FACEBOOK ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS: SERBIA AND THE DEFINED COMPETITIVE SET

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Abstract

Social media are widely used in tourism due to modern trends and changes pertaining to tourism demands. They offer many benefits to national tourism organizations, such as developing a direct relationship with tourists, access to tourists' feedback and the possibility of adapting the voice of communication according to the needs of individual tourists. Considering the necessity for their use, this paper presents a research on the degree of use and quality of promotional activities on Facebook by the National Tourism Organization of Serbia. In order to provide a more detailed analysis, Facebook based promotional activities of NTOs of Serbia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria were compared. The analysis covered all posts on Facebook by these tourism organizations during the period of one year. The results on the success of promotional activities presented through the engagement rate can be used to further enhance promotional activities of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia on Facebook, as well as other social media. The analysis showed that the promotional activities of the selected NTOs on Facebook are similar to one another with no major differences, even though certain improvements can be advised.

Key words: destination marketing organizations, national tourism organizations, digital marketing, social media marketing, digital promotion of tourism destinations and tourism attractions.

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АКТИВНОСТИ НАЦИОНАЛНИХ ТУРИСТИЧКИХ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА НА ФЕЈСБУКУ: СРБИЈА И ДЕФИНИСАНИ КОНКУРЕНТСКИ СЕТ

Апстракт

Друштвене мреже се у великој мери користе у савременом туризму, што је условљено савременим кретањима у туризму и променама у туристичким потребама. Њихова употреба, посебно од стране националних туристичких организација, пружа бројне предности попут развијања директне везе са туристима, приступа повратним информацијама, као и прилагођавања начина комуникације потребама појединачних корисника. С обзиром на неопходност њиховог коришћења, овај рад представља истраживање о степену употребе и квалитету промотивних активности Туристичке организације Србије на Фејсбуку. У циљу детаљније анализе, упоређене су промотивне активности националних туристичких организација Србије, Словеније, Бугарске, Мађарске, Чешке, Словачке и Аустрије на Фејсбуку. Истраживање је спроведено на основу анализе садржаја и обухваћене су све објаве одабраних националних туристичких организација на Фејсбуку у периоду од једне године. Резултати истраживања о успешности промотивних активности представљених кроз стопу интеракције се могу искористити за даље унапређење промотивних активности Туристичке организације Србије на Фејсбуку, као и на другим друштвеним медијима. Анализа је показала да су промотивне активности одабраних НТО на Фејсбуку сличне једна другој, иако се могу саветовати одређена побољшања.

Кључне речи: дестинацијске маркетинг организације, националне туристичке организације, дигитални маркетинг, маркетинг друштвених медија, дигитална промоција туристичких дестинација.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important parts of the tourism destination management process is tourism destination marketing, recognized as the key element of the future development and sustainability of tourism destinations (Pike & Page, 2014), and as such, it has become the central element of research in tourism (Fyall, Garrod & Wang, 2012; Wang & Pizam, 2011). Nowadays tourists are consuming regions as experiences without realizing that every tourism destination consists of many individual products and services, hence destination marketing is becoming all the more complex (Buhalis, 2000). Consequently, constant improvement of destination marketing organizations (DMaO) is required to achieve their business goals and maintain their competitive advantage (Kiráľová & Pavlíček, 2015). In order to keep up with the newest developments in modern marketing activities, numerous DMaOs have been integrating social media applications into their websites in order to enhance customers' travel information searching experience (Fuchs, Scholochov & Höpken, 2009; Leung, Law, Van Hoof & Buhalis, 2013; Sánchez-Franco & Rondan-Cataluña, 2010), as well as to affect the travellers' choice of tourism destination (Di Pietro, Di Virgilio & Pantano, 2012; Fotis, Buhalis &

Rossides, 2012; Narangajavana, Fiol, Tena, Artola & García, 2017; Yoo & Gretzel, 2016). As a result, social media have become the most important communication medium for DMaOs (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2006). Having in mind the importance of social media marketing for DMaOs, the aim of this paper is to present the results of the research with the focus on the degree of the use of promotional activities on Facebook by the *National Tourism Organization of Serbia*, with special attention given to the quality of the promotional activities compared to the same activities of the NTOs selected for comparison in this analysis.

