

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PROMOTIONAL PURPOSES IN TOURISM: THE EXAMPLE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS

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ABSTRACT

Today, with the development of technology, the methods, tools and techniques used by public and private sector organizations in public relations have begun to change. In addition to the private sector, public institutions and organizations also actively use social media. It has become obligatory to use social media to share the work done with the public, create public opinion, inform the public and get the support of the public. How social media is actively used for communication, interaction, feedback and persuading the target audience is also important. Institutions that actively use social media have a greater chance of being successful today. Institutions need to give more importance to social media, whose agenda-setting features and influence are increasing day by day. This study aims to reveal how social media is used for promotional purposes. For this purpose, how the TR Ministry of Tourism uses Facebook, Instagram and Youtube has been examined. Pages were scanned between September and October 2022 to reveal how and for what purpose the Ministry uses these tools. The data obtained by creating a coding scale were analyzed and the findings were interpreted. As a result of the study, it has been determined that the ministry uses social media as a one-way communication tool within the framework of informing the public, the routine activities of the ministry are shared on social media and it is not used for promotion of the country's historical, cultural and touristic values.

Keywords: TR Ministry of Tourism, social media, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube.

INTRODUCTION

Today, rapid changes in social and economic fields, depending on the developments in the field of technology, affect business life and some of the professional knowledge loses its validity over time. In addition, the new information that emerges changes the functioning of the systems, making the change necessary. It is not possible for businesses that cannot keep up with the changes in today's business environment to maintain their competitive structure. The most effective way to keep up with change is "education" (Lesinger Şahoğlu & Yinal, 2019).

It is now much easier and cheaper to obtain information in a world that has become a global village. People actively use the internet to shop, take a vacation, and visit countries with tourism and cultural values. People who follow the comments about the holiday destinations and the evaluations about the hotels on the internet, therefore on social media, make their decisions based on the comments they read and the ratings of the evaluated hotels. Therefore, the private sector and public institutions and organizations operating in the field of tourism have to update and follow their websites and social media pages more (Özdemir, 2003).

The tourism sector has grown rapidly in recent years and is an important source of income, especially for developing countries such as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The tourism sector, with its features, carries developed industrial centres to rural centres and significantly contributes to rural areas' development. Tourism, which has vital importance throughout the world, is an important industry for many countries in terms of ensuring peace between countries, contributing positively to the balance of payments, and employment opportunities and contributing to the area where the promotion is carried out. (Avcikurt and Erdem, 2005).

Giving the necessary importance to tourism, which is very important in supporting and developing the economies of the countries, imposes responsibilities on both public and private sector organizations. It is important to use social media activities while fulfilling this responsibility. Because social media, which is easily accessible to everyone, needs to be used consciously (Safakli, 1998). Social media, which has become an important tool to reach the target audience, also has a huge promotional role. Social media, which is important for reaching the target audience, also offers the advantage of two-way communication. Social media also provides organizations with great tips for measuring the reaction of their audience. Organizations can guide their work by reviewing the complaints, suggestions, and positive or negative comments from the target audience or the public through social networks, taking action by considering the response and following the acclaimed works from the critics. The

correct use of social media, which is so important in both the private sector and public institutions, provides benefits to institutions (Çavuşoğlu & Çavuşoğlu, 2018).

This study reveals the use of social media for promotional purposes. The TR Ministry of Tourism and Environment was chosen for the study. A coding chart was created to determine how the Ministry uses social media (Facebook, Instagram and Youtube). The coding chart was created by scanning the literature and examining the social media contents of the ministry. Content analysis was made through the questions created, the data obtained were evaluated and the findings were interpreted.

PROMOTION AND TOURISM CONCEPTS

The phenomenon of tourism is a system that concerns and affects every part of society. The desire of people to see different places and the desire to know different cultures can be evaluated within the tourism system, as well as travels organized for very different purposes from time to time, finding themselves in the definition of tourism. People have been travelling to many different places for many different purposes over the years. Among them are sea-sand-sun tourism just for vacation and relaxation, as well as cultural tours that help to see different regions, values and social differences. However, today's changing world standards and expectations have also directly affected tourism and given new forms to tourism. These reasons are; the development of industry, increase in welfare level and increase in per capita national income (Kazancı, 2011).

