

# *Social Media Promotion Methods*

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*The aim of this paper is to highlight that social media is not only a communication tool used for fun, but also an important part of business marketing strategies. It can be argued that social media is a new marketing strategy tool used to assess company performance. This paper focuses on a case study of a travel company's social media presence in terms of the number of likes and followers, content quality, customer interaction and language use. The qualitative method is used to assess how the company interacts with its customers online and how it uses social media as a strategic marketing tool. Social media plays an important role in everyday life and in every industry, both personally and professionally. Most of the time it influences our daily choices without us even realizing it. When it comes to travel choices and reviews when choosing a vacation destination, social media has proved to be our top choice (Antoni & Bulican, 2019). In this case, the tourism industry also helps in making easy decisions for travellers through the information available on various social media platforms. This paper provides a conceptual framework of how social networks play a crucial role in establishing individual preferences and choices during travel decision-making, as well as of the importance of trusting influencers and the recommendations they make. It can be argued that social media has provided a great foundation for*

*brand building and recognition, and that social media plays a key role in driving travellers' decisions.*

**Keywords:** *Social media, Tourism industry, Promotion*

## **1. Introduction**

The tourism industry is dynamic and still evolving, and the effective promotion of travel offers is becoming increasingly important in an intensely competitive environment. In the digital age, social media hosts a powerful platform and exerts influence to promote brands and attract the attention of prospective customers. Thus, this paper explores social media promotion methods, focusing on the case study of a travel agency called Travel Planner.

This paper aims to analyse the social media promotion strategies and tactics used in Travel Planner's projects, in an attempt to better understand how social media promotion works in the tourism industry. The analysis of the company's social media promotion strategies, impact and results has provided valuable insights and practical recommendations for other tourism agencies that want to optimize their social media presence and to attract and retain a target audience in the digital environment.

## **2. Research method**

*Qualitative research:*

In this study, I used a *qualitative research method* to gain a deep and detailed understanding of social media promotion. The qualitative research method focuses on exploring and understanding phenomena and perspectives in depth, allowing me to reveal aspects and nuances that other research methods cannot capture.

The qualitative method allowed me to analyse in detail the

strategies, tactics, and experiences of the marketing agency responsible for promoting Travel Planner. In turn, this has led to a better understanding of the motives, perceptions and factors behind their decisions and actions in social media promotion. I was thus able to explore their decision-making processes, their creative approaches and the strategies they implemented to attract and engage the travel agency's target audience.

*Interview:*

In addition to the qualitative research method, I also relied on an *interview* with the marketing agency to gain direct insights and relevant information from experts in the field. This interview provided an opportunity to explore in detail the strategies, tactics, and results of the social media promotion campaigns for Travel Planner. I gained valuable insights into the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating promotion campaigns, as well as into the challenges and opportunities encountered in this area.

Using the qualitative research method and the interview with the marketing agency, I managed to analyse how social media promotion can influence the tourism industry and its impact on the travel agency Travel Planner.

This approach allowed me to develop practical recommendations and suggestions for optimizing social media promotion strategies for other travel agencies interested in improving their presence and results in the digital environment.

Through this *combination of qualitative research and the interview* with a marketing agency, I can hopefully bring a significant contribution to the understanding of social media promotion methods in the tourism industry and to the identification of the most effective practices in this field.

### **3. Results**

One of the main goals of the travel agency Travel Planner is to expand

its online presence and establish a strong influence on social networks. To achieve the goal of reaching 150,000 followers by the end of 2023, Travel Planner implemented two key strategies: influencer strategy and content strategy.

*Strategy 1: Influencer strategy*

The agency recognized the power of influencers in the social media landscape and sought to leverage their social media influence to expand reach and attract a wider audience. They carefully identified and collaborated with well-known influencers who were highly regarded online. Influencers such as Mihai Morar, Ruxandra Luca, Adrian Enache, Andreea Bănică, Lavinia Pârva, Laura Cosoi, Adela Popescu, Barbara Isasi (Mandinga), Miruna Ioani (*Și blondele gândesc*), Mihai Bobonete and Pavel Bartoș were among those chosen for their significant impact and relevance to the target audience.

