

Content Marketing in Tourism Industry: Content Marketing Applications of Five Star Hotel Industry in Kusadasi

Guntekin Simsek*, Aziz Batuhan Dincel**

* Adnan Menderes University, The Faculty of Tourism, gsimsek@adu.edu.tr

** Adnan Menderes University, Institute of Social Sciences, batudncl@gmail.com

Abstract: *Tourism has a special position in terms of country, region and business economies. The reasons of this are; tourism revenues are foreign currency and create export effect. However, demand instability is the biggest disadvantage in tourism. But it is possible to overcome this uncertainty with effective marketing strategies. The companies can reach existing customers and potential customers with interesting and non-sales-oriented content owing to emerging technologies and communication tools. It is of great importance that tourism enterprises adapt to developing technology and use marketing strategies in the most effective way.*

Keywords: *Tourism, Content marketing, Hotel industry*

I. Introduction

Undoubtedly, technological developments and internet use have affected most of our lives even if individuals do not use individual internet, they are meet forced to use internet in their relations with businesses, industries, sectors and even state institutions. Internet provides many advantages for individuals' lives, so internet use is increasing day by day in 2019, 50.8% of the world's population is internet users moreover, the rate of internet access from mobile devices increased from 48.8% in 2014 to 63.4% in early 2019 (www.statista.com).

The development of technology and the widespread use of internet have affected the tourism industry as well most of today's tourists get support from the internet while they are at the phase of planning before their travel decisions. In fact, tourists use the internet before travel, during travel and after travel. The Internet has been used as a marketing tool in the tourism industry as the number of online tourists' increases.

Tourism demand has an elastic structure due to the high density of competition in the industry and the possibility of substitution. It is possible to say that the traditional marketing strategies aren't as effective as in the past for tourism establishments to expand their market share and increase their preferability when the structure of tourism demand is taken into consideration, the only way to succeed in these is to identify and evaluate the interest and the tendency of tourists and make strategic decisions accordingly in today's technology, it is possible to do this with the big data concept.

Big data is the name given to the whole range of non-structural data, such as social media shares, photos, videos, comments, documents, and audio files Big data can be interpreted if it is collected correctly and analyzed correctly to make it meaningful. Thus, establishments can apply their demand oriented strategic decisions and actions more effectively than traditional market research methods (Esen & Türkay, 2017). Today, social media applications are very popular individuals actively create their own content, likes and comments. Considering all these developments, content marketing and content marketing in social media applications are the most important marketing strategies for tourism industry.

II. Content Marketing

Mostly, content could be defined as the shortest way we communicate and be in touch with the collocutor(Yilmaz, 2017). As a consequence of increasing mobility in tourism year by year, the number of tourism establishments have increased as well and that caused the competition in the industry to be more intense with the internet usage being more common, the quantity of online customers has also raised. Customers are not as they used to be, and it is possible to understand this by the underwhelm of the traditional sale-oriented marketing strategies. As to digital content, it is all the information as video, audio, image files, articles or short comments, likes that can be found in the internet(Varnali, 2013; Yilmaz, 2017).

Content marketing is a marketing strategy that increases the brand value of the products of the establishments through informing customers; including page designing, graphics, texts and videos that increases the brand loyalty of the current customers(Benli&Karaosmanoğlu, 2017). According to a stereotype definition; it is creating valuable contents and using them in decent channels in order to draw the attention of potential customers of the establishments and turn them into current customers(Karkar, 2016).

According to the definitions, content marketing is both creating loyalty among current customers and carrying it to the top levels, and the endeavor to turn potential customers into current customers. Unlike the other marketing strategies, the point of this endeavor is not to force the customer to buy, but to create a brand distinction, knowledge and value through informing the customer(Karkar, 2018). In Table 1, the differences between the content marketing and traditional marketing are given.

Table 1. Features that Distinguish Content Marketing from Traditional Marketing

Traditional Marketing	Content Marketing
One-sided communication in content creation (Outbound)	Double-sided communication with consumer in content creation (Inbound)
Contents are prepared to sell the product	Contents are being prepared to inform the consumer
Broad target groups	Specific target groups
Strategies are short-term	Strategies are long-term
Strategies are costly	Strategies are often low-cost
Does not use technology	Focused on technology

Reference: Bilge, A. (2016:128). YeniPazarlamaYaklaşımıİçerikPazarlamasınınİncelenmesiveTurizmSektörüneUygulanabilirliği. *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*. 44(2), 125-140.