According to Ryan, many approaches can be taken to understand the nature of tourism. The first of these is the acceptance of tourism as an economic activity and industry (Ryan, 1991). Or tourism according to Konstanty; is the sum of phenomena and relationships created by travels that do not aim to earn income by living in a place or area (Konstanty, 1993). The search for a definition of tourism has become a subject that is more and more dealt with as time passes, depending on the rapid technological development, and political and economic transformation in the world. Emphasizing the benefits of tourism beyond the use of leisure time are emphasized in the definitions of tourism. (Rızaoğlu, 2004).

It is possible to see a copy of Konstanty and Ryan's point of view, especially considering the functioning and service understanding of the tourism sector in today's TRNC. Uneven construction, the fact that infrastructure services cannot meet the potential in tourism activity, the total number of tourists rather than the service standard and the plans for profit maximization have started to drag the country's tourism into a bottleneck. Although there are many different opinions about whether business travel activities can be evaluated within the scope of tourism; If the purpose of the trip is to generate income and there is no activity such as turning it into reality, travel for business purposes should be considered within the scope of tourism. For example; to finalize a job or for a conference, panel, congress, etc. Travels for activities are among the tourism activities (Özdemir, 2003).

To promote tourism and cultural values, to raise awareness, and to arouse special interest. Tourism includes social, psychological, cultural and economic interests that facilitate the purchase of goods and services by tourists, provide information and create an image in the mind. The field of tourism in Belgium and abroad is a media event. Every travel facility and organization has specific goals. These organizations aim to promote the touristic assets of the country to achieve their goals. The aims and results of tourism promotion are presented as follows (Tolunguç, 1990):

- If there is an increase in domestic tourism, it can increase the growth rate.
- It helps to remember names, events and places while conveying information.
- It can create a long tradition of tourist migration to the country.
- It can reduce the impact of various negative rumours on tourism.

Social Media and Tourism Relationship

Thanks to the internet, it is possible to reach a large number of target audiences in a short time, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the target audience with the company or product can be learned in a short time, and the ability to train, create and transmit information, target the target audience in a short time at a lower cost. As the internet changes how businesses and brands communicate with consumers, social media influences how business is run in many ways. Businesses use social media to reach existing customers, gain new customers, build trust, increase brand awareness and protect brand image (Mills, 2012).

Social media can create information exchange among social units such as individuals, groups and organizations, provide users with the opportunity to share information, thoughts, interests and information, and individuals can create content on social media. Social media, which is considered to be a wide-ranging network that includes blogs, chat rooms, consumer e-mail, product and service evaluation websites, social networking sites, and forums, has a wide range of influences from shopping to politics, from sports, support to activism, from cultural events to voting

behaviour. and the political information process, it shapes many activities and ways of doing business and affects many attitudes and behaviours in social life (Pelenk, 2011).

Social media, which provides an environment where participants can communicate naturally, sincerely and mutually, is also a medium where users can produce content. Social networks are online platforms where users can create profiles, share their comments on written information, share information and maintain communication with people they are connected to (Şafakli & Erkut, 2002).

Social media has greatly affected the tourism and travel industry due to the internet, which has changed the private sector as well as public institutions and organizations in terms of business conduct. Social media has become one of the most effective tools for tourism businesses. Individuals who want to choose any place as a destination can realize their holiday planning through social media, access the information they need, and obtain opportunities such as searching, finding and sharing the information they need for the selection of tourism-related products and destinations (Dina & Sabou, 2012).

People who will participate in touristic activities share their travel experiences, the photos and videos they took during their travels, and the comments they made about their travels on social networking sites. Tourists, who show great interest in shared experience and information, make their travel decisions by being influenced by these shared contents (Atadil, 2011).

In Türkcan's study (2017), 47.5% of the participants stated that they would share their positive or negative experiences about the touristic accommodation facility they preferred through social networks. They listed them as sharing photos and videos that would be pleasant.

