

Use of online Space and Social Media in Hotel Resorts

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Abstract: The aim of the paper is to verify the individual aspects of hotel online communication by analysing the online activities of hotel resorts and their online activities. The subjects of the research were hotel resorts, which are defined as accommodation facilities that meet the requirements for the hotel category of classification level 3* - 5*. The individual resorts were identified using the Booking.com portal, followed by mapping data. The subject of the investigation was the website content, online activities and services of the website and social media activities. We used content analysis and statistical tests, in particular the correlation coefficient, coefficient of determination or R^2 reliability value, Pearson's correlation coefficient and Spearman's rank. We looked at the intensity of online activity, aspects of social media activity, and other aspects of online communication. The most significant conclusion is the importance and impact of communication messages on social networks. We have concluded that the increased frequency of posts leads to a higher number of followers. We have also confirmed that video posts are more successful in attracting subscribers/followers than other posts.

Keywords: Online communication, Hotel resorts, Social media, e-Marketing

1. Introduction

The importance of online communication of companies, their brand and their products has been gradually growing since the widespread use of corporate websites. This is no different in the hotel industry (Law, 2019; Ibrahim, 2016; Schmidt, Cantalopsand dos Santos, 2008). Then, in the last ten to fifteen years, the importance of social networking and social media has gradually increased. The fact that in the hospitality segment, word of mouth (Litvin, Goldsmithand Pan, 2008; Kandampullyand Suhartanto, 2000) is one of the main aspects that play a role in a customer's decision underlines the importance of online communication and social media in this field of business. Social networks have facilitated the rapid production and dissemination of information (Gao and Keller, 2023). Hotels can achieve certain goals through online communication, mainly increasing hotel awareness, improving their image, and increasing customer satisfaction and trust, or brand loyalty (Krizanova et al, 2019). The content and presence in the online environment and social networks may vary according to the hotels' classification levels (stars) and the type of social network (Cunha, Correia and Costa, 2021).

1.1 Tourist behaviour

The evolution of the tourists' behaviour is a main driver of the hotels' activity, of course. Self-organised trips are an increasing phenomenon (Fernández-Herrero, Hernández-Maestro and González-Benito, 2019). That phenomenon, together with several enabling aspects, is changing the sales pattern in the hotel industry (Blal, Singal and Templin, 2018; Rishi and Gaur, 2012) and placing more emphasis on direct presentation to and communication with consumers (see, e.g., Cunha et al, 2021; Krizanova et al, 2019; Christou, 2011). Travel agencies are preferred rather by off-season tourists with longer stays (Boto-García, Zapico, Escalonilla and Pino, 2021).

Online booking availability has secured valuable competitive advantages for the tourism industry, such as lower distribution costs, increased tourist delight, and efficiency (Ghaedi, 2022). The frequency of online booking is rising, even if there are still some barriers or perceived risks related to online payments (San-Martin, Jimenez and Liebana-Cabanillas, 2020). Tourists who use 'new' technologies, such as the internet, SMART phones and social media, strongly prefer online booking (Boto-García et al, 2021).

1.2 Social Media and e-Marketing in the Hotel Industry

Some authors still consider email marketing efficient for addressing many potential customers (Araújo, Pires, Delgado and Santos, 2023; Floričić, 2018; Tse, 2017). However, this depends on the frequency of the messages sent and the willingness of the recipients to open and read the mail (Chaparro-Peláez, Hernández-García and Lorente-Páramo, 2022). According to Lithuanian researchers (Labanauskaitė, Fiore and Stašys, 2020), tourists consider websites, e-mail and social media as the most important communication tools for hotels.

Hotels use social media often only as a promotional instrument rather than to create an interaction (Sánchez-Casado, Artal-Tur, and Tomaseti-Solano, 2019), which is not considered the right way (Garrido-Moreno, García-Morales, Lockett and King, 2018). Using social media networks to interact with hotel guests and facilitate interaction among them at any time and anywhere is an important component of future marketing strategies (Jung, Tom Dieck and Chung, 2018). Interactive media could enhance the attractiveness and effectiveness of the company's relationship marketing effort (Chan and Guillet, 2019). According to Sánchez-Casado et al (2019), relational e-marketing tools open new avenues for marketing policies in hospitality.

Social media influence the way consumers search, decide, and book hotels (Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017). For hotels, they can play an important role in enhancing customer engagement (Sánchez-Casado et al, 2019). We should admit that the hotels' activities in social medias do not automatically increase traveler satisfaction and purchase intentions (Aluri, Slevitch and Larzelere, 2015). Yet, social media marketing is increasingly seen as one of the main ways of communicating with consumers (Silva, Silva and Rodrigues, 2024).