The tools of content marketing in nowadays now have become the social media, blogs, information's graphics, internet articles, e-books, mobile applications and smart phones(Yilmaz, 2017). One of the contemporary examples of content marketing is the 360° video posted on the Facebook page of "Game of Thrones" series. The "Bandersnatch" episode of a tv show called "Black Mirror" can be given as another example(www.netflix.com). In the certain parts of the episode, the choices are made by the viewers, by this way, the course of events of the episode are left to viewers hands. In the other way, Netflix company could create a customer profile by observing the choices of their customers.

III. Content Marketing in Tourism Industry

Content marketing is a brand narrating method aiming changing consumer behavior by attracting their attention without appealing all interest onto themselves in media(Çokal&Büyükkuru, 2018). Essentially, consumers are provided information through transmission of a valuable content. It is an ideal strategy to contact with consumers and to get into their head especially when consumers' attitude towards advertisement- and sales- oriented marketing is taken into consideration.

In general, content marketing can be seen in the form of information graphics including viral video, entertaining and funny content in social media, micro site and interesting contents(Özcan, 2014; Çokal&Büyükkuru, 2018).

Due to demand elasticity in tourism industry, content marketing is suggested to gain sympathy and to drag attention of tourists by tourism establishments because of highly volatile interest and preferences of consumers for sales growth. Two viral videos broadcasted by Jolly Tour, one of the Turkish tourism companies, are considered state of the art examples of content marketing in tourism industry. “Cinnetten Bir Köşe – A Vacation in Hell”, the first video broadcasted by the company, presented potential adverse circumstances incurred by tourists during their vacation if they do not prefer Jolly Tour. The second video, “Cennetten Bir Köşe – A Vacation in Heaven”, presents the potential joy and fun if consumers prefer the company for holiday(Jolly Tour, 2015).

Bilge(2016:139) suggests following points for applicability of content marketing in tourism:

- a. Travelers’ Blogs: As part of useful content for consumers, businesses share and transmit information through micro sites or blogs established apart from their official websites.
- b. Social Media Reward System: The system functions as a mean to distribute and share the business contents on social media and rewards these individuals.
- c. Information Differences in Catalogues: Distinctive and attractive visual presentation of ordinary information and details found in catalogues regarding accommodation and hospitality establishments.
- d. Information from the Tourism Industry: This is a place in which consumers are saved from misleading information and presented accurate facts about the sector.
- e. Viral Videos: This is broadcasting of entertaining and funny videos about tourism or a specific business on social media.

To sum up, valuable contents to be prepared within the concept of content marketing campaigns of tourism businesses are required to be interesting, convincing, attracting as well as reassuring in the eyes of consumers. Hence, for hospitality businesses, having a corporate website with only content of address, location, facilities, reservation is not enough anymore(Özçit, 2015).

Finally, the most effective content marketing tools for tourism businesses are websites, social media applications, and blogs. Twenty percent of these contents transmitted by these tools are associated with 80% of amenities (restaurants, entertainment places etc.) surrounding the core business increase the efficiency and impact of these contents further(Ciria, 2016).

IV. Method

Content marketing in tourism businesses enhances popularity of businesses among tourists and consequently maximizes their sales. Especially when it is considered that active internet usage of contemporary tourists from travel planning to post-travel assessment stage, content marketing could be regarded as substantially important strategy.

Content marketing activities of 5-star hotels located in Kusadasi County of Aydin City, an important tourism destination in Turkey, were investigated as part of their marketing strategy. There are totally eleven 5-star hotels located in Kusadasi according to the records of the Investments and Operations Department of the General Directorate of Culture and Tourism Ministry(yigm.kulturturizm.gov.tr).

The basic problem of the study is that whether content marketing is practiced by the 5-star hotel businesses located in Kusadasi? Sub-problems of the study are given as follows;

- a. Do 5-star hotel businesses in Kusadasi have websites?
- b. Is there blog section in the websites of 5-star hotel businesses in Kusadasi?
- c. Do 5-star hotel businesses in Kusadasi have social media accounts?
- d. Do 5-star hotel businesses in Kusadasi use social media applications?
- e. What sort of contents do 5-star hotel businesses in Kusadasi have in their websites in terms of text, photographs and videos?

