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# DIGITAL-TOOLKIT FOR SPORTS TOURISM PROMOTING

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#### ABSTRACT

Sports tourism is an independent and socially oriented sphere, a way of life of a large part of society. Sports tourism, for its purposes, can have different orientations: sports, cognitive, educational, research, environmental, as well as their different combination. This is a sport based on competitions on routes that include overcoming categorical obstacles in the natural environment (passes, peaks (in mountain tourism), rapids (in water tourism), canyons, caves, etc.), and on distances laid in the natural environment and on artificial terrain.

The article defines sports tourism, selected types of sports tourism, stages of creating tours and methods of promotion. Methods of promotion of sports tours, differences in classical media marketing from digital are also considered. The important role of digital marketing tools in the promotion strategy is noted, as Internet

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marketing has become an integral part of any effective marketing campaign as a result of the global digitalization of society. Traditional "analogue" marketing cannot ensure effective functioning. A necessary condition for the successful promotion of sports tourism is the use of all available digital marketing tools along with classic marketing and in some cases a complete transition to online technology.

Keywords: Digitalization, Digital-Toolkit, Promoting, Sports Tourism, Sport

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is a powerful conductor of global socio-cultural trends, which are characterized by a growing frequency of movement of people in real and virtual space, the development of network business, international integration and information and communication technologies [1-5]. Tourism poses a new problem for the production of new tourist places, brands, images, i.e. the production of new meanings and values. Modern tourism is becoming a kind of cultural matrix of modern culture in general, accumulating such trends in its development as virtuality, informatization, consumption. Sports tourism is a special kind of tourism and sport, which is based on competitions on routes, overcoming various obstacles in the natural environment (roads, trails and off-road, crossings, passes, peaks, rapids, canyons, caves, etc.), and at distances laid in the natural environment and on artificial terrain. Sports tourism also includes events that allow tourists to witness the biggest events in the world of sports and culture. Such trips remain in memory as one of the brightest moments in life.

Competent use of technologies and modern tools for the formation and promotion of sports tourism will expand the scope of sports tourism, promote and increase its efficiency.

Sports tourism – a very interesting and relatively young area of tourism. Passion for sports tourism allows you to get acquainted with the unique corners of nature, culture and life of different countries and peoples, interesting sights. Tours that combine traditional active recreation, sports and participation in the most spectacular international events are gradually gaining more and more popularity.

Even though sports tourism is largely associated with the natural environment, wild trails and mountains, rivers and other areas remote from major cities and civilization, digital marketing has become an integral part of the modern marketing campaign of the tourism business [6-7].

Traditional marketing cannot ensure the effective functioning of companies in various industries, especially companies in the field of tourism. The use of Internet marketing along with classic marketing, and in some cases a complete transition to online technology, are becoming a prerequisite for the successful promotion of sports tourism.

Communication with the client in real-time, the formation of emails at the time of its opening (when the user loads the semantic blocks relevant to his recent search), automatic sales tunnels, chatbots in messengers – all this complicates Internet marketing, but also with thus making it more customer-oriented and necessary for the successful promotion of sports tourism [1; 8].

## 2. THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES OF SPORTS TOURISM

Sports tourism is the preparation and conduct of sports trips to overcome the long space of wildlife. As a rule, small groups of 6-10 people take part in sports tours. Sometimes such routes pass in the wild, and travellers for a month do not meet any traces of civilization. To pass the route, you need to have not only strength, agility and stubbornness, but also have a wide range of special knowledge, such as the technique of overcoming obstacles and human physiology in extreme conditions. Unlike a regular trip, a sports trip includes a set of natural obstacles classified by difficulty. As a rule, in the mountain and ski tourism, such obstacles are mountain peaks and passes, and in water tourism – river rapids.

## 2.1. Features of Sports Tourism

By types of sports tourism differs:

- hiking tourism moving on a tourist route and overcoming terrain and landscape obstacles on foot. on foot;
- ski tourism overcoming relief and landscape obstacles on the snow and snow-ice cover on skis, for high difficulty categories in harsh climatic zones and mountainous terrain;
- mountain tourism passing mountain passes, climbing to the tops, traverses of mountain ranges;
- water tourism the passage of water obstacles formed by the relief of the riverbed and the peculiarities of its course;
- speleotourism travel through underground cavities, overcoming structural obstacles encountered in caves;
- sailing tourism-travel on ships under sail by sea or the waters of large lakes;
- on means of transportation overcoming on extended route relief-landscape obstacles, tourist, animal migration trails, fords and crossings, mountain passes, traverses, etc.) in difficult conditions, usually in mountain or difficult on climate and relief strongly crossed terrain.
- combined tourism hiking, combining elements of different types of tourism;
- motorcycle tourism one of the types of active recreation and a kind of sports tourism, in which a motorcycle serves as a means of transportation [9-11].