2. Methods

2.1 Data Collection

The subjects of the research were hotel resorts, which are defined as accommodation facilities that meet the requirements for the hotel category of classification level 3* - 5*. The identification of the resorts was based, among others, on their designation in the offer or on their own websites. It was based on the definition of a hotel resort as a full-service lodging facility that provides access to or offers a range of amenities and recreation facilities to emphasise a leisure experience (Brey 2011) and on the Official Unified Classification of Accommodation Facilities of the Czech Republic. The surveyed hotel resorts are located in the Bohemian part of the Czech Republic. A full statistical survey (investigation) was carried out in the defined area. The individual resorts were identified using the Booking.com portal, followed by map data. Entities that did not meet the definition of a hotel resort were not included in the study population. The analysis set included 77 cases. The subject of the study was website content, online activities and services of the website, and social media activities.

Data on the surveyed hotel resorts was collected from the resorts' websites and social media profiles. The analysis took place over six months in 2024. Namely, data was collected on the booking option on the resort's website, the newsletter subscription option and the basis for potentially identifying the focus on specific market segments. We analysed activity on Facebook and Instagram as the most frequently used social networks in the hotel industry (Zavistic, Zavistic and Bernardic, 2022). The social media profiles were evaluated mainly to determine the number of followers/subscribers and the frequency of posts. For this analysis, post frequencies were calculated as an average value per month.

2.2 Data Analysis

The content analysis method was used to analyse the content of the websites and communication posts. Based on this method, the target customer segments of the studied hotel resorts were identified. In identifying the target segments, the following eleven groups were considered: businesses; young and single; families with children; groups of friends; families without children of higher economic standards; individuals of higher social groups; individuals of higher social groups; senior citizens; women's groups; men's groups; extended families (weddings). The target segments were identified either by specific messages on the website, by the products offered or by the content of messages on social media. Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and R Commander tool were used for statistical analysis. In particular, the correlation coefficient, coefficient of determination or R^2 reliability value, Pearson correlation coefficient and Spearman's rank were used to test the effect of the frequency of hotel resort social media posts on the number of followers.

3. Results

3.1 Hotel Resorts' Online Activities

All explored hotel resorts have their websites. 91% of the resorts surveyed offer online booking. 66% allow online booking on their website. Another 25% allow online booking through a partner entity. 30% of resorts allow newsletter subscriptions (NL). 87% of resorts that have a newsletter offer online booking. 83% of resorts have a Facebook profile, 69% of resorts have an Instagram profile, 62% of resorts have both a Facebook and Instagram profile. The correlation of resort location with post frequency was not confirmed. The overall analysis revealed

a focus on up to nine customer segments. The correlation of targeting with the possibility of receiving newsletters or the frequency of social media posts was not proven.

3.2 Frequency of Facebook Posts And Number of Followers

In the case of the posts on Facebook, we have identified a significant dependence of the number of subscribers on the number of published posts of any kind - $r = 0.43206$; $R^2 = 0.1867$ (see Figure 1). Similarly, we have confirmed the dependence of the number of subscribers on the number of published video posts on Facebook, showing an even closer dependence - $r = 0.69761$; $R^2 = 0.4867$ (see Figure 2).