In a study conducted by Çakır and Yalçın (2012) in 33 countries, it was researched how people are affected when making holiday and travel decisions. In the study between 2009 and 2011, it was found that people cared most about friend recommendations with 27% when making their holiday decisions, secondly, they used the internet with a rate of 24% in all three years, thirdly personal experiences, fourthly tour agencies, and fifthly brochures. /magazine, and sixthly, they were affected by the media. In another similar study, the effect of social media on holiday preferences was investigated, and it was determined that 32.3% of young people were affected by social media before and changed their holiday schedules.

Another study was conducted with 181 academicians. It accounts for 26% of the academics' behaviours about choosing a holiday destination, 27% of their behaviour about choosing a travel agency, and 28% of their behaviour about choosing an accommodation business. social media has been determined to represent (Aymankuy et al., 2013).

However, it has also been revealed in the studies that social media is not used consciously and is result-oriented in tourism activities. In the study on this subject, it was determined that only 48 of the tourism directorates in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have Facebook sites. In the study, it has been determined that the directorates do not use the Facebook site, which is one of the most important social media tools, enough, and the Facebook site is mostly used to share photos of the destination, to direct them to their web sites, and to provide contact information such as address and telephone (Çavuşoğlu & Çavuşoğlu, 2018).

The TR Ministry of Tourism, which makes its official promotion via <http://turizm.gov.ct.tr/>, does not promote official tourism through social media, except for a few special applications. There is a page called "TRNC Ministry of Tourism and Environment" on Facebook and Instagram regarding the promotion of TRNC on social media.

It is important that institutions operating in the tourism sector conduct studies by taking the practices of the most visited countries for tourism purposes as an example. Getting tourists to share their experiences on social media will be a real promotional activity and will encourage and accelerate the arrival of other tourists. Encouraging tourism consumers to share their travel and accommodation experiences on social networking sites will positively change the perspective of the business and gain new customers. Following social networking sites closely will prevent possible negative sharing for businesses and will help prevent the loss of potential customers.

METHOD

This study aims to reveal how the TR Ministry of Tourism uses Facebook, Instagram and Youtube, which are social media tools. Qualitative and quantitative content analysis was conducted to determine how the Ministry uses social media. Document analysis/analysis was carried out in the research, which has a descriptive character in the scanning model (Yıldırım & iimşek, 2011). Content analysis is a research technique that makes objective, systematic and quantitative descriptions of the specific (written or explicit) content of the communication. Content

analysis is the classification and summarization of verbal and written data, and categorizing of certain variables or concepts in the data to measure and make sense of them (Böke, 2009).

The questions of the study were formed as follows:

- What is the distribution of the messages shared by the TR Ministry of Tourism and Environment?
- Which visuals does the Ministry use on social media?
- What is the distribution of the Ministry's domestic and international activities?
- What are the contents of the messages shared on social media?
- Does the Ministry use social media as a two-way communication tool?
- Does the Ministry use social media for promotional purposes?

The study was limited to September-October 2022. Since the contents shared by the Ministry in other months were not different, 2 months were chosen randomly. In these 2 months, how the TR Ministry of Tourism and Environment uses Facebook, Instagram and Youtube, whether there are promotional activities, the content of the photos and texts used, the number of likes, and the content of the comments were examined by the content analysis method. The data obtained with the coding scale consisting of the above questions were analyzed and the findings were determined.

RESULTS

The official Facebook page of the TR Ministry of Tourism and Environment was opened in 2011. The Ministry's Facebook page includes the purpose, mission and general information of the TR Ministry of Tourism and Environment. The Instagram account of the TR Ministry of Tourism and Environment is approved. In the distribution of the Ministry's social media tools and the number of messages, in September and October 34.5% (n=96) were on Facebook, 44.6% (n=124) on Instagram and 20.9% (n=58) were on YouTube. shared has been found. A total of 278 messages were shared in 2 months. Most messages were shared from the Instagram account (Table 1).

Table 1: social media Tools and Number of Messages

	F	%
FACEBOOK	96	34,5
INSTAGRAM	124	44,6
YOUTUBE	58	20,9
TOTAL	278	100

The Ministry shared the most photos with 61.5% (n=171) on social media (Facebook, Instagram and Youtube). Secondly, 33.1% (n=92) video was shared, thirdly 3.2% (n=9) poster, and fourthly 2.2% (n=6) without visual elements (Table 2).