Given the dynamic development of tourism in Serbia over the last twenty years, the focus of this study is on Serbia, which is selected for the analysis as an emerging tourism destination. This study aims to point out the importance of social media as the promotional tool for attracting new and retaining existing tourists in the overall competitive struggle among destinations in the global market. As an emerging tourism destination, during the time of intensive use of social networks in promotional activities in tourism, Serbia can use these tools for positioning itself more successfully in the tourism market, focusing on the existing and potential tourists which are frequently using the Internet and social networks for searching and gathering information on their travel. To compare promotional activities of NTO Serbia on Facebook, a competitive set for Serbia was selected. The criteria for defining the competitive set for the analysis in this paper is based on the following: the selection of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with similar geographical features and natural and cultural resources, and with the similar tourism destination products that are competing for the same tourism market (Armenski, Gomezelj, Djurdjev, Deri & Aleksandra, 2011; Popesku & Pavlović, 2013; Popesku, 2016). Therefore, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia were selected. In addition, Austria was chosen for comparison purposes because of its proximity to Serbia and other destinations of the competitive set (Teodorović & Popesku, 2017), as well as its constant high number or international tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2019), which defines it as a good basis for comparison, especially given its position on the market in comparison to other countries of the competitive set. For the purpose of further analysis, Facebook activities of the NTOs of these countries were compared. It is important to emphasize that Bulgaria and Slovakia do not have official NTOs. The *Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria*, established by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria, is responsible for the promotion of tourism in Bulgaria and manages the Facebook page analyzed, while the *Official Information Portal Slovakia Travel* established by the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic is responsible for the promotion of tourism in Slovakia and manages the Facebook page analyzed. Notwithstanding this fact, all selected NTOs use Facebook for promotional activities, and the analysis

in this paper, in line with the research objective, addresses this domain of the activities of the selected NTOs. The approach and the results presented are part of a wider research related to the digital marketing activities of the tourism organizations in Serbia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing activities carried out in a tourism destination have the task of supporting the most important elements of the destination such as attractions, services, facilities and human resources, by creating an attractive image of the destination, designing instruments to support that image and promoting the destination image to the target segments of visitors (Mazilu, 2012). Contemporary marketing has changed significantly compared to its beginnings, hence digital marketing communication has probably become the most advanced communication technique (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011) and an inevitable part of every NTO's marketing strategy (Law, Buhalis & Cobanoglu, 2014; Molinillo, Liébana-Cabanillas, Anaya-Sánchez & Buhalis, 2018). In addition, numerous studies have shown that tourists, especially younger ones, are more likely to trust and rely on the social media channels to make decisions (Ip, Lee, & Law, 2012; Tham, Croy, & Mair, 2013; Yang & Wang, 2015), as well as to share their own opinions, which leads to creating the destination image and destination brand awareness. This is especially important given that Millennials and Generation Z will make up most of the total tourism demand in the near future, which is essential for NTOs' proactive thinking since this demand in tourism base their travel on using information and communication technologies on the Internet, such as social media (Alčaković, Pavlović & Popesku, 2017). In response to that, social media are becoming increasingly relevant as a destination marketing tool and must be effectively managed by NTOs trying to create a sustainable competitive advantage (Mariani, Di Felice & Mura, 2016; Pike & Page, 2014).

Social media was adopted by travellers as the main platform for searching, organizing, sharing and annotating travel stories and experiences (Bilgihan, Barreda, Okumus & Nusair, 2016; Leung et al., 2013), and using them to market tourism products has proven to be an excellent strategy (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014), therefore NTOs must be able to adapt (Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013; Molinillo et al., 2018) and meet the challenges placed by new interaction and communication paradigms in the tourism sector (Roque & Raposo, 2016). Considering the fact that with the help of the Internet tourists can come from any part of the planet (Andreopoulou, Tsekouropoulos, Koliouska & Koutroumanidis, 2014; Díaz, Martín & Rubio, 2016), appropriate employment of social media activities allows for further business development of NTOs, either locally, na-

