

Possibilities of Using Online Tools and Artificial Intelligence in City Marketing

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Abstract: AI has had a significant impact on marketing, transforming the way companies approach advertising and customer engagement. But we are not talking only about the business sphere, marketing tools are transformed and applied also in regional conditions and in the marketing communication of cities. Artificial intelligence and its use therefore also concern this area. Its use can be found in various spheres of city services, one of these services is communication with target groups operating in the given territory. These target groups primarily include citizens, tourists, entrepreneurs, students and working people in the given area. One of the main tasks of the city is that the primary target groups are informed about current events and information is provided to them in the most modern, efficient and fast way possible, which reflects the current technological progress in marketing communication. The aim of this contribution is to point out the possibilities and ways of using artificial intelligence in the communication of cities in Slovakia. AI can help city marketers to create more targeted and effective marketing communication, improve the customer experience, and build stronger relationships with residents and visitors. By analyzing data and providing insights, AI can also help city marketers to make data-driven decisions and measure the impact of their marketing communication efforts. In general, Slovakia belongs to the countries in which the development and advancement of city marketing is difficult from the point of view of financing and lack of human resources. However, one does not always think about the fact that current online and digital tools can be beneficial only if we know about them and know how to use what they offer. In the paper, we will look at the current use of artificial intelligence in the communication of selected Slovak cities with tourists and at the possibilities that artificial intelligence brings in the field of city marketing development.

Keywords: AI, City marketing, Marketing, Regional marketing, Tourism.

1. Literature Background

1.1 City marketing

Based on the author Hanuláková (2005), we can distinguish regional marketing according to the size of the territory and its borders, for example marketing of the state, region, cities and municipalities. The country's uniqueness is symbolized by the state's marketing. Marketing at the regional level can be implemented as territory marketing within individual territorial units, and the term marketing of cities and municipalities can be understood as a management and systematic development tool. Its concept should be based on the regional development policy of the respective region. "City marketing involves engaging residents as active participants in the branding process, recognizing their role in shaping the city's image and promoting a sense of pride and attachment" (Braun et al 2013). Marketing of regions is a significant element strengthening the economy, image and identity of a given location. Marketing tools are thus used to create sustainable, competitively advantageous regions.

The character of the proposed marketing concepts for municipalities, districts, cities, regions or states differs considerably in many cases, even if the same goal and purpose of these activities are pursued. From the point of view of management in marketing, at the level of regions, it is assumed that they will be successful in the long term only if they are managed in a market-oriented way, with the fact that the needs of citizens are met. "Place branding involve the development and implementation of marketing strategies to enhance a city's image, attract visitors, and foster economic development, with each approach tailored to the unique characteristics of the city" (Guerreiro & Murphy, 2013). The primary goal of regional marketing is the comprehensive use of the potential of the given territory, economic and social development and improvement of the position within the competition. "City marketing plays a vital role in the development of local innovation ecosystems by promoting a city's attractiveness to entrepreneurs, businesses, and investors, fostering collaboration, and stimulating innovation-driven growth" (Rainisto, 2016). The implementation of marketing in the regional environment is associated with various changes. We encounter changes in values and preferences, not only on the part of citizens, but also businesses, investors, visitors

1.2 Tourism marketing

The motivation of regions to obtain certain benefits using local means and resources, with the help of various activities, can be seen as an effort to stimulate socioeconomic activities by means of marketing and at the level of regions. "Tourism marketing is greatly influenced by technological advancements, which act as catalysts of change in shaping the tourist experience and have significant consequences for destination marketing strategies" (Neuhofer et al 2012). Successful regions are primarily those that systematically develop the offer of the territory based on demand from target groups, introduce innovative processes and strive to make the territory more attractive, which by its progress helps itself as well as all entities operating in the given territory.

"Destination branding in tourism marketing has been greatly influenced by the use of social media platforms, which offer opportunities to engage with tourists, build destination reputation, and stimulate positive word-of-mouth" (Kavoura & Sakas, 2016). In contrast to marketing used in a market environment, at the regional level it is a long-term time horizon, in which it is possible to observe changes mostly over a longer time horizon.