According to age and social characteristics, sports tourism is divided into:

- children's tourism;
- youth tourism;
- adult tourism;
- family tourism;
- tourism for people with disabilities.

Designing a sports tour involves the following stages (Fig. 1).



Figure 1 Stages of designing a sports tour

The project must contain specific requirements to ensure the safety of the tour, minimizing risks to tourists and their property, staff and the environment.

Documentation specifying the requirements for the process of tourist service should include:

- description of processes, forms and methods of tourist services;
- the importance of the characteristics of the process of tourist service;
- the number of staff and the level of their professional training;
- contractual provision of tours.

The technological documentation for the tour includes the technological map of the tourist route and methodical recommendations for its filling, the schedule of loading of the tourist enterprise, the information leaflet to the tourist permit, etc.

The quality control documentation must establish the forms, methods and organization of control over the implementation of the tourist service process to ensure its compliance with the designed characteristics.

Project analysis is the final stage of design, and it is aimed at identifying and timely elimination of inconsistencies in the project.

The process of forming a tour for further sale includes the following stages:

- development of the plan (idea) of the tour;
- search and selection of partners and suppliers;
- formation of the main and additional complex of services;
- experimental tour verification, usually so-called promotional tours.

Information about sports tourism can be obtained from various sources, but the most convenient and effective is the global Internet and messengers. With the help of modern digital marketing tools, you can get complete information about the tour, read the list of services, view photos and video reports, get answers automatically, book and pay for the tour.

Even though companies use various channels and tools to promote sports tours, the share of digital tools is constantly increasing. Online services are displacing analogue media resources, as in the global network, you can quickly find quality information, the Internet gives you the right to choose. Educational site sites provide complete, vivid, multilingual, and often interactive information.

Advertising in the media is also important in promoting sports tourism on the market and in informing potential customers about the proposed tourism product but has several disadvantages. The biggest disadvantage of analogue media is the lack of feedback (Fig. 2).



Figure 2 Differences between digital marketing and media

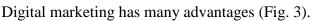
When planning a promotion strategy, many tourism companies perceive promotion as a supplement to advertising. It is rare to use certain digital tools separately from the marketing plan (each of them has its place in the plan), even if they pursue different goals. Advertising is often seen as the main means to achieve a goal in the long run, as well as to create the image of the organization and its product, while the promotion is used to perform short-term tasks.

Although this attitude towards marketing is based on the overuse of advertising in the past as a means of communication, now the decisive factor is the growing competition in the tourism industry and the global digitalization of society, which forces marketing managers to more accurately use all available marketing tools [12-13].

In these conditions, it is necessary to create an effective system of promotion of the created sports tours. The basis of this system is the adoption of a strategy to expand the market while enhancing the effectiveness of the use of digital marketing tools. Modern Internet marketing plays an important role in achieving positive results. According to statistics, in search of a good active holiday, most tourists rely on social networks and mobile applications. According to recent research, 140 million users of popular social networks Facebook and Instagram pre-evaluate all options for future travel on the Internet. Therefore, for the successful promotion of sports tourism, it is necessary to focus on digital communication with tourists.

## 2.2. The Importance of Internet Marketing in the Promotion of Sports Tourism

Internet marketing has become an integral part of any effective marketing campaign as a result of the global digitalization of society. Traditional "analogue" marketing cannot ensure effective functioning. A necessary condition for the successful promotion of sports tourism is the use of all available digital marketing tools along with classic marketing and in some cases a complete transition to online technology.



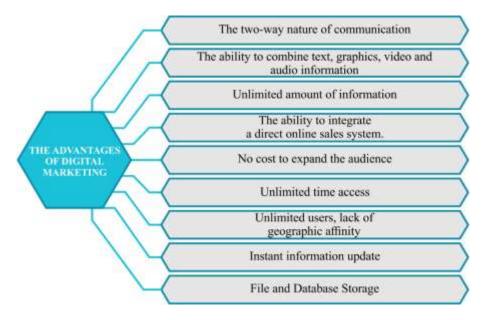


Figure 3 The advantages of digital marketing

When creating and promoting sports tours, it is digital marketing that gives impetus to successful development and sales, as it has several advantages and unique opportunities (Table 1).