tionally or internationally. However, despite the important role of social media in NTOs' marketing activities, extant research on the use of social media in tourism has focused mainly on the use of social media by tourists, or the adoption of social media practices by tourism enterprises (Uşaklı, Koç, & Sönmez, 2019), leaving the research on the use of social media as a destination marketing tool relatively scarce (Hays et al., 2013; Mariani et al., 2016; Munar, 2012; Pike & Page, 2014; Stankov, Lazić, & Dragićević, 2010; Uşaklı, Koç & Sönmez, 2017). Considering the importance of using social media in promotional activities in tourism, especially by the NTOs, the main aim of this paper is to gather insight into the use of Facebook by the NTOs. The intention of this study is to contribute to the existing knowledge about the use of social networks for promotional purposes in tourism by following the analysis of several European NTOs' activities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research was selected as the primary method of research with the aim of classification, measurement and analysis of NTOs of Serbia and selected countries' communication with their target markets on Facebook. This type of research allows for numerous statistical analyses, as well as drawing conclusions based on the sample, and was previously applied by multiple authors researching social media communication between various DMaOs and tourists (Hays et al., 2013; Mariani, et al., 2016; Mariani, Mura & Di Felice, 2018; Roque & Raposo, 2016; Stankov, Jovanović, Pavluković, Kalinić, Drakulić-Kovačević & Cimbaljević, 2018; Uşaklı et al., 2017; 2019; Villamediana, Küster & Vila, 2019; Yang & Wang, 2015). For the purpose of research, the contents of Facebook pages of the abovementioned countries' NTOs were analysed during the period from January 1st, 2018 to December 31st, 2018. The official Facebook pages were selected using the official websites of the NTOs and the links to social media provided by them. Studies regarding the evaluation of communication between NTOs and tourists can be based on numerical analysis or focus on content analysis. Numerical analysis of the communication between NTOs and tourists measures aspects such as the number of followers the page of an NTOs has, as well as the number of comments, shares and reactions generated by users. Content analysis, on the other hand, refers to the set of procedures intended for the systematic analysis of text and includes qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative techniques include in-depth interviews, open questions and focus groups which provide high quality data, but are necessarily limited to a small sample. Quantitative content analysis provides numerical measures, either by just counting the categories or words that appear in the text or by applying semantic methods that use the actual

meaning of the words to do the analysis at the conceptual level (Jabreel, Moreno & Huertas, 2017). This research applies the numerical analysis and quantitative content analysis. In order to determine the criteria for content analysis, understand the nature of the posts and identify categories worthy of further research, posts by NTOs of Serbia were observed for a certain period of time prior to the research. Accordingly, the categories for the content analysis of the posts, as well as research questions driven from them, were determined and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories for content analysis and research questions

Category	Research question
Posts enhancing customer relationship.	Do posts by the NTO of Serbia enhance customer relationships by addressing individual users? What is the degree of enhancing customer relationships compared to the other analysed NTOs?
Call-to-action.	What is the level of interactivity of the posts by the NTO of Serbia compared to the other analysed NTOs? How often do they invite users to share their own content?
Promotional posts.	How often are the posts published by the NTO of Serbia used for promotion? Do they promote a certain website? If they do, is the website promoted an official website of the NTO or a review website? Does the NTO of Serbia use posts on Facebook to promote other social media accounts? To what extent does the NTO of Serbia promote national food or drinks, events, tourism attractions and tourism destinations? What type of tourism destination is mostly promoted: a country as a whole, the capital city or the rest of the country? What is the degree of promoting these various elements of tourism destinations compared to the other analysed NTOs?
Type of tourism promoted in the posts.	What type of tourism does the NTO of Serbia mostly promote on Facebook? What type of tourism is mostly promoted by the other analysed NTOs?
Engagement rate of the posts.	What is the engagement rate of the posts published on Facebook by the NTO of Serbia? Which analysed NTO has the highest engagement rate?

