



SOCIAL MEDIA IN TOURISM DESTINATIONS

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AUSTRIAN AND
CZECH TOURISM ORGANISATIONS ON NATIONAL,
REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

Aim of the project

Social media has become a key element of marketing tourism destinations. Based on existing studies the cooperation between the MCI Management Center Innsbruck and the Economic University of Prague aimed at carrying out a comparative study on social media activities of touristic destinations in Austria and the Czech Republic. The project thus tries to answer the following research question:

How do tourism organisations in Austria and the Czech Republic apply Social Media Marketing within their organisational structures?

Both institutions have been working together on a student exchange agreement since 2011. However, in the field of tourism, it has been difficult for MCI students to access enough courses in English. Therefore, the lateral objective is to develop the destination management & marketing class in English so that the MCI Tourism students can visit VSE Prague as exchange students.

Project phases

The project was set up in 4 phases:

Phase 1: Setting up the study

In a first step, Jan Herget came to Innsbruck in fall 2018. During his visit, the study design was set up based on the research already carried out in Austria in 2017. The project applied the same methodology in order to receive comparable results.

Phase 2: Carrying out the study

The study was then carried out during the fall semester 2018/19 as well as the summer term 2019. During the visit of Dr. Birgit Bosio in May 2019, the results were analysed and compared and further steps discussed.

Phase 3: Upgrading the methodology

Another aim of the study was finding a better method or tool to analyse Social Media data of tourism organizations. While in the Austrian case, data was manually collected and analysed, the aim of this joint project was to find a software solution for this. However, most software products do not focus on research, but rather on the industry. The project team discussed this issue with various software providers, however most of them proved to be too expensive. Most pricing models are based on the number of tourism organisation and channels, that need to be monitored. While the industry is mostly interested in their own product/service/destination and some competitors, this research project aimed at comparing many destinations on various channels. Furthermore, most software solutions provide a wide range of services which are not applicable for this research projects. However, they are included in the price and cannot be separated. The only tool, which finally proved to be interesting, is Fanpage Karma. This solutions offers a wide range of organisations, which can be analysed and offers a monthly subscription only, while most others include an annual membership. Even though this project did not include funding for such a software solution, the project helped to investigate which tool can be used for further research.

As the Social Bakers conference did not take place in Prague in May 2019 as planned, it was not possible to attend it as part of this project as initially planned.

Phase 4: Presenting the results

Results have been presented in both Innsbruck and Prague. While in Innsbruck they were presented on the knowledge platform for the Tyrolean Tourism Industry (www.ttr.tirol), in Prague the results were presented in a meeting with tourism representatives as well as in front of the association of ski resorts. The project team further aims at publishing the results of this comparative study either at an academic conference or as a research paper in a journal.

Key outcomes

Key outcomes include the comparative analysis of social media activities of tourism organizations on national and regional level as well as in ski resorts.

Comparison of Social media activity on national level

First, data comparison was done on the national level. Therefore, the social media activity of the Austria National Board (ÖW Österreich Werbung) and Czech Tourism on the the following Social Media channels was analysed: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube, ISSUU.

ÖW has twice as much followers and check-ins than Czech Tourism. The reason could be that ÖW started their **Facebook** page almost 1 year before Czech Tourism. Furthermore, in terms of tourists, Austria receives nearly 4 times the number of the Czech Republic. Both Instagram accounts were established during the first half of 2014. ÖW is more active on **Instagram**. With an average number of posts of 54 per month, it outreaches the Czech Republic with only 32 posts per month. However, it is interesting to see that the total number of posts is nearly identical. The Austrian Instagram profile has much more followers (229.000) than the Czech profile (61.745). A big difference can also be found in numbers of users following the account: the Austrian profile has 2.319 and the Czech only 391. On **Pinterest** however, the Czech Republic has more boards (36) than Austria (30). The Czech page also outperforms on the number of pins with 8.115 versus 2.002 of Austria as well as the monthly viewers (139.600 vs. 77.000). However, Austria has more followers (5.428) than the Czech Republic (1.200).