*Strategy 2: Content Strategy*

In addition to collaborations with influencers, Travel Planner implemented a content strategy focused on addressing the concerns and needs of potential tourists. Travellers often face various challenges and uncertainties when choosing a vacation destination, and the agency developed a plan to help potential tourists in this direction. About 200 articles were created to provide informative and useful resources to help tourists make useful decisions about their travels, especially to Bulgaria. These articles covered a wide range of topics, including top destinations, travel tips, accommodation recommendations, local cuisine, transport options and cultural information. By addressing potential concerns and providing valuable information, the agency aimed to position itself as a trusted resource for travel-related questions, thereby attracting more potential tourists and establishing credibility within the travel community.

To achieve their goal to sell 15,000 vacations through social media campaigns in 2022, Travel Planner implemented segmentation strategies and focused on differentiation in their communication approach, as follows.

*Segmentation strategy:*

The marketing agency promoting Travel Planner recognized the importance of tailoring their promotional efforts to specific customer segments. To this end, they performed a thorough segmentation by hotel category. The hotels listed on the agency's website were divided into comfort categories, including premium, superior, comfort, standard and low-cost options. This segmentation allowed the agency to create personalized promotions based on target customer profiles and budgets.

By understanding the preferences and needs of each segment, the agency could develop targeted communication strategies. They acknowledged that the communication approach should vary for each customer and category, leading to a global motto and strategy called "Holiday for All". This approach aimed to ensure that every client, regardless of budget or preferences, would find suitable holiday options and feel valued by the agency.

*Differentiation strategy:*

In addition to segmentation, the travel agency identified the need to differentiate itself from the competition and shift the attention of potential buyers from price to quality. To achieve this, the marketing agency team created a list of unique selling points and differentiators, which were then integrated into the agency's communication strategy to emphasize the value they offered beyond the price.

By highlighting their differentiators, such as exceptional customer service, exclusive amenities, curated experiences or personalized recommendations, the agency aimed to capture the attention of potential buyers and convey the message that their offers meant superior quality and went beyond just price considerations.

In the Travel Planner case study, one of the key goals for 2022 and 2023 was to increase the number of likes on their Facebook page. For 2022, the agency set out to reach 100,000 likes, while for 2023 the goal was raised to 150,000. At the moment (i.e. July 2023), the agency is very close to reaching its goal, with 147,000 likes.

After careful market analysis, the agency realized that this goal could not be achieved through organic posts alone, regardless of how they were done. Additional support from influencers and paid campaigns was needed. At the same time, the agency realized the importance of a clear plan for the organic social media channel. To define this plan, the agency had to consider several important aspects. They decided that the ideal number of posts per day would be 4 in season (May-September) and 2 out of season. As for the content, they established that it should consist of 40% offers, 40% value content, 10% testimonials and 10% influencers and other relevant topics.

In addition to the goal of increasing the number of likes, other important aspects related to social media promotion were analysed in the Travel Planner case study.

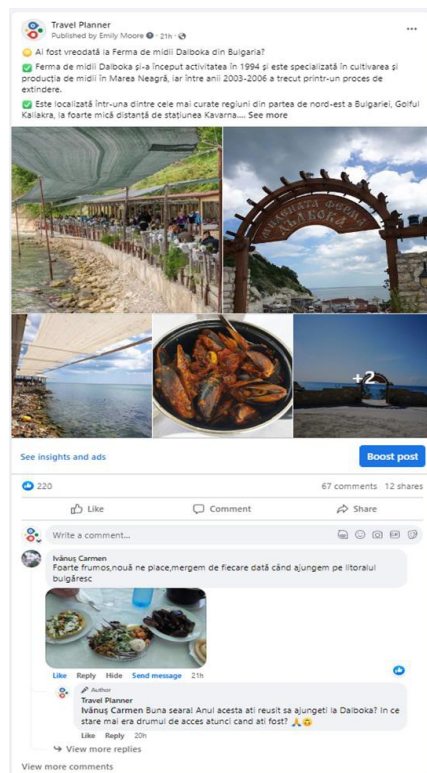
1. Remarkable results: Following the implemented strategies, the agency got more than 7600 likes and more than 560 comments on the posts promoted on social media. These numbers reflect the audience's engagement and interest in the content provided by Travel Planner.