Source: Authors

The first category for the content analysis of the posts was the degree of enhancing customer relationship. The criterion for evaluating a post as the one that supported customer relationship was that the NTO communicated with one user directly and thus developed a deeper relationship with the user. That direct communication was mostly established by thanking the author of the picture for sharing it with the NTO. According to many authors, one of the greatest advantages of social media marketing is the interaction with users (Enders, Hungenberg, Denke & Mauch, 2008; Hajli, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). Therefore, the degree of interactivity of all posts was also analysed. Posts that contained a question for the users or a call-to-action, mostly asking the users to share their own photos, were categorized as interactive.

The aim of every NTO is to attract new tourists and incite them to visit the tourism destination, as well as retain the existing ones, which is achieved by promotion, therefore, the percentage of promotional posts was analysed. Promotional posts were divided into those that promote digital content, such as the official NTO website or accounts on other social media, and those that promote various elements of tourism destinations, such as national food, events, tourism attractions and destinations themselves. Furthermore, it was analysed how often the NTOs promoted the country as a tourism destination, the capital cities and some other parts of the country. In order to identify the main generators of tourism traffic from the NTOs' point of view, the types of tourism promoted in the posts were also analysed.

Considering the fact that the NTOs do not sell tourism and travel products, nor services individually, it can be hard to determine the success rate of their digital marketing activities. One of the ways of measuring interest in the tourism offer of the country as a tourism destination is to look at the number of followers of the NTO on Facebook. However, the number of followers is not the most important indicator. The content published triggers the interaction of Facebook users, and those different actions taken by the users can be measured and represent the engagement rate. There are different ways of measuring the engagement rate, however most of them include information such as the reach of the post or the number of impressions, both only available to page administrators. Because of that, the following formula, developed by Buhalis & Mamalakis (2015, p. 259), was used:

$$Engagement\ rate\ (ER) = \frac{Total\ engagement\ (likes + comments + shares)\ (TE)}{total\ fans\ (TF)}$$

According to this formula, it is possible to calculate engagement rates for all individual posts, and therefore the average engagement rates of all the posts published by the NTOs during the period of one year.

The categories for content analysis were not mutually exclusive, hence one post could fit more categories at once. Every post published by the NTOs was analysed separately according to all the above-mentioned categories established by the authors, based on the criteria used by Hays et al. (2013) and further developed by numerous authors (Huertas, Setó-Pàmies & Míguez-González, 2015; Mariani, et al., 2016; 2018; Uşaklı et al., 2017; 2019). In order to get the relevant data and assemble useful information, the observations made on the posts were converted into data containing values 1 or 0, depending on whether the post meets a certain criterion or not. The data was then introduced in and analysed by the statistical analysis software SPSS, version 23.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The observation of NTOs' Facebook pages indicates that most NTOs have more than 90% of posts published in the English language from which the conclusion is drawn that those pages are intended for international tourists. The only exception is the NTO of Bulgaria, which published almost 90% of their posts in Bulgarian. The data on the frequency of posting is presented in Table 2. If we take into consideration the overall data on the median frequency of posting on Facebook in 2018, which was 1.1 posts per day (Rival IQ, 2018), it can be concluded that only the NTO of Slovenia published frequently enough.

Table 2. Frequency of posting

	NTO Serbia	NTO Slovenia	NTO Bulgaria	NTO Hungary	NTO Czech Republic	NTO Slovakia	NTO Austria
Number of published posts	303	356	254	245	203	314	321
Median frequency of posting	0.83	0.98	0.7	0.67	0.56	0.86	0.88

Source: Authors

The highest percentages of posts enhancing customer relationship were recorded for the NTOs of Slovenia, Slovakia and Bulgaria with 7.6%, 7.3% and 6.7%, respectively. The NTO of Serbia enhanced customer relationship in 5.6% of their posts, while other NTOs enhanced customer relationships in less than 2% of their posts. It can be concluded that the posts of the NTOs were usually not used for communicating with individual users, thus also concluding that not many user-generated pictures were used for promoting the destinations. In addition, it can be assumed that the NTOs use the comments section of the posts for communication with users, thus concluding that further research is needed that would include comments as well.