Table 2: Images Used

	F	%
PHOTO	171	61,5
VIDEO	92	33,1
BANNER	9	3,2
WITHOUT VISUAL	6	2,2
TOTAL	278	100

Table 3: Distribution of Images

	PHOTO		VIDEO		BANNER		VISUAL		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
FACEBOOK	76	79,2	13	13,5	4	4,2	3	3,1	96	100
INSTAGRAM	95	76,6	21	16,9	5	4,0	3	2,4	12,4	100
YOUTUBE	0	0	58	100	0	0	0	0	58	100
TOTAL	171	61,5	92	33,1	9	3,2	6	2,2	27,8	100

Photographs were used the most in social media. The photos were shared the most on Instagram by 76.6% (n=95), and secondly by 79.2% (n=76) on Facebook. While the video took first place on YouTube with 100% (n=58), the poster was first place with 4.0% (n=5) on Instagram, and the second social media tool that used the most posters was Facebook with 4.2% (n=4). It is seen that the Ministry uses the most photographs in its posts (Table 3).

International and domestic events were also shared on social media. It is seen that most activity is done domestically. While domestic activity was shared by 83.9% (n=104) on Instagram, it was shared by Facebook with 78.1% (n=75) in the second place and 79.3% (n=46) on Youtube in the third place. While Facebook was the social media tool with which international activities were shared the most with 21.9% (n=21), Instagram took second place with 16.1% (n=20) and YouTube was the third with 20.7% (n=12) (Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of Domestic and International Activities

	DOMESTIC		INTERNATIONAL		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
FACEBOOK	75	78,1	21	21,9	96	100
INSTAGRAM	10,4	83,9	20	16,1	124	100
YOUTUBE	46	79,3	12	20,7	58	100
TOTAL	22,5	80,9	53	19,1	278	100

Table 5: Content of Shared Messages

	FACEBOOK		INSTAGRAM		YOUTUBE		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Theatre	4	4,2	4	3,2	4	6,9	12	4,3
Festival	12	12,5	16	12,9	13	22,4	41	14,7
Conference	16	16,7	23	18,5	8	13,8	47	16,9
Visit	37	38,5	45	36,3	18	31,0	100	36,0
Historical	4	4,2	4	3,2	1	3,4	10	3,6

CELEBRATION/MEMORIAL MESSAGES	10	10,4	10	8,1	3	5,2	23	8,3
COMPETITION	3	3,1	3	2,4	0	0	6	2,1
OPERA/BALLET	3	3,1	4	3,2	1	1,7	8	2,9
OTHER	3	3,1	9	7,3	3	5,2	15	5,4
EXHIBITION	4	4,2	6	4,9	6	10,4	16	5,8
TOTAL	96	100	124	100	58	100	278	100

The Ministry shared the highest number of visit messages on social media. Messages visited by tourism-related associations, organizations, institutions and organizations or visited by the ministry ranked first with 36.0% (n=100). The Ministry was second with 16.9% (n=47) conference, third with 14.7% (n=41) festival/fair, fourth with 8.3% (n=23) congratulatory/commemorative messages, fifth with 5.8% (n=16).) and exhibitions. Other (non-tourism-related party visits and speeches) activities were respectively 5.4% (n=15) sixth, theater activities 4.3% (n=12) seventh, historical studies 3.6% (n=10) eighth, opera and ballet efficacy of 2.9% (n=8) ranked ninth. Competition events are among the messages shared on social media, with the latest 2.2% (n=6) (Table 5).