Applying marketing to public administration is not an entirely simple process. Fast and dynamic times bring with them fast and dynamic changes. The biggest problem seems to be the lack of trained marketing workers and lack of knowledge of marketing processes. "Marketing has been greatly impacted by the rise of online review platforms, providing valuable insights into tourist experiences and influencing destination choices through user-generated content" (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2017). Regions are adapting management management systems and are increasingly oriented towards marketing and marketing communications. Communication tools, which until recently were the domain of private companies, are increasingly becoming a means of presentation and promotion for regions as well.

1.3 AI and cities

AI technology plays a crucial role in enhancing city marketing strategies by providing valuable insights and data-driven solutions. „AI is increasingly being applied in the field of tourism, enabling smart tourism initiatives that enhance traveler experiences, personalize recommendations, and improve destination management practices" (Gretzel et al 2020). With AI, cities can personalize their marketing campaigns based on individual preferences, delivering tailored messages and recommendations to potential visitors. "It has emerged as a transformative technology in tourism marketing, presenting significant implications for emerging destinations. AI-driven applications such as personalized recommendations, chatbots, and data analytics enable enhanced targeting, engagement, and competitiveness in destination marketing" (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2021). The predictive analytics capabilities of AI have helped cities forecast tourism demand, allocate resources efficiently, and plan targeted marketing campaigns, ultimately optimizing their marketing budgets.

2. Tourism in Slovakia

The Ministry of Transport and Construction is involved in the management and financing of tourism in the Slovak Republic and oversees the country's tourism policy, regional cooperation, international cooperation and state aid to tourism. The ministry cooperates with other government departments through various committees and working groups that address tourism issues. At the local level, municipalities and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) play a role in tourism development, product development and promotion. There are 49 local DMOs and 8 regional DMOs whose financial resources are subsidies and membership fees. In 2021, the ministry will establish Slovakia Travel as a national tourism agency, which will act as a marketing, promotion and tourism data centre. The Slovak Tourism Association promotes industry cooperation and advises on changes in legislation, while local and regional tourism associations contribute to quality improvement, professional training and exchange of best practices.

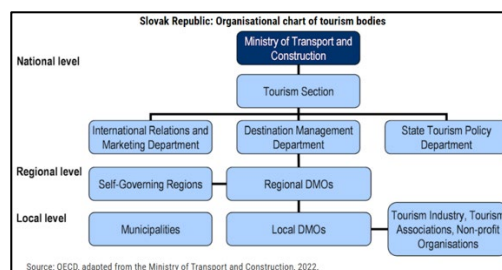


Figure 1: Organisational chart of tourism bodies

Source: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/dba2fbca-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/dba2fbca-en>

In 2022, the Slovak Republic will begin the process of redesigning its National Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan towards 2030. The impact of the pandemic, the Ukrainian War, and the establishment of the National Tourism Board created the need for this redesign. The 2030 Revised Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the tourism sector, harness its potential more effectively, eliminate regional differences and create new employment opportunities. purpose.

In the Slovak Republic, tackling the job crisis in the tourism sector and providing government support for strategies in the hospitality and catering sectors are key priorities. The country faces a situation where some workers are reluctant to return to tourism due to uncertainty and instability, choosing to remain in such sectors as automobiles and other sectors considered safer. ing. Moreover, prioritizing sustainability in tourism is paramount. The strategy aims to set clear priorities and targets for sustainable and responsible exploitation of the tourism sector potential of the Slovak Republic. The strategy will incorporate the results of the European Commission's co-development process for tourism transition pathways.

Another focus is to bring together all stakeholders involved in tourism. The Slovak Republic aims to establish new information channels at the national level using the Regional Tourist Office, the National Tourist Office, local authorities and private organizations. The 2030 Strategy will also improve communication channels between national and international stakeholders, with a particular focus on EU countries (OECD Tourism Statistics (Database), 2022).