2. Allocation of budget: To promote certain posts, their performance in terms of reach was considered. Posts that had a reach of more than 5000 people were selected to be turned into paid advertisements. The budget allocated for these ads was decided by the specialists responsible for their creation. They also considered setting ads on Bidding Conversions, with a conversion cost below 30 lei per purchase, in order to maximize the efficiency and results of the campaigns.

3. Collaboration with influencers: The travel agency allocated a budget for influencer campaigns. In the summer of 2022, a budget of 100,000 euro was allocated, and for the year 2023, 120,000 euro. Collaboration with influencers was particularly preferred in the form of a barter, where Travel Planner offered a free vacation to the influencer in exchange for promoting the destination. In some cases, influencers also received financial compensation, but such details were confidential.

4. Promotion of locations and valuable content: An important strategy adopted by the Travel Planner agency was to promote locations and relevant content, especially by creating informative blog articles and sharing them on social media channels. In the summer of 2022, more than 100 informative articles about holidays in Bulgaria were written, and by the end of the year, the number of articles had reached almost 200. These articles strengthened Travel Planner's position as Romania's number 1 source of information about holidays in Bulgaria. In the year 2023, the articles were updated with the latest news and articles for other destinations such as Greece and Turkey were also written.

Here is an excerpt from a Facebook post:



Picture 1. An informative article in a Facebook post (Travel Planner Facebook page)

Travel Planner's paid campaign strategy was structured on three levels, considering the different stages of the digital marketing funnel: top of funnel (TOFU), middle of funnel (MOFU) and bottom of funnel (BOFU).

At the TOFU level, campaigns were developed that targeted cold audiences, i.e. people who were not directly familiar with the brand or product. The aim of these campaigns was to attract users' attention and bring them in contact with Travel Planner. Through these campaigns, valuable content was promoted, providing relevant information about destinations, travel tips and other interesting aspects related to tourism.

At the MOFU level, campaigns targeted warm audiences, i.e. people who had already shown some interest in the brand and had previously interacted with it. The goal was to keep these audiences engaged and convert them into potential customers. These campaigns included special offers, promotions and personalized content to drive purchase intent and strengthen the relationship with the audience.

At the BOFU level, campaigns focused on very warm audiences, i.e. people who were already close to completing a purchase. These campaigns had as their main objective the conversion and completion of a transaction. Personalized messages, special offers and push messages were used to drive purchases and convert leads into actual customers.

By structuring campaigns on these three levels, Travel Planner managed to reach diverse audiences and to provide them with relevant messages and content based on their level of interest and stage in the purchase process. This strategy helped increase the effectiveness of paid campaigns and achieve the desired results in terms of promotion and sales.

TOFU audiences were subjected to a process of testing different campaigns with the aim of attracting and capturing their interest. Depending on the hotel category, customized campaigns were created to address the various preferences and needs of potential customers.



Hotel categories considered in the campaigns include:

1. Premium + Superior: Luxury and high-quality hotels that offer exclusive services and facilities.
2. Comfort: Hotels with comfortable and attractive services and facilities for common people.
3. Standard + Low-cost: Hotels with affordable prices and standard services for those looking for a more economical option.
4. Resorts: Promotion of various holiday resorts in Bulgaria such as Albena, Golden Sands, Obzor, Sunny Beach and Nessebar.
5. Groups: Hotels that are ideal for groups of travellers, such as hotels with an aquapark.
6. On the beach: Hotels located near the beach, offering easy and convenient access to the surrounding sand and sea.
7. Family: Family-friendly hotels with facilities and activities for children and parents.
8. Ultra all-inclusive: Hotels that offer luxury all-inclusive packages with all services and amenities included.
9. Adults only: Hotels exclusively for adults, offering a relaxing and intimate experience.

Also, specific campaigns were implemented to promote offers and promotions, such as last-minute and early booking, to stimulate bookings at the right times.