Regarding the call-to-action posts, the highest levels of interactivity were noticed in the cases of NTOs of Austria, Slovakia and Slovenia, as it can be seen in Figure 1. However, only three out of the seven analysed NTOs used at least some of their posts in order to ask users to share their own photos. In order to further investigate the degree of call-to-action posts, the Chi-square test was performed. The results are presented in Table 3 and considering the low level of Asymptotic Significance, it can be concluded that there are statistically significant differences between the analyzed NTOs regarding the degree of call-to-action posts.
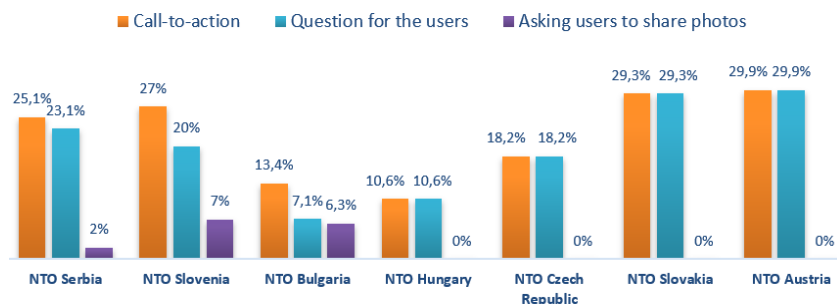
Figure 1. Call-to-action posts
Source: Authors

Table 3. Call-to-action-posts Chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	56.852[a]	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	61.369	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.105	1	.746
N of Valid Cases	1996		

Source: Authors

The analysis showed that more than 90% of all the posts by all the analysed NTOs were promotional. With regard to the promotion of digital content, the biggest differences can be seen in case of promoting certain websites, ranging from little over 20% in case of the NTO of Serbia, to more than two-thirds of posts promoting a website in the cases of the NTOs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Even though different websites were often promoted, it was determined that the NTOs rarely promoted their own official websites or accounts on other social media. Starting with NTO of Bulgaria that promoted their official website in only one post, with the NTO of Serbia and Hungary doing so in less than 3% of their posts, to the NTO of Austria that promoted their official website in staggering 48.9% of the posts. As far as the promotion of another social media account is concerned, only the NTO of Slovenia can be singled out for promoting their Instagram account in 11.3% of the posts, while other NTOs did not take advantage of this possibility.

As far as the promotion of various elements of tourism destinations is concerned, the page with the highest percentage of posts promoting national food was the NTO of Serbia that used every fourth post to promote it, while the NTO of Bulgaria did so in less than 2% of their posts. In addition, it was noticed that only a small percentage of all posts by all the analysed NTOs promoted events, indicating the minor role given to event

tourism compared to promoting other tangible and intangible tourism at-
tractions. In order to test whether there are statistically significant differences
between the analyzed NTOs considering the frequency of using the posts in
order to promote various elements of tourism destinations, the Chi-square test
was performed. The high level of Asymptotic Significance shown in Table 4
clearly indicates that statistical differences can be disregarded between the
frequency of promotional activities and the NTO itself so it does not
determine that this link should be explored by further analysis.

Table 4. Promotional-posts Chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.494[a]	6	.074
Likelihood Ratio	11.397	6	.077
Linear-by-Linear Association	.960	1	.327
N of Valid Cases	1996		

Source: Authors

The highest percentage of all posts by all the NTOs was used for pro-
moting tourism destinations, therefore the types of tourism destinations most-
ly promoted were also analysed and the data is presented in Figure 2. As it
can be seen, most of the NTOs regularly promote the country as a tourism
destination and the capital city, but they mostly promote other parts of the
country. This insight into the orientation of most of the researched countries
towards predominantly promoting parts of the country other than the capital
city can be highlighted as one of the most important qualities of the subject
analysed. The only exception to this rule was the NTO of Hungary that pro-
moted Budapest in more than half of their posts, meaning that posts pub-
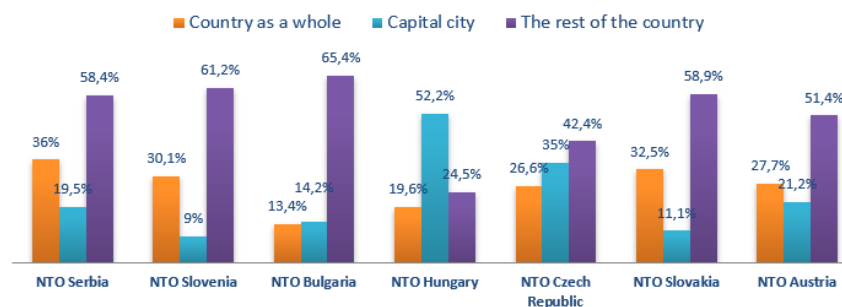lished for one year were pretty much monotonous.

