone with a device with the possibility of connecting to the Internet. The purpose of this research is to identify the importance of social media in promoting the cultural and recreational heritage in the vicinity of Bucharest, represented by the lake, forest and Snagov Monastery. The objectives of the study were: the analysis of the Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages that promote the cultural and natural heritage of Snagov and the analysis of the promotional content on each platform. The results of the research revealed that although there are no pages to promote heritage elements in Snagov, the area remains known on social media, due to the communication between those who enjoyed this recreational space or visited the Snagov Monastery for tourism or religious purposes, but it is also worth mentioning the social media pages of the accommodation units that indirectly promote the heritage elements as well. The hashtag option favored the popularity of the area on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, but to a lesser extent in the direct or indirect promotion of tourism.

Keywords: social media, tourism, culture, heritage, internet

INTRODUCTION

The development of social media is a global phenomenon that affects the current generation [20]. Social media is defined as a group of Internet-based applications, built on the ideological and technological pillars of Web 2.0 [14]. Social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) are platforms where users build a profile and a network of "friends" that connect them with other users having the ability to create and share content [4]. In the context of tourism, social media has significantly changed the way tourists search for information, plan their travels, and more importantly, share their travel experiences with others.

Facebook was launched in 2004 and is currently one of the most popular sites in history. Initially, was available only for Harvard University students, but since 2006 it has been open to the general public, aged 13 and over, who could register by e-mail. This decision was immediately followed by a huge wave of recordings [1]. In 2019, Facebook had 2.9 billion monthly active users [11], [20], [9]. The promotion of a tourist destination on

Facebook facilitates creation of content among users, determines direct relationships between current and potential tourists and promotes the exchange of impressions online, which can improve the image of the destination [15], [33], [24].

Another very popular platform is Instagram. Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has developed and registered more and more users, being mainly intended for photographic content, which can be used both for marketing campaigns of various brands [35], but also for promotion of cultural tourism [19]. In the context of tourism, the purpose of online photography is to induce a positive public perception of the tourist destination [10], [31], [29], 12]. Some researchers have highlighted the value of Instagram as an effective means of communication for operators and travel agencies to promote a destination [22], [8]. Not only that has Instagram has become a vital tool in multi-destination promotion strategies, but one of the latest marketing practices of travel organizations is to involve travel bloggers and influencers on this platform in tourism promotion strategies, for example Dubai, Jordan, Scotland and Australia etc.

Twitter was created in 2006 and is considered the most popular microblogging site in the world [2], [25], [9]. Bassolas in 2011 emphasizes the value of Twitter data and metadata for analyzing user behavior, and Deddens also notes in 2011 that Twitter's original purpose was to inform people about what they are doing. However, Twitter has become one of the most important information channels about current personal and public events [23], [27], [3].

Tourism is one of the industries that has gained many benefits from the development of social media, especially in terms of tourism behavior analysis, planning and creation of marketing strategies.

In the literature analysis related with the importance of social media for tourism industry, Mirzaalian & Halpenny in 2019 found that most studies analyzed destination image [15], [18], [17], tourist satisfaction with the chosen destination [5], but also travel models and tourist flows [13], [32], [30]. Also, research that analyzed various features of tourism industry used social media as a database to forecast tourist flows to a specific destination [21], [24], but also to measure the performance and accuracy of analytical methods [11]. The variety of methods based on social media data includes the analysis of posts, feelings, trends, but also predictive analysis and spatialization of tourism phenomenon [23], [16], [8].

Social media platforms are ideal for organizations with a small marketing budget [26]. Content for posting in the form of text, images and videos is easily created and shared with mobile users [34], [28], [7]. Király in 2011 mentions a Skyscannar study that looked at how social media influences travel attitudes. The result was interesting, half of the participants said that they selected their next holiday destination after the photos shared by friends online. In addition, this study also showed that 88% of users always look at their friends' holiday photos.

Positive and negative online reviews provide information that helps tourism service/ product providers to evaluate consumer perception and appreciation in order to determinate how the tourist product / service managed to fulfill its brand promise. Negative reviews highlight situations in which a destination has failed to meet the requirements of tourists, while positive reviews provide new ideas for tourism service providers. Also, the revisiting intentions are consolidated which can lead to loyalty over time. Gilbert & Veloutsou in a 2006 study concluded that online reviews for hospitality and tourism tend to be better compared to other service industries, such as banking and finance.