Advantages	Description
Low entry threshold	The bar for brands to enter new markets has never been so low, the opportunities to compete with leaders and the established environment – so wide.
-	The first customers can be obtained in the first minutes of advertising, even during non-business hours.
Instant feedback from customers	The main difference in Internet marketing – is to receive instant feedback in the form of subscribers, orders, shares, comments, etc.
Automation of the sales process	When using automatic sales tunnels and chatbots, it is possible to organize both simple online sales and complex schemes with clarifying questions and sales of additional services.
Interactivity	On the Internet, you can directly interact with the audience, keep in touch with customers and monitor the situation. The use of video, audio, photo and modern VR and AR technologies allows you to immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the product and assess the competitive features of the brand.
Targeting	Ability to identify the target audience by region, age, gender, interests and even behavioural patterns. For example, you can exclude from your target audience people who returned from a trip a week ago and are unlikely to take advantage of your offer.
Retargeting	For people who have responded to your ad and taken some action, it is possible to show individual ads, use special offers and other marketing techniques.
Detailed web analytics	Internet marketing allows you to conduct detailed analytics, which will identify problem areas, analyze customer behaviour, will improve performance.

Table 1 What gives the use of digital marketing tools

To promote sports tourism, the use of digital tools has an additional value associated with the specifics of the product itself, namely the elusive sensations. Most often, the tourist product is sold to the tourist away from the actual place and time of consumption. The fact of the geographical distance of the product from the buyer complicates the sales process. The Internet allows you to level the distance of the tour from a potential tourist – in real-time the tourist can get all the necessary information, including photos, videos and recommendations of tourists who have already been there.

Hospitality industry statistics suggest that neglecting digital marketing in promotion strategies is a big mistake (Fig. 4).



52% of travellers were so influenced by social media that they changed their original travel plans



Social media is one of the most successful ways to market your travel services, with more than 50% of direct bookings coming from social media accounts

Figure 4 Travel Industry Statistics

89

50.9

However, some of the advantages of Internet marketing give rise to their disadvantages, which are worth paying attention to:

- high competition due to the availability of Internet technologies.
- low customer loyalty, as a result of a large number of similar offers from different brands.
- instant negative reaction. A dissatisfied customer can easily leave feedback on social networks or on tourist portals, which hundreds of potential customers will read.
- automation of the sales process requires the involvement of new highly paid specialists, such as architects of sales tunnels.
- additional online sales markets increase the risk of double booking services. To avoid problems with overbooking, it is necessary to use special services (channel managers).
- the importance of social networks in the promotion of sports tourism.

Maintaining a page or community has become a necessity for everyone who works with a client. This is important not only for the recognition of the company but also for real sales. Clients on social networks exchange impressions, which greatly affects the decision-making in favour of a tourist product. When planning a vacation, more than 60% of tourists are looking for profitable solutions based on social content with offers and promotions.

Social networks as a digital marketing tool solve some important tasks, such as developing and recognizing a brand and a tourism product, accessible and instant communication, creating traffic and sales (Fig. 5).



Figure 5 The tasks that Social Media Marketing solves

## Development and Recognition

Social networks help to increase the recognition of a particular sports tour or a whole direction. An integrated approach is important here. This is the task of the chosen strategy. The advantage of digital marketing over traditional marketing is its low cost per contact (CPC). The same amount spent on advertising in social networks will bring more customers than a banner in a thematic publication.

## Affordable Communication

A business page in social networks acts as a platform for communicating with potential customers directly. Users of social networks communicate in comments, discussions or ask questions of the company directly. Loyal tourists or an entire community of fans themselves become an advertising medium that recommends travel agency services to other people.

Communication becomes available: comments, questions, work with the negative. Customer feedback is an important part of the development of the tourism business.

## Sales and Traffic

Social networks are the main source of traffic and support ongoing sales. With proper promotion, social networks become a full-fledged source of constant traffic. This is especially true for the tourism industry. According to statistics, 78% of tourists always read about tours and destinations, and half of the respondents choose a tour based on this information. To organize traffic and sales through a social network, it is enough to collect the target audience using the built-in social network tools and make targeted advertising for sports tours.