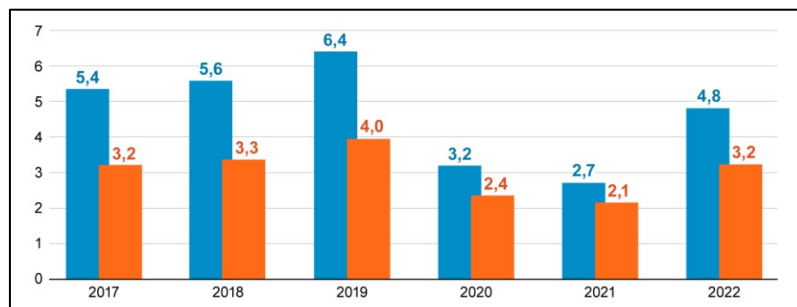


Figure 2: Visitors in tourism accommodation facilities in 2022 in mil. (Blue – visitors together, Orange – domestic visitors)

Source: <https://shorturl.at/qvAGQ>

In 2022, domestic tourists will account for two-thirds of the total, and the number of overnight guests at accommodation facilities has halved compared to the previous year, reaching 3.2 million. Only 18% of domestic travelers approached 2019 levels, just short of 2019, even though domestic travelers grew slower than foreign tourists. Over the summer, domestic travel numbers were closest to pre-pandemic levels, but did not exceed 2021 highs. In 2022, most domestic tourists visited tourist attractions such as Žilinský, Prešovský and Banskobystrický (<https://shorturl.at/qvAGQ>, 2022).

Table 1: Number of visitors and average number of overnight stay in Slovakia in 2022

2022	Number of visitors together	Average number of overnight stays
Slovakia	4 831 628	2,6
Domestic visitors	3 237 480	2,8
Foreign visitors	1 594 148	2,4
Western region		
Bratislava region	1 090 352	1,9
Trnava region	329 067	3,6
Trenčín region	291 653	3,8
Nitra region	240 368	2,7
Middle region		
Žilina region	1 087 373	2,6
Banská Bystrica region	546 690	2,9
Eastern region		
Prešov region	888 970	2,9
Košice region	357 155	2,1

Source: Own processing

During 2022, the return of foreign guests continued, the pandemic decimated foreign visitors the most. Their more dynamic growth was supported during the past year by the simplification of travel. The number of foreigners in 2022 was higher than in the previous two years combined (2020 and 2021). Their total attendance grew 2.7 times year-on-year and thus reached 1.6 million guests, almost a million foreigners were still missing from the values before the pandemic. Visitors from the European Union predominated, accounting for 81% of the total foreign visitors. Other European countries accounted for almost 11%, visitors from Asia 3.8% and America 3.5%. The structure of foreign visitors was dominated by guests from neighboring countries. The largest number of foreign visitors came from the Czech Republic (563,000) and Poland (190,000) (<https://shorturl.at/qvAGQ>, 2022).

Table 2: The most visited districts of 2022 in Slovakia

The most visited districts of 2022		
District	Number of visitors together	Average overnight stay
Poprad	609 747	2,8
Bratislava I.	570 739	1,7
Liptovský Mikuláš	468 123	2,6
Žilina	204 066	2,2
Košice I.	191 945	1,8
Trenčín	120 822	3,9
Piešťany	114 198	5,2

Source: Own processing

The most visited district in 2022 was the Poprad district. The total number of visitors exceeded more than 600,000. The average number of overnight stays reached almost 3 nights per visitor. The High Tatras, but also other attractions, can definitely take the greatest credit for the number of visitors. Within the Poprad region, the biggest tourist attractions are:

- *High Tatras* - The High Tatras mountain range is a major draw for tourists visiting the Poprad region. It offers natural beauty, with majestic peaks, alpine meadows, lakes, and picturesque hiking trails. Visitors can explore the region's landscapes, engage in outdoor activities such as hiking and skiing, and enjoy the atmosphere of the mountains. The High Tatras are a major attraction for tourists visiting the Poprad region. Enjoy the beauty of nature with majestic mountains, alpine meadows, lakes and scenic hiking trails. Visitors can explore the area's landscapes, enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking and skiing, and soak up the mountain atmosphere.
- *Spiš castle* - Located near the town of Spišské Podhradie, Spiš Castle is one of the largest castle complexes in Central Europe and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Delving into its ruins affords deep insights into the region's rich historical tapestry and rewards beholders with panoramic vistas of the surrounding countryside. Spis Castle, located near the town of Spiske Podradije, is one of the largest castle complexes in Central Europe and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Exploring the ruins provides a deep insight into the region's rich historical diversity and offers panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.
- *Aqua City Poprad* - AquaCity Poprad serves as a renowned thermal park and wellness retreat. Comprising thermal pools, water slides, saunas, spa facilities, and an array of wellness treatments. Aqua City Poprad serves as a famous spa park and wellness retreat. It consists of thermal pools, water slides, saunas, spa facilities and a range of wellness treatments
- *Tatranská Lomnica* - Tatranská Lomnica stands as an idyllic mountain resort town, serving as a gateway to these majestic peaks while affording breathtaking panoramic vistas. Tatranska Lomnica is an idyllic mountain resort that serves as the gateway to these majestic mountains and offers stunning panoramic views.
- *Štrbské Pleso* - Situated in the middle of the High Tatras, Strbske Pleso is a mountain lake that attracts nature lovers, hikers and winter sports enthusiasts alike.

3. Concrete online and AI tool used by the most visited districts in Slovakia

As part of the most visited regions in Slovakia for the year 2022, we looked at selected digital elements and artificial intelligence tools. Specifically, we were interested in whether the given region has an official website, or a subpage containing information for tourists, an application that can be used by tourists, both in Slovak and in English, the possibility of using a virtual tour of the city, or selected tourist locations, and a chatbot or virtual assistant on the website for tourists or subsite. The aim of the analysis is to find out what artificial intelligence

tools are used by the most visited regions of Slovakia for communication with tourists and visitors and for promoting their region.

Of the 7 most visited regions of Slovakia, all regions, except the Piešťany region, have an official website or sub-site for tourists, even in a foreign language. 3 districts out of 7 investigated have an application providing information in a foreign language about a given location, its attractions, the biggest attractions and containing practical information about the region. 4 districts have the option of using virtual tours of the city, its nearby locations or surrounding places representing tourist attractions. Only 2 of the investigated districts have a chatbot or virtual assistant.

Table 3: Online, AI tools used by the most visited districts in Slovakia

District	Official webpage or subpage for tourists in English	Application in foreign language	Virtual city tour or selected areas	Chatbot/Virtual Assistant
Poprad	Yes	Yes	No	No
Bratislava	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Liptovský Mikuláš	Yes	Yes	No	No
Žilina	Yes	No	Yes	No
Košice	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Trenčín	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Piešťany	No	No	No	No

Source: Own processing

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4. Discussion

The aim of the analysis is to identify how particular regions use technology to communicate with tourists and promote their destinations. The text provides a clear and concise overview of the key digital elements and AI tools that were investigated, including official websites, applications, virtual tours, and chatbots. The analysis covers multiple regions, providing a broader perspective on the use of technology in tourism promotion across Slovakia. By including a comparison between different regions, the text highlights disparities in the adoption of digital tools, offering insights into potential areas for improvement. After this analysis, a deeper analysis will be carried out using specific data specific data and metrics to support the results. Adding statistics, user feedback, or specific examples of how these tools are used would strengthen the findings. We will primarily focus on answering of questions why do some regions have chatbots while others do not? Are there any barriers to adopting certain digital tools in specific regions? While the text mentions the presence of digital elements and AI tools in the most visited regions, it does not assess the effectiveness of these tools in attracting and engaging tourists. Including data on the impact of these tools on tourism numbers or user satisfaction would provide a more comprehensive evaluation.