METODOLOGY

The research methods in this study are based on the observation and analysis of content on 3 social platforms (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter). According to Weber 1990, the analysis of content posted on social media networks is particularly useful, allowing researchers to identify the link between text and / or visual content through a set of procedures. Content analysis is often photo-oriented and this makes possible to simultaneously study both observable features of images and latent content by examining additional elements embedded in the message [4], [10]. The decision on the methodology was based on studies conducted by Iglesias-Sánchez and his collaborators in 2020. Were also analyzed the most popular hashtags related with "Snagov" using brandmentions.com for Instagram and dash.tweetbinder.com for Twitter. The results refer to the period November 22-28, 2021.

RESULTS

Promotion via Facebook
According to the data provided by napoleoncat.com in October 2021, were 11,949,900 Facebook users in Romania, which represents 62.1% of the entire population. The majority of users are women, 50.8%, and in terms of age most users are in the category of 25-34 years (Figure. 1)
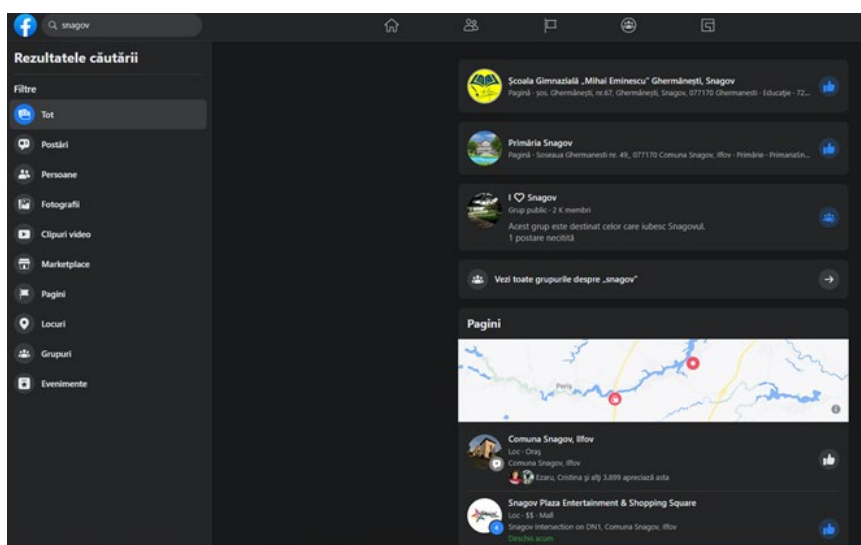

Figure 1. Search results for the word "Snagov" on Facebook

On Facebook, the promotion of the heritage of Snagov commune is reduced. There are over 130 pages that contain the word "Snagov" in their name , but only two of them deal with the promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of Snagov commune. These pages are managed by the same NGO, Snagov Foundation, which actively promotes the natural and cultural heritage of the commune, and also functions as a travel agency. For sights such as Snagov Monastery and Snagov Palace there are Facebook pages, each with about 500 likes. Regarding the groups, there are about 12 whose main purpose is to facilitate the exchange of news and announcements of public interest for the inhabitants of Snagov commune. In the analysis of the posts within these groups, the promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of the commune was not observed. As seen in Fig. 1, Facebook

platform displays the events, photos, and videos in which Snagov is mentioned as location.

Promotion via Instagram

In the tourism sector, Instagram takes the form of an online photo album that can be accessed by other users, but also a promotion channel for various tourist destinations. The advantage offered by Instagram for self-promotion is the ability to turn users into a target audience for each visual material uploaded. Tour operators have exploited this advantage, using it in promoting the image of some tourist destinations [14], [6]. According to napoleoncat.com in October 2021, there were 4,890,300 Instagram users in Romania, which means about 25.4% of the entire population. The majority of users are women, 50.2%, and the predominant age group is 18-24 years.