Figure 2. Types of tourism destinations promoted
Source: Authors

The data on the types of tourism promoted in the posts by the analysed NTOs is presented in Table 5. As it can be noticed, most of the analysed NTOs rely largely on cultural tourism, including the NTO of Serbia. In addition, most of the NTOs promote nature-based tourism, which was the most promoted type of tourism in the case of the NTO of Slovenia and promoted to a great extent by the NTOs of Serbia, Slovakia and Bulgaria. Lastly, cities and towns are also promoted regularly, with urban tourism being the most promoted type of tourism in posts by NTOs of Hungary and Austria. All the NTOs published around 10% of posts that did not promote any type of tourism in particular, except for the NTO of Bulgaria that did so in 19.3% of the cases.

Table 5. Types of tourism promoted in the posts

	NTO Serbia	NTO Slovenia	NTO Bulgaria	NTO Hungary	NTO Czech Republic	NTO Slovakia	NTO Austria
Active tourism	10.9%	19.4%	6.7%	4.5%	7.9%	12.1%	9.3%
Wellness tourism	4.6%	9.6%	1.2%	3.3%	1.5%	4.5%	1.2%
Culinary tourism	26.4%	14.6%	2%	13.5%	17.7%	5.7%	16.8%
Cultural tourism	**38.9%**	16%	**29.5%**	46.9%	**48.3%**	**41.1%**	27.4%
Mountain tourism	12.2%	4.5%	10.6%	-	3%	6.7%	18.4%
Nature-based tourism	29.4%	**25.8%**	22.8%	9%	13.8%	26.8%	19.6%
Rural tourism	3.6%	2.5%	1.2%	-	-	1.3%	2.8%
Seaside tourism	-	5.3%	8.7%	-	-	-	-
Urban tourism	20.5%	20.8%	15%	**52.6%**	36.9%	17.2%	**29.3%**
Other	0.3%	2.5%	0.8%	1.2%	0.5%	1%	3.7%
None	11.6%	8.1%	19.3%	11.4%	11.3%	10.8%	9.7%

Source: Authors

Out of all the analysed NTOs, the NTO of Austria has the largest number of followers and was the first to join Facebook. On the other hand, the NTO of the Czech Republic joined Facebook significantly later than the other NTOs, but still has a considerable number of followers[1]. The NTO of Serbia does not have many followers, more precisely, only the NTOs of Bulgaria and Slovakia have less followers. Since the NTO of Bulgaria published mainly in Bulgarian, it can be assumed that is the reason why not so many international tourists showed interest in their Facebook page. The data on the other indicator of the success rate of the NTOs digital marketing activities, the engagement rate, is presented in Figure 3. As it can be noticed, posts by the NTO of Serbia have the highest engagement rates, even though their number of followers is not that

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[1] Number of followers was registered on February 8th 2019.

high. Thus, it can be concluded that the fan base of the NTO of Serbia is high quality, as opposed to the fan bases of the other NTOs, especially the NTOs of the Czech Republic and Austria that have the highest numbers of followers, but the lowest engagement rates.
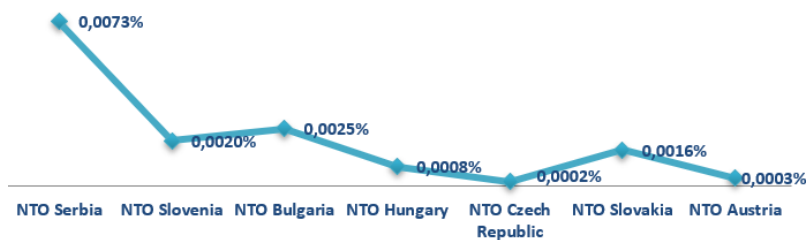

Figure 3. Engagement rates of the NTOs
Source: Authors

The total data obtained in the analysis and previously explained are summarized in table Table 6.