The outcome has been remarkable, validating the campaigns' effectiveness and impact in attracting interest and generating leads or sales. The success of these campaigns is highlighted in the concrete results below:

Off / On	Ad set	Results	Reach	Amount spent ↓	Cost per result	Website purchases	Purchase conversion value	Purchase ROAS (return on ad spend)
	MOFU - Vira	362	89,964	€6,998.37	€19.33	362	2,210,029.73	118.65
	TOFU - Prospecting All	319	129,698	€5,789.88	€18.15	319	1,722,561.65	227.51
	TOFU - Prospecting All	228	116,416	€4,779.87	€20.99	228	1,261,692.94	261.96
	TOFU - Married	152	46,040	€3,523.87	€23.19	152	912,388.20	258.92
	BOFU - Invite Checkout - All hotels	164	9,932	€3,360.71	€20.49	164	836,992.73	266.92
	MOFU - Vira & Iarna - MC	183	72,785	€2,716.40	€14.84	183	992,899.76	309.64
	TOFU - Vira 2023 - Grid	103	48,576	€2,677.73	€26.00	103	643,919.66	248.28
	TOFU - Prospecting All	111	77,649	€2,654.12	€23.91	111	583,528.99	218.72
	TOFU - Travel - Hotelar Single Ads - W25+	135	83,665	€2,537.48	€18.80	135	752,652.34	296.61
	BOFU - View Content	52	19,040	€1,756.98	€33.79	52	276,192.12	157.20

Picture 2. Travel Planner promotion campaign results

The interview I had with Marian Cristinescu, executive director at Marketos – the marketing agency in charge of promoting Travel Planner, was designed to explore the strategies, tactics and results of social media promotion, considering the peculiarities of the tourism industry and the specifics of the travel agency.

During the interview, I asked a series of questions regarding the goals and strategies of the marketing agency in promoting Travel Planner in the digital environment. We covered topics such as the social media platforms used, adapting the message and content, integrating collaborations with influencers and partners, as well as measuring the success of social media promotion campaigns.

We also explored the marketer's perspective on user trust in social media reviews versus personal recommendations. I wanted to understand how the travel agency Travel Planner manages and capitalizes on this dynamic within its promotional strategies.

Through this interview, I aimed to gain firsthand insights from a social media promotion expert, so as to better understand the processes and decisions behind Travel Planner's promotion campaigns. Marian's

recommendations and answers helped me assess the impact of social media promotion in the tourism industry and formulate practical recommendations to improve promotion in the digital environment.

Q1. A brief introduction, who is the man behind Marketos?

CM: My name is Cristinescu Marian and I have been active in marketing for over 14 years. I started with SEO and over time I have also learned Facebook Ads, now Meta ads, Google Ads, Email Marketing, Conversion Rate Optimization.

I've built and participated in very complex campaigns with budgets of hundreds of thousands euros per month.

Due to my vast experience and interaction with over 250 clients over time, I think I am a very good strategist, which allows me to develop innovative campaigns, customized according to the needs of each client. We have results that exceed any expectations, with a Return on Ad Spend of 300x.

Q2. What are the agency's main goals in promoting Travel Planner on social media?

CM: The main goal is to drive conversions. Secondary goals include interaction with as many people as possible, as well as continuous cost optimization.

Q3. What social media promotion strategies and tactics do you use to attract and engage Travel Planner's target audience?

CM: Our tactics are more about customer experience. This brings a huge advantage in promotion, because in addition to the standard offers, we also bring differentiators that shift the focus from price to experience.

Q4. How do you identify the right social media platforms for travel agency promotion and how do you tailor your message and content accordingly?

CM: The most powerful way to make decisions is to understand your customers and their needs. Marketos has a dedicated team to create advanced customer profiles.

Our experts specialize in conducting in-depth customer,

competitor and market research to help companies identify opportunities for differentiation and growth. With a deep understanding of the audience and competitors, more informed decisions will be made, and our team will be able to build customer-centric campaigns.

Q5. How do you ensure that the messages and content promoted on social media reflect the values and identity of the Travel Planner brand?

CM: There is a Brand Book and a communication strategy. The messages observe the established tone of voice, contain business differentiators and carefully thought-out keywords.

Q6. What types of content do you create and share on social media to inspire and inform potential travellers?

CM: All types of content. From content to sell, to content to inform, both in standard format, text and video.