There are no pages dedicated exclusively to the promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of Snagov on Instagram. Tourist attractions are promoted by hotels or restaurants located here in addition to their own promotion. Examples include Snagov Club (hotel and restaurant), Lagoo Snagov (restaurant), Mood Snagov (restaurant). All these pages have between 3-6,000 followers and over 100 posts each.
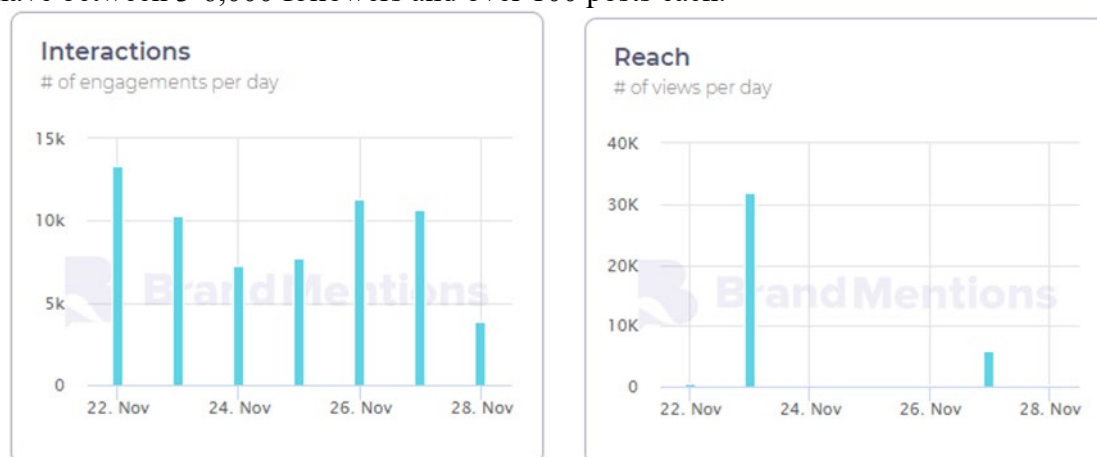

Figure 2. Analysis of hashtag "snagov" on Instagram

Another element that promotes Snagov on Instagram is the use of hashtag. There are about 20,000 posts that have the hashtag "snagov", 1,000 that have the hashtag "snagovlake" and several hundred with the hashtags "snagovmonastery", "forest". Figure 2 shows the image of the unique interactions and views of the posts that have the hashtag "snagov" between November 22-28, 2021. More than 10,000 people viewed photo or video content that was related to Snagov, which is quite a good impact among users.

Promotion via Twitter

Examining the social media activities of eight top international tourist destinations, Hays and his collaborators in 2013 found that DMOs (national tourism organizations) generally posted more often on Twitter than on Facebook. The researchers argued that Twitter algorithm was built for real-time updates and mass dissemination of information. Due to the constant updates on this platform, tweets are quickly disappearing from the news sphere. Thus, travel organizations or agencies need to constantly update their content in order to remain visible. Fig. 3 presents the results of hashtag "snagov" analysis on Twitter. It is noted that on Twitter the hashtag "snagov" is least used, which can be explained by the low number of users in Romania.

Figure 3. Analysis of hashtag "snagov" on Twitter

CONCLUSIONS

Although Snagov is not sufficiently promoted and known from a tourist point of view, social media plays an important role in the visibility of this area. In this study, three social networks were chosen, the most used when it comes to Romanian Internet users, and the ways of promoting their heritage were analyzed. It can be said that Youtube is a platform that offers a more detailed and attractive perspective in promoting Snagov and has a greater international influence, unlike other social media networks. In terms of internet user preferences, most prefer green spaces, Snagov Forest, and religious tourism, respectively Snagov Monastery.

The size of social networks increases which offers a real opportunity to promote a tourist destination. Although the heritage elements of Snagov are not promoted on these networks through accounts intended exclusively for this purpose, they are promoted indirectly through photos posted by users or through the use of hashtags. Social media platforms, especially Instagram and Facebook, which have the highest market penetration in Romania can be useful tools in promoting a tourist destination and can significantly contribute to improving the destination image.

In the future, this form of promotion will be used more and more. The consumers of a tourist product transform that area in which that product is located into a tourist destination.

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