Table 6. Overall data of the analysis

		NTO Serbia		NTO Slovenia		NTO Bulgaria		NTO Hungary		NTO Czech Republic		NTO Slovakia		NTO Austria	
Posts enhancing customer relationship		5.6%		7.6%		6.7%		0.4%		1.5%		7.3%		2%	
Call-to-action	Question	25.1%	23.1%	27%	20%	13.4%	7.1%	10.6%	10.6%	18.2%	18.2%	29.3%	29.3%	29.9%	29.9%
	Ask for photos		2%		7%		6.3%		0%		0%		0%		0%
Promotional posts	Website		21.5%		48%		53.9%		58.4%		77.3%		75.8%		71%
	Official NTO website		2%		24.4%		0.4%		2.9%		25.6%		27.4%		48.9%
	Review website		16.5%		10.4%		4.3%		26.5%		29.6%		15.6%		5%
	Another social media account	97.7%	5.6%	95.5%	11.3%	92.5%	0%	95.1%	2%	95.1%	0.5%	97.1%	3.7%	97.5%	0.6%
	National food		24.8%		12.9%		1.6%		14.3%		16.7%		5.7%		16.8%
	Event		11.2%		10.7%		9.1%		16.3%		13.3%		6.7%		5.6%
	Attraction		49.8%		37.1%		30.3%		52.2%		42.9%		46.8%		34.3%
	Destination		97.7%		95.5%		92.5%		93.9%		95.1%		97.1%		97.2%
Type of tourism destination mostly promoted		The rest of the country		The rest of the country		The rest of the country		Capital city		The rest of the country		The rest of the country		The rest of the country	
Type of tourism mostly promoted		Cultural tourism		Nature-based tourism		Cultural tourism		Urban tourism		Cultural tourism		Cultural tourism		Urban tourism	
Engagement rate of the posts		0.0073		0.0020		0.0025		0.0008		0.0002		0.0016		0.0003	

Source: Authors

Several constraints of the research presented can be pointed out. As it was already emphasized, even though a fair part of conversation between the NTOs and the users takes place in the comments, they were not

part of this research. Secondly, it was analysed how often different types of tourism destinations were promoted, however, only the capital cities were singled out, while the other parts of the countries were put in one category. The results of the analysis showed that clearer criteria should be defined by which other parts of the country would be categorized separately. Additional research by the countries' regions can also be advised. The approach of the research presented was defined by the criteria for the selection of the competitive set for the analysis, however, future analysis could establish broader approaches to Facebook promotion, not limited to mutual competitors only but to those destinations that are among the most developed in the world. Lastly, the implementation of qualitative content analysis evaluating the frequency of the used terms within the posts using NVivo statistical software can be advised to provide insight into the most significant attributes promoted by individual tourism organization.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents the results on the degree of the use of promotional activities on Facebook by the National tourism organization of Serbia compared to the same activities by the selected NTOs. Out of the analysed NTOs, the only one with an official digital marketing strategy is the NTO of Slovenia. According to the Slovenian NTO, in accordance with their work programs for 2020/2021, it is indicated that digital marketing activities of the NTO have been upgraded with the Digital Marketing Strategy 2022 (Slovenska turistična organizacija, 2019, p. 23). However, even without the official strategy, the NTO of Serbia, as well as all the other researched NTOs, are actively using digital marketing activities.

Previous research on the use of social media in NTOs' marketing activities is limited in terms of the countries investigated, as well as the duration of the research period. There have been researches including only one country (Villamediana, et al., 2019), a few researches on the use of Facebook by the NTOs of the top 10 international tourism destinations according to the UNWTO data for the appropriate year (Hays et al., 2013; Mariani et al., 2018; Uşaklı, et al., 2017), as well as those researching representatives of NTOs from five different continents (Roque & Raposo, 2016), or leading Asian NTOs (Yang & Wang, 2015). A study by Stankov et al. (2018) needs to be highlighted as the one including multiple European countries, that is, 27 of them, and offering numerical data on the Facebook pages researched. In addition, most of the mentioned papers and studies offered data based on the research period of only a month or two. Accordingly, this paper contributes to the existing knowledge on the use of social media in NTOs' marketing activities by focusing on emerging tourism destinations instead of the leading ones, as well as by providing detailed analysis based on multiple categories for content re-

search, and extending the research period in order to make the conclusions more valid.