The Czech Tourism **Twitter** account was established 6 months before the one of the Austrian Tourism Board. Czech Tourism is much more active on Twitter than the Austrian Tourism Board. The Czech Republic outperforms Austria in terms of tweets, followers and likes. The differences are considerable. While the Austrian Tourism Board established its **YouTube** account already in 2005, Czech Tourism only did so 3 years later. Austria has more subscribers on this video platform (8.800) than the Czech Republic (3.707). However, Czech Tourism has much more views (14.144.010) than Austrian (8.630.584).

Comparison of Social media activity on regional level (kraj)

On the regional level, the 9 Austrian provinces were compared to the 14 Czech regional provinces. Tyrol marks the province with the most number of guests (12 Mio.) and overnights (48 Mio.). The strongest Czech province is Prague with 8 Mo. Arrivals

and 18 Mio. overnight stays. Also on regional level, Austria outperforms the Czech provinces. The strongest region on Facebook is Tyrol with 480.000 Likes followed by Vienna with 300.000 Likes. Prague ranks third with 220.000 Likes. However, the smaller Czech provinces only reach 1.000-7.000 Likes. A similar picture arises for Instagram with nearly 100.000 Followers for Vienna and Tirol, 33.000 for Salzburg and 28.000 for Prague. While 8 out of 9 Austrian provinces run an Instagram account, only 8 out of 14 Czech regions do so. In addition, 8 Austrian provinces run a Twitter account, however not one single Czech region. Moreover, 3 Austrian and Czech provinces are on Pinterest.

Comparison of Social media activity on destination level (TVB)

Tyrol as the most important province in terms of overnights was further selected for a more detailed analysis of its tourism destinations. The main problem of comparison on the regional level was that Austria is composed of various regional tourism organizations, while in the Czech Republic only few regions compose of a professional tourism organization responsible for its touristic marketing. Therefore, the 34 Tyrolean destination management organizations (DMO) were compared to only 9 Czech DMOs.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Tyrolean DMOs have a stronger position on Social Media than Czech Regions. On Facebook e.g., the Czech DMO with the most Likes (7.653) reaches the same number of the smallest Tyrolean DMOs. The top Tyrolean DMOs on the other hand compose of more than 150.000 Likes, namely Ischgl-Paznaun and Kitzbühel Tourism. The same applies to the Instagram account. The Czech region with the most followers reaches 3.479 users, while the Tyrolean DMO has acquired nearly 40.000 followers (Innsbruck Tourism). Only few destinations are present on Pinterest, ISSUU or Flickr.

Comparison of the 10 biggest ski resorts

Another key outcome was the fact that due to the lack of tourism organizations in the Czech Republic, ski resorts take over the role of tourism destination marketing organizations. Therefore, besides the tourism destinations, also the 10 biggest (in terms of Austrian and Czech ski resorts) were evaluated in terms of Social Media Marketing. It becomes clear that Austrian ski resorts are much bigger ranging from 110-306 kilometres of slopes, while the biggest Czech ski resort Černá Hora – Pec composes of only 44 kilometers. While all 20 ski resorts analyzed are on Facebook, 10 Austrian, but only 4 Czech resorts are also on Instagram and YouTube. The same applies for Twitter (6 Austrian, but only one Czech ski resort). Also for other parameters like the number of Likes or the total number of reviews on Facebook, the number of posts and the followers on Instagram, the tweets, the followers and the likes on Twitter as well as the subscribers and the views on YouTube, Austrian ski resorts outperform the Czech ones.

Development of an English destination management & marketing course

Another aim of this joint project was to foster the existing student exchange cooperation between the two institutions. As part of this project, initiatives were launched to set up a course on destination management & marketing in English. This would help Austrian students to get enough ECTS at the University of Prague, as so far there was not enough offer of courses in English. The course should start in the summer term 2021.

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