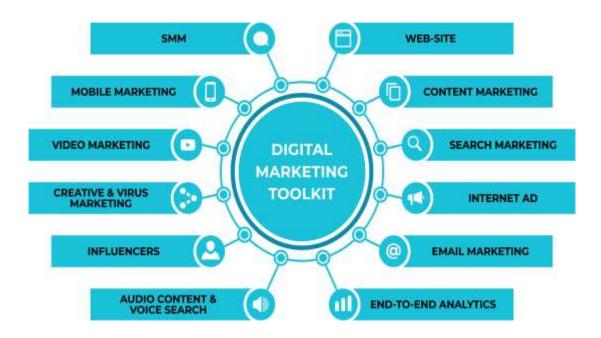
# **3. DIGITAL TOOLKIT FOR PROMOTING SPORTS TOURS**

For the successful development of sports tourism, it is important not only to determine the goals and methods of promotion but also to choose the right digital marketing tools.

In digital marketing, there is no standard turn-based strategy and a specific set of tools that work equally well for any product. Before promoting a sports tour and a tourist destination, it is necessary to determine the target audience, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism product and set goals.

Digital marketing tools are technologies and methods that help tourists get information about a particular tour, exchange experiences and share experiences, as well as make a purchasing decision and book a tour. The resources of the global network every year offer more and more new opportunities, so the list of digital marketing tools is large and constantly expanding.

We can distinguish the main digital tools of Internet marketing relevant for the tourism and sports industry (Fig. 6).



## Figure 6 Digital marketing toolkit for promoting sport tours

Web site. The company's website for organizing sports tours has two main goals:

- generate initial interest in a sports tour or destination with a potential tourist
- provide the maximum information about the sports tour to the person who decided to take part in it.

The site in its structure and content should correspond to the marketing strategy of the company – whom to focus on, what to represent, how to represent. Regardless of the target audience, the site should be informative and useful.

*Content marketing*. Today, content marketing is an integral and most important tool in digital marketing. Content can be different – articles, infographics, photos, videos - and distributed through different channels, such as a website, pages on social networks, email newsletter, video channel on YouTube. And the main requirements for it remain unchanged: quality, uniqueness and completeness of the response to user requests. The Internet is oversaturated with information, and if your article looks like an advertisement, they won't trust it. Therefore, you should always be inclined to the information style or native advertising.

Search Marketing (including Search Engine Optimization, Search engine marketing). It consists of several categories of tools, such as SEO (Search Engine Optimization) or optimization of web resources for search engines, promotion in search engines and search advertising. Search engine marketing can target various types of searches, including image search, video search, news search, and industry-specific search engines. Usually, the higher the site's position in search results, the more interested visitors go to it from search engines.

*Internet advertising.* Using the Internet as an advertising channel is an objective necessity for any company in the tourism industry that wants to develop and attract a larger flow of tourists and investments. Currently, there are several varieties of advertising on the Internet:

- contextual advertising represents text or text-graphic modules displayed on sites located in the context of the audience of the advertising object or a specific user
- banner/media static or animated advertising objects are aimed at attracting the attention of the audience.
- viral. The basic principle of viral advertising is the free distribution of information "from user to user". Most often, in this case, videos or graphic content act as an advertising medium.
- teaser. Teaser advertising is partly reminiscent of media the same graphic advertising modules, supplemented by textual content.

*email marketing*. Email advertising has recently occupied the lion's share of the market. Today, it is most often just one of the areas of work with a regular client audience. However, if desired, it can be used quite effectively. The main thing is to approach the organization of the newsletter wisely, avoiding intrusive language and uncontested appeals.

Social Media Marketing (SMM). Today, the influence of social networks on people's choices is quite large, and their audience consists of billions of users. Some travel companies do not have their website, but they are present in one or more social networks [14].

SMM is one of the most significant mechanisms for forming the company's image since, in social networks, participants are united not only by the communication environment but also with clearly established connections between themselves (Fig. 7).



Figure 7 Statistics of travel brands SMM

Networks, unlike the press, television, radio and official websites, carry unbiased information that users trust, and which, with a reasonable approach, can be used for strategic and tactical purposes of promoting sports tourism. Currently, consumers are increasingly less likely to trust traditional forms of advertising and spend more and more time on-line. Newspapers and magazines are losing their audience because web portals provide this information for free, faster and in a more accessible form.

*Mobile marketing*. In addition to traditional SMS mailings, the creation and distribution of mobile applications with guides, instructions and catalogues of routes, modern technologies allow the use of mobile trackers, QR codes for the entire tourist route, etc.