There are several conclusions about the promotional activities of the NTO of Serbia on Facebook that can be drawn from the data presented. First, the content could be published more often. Even though the frequency of posting is not that low, it is lower than the average frequency of posting on Facebook in 2018. Secondly, the posts rarely enhance customer relationship. The fact that all the other researched NTOs also rarely enhance customer relationship needs to be highlighted, however, the increase of the number of this type of posts can be recommended. Compared to the other NTOs, the level of interactivity of the posts by the NTO of Serbia is in accordance with the others, however they could ask for users' photos more often. If they choose to share those same photos, then that would automatically increase the number of their customer relationship enhancing posts as well. It is well known that user-generated content is a very useful marketing tool, therefore asking for and sharing users' photos is highly recommended. With regard to the promotion-related posts, more frequent promotion of the official NTO website, as well as the promotion of the other social media accounts can be recommended. It can also be noticed that national food is frequently promoted, which leads to the conclusion that it is believed that national food can increase the interest of foreign tourists. However, events are rarely promoted. Every year, many different events take place in Serbia, with a few of them being well established in the perception of foreign tourists. Nevertheless, the unusually low number of posts was dedicated to events, even to the successful ones. Research on the promotion of tourism destinations showed evenly distributed frequency of promoting three different types of destinations. Therefore, the posts published for one year were versatile enough, with all parts of the country evenly promoted. In addition, cultural tourism, nature-based tourism and urban tourism were most frequently promoted. Finally, even though the NTO of Serbia should try to attract more followers in order to present the tourism offer of Serbia to a larger number of potential visitors, it can be concluded that the NTO of Serbia has a high-quality fan base given that they frequently engage with the content provided. Overall, it can be concluded that the promotional activities of the NTO of Serbia on Facebook are in accordance with the activities of the other analysed NTOs, except for the significantly higher engagement rate which needs to be highly praised. According to the data presented, certain improvements can be advised which can be used to further enhance marketing activities of the NTO of Serbia on Facebook, as well as of other national tourism organizations.

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АКТИВНОСТИ НАЦИОНАЛНИХ ТУРИСТИЧКИХ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЈА НА ФЕЈСБУКУ: СРБИЈА И ДЕФИНИСАНИ КОНКУРЕНТСКИ СЕТ

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Резиме

Друштвене мреже се у великој мери користе у савременом туризму и постају све важнији алат дестинацијског маркетинга, па их националне туристичке организације морају ефикасно користити како би створиле одрживу конку-

рентску предност. С обзиром на бројне предности које њихова употреба пружа националним туристичким организацијама, овај рад представља истраживање о степену употребе и квалитету промотивних активности Туристичке организације Србије на Фејсбуку. У циљу детаљније анализе, упоређене су активности Туристичке организације Србије у овој области са применом промотивних активности националних туристичких организација Словеније, Бугарске, Мађарске, Чешке, Словачке и Аустрије на Фејсбуку. Садржај налога наведених НТО на Фејсбуку је анализиран у периоду од годину дана. Пре свега, утврђено је у којој мери објаве подржавају однос са корисницима и колико често позивају кориснике на интеракцију. Поред тога, истражен је степен промоције дигиталног садржаја, националне хране, догађаја, атракција и дестинација. У складу са тим, утврђено је колико често се промовишу земље као туристичке дестинације, а колико често главни градови и остали делови истраживаних земаља. Како би се утврдили главни генератори туристичког промета из перспективе истраживаних НТО, истражено је и питање врста туризма које су најчешће промовисане. На крају, представљени су резултати истраживања о квалитету дигиталних маркетинг активности истраживаних НТО на основу стопе интеракције њихових пратилаца.