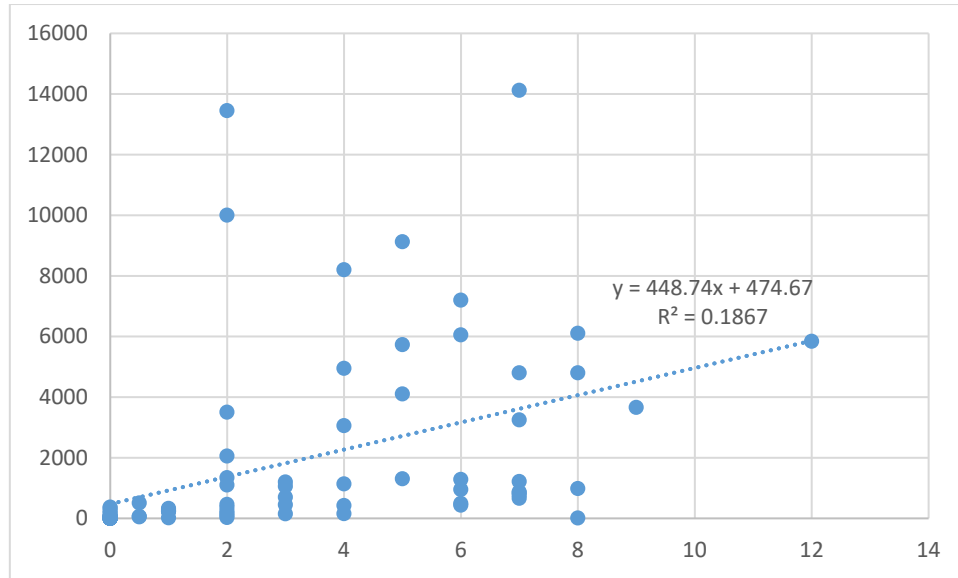


Figure 1: Facebook posts and number of followers

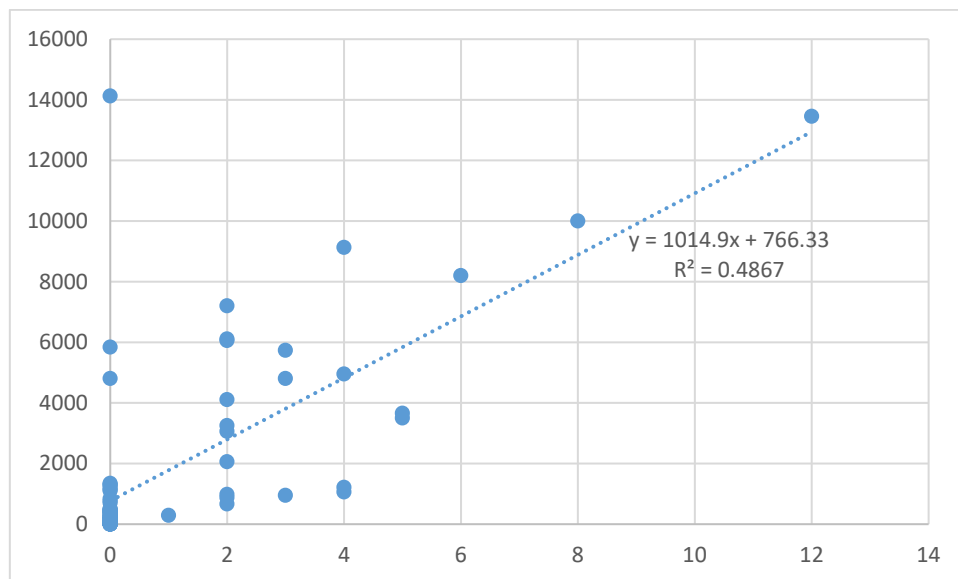


Figure 2: Facebook video posts and number of followers

3.3 Frequency of Posts on Instagram and Number of Followers

Regarding the posts on Instagram, we have identified a significant dependence of the number of followers on the number of published posts of any kind - $r = 0.41501$; $R^2 = 0.1722$ (see Figure 3). Similarly, we have confirmed the dependence of the number of followers on the number of published video posts on Facebook, showing an even closer dependence - $r = 0.60095$; $R^2 = 0.3611$ (see Figure 4).