The use of online, digital and artificial intelligence tools will become more and more of a trend. Use of the website serves as a centralized hub of information about the city's attractions, landmarks, events, accommodations, dining options, transportation, and other essential details. Most Internet users logically search for information about a city or village on an Internet address - domain identical to the name of the city. These domains are also called intuitive. It provides visitors with a one-stop platform to access comprehensive and up-to-date information, making it easier for them to plan their trips effectively. It eliminates the need for physical brochures or guidebooks, providing quick and easy access to essential information, maps, and resources from their

computers or mobile devices. The page must leave a favorable impression, graphics must be used that are interesting, in line with the graphic visuals of the village or city, pleasing, not irritating, and above all, the page must contain up-to-date, clearly structured information. City webpages can offer personalized content based on visitors' interests, preferences, and demographics. By utilizing cookies, user profiles, or survey data, the webpage can recommend relevant attractions, activities, and events, enhancing the overall visitor experience and engagement. The main purpose of the city website should be to inform the residents and visitors of the city. Webpages can include high-quality images, videos, and virtual tours to showcase the city's attractions and landmarks. Visual content can create a more immersive experience for tourists, allowing them to get a glimpse of what they can expect and generating excitement about their visit. City webpages can integrate online booking systems for accommodations, tours, or activities, allowing tourists to make reservations directly through the platform. The truth is that the page's clarity, design and usability are closely related to the very functionality and findability of information. This streamlined process eliminates the need for multiple websites or phone calls, simplifying the booking process for visitors. Interactive maps integrated into the city webpage can help tourists navigate the city, locate attractions, and plan their routes efficiently. Features like GPS functionality, public transportation information, and suggested itineraries can further assist visitors in exploring the city with ease. Town website design needs to be mobile-friendly because audiences will access it from various devices (smartphones, tablets, desktops, etc.) That's why responsive web design is important — it is the most popular technique to make site layout reshape itself perfectly depending on the device.

The application allows tourists to easily access important information, maps and resources on their smartphones and tablets. This eliminates the need to carry physical brochures and guidebooks and allows visitors to access information anytime, anywhere, even offline. The goal is to use technology, data and apply digital interfaces to traditional infrastructure to increase efficiencies and convenience, reduce costs and improve the overall quality of life. Push notifications let tourists know about special offers, discounts, or important announcements, ensuring they are up to date during their visit. The application takes into account individual interests and preferences to suggest customized itineraries and experiences to enhance the visitor's overall journey. Technology is thrust into each of our lives where we can use smartphones and apps to discover information about traffic, transit, safety, news and weather alerts. Applications can integrate interactive maps and navigation features to provide tourists with accurate directions, suggested routes, and transportation options. Multilingual support can be provided so that tourists can access information in their preferred language. City applications can help to reduce costs, efficiently manage the use of resources and physical infrastructures and increase communication and information sharing. This feature improves accessibility so that visitors from different countries can easily understand and navigate application's content. Tourists can purchase, book and receive electronic tickets directly from the application, reducing the need for physical tickets. To be successful, an app strategy needs to start with a current pain point, either addressing internal workflow or citizen access to services or information, and then explore how a mobile app will remove current barriers. The City App showcases special offers, discounts, and special offers from local businesses, encourages tourist exploration, supports local establishments, integrates with social media platforms, and allows tourists to share experiences, photos, and recommendations. It can be shared and include features that allow tourists to provide feedback. Leave a review or rate your experience. Cities need to understand that apps can be an effective communication tool, but only if they are sensitive to making the experience a positive one for users.

Virtual city tours provide access for those with physical limitations or who are unable to travel directly into the city. Virtual tourism is an immersive experience of any location, activity or destination around the world which can come to life through technology. It is linked to virtual reality through 3D technology, audio and video narration, various images and so on. This will allow people in different parts of the world to experience the sights and landmarks of a city without actually being there. When it comes to travelling, majority of people are bounded by cost constrains and virtual tourism provides the opportunity for accessible "travelling" to everyone. This makes virtual tours a cost-effective option for tourists to virtually explore multiple cities and attractions in a short amount of time. This flexibility allows tourists to explore the city at their own pace, rest and revisit certain attractions as they please. The technology is more precise and interesting than a simple brochure or a website. It increases the probability that viewers will want to visit in-person in the real locations. Virtual city tours often use technologies such as 360-degree images, videos, and interactivity to provide an immersive experience for tourists. Users can access audio guides, text descriptions, and visual presentations to learn about the city's history, architecture, and important cultural aspects, thereby expanding their knowledge and understanding. Virtual tourism aims to create a near-life touring experience of a particular destination or tourist attraction. Visitors can take advantage of virtual tours to familiarize themselves with the city's layout, popular landmarks, and points of interest before visiting in person. This will help you create an informed itinerary

and prioritize the places you want to explore further. Virtual tourism can provide a glimpse of what a destination or tourist attraction has to offer; it can also be used to plan a future in-person trip.