*Viral marketing.* The peculiarity of viral marketing is that the main distributor of information is its recipient, which causes greater confidence among potential tourists. Since sports tours have specific features, including intangible ones, obtaining information not from the advertiser himself, but indirectly through other clients is more effective. Also, the tour is usually bought away from the tourist route where the tourist is going; therefore the buyer receives the idea of the tourist service as a product only in the form of a stream of information, and the tourist's preliminary impressions of the service are based on the content and video sequence that he receives.

*Video marketing.* Video marketing became one of the leading digital tools in 2019: about 80% of online content is rendered. This is especially true for the tourism industry. A variety of formats (reporting, video blogs, interviews, discussions) makes it easy to tailor such content to almost any audience. The lack of processing and installation reduces the distance between the tourist product and users, and most importantly – corresponds to the request for reliability and authenticity. Live broadcasts are watched three times longer than regular videos, involving a larger stream of views and comments. This creates all the conditions for the development of broadcasts in digital marketing.

*Voice search.* Shortly, about 30% of all actions on the Internet will be performed without the help of hands, and 50% of searches will be carried out using voice commands. Companies are looking for ways to develop apps like Siri, Google Assistant, and Bixby. As these forecasts come true, marketers of travel industry companies need to optimize their content for voice search, which is very different from traditional. Voice queries are formulated more freely than printed ones, and their average length is approximately twice as long: from 1-3 words in a print search, it grows to 3-5 words in a voice search.

Influencers and micro-influencers. In recent years, influencers on social networks have become a real force: now we have stars on Instagram, millionaires on YouTube, and famous bloggers on Twitter. Millions of people follow them and their messages, reviews and other content. The influence of such people has become apparent to everyone. At the same time, the number of popular influencers in the network has increased, and along with their number, the cost of their services has also increased. This has led to the fact that more and more companies when promoting tours, turn to the so-called micro-influences - people who exist in every marketing niche, who have a rather low number of subscribers (less than 10,000), but at the same time a very attentive and loyal audience. Firstly, they have a more lively and responsive audience, and secondly, their services are much cheaper, and their involvement is many times higher. Thirdly, the audience is not so willing to follow the advice of celebrity, knowing that the recommendation of the hotel or restaurant is paid.

*End-to-end analytics.* An essential digital marketing tool is End-to-End Analytics. This is the most effective way to optimize advertising budgets and make informed decisions in promoting sports tourism. In most countries, sports tourism belongs to small and medium-sized businesses; therefore, national support for the promotion of sports tours is required [15-16]. The amount of financing depends on the economic development of the country, state

policy in the field of tourism and sports and the size of tourist flows. Modern end-to-end analytics can process Big Data, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of each launched advertising channel, even offline data.

The effectiveness of tourism management is considered in two directions: economic and social.

The main and simplest are the calculations of the frequency of tours and the intensity of travel, which to some extent will allow us to conclude that the use of digital tools and the development of sports tourism as a sub-sector of the economy as a whole are effective.

The frequency of trips shows how many tours a person takes part on average over a certain period:

$$T_f = \frac{n}{t} \tag{1}$$

where  $T_f$  – travel frequency; n – number of trips; t – time period.

The definition of the indicator of the intensity of tours takes into account not an individual person, but the entire population of the region:

$$T_I = \frac{N}{P} * 100\%$$
 (2)

where  $T_I$  – travel intensity (%); N – number of tourists; P – population.

This information will allow you to keep statistics and form the basis for further forecasting.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Sports tourism in many countries is a sport with many years of tradition. It includes not only a sports component, but also a special spiritual sphere, and the lifestyle of travel lovers themselves.

The process of promoting sports tours from the manufacturer to the final often does not provide for their direct contact. The modern tourist market is characterized by the presence of a large number of intermediary links, without which manufacturers of tourist goods and services simply could not function normally. Communication of information to the end consumer is impossible without the use of modern digital marketing tools.

Given the difference in time of purchase and consumption of the product, as well as the remoteness of the tourist route from the place of purchase, it is necessary to use a lot of information, interactive media and other digital marketing tools. This will increase the effectiveness of promoting sports tourism.

Tourism industry enterprises need a daily presence in the digital environment. Competent SMM tactics bring results and solve specific business problems. In other words, the end-user's decision to buy a tour is largely determined by the quality of information support that is available to him at the time of the purchase decision. Video materials have the opportunity not only to clearly demonstrate the tourist route but also foster interest in the tour. They contribute to the development of the tourism product, which should be presented on all platforms.

The use of modern digital marketing tools is an integral part of the effective promotion of sports tourism.

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