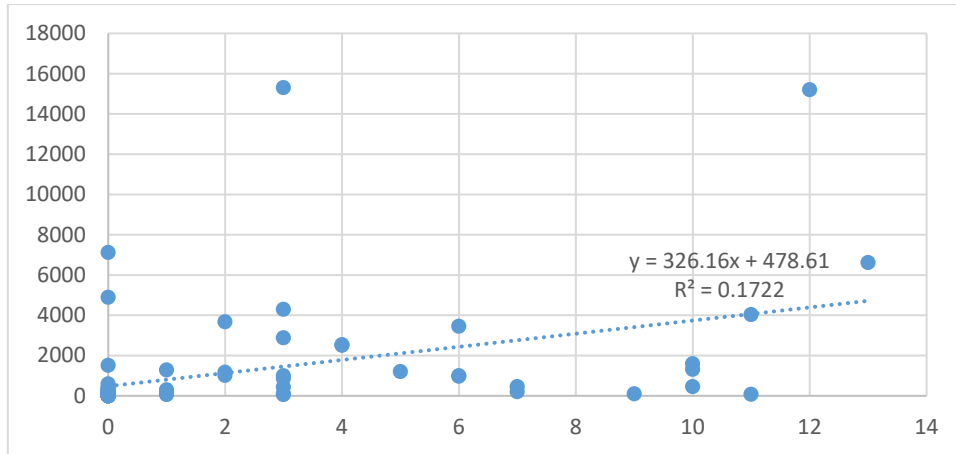


Figure 3: Instagram posts and number of followers

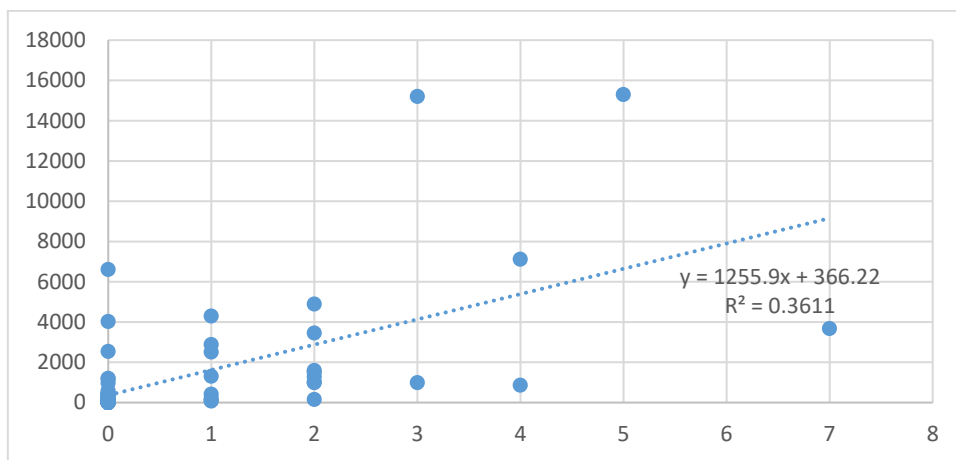


Figure 4: Instagram video posts and number of followers

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The surveyed hotel resorts make only limited use of email marketing in the form of sending a regular newsletter to subscribers. Email marketing and newsletters are considered to be important communication tools, as already mentioned above in the theoretical backgrounds) if sufficient attention is paid to design, size, content and other features (Hudak, Kianičková and Madleňák, 2017). While Aydin (2020) concluded (Mota, Borges, Braga and Brás, 2023; Labanauskaitė, Fiore and Stašys, 2020; Araújo, Pires, Delgado and Santos, 2023; Floričić, 2018; Tse, 2017) that facility location has an effect on overall interaction, in our case we did not confirm the effect of location on post frequency. The possibility of online booking for the vast majority of hotel resorts is consistent with the findings of a study of the benefits of online booking for hotels (Ghaedi, 2022) and the evolution of tourists' preferences (Boto-García et al, 2021).

Social media usage has a positive effect on brand loyalty and e-WOM (Dülek and Aydin, 2020; Seo, Park and Choi, 2020) and improve booking intention (Gomez-Suarez and Veloso, 2024). Aydin (2020) found out the 5-stars hotel had mostly not adopted social media in their communication. In our case, 90% of hotel resorts already have a social media profile. We have not analysed the regularity of posting on Facebook and Instagram and so omitted conclusion of several studies mentioned e.g. by Nummelin (2015) or Kostyk and Huhman (2021) that showed that too irregular posting lowers the Instagram followers' engagement. Iborra Meseguer (2023) suggested there is an optimal frequency of posting to increase customers' engagement levels. Moreover, this optimum varies among particular social media. In our case, we have only concluded that the increased frequency of posts leads to a higher number of followers. We have also concluded that video posts are more successful in attracting subscribers/followers than other posts, which is consistent with the findings of Wagner, Baccarella, and Voigt, (2015) on the text-image-video post attractiveness hierarchy and the suggestion the videos are preeminent among social media content in terms of cost, time and effectiveness (Coronel, 2023). They may also reinforce customers' interest in sharing their own short videos (Polat, Çelik, Ibrahim and Köseoglu, 2023). In further research, it would be useful to observe whether the low level of use of newsletters by hotels is an isolated

or more widespread phenomenon in view of the emphasised continuing importance of e-mail marketing. In light of some of the findings of previous research (e.g., Chaparro-Peláez, Hernández-García and Lorente-Páramo, 2022; Floričić, 2018), the influence of the regularity with which communications are sent must be taken into account. An increasing number of followers based on an increased frequency of posts implies higher customer engagement, but this observed experience needs to be linked to an examination of conversion to hotel bookings. The research should, of course, be extended to examine the impact of responses to customer reviews.

Hotel managers should not underestimate the impact of communication frequency. They should post regularly and pay attention to the possibility of reactions to follower posts. As the results show, video posts are more attractive. It is also advisable to encourage user-generated videos.

AI Statement: We have not used any AI tool in the development of this paper.

Ethics Statement: We did not need any ethical clearance for our research. All data used in the research is publicly available.

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