Virtual walking tours can be educational and stimulating, especially for students and individuals with a keen interest in history, art, and architecture. It also allows travelers to experience and appreciate the city's sights and culture while minimizing the negative environmental impact of travel. The goal is not to replace in-person travel but complement and also reach new markets.

The city's chatbot can instantly answer tourists' questions and provide assistance at any time of the day. This allows tourists to access information and support outside of normal business hours, increasing convenience and customer satisfaction. Chatbots are also implemented in the government sector for citizens' quick access to public data and reporting complaints. Visitors can ask specific questions and receive instant answers, eliminating the need to search websites or contact multiple sources. Implementation of chatbots in various government agencies will totally transform the communication. By understanding individual needs, chatbots can suggest customized itineraries, attractions and activities to enhance the visitor experience. The use of chatbots by a city hall or a local authority remains pretty much the same as for companies. Chatbots provide an interactive conversational experience by simulating human-like conversations. It allows you to interact with tourists in a friendly and natural way, making interaction more comfortable and intuitive compared to traditional search methods or static websites. While some cities, town halls and local governments use classic chatbots, others rely on more customized tools designed to meet specific needs. They provide a platform for tourists to express their opinions, make suggestions, and report problems, helping the city improve its services and address tourist concerns. Personalized efficiently and appropriately, the chatbot can be used to energize a city or to optimize the various services offered by the city hall. Deploying city chatbots can lead to cost savings for tourism organizations. Chatbots can handle large numbers of queries at once, reducing the need for additional customer support staff. It also offers scalability as it can handle increasing requests without consuming too many resources. Thus, chatbots generally used in communities or city halls differ from those intended for a company, an e-commerce site, an NGO or a school. The bot must be able to answer questions related to the operation of the city.

5. Conclusion

A study by the World Travel & Tourism Council suggests that AI and Machine Learning could result in a \$1 trillion boost in global economic activity from the travel and tourism sector by 2025. The study found that AI-enabled features such as smart personalization, automated customer service, voice recognition, virtual reality, and facial recognition are all expected to become more prevalent shortly. AI technology is helping to streamline operations for businesses in the travel and hospitality sector. For example, AI-driven systems can be used to automate processes such as customer service, hotel management, marketing and sales, air ticketing, and baggage handling. These systems can save businesses time and money while providing improved services to their customers (Angry Nerds, 2023). Both Slovakia and many other countries have the potential to become attractive tourist destinations. Realising this potential is a real challenge, but innovation, smart specialization and building 'smart' competitive advantage provide opportunities to create new tourist destinations. Both Slovakia and many other countries have the potential to be attractive travel destinations. Realizing this potential is a major challenge, but innovation, smart specialization and building "smart" competitive advantages offer opportunities to create new destinations (Borseková et al, 2017).

Artificial intelligence in the travel industry provides historical and real-time insights quicker than manual data analysis. Travel intelligence can provide a single source of information and reveal problems with the customer's experience before it becomes a significant issue.

It is obvious that artificial intelligence technology is already having a significant influence on the travel and tourism sector, and this trend may last for years to come. Travelers should anticipate more effective service and more individualized recommendations for their forthcoming journeys as AI-driven capabilities become more widespread. Artificial intelligence (AI) applications in the travel and tourism sector have fundamentally altered how consumers plan, purchase, and enjoy travel. Access to enormous volumes of data about locations, costs, routes, and experiences has been made easier by AI. Establishing a welcoming atmosphere with customized advice. AI-powered advancements optimize the travel experience, making it quicker and more effective. Examples include smart booking assistants, facial recognition technology, and luggage management systems. In conclusion, using internet and AI technologies to sell cities to visitors allows for improved user experience,

focused marketing, and data-driven decision making. This promotes open communication, teamwork, and environmentally friendly practices while enabling cities to change with emerging trends.

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