

**Miraziz Bazarov**

## **Social Media Marketing by Russian Luxury Hotels. Before, during and after the Trip**

**Scientific Study**

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Before, during and after the Trip**

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Social media marketing by Russian luxury hotels: before, during and after the trip.

# Abstract

Most of the markets experience decreasing loyalty of customers (Neslin, 2006). However, social media and user-generated content “continuing dialogue” can enhance sales and improve loyalty (Leue et al., 2013). Social media marketing is seen as one of the fastest growing approaches to marketing, especially within such information and labour intensive sectors as hospitality (Laudon and Traver, 2010; Leue et al., 2013). Studying content at social networks and review websites can help reveal requirements of customers and flaws in services (Dellarocas, 2003). There is a lack of academic research on the effectiveness of particular approaches to the SMM in particular regional environments (Leung et al., 2011; Rosman and Stuhura, 2013). Moreover, there is a research gap in the topic of Russian luxury hotels and their SMM strategies. Hence the aim of the research, "To reveal the approaches to social media marketing Russian luxury hotels use before, during and after the trip (according to Euromonitor International model), find the patterns of using social media and aggregator websites by their clients and provide recommendations based on the collected data." This is done by interviewing specialists on social media marketing in Russia and the representatives of Russian luxury hotels and surveying 40 frequent customers of Russian luxury hotels.

The literature review reveal several major issues to study: difference between social media marketing and other online marketing activities, work with major third party booking and aggregator services (UGC), work with major social networks, responsibility for SMM, measuring the effectiveness of SMM, and profile of the customers attracted by SMM activities.

The research uses the pragmatism philosophy number of research and data collection techniques, both qualitative and quantitative, both primary and secondary, to analyse the data and try to offer the reliable and valid information that would have practical implications for luxury hotels in Russia. There is a large list of interviewed, some are presented in Appendix.

The findings show that the division on “before, during and after the trip” stages of SMM activities is not used in the real life. Russian luxury hotels are very good in SEO-optimisation, however hotels are increasingly spending on search ads, while they are not well-experienced in SMM. Two most prominent third party booking and aggregator services were booking.com and tripadvisor.ru, however, the most popular platforms included Russian services, such as ostrovok.ru. Apart from the evident focus on working with such third-party services as Booking.com and TripAdvisor, Russian luxury hotels focus on Facebook, neglecting Odnoklassniki and V Kontakte. Russian hotels generally do not use the opportunities of Twitter, Google+, Tumblr, Pinterest and even YouTube, as they are not effective for them. In most of the cases, the hotels avoided outsourcing SMM activities, due to the trust issues, especially after the number of incident related to buying “fake” likes, comments, comments and subscribers. The overall strategy and content is under the supervision of the Deputy Director and or PR/Marketing managers (in rare cases “E-commerce Managers,”) while replying to the requests and inquiries is under the responsibility of the managers for operations. However, the strategy can often prescribed by HQ in the case of the representatives of large hotel groups. It is hard to measure the effectiveness of social media marketing efforts. Considering the small luxury hotels, it is almost impossible, given their limited resources and competences. It is hard to reveal the profile of the customers who come from third party booking websites and online books services at social networks; however, they are generally younger and more technologically savvy.

Those interested in the recommendations to the hotels, SMM agencies and social networks, can read the final chapter and skip the other parts, as the final part is very concise and short.

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