It was determined that comments were made on various subjects on the social media usage pages of the Ministry. While most comments (n=191) were made on Facebook, the second (n=85) comments were made on Instagram. In the content of the comments, the recruitment of the Ministry (in archaeology, restorer and business fields) %

Questions and comments about 34.7 (n=96) were found. In the comments made, it was stated that the interviews were not fair in general, the exams were announced late, and the Ministry was not very sensitive about this issue. The highest number of comments were shared on Facebook. While the number of people who did not like the work

of the Ministry and the messages shared on social media and criticize it was 44 on Facebook, it was 32 on Instagram. The number of people who commented on the Ministry in terms of criticism was 27.5% (n=76) in total. Criticisms are as follows:

- "The participation of the minister in a technology-related opening, the visit of institutions not related to tourism", where the Ministry conducts studies outside the subject,
- For those who do not like the messages shared on their social media account, "You could find better images, for God's sake, what is this",
- Criticism was expressed about the lack of feedback on the comments on social media, with the comments "We live in the digital age, but, interestingly, we do not get any feedback".

Table 6: Content of Shared Comments

	FACEBOOK		INSTAGRAM	
	F	%	F	%
HISTORICAL PLACES ARE PROTECTED	10	5,2	6	7,0
ISRELATED QUESTIONS	74	38,8	22	25,9
CRITICISM OF MINISTRY STUDIES	44	23,0	32	37,6
THANKS FOR THE WORK	27	14,1	3	3,5
CONGRATULATIONS	27	14,1	14	16,5
OTHER	9	4,8	8	9,5
TOTAL	191	100	85	100

Some followers write positive comments about the work of the Ministry. The following comments were made for the work of the Ministry:

- Those who thank (n=30), "God help you, I love this minister, we follow your beautiful work closely, Thank God",
- Those who congratulate (n=41), "I congratulate you on your holiday, happy holidays, I congratulate you on your work",
- 10 people on Facebook and 6 people (n=16) on Instagram commented on the protection of historical, touristic and cultural values. "Let's protect our Cyprus, protect our history",
- In the section categorized as other, 17 people shared "films and messages that are not related to the ministry..." on Facebook and Instagram (n=17).

CONCLUSION

With the rapid development of technology, social media has become an indispensable part of life. In addition to traditional media, it is used for promotional purposes on social media and comes to the fore. In addition to public institutions and organizations, private sector organizations have to actively use social media for many reasons such as promoting, sharing up-to-date information with the public, keeping the pulse of the target audience, creating public opinion, and adding strength to their image and reputation. The TRNC Ministry of Tourism and Environment also shares its work on social media and informs the public about the work. With this study, it has been revealed how the ministry uses social media. In the study, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube used by the ministry were preferred. In the study, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube were examined, 278 messages were determined, and most messages were shared from Instagram. It was determined that the Ministry shared the most photos visually, and the photos of the events attended by the Minister were shared in the content of the photo. It has been determined that visit messages are given the most content. The Ministry carried out the most activities in the country. Foreign activities are given less space. Therefore, foreign activities are also rarely included in social media.

In a similar study by Cinnioğlu and Polat (2016), the social media accounts of 48 provincial culture and tourism directorates affiliated to the ministry were examined and it was found that these directorates do not use social media actively. In another similar study, the websites of local tourism offices operating in the TRNC were evaluated and it was determined that the websites were not sufficient in terms of content (Giritlioğlu, 2014). In Yatkın's study (2006), it is seen that the ministry uses social media mostly unidirectionally within the framework of the public information model. According to Peltekoğlu, social media has an important place among internet technologies in terms of enabling two-way communication, which is the ideal form of communication in public relations (2012). While social media conveys the activities of the organization to the public through various

methods, it also provides two-way communication and interaction by conveying the expectations, requests and complaints of the public to the institution. As a result of the study, it is seen that the ministry benefits from social media in one way. As a result of the study, the following recommendations are included:

- The number of promotional activities at home and abroad can be increased.
- Impressive photos of historical, touristic and cultural places should be shared on the official website of the ministry and informative messages can be created about these places.
- Comments shared on social media should be taken into account.
- Shared messages can be translated into other languages.
- Various activities can be organized to increase the number of social media followers.
- Promotions can be made using gastronomic items.
- Promotion can be made using famous people. Using these people in promotional posters can be remarkable.
- The Ministry should benefit from the two-way communication feature of social media.
- In future studies, a comparative study can be made about how the TR Ministry of Tourism and Environment and the countries that have an important position in the field of tourism use social media for promotional purposes.

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