The study data is limited with the internet websites of 5-star hotels because of their seasonal operation. Common social media activities of these businesses were determined by their last Instagram shares on the applications.

V. Findings

Data for the study are given in table 2.

Table 2. Website, Blogs and Social Media Accounts of 5 Star Hotels in Kusadasi

Number of Hotel	Hotels	Website	Blog	Social Media Account
1	ADAKULE OTEL	No	No	Yok
2	AMARA SEALIGHT ELİTE HOTEL	Yes	No	1,2,3
3	FANTASÍA OTEL DE LUXE	Yes	No	1,2,3,4,5,6
4	FLORA GARDEN EPHEBUS HOTEL	Yes	No	1,2,3,5,6,7,8
5	HOTEL GRAND BELİŞH	Yes	No	1,2,5
6	KORUMAR HOTEL DE LUXE	Yes	No	1,2,3,5,9
7	LE BLEU HOTEL& RESORT	Yes	No	0**
8	PALMWINGS BEACH RESORT &SPA KUŞADASI	Yes	No	1,2,3,4,5,10
9	RAMADA RESORT KUSADASI OTEL SUITES APART	Yes	No	1,2,3,5
10	SEA LIGHT RESORT HOTEL	Yes	No	1,2,3
11	TUSAN BEACH RESORT OTEL	Yes	No	1,2,3

*1: Instagram 2: Facebook 3: Twitter 4: Pinterest 5: Youtube6:Google+ 7: Flickr 8:Tumblr 9:WhatsApp 10:Foursquare

**0: The company does not state on website.

Within the scope of the study, it was determined that only 1 out of the eleven 5-star hotels in Kusadasi did not have an official website.

According to screening of the websites of businesses, it was found that two of the websites were not operating functionally and it was not possible to browse across the pages and links in the website. Moreover, all the websites did not have blog sections. On the other hand, all of websites had "Trip Advisor" extension, which allows users to leave feedback.

In general, it was determined that tourism businesses were utilizing from social media applications of Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Youtube, GooglePlus, Flickr, Tumblr, WhatsApp, and Foursquare. One of the businesses had no website; one of others did not share their official social media accounts. In terms of number of social media account possession, 36% of 5-star hotels had 3, %10 had 4, %10 had 5, %20 had 6 and %10 had 7 different social media accounts. Additionally, no any 5-star hotel business was determined to use all of the social media accounts. In terms of the dates of the last content shared on Instagram, 22% of businesses made a sharing in the last 24 hours, 67% in the last 7 days, 11% in the last 1 month.

Except the one hotel business with no website, it was determined that all accommodation businesses had a website with photograph and text content. Additionally, 63% of businesses were not including a video content at their homepage while 37% were having video. However, it was also determined that all of the before businesses had this video content in their social media accounts.

VI. Results and Discussion

From the macro point of view, tourism is significant strength in economic development. The most significant indicator of this was its export-like impact because tourism income is in foreign currency. The most important reason for tourism is not regarded as a primary industry in an economy is its

volatile nature with respect to other industries. This is totally because of elastic structure of tourism demand.

The demand in tourism could be influenced by effective marketing strategies. Accompanied by increasing number of smart phone and internet users, developments in today's technology have eroded conventional marketing understanding. Consumers make more conscious choices and they tend to collect more information and place emphasis on knowledge. Therefore, sales-oriented marketing strategies and advertising efforts have almost totally lost their impact.

Content marketing surpasses all other marketing strategies because they conform to contemporary needs completely and they are technology-oriented. From the consumers' point of view, interesting, entertaining, and sales-oriented nature of new perspective are found more acceptable with respect to conventional marketing and advertisement campaigns. Businesses could reach not only potential consumers by means of valuable, funny and interesting contents but also to current consumers.

When nature of demand in tourism industry is taken into consideration from the point of big data of content marketing, it could be realized that they yield significant advantage for tourism businesses. As it is commonly known, big data could be collected, compiled, processed and assessed appropriately so that tourism businesses could determine their ideal consumers through content marketing tools such as website visits and social media applications.

It is possible to claim that 5-star business hotels located in Kusadasi, a significant tourist destination of Turkey, were exhibiting unprofessional behavior in terms of content marketing. Almost all of the investigated hotels were required to re-organize their websites and to develop and broadcast valuable contents through all communication channels (website, social media, etc.) under a planned initiative.

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