Q7. How do you measure and assess the success of the social media promotion campaigns for Travel Planner? What metrics and performance indicators do you use?

CM: The main two performance indicators are the number of orders and the purchase cost. They are measured at platform level (cross conversions are not taken into account), and the fact that platforms can sometimes report the same orders (their percentage is below 5%, but it happens).

Q8. What are the biggest challenges in promoting a travel agency on social media and how do you overcome them?

CM: The biggest challenges are due to prices. As all prices have increased, including for packages, people comment a lot that the prices are 20-40% higher than last year. This has a negative impact on campaigns. We try to respond to most comments, but if they become very aggressive, we do respond but we hide them (Meta option to hide comments and show them only to people who wrote them).

Q9. How do you integrate collaborations with influencers and partners into the social media promotion strategy for Travel Planner?

CM: When promoting the agency, all influencers have a series of tasks that they must comply with (for example, link to the site, tag the agency, create certain types of content). All their posts are shared with us. We boost organically as much as possible; we cannot promote shared posts because the platform does not allow this, but we use print screens with influencers and what they say about us to create content that we use in future campaigns.

Q10. How do you manage customer feedback and interaction on social media platforms to maintain a positive image of the travel agency?

CM: I answered in Q8. The feedback is generally very positive. Travel Planner is the travel agency with the most positive reviews among the agencies in Romania, with over 28,500 real reviews.

Q11. How do you use emerging technologies and trends in social media promotion to stay ahead of the competition and stay relevant to Travel Planner's target audience?

CM: We use the latest technologies, including AI now, for both content and design. We also have competitive scanning software and data analysis that highlight all kinds of opportunities. It is a very big advantage that we can afford such programs, because for each client we use analysis platforms with business accounts (that is, we can analyse multiple accounts/businesses), which would cost a client a monthly subscription of thousands euro.

Q12. In your opinion, within the travel industry, which do you think people trust more: the reviews they read on social media or personal recommendations? How do you think this perception influences the promotion strategies and reputation of Travel Planner?

CM: Personal recommendations will always beat any review. But of course, reviews matter anyway; in many posts people ask in the comments if anyone has travelled with Travel Planner before, what their opinion is, etc. Thanks to the community and the fact that the agency is well-known on the market, I almost always receive answers from other clients, which is a huge advantage.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This section covers the most important conclusions of the study, starting from the assumptions in the introduction of the paper, my personal opinion regarding the results of the study, as well as the potential future research directions related to the topic addressed.

It can be concluded that social media promotion is essential to the success and growth of the travel agency Travel Planner. The effective use of social media platforms allows the agency to increase its visibility, strengthen its brand, communicate directly with clients and promote its offers in an engaging way. By analysing results and constantly adapting strategies, Travel Planner can take advantage of social media promotion to achieve their business goals and differentiate themselves in a competitive environment.

Research Method: The importance of Social Media Promotion - Travel Planner Case Study. To examine in detail the importance of social media promotion for the travel agency Travel Planner, I opted for a qualitative research method. This approach has allowed me to gain a thorough understanding of the experiences, perceptions and strategies used by the agency in its social media promotion. Another important part of this research consisted in an interview with a marketing agency specialized in social media promotion, responsible for the promotion of Travel Planner.

The qualitative research method provides an appropriate framework to explore the topic of social media promotion in a detailed and contextual way. This approach allows researchers to gain in-depth insights into the experiences and perspectives of those involved in travel agency promotion. Interviews can provide direct opinions and relevant information from promotion experts who work in a similar context to Travel Planner.

The interview with the marketing agency specialized in social media promotion has brought multiple advantages to my case study. It has provided an inside look at the specific social media promotion strategies, tactics and experiences of the travel agency Travel Planner.

It has also allowed me to explore their results, challenges and perspectives on social media promotion in the tourism industry.

The qualitative research method, in general, and the interview with the marketing agency, in particular, has added significant value to this study on the importance of social media promotion in the tourism industry. This approach has allowed me to gain a detailed understanding of and relevant information about a travel agency's strategies, tactics and experiences in promoting itself in the digital environment. This information is essential to develop solid conclusions and useful recommendations in my dissertation paper.

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