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**Global Challenges and Prospects of the Modern Economic  
Development**

**PROBLEMS OF PROMOTION OF ACCOMMODATION  
FACILITIES IN SOCIAL NETWORKS**

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**Abstract**

In the context of an unfavorable epidemiological situation, the development of tourism business is under serious threat. Prospects of the tourism industry after the pandemic are assessed by experts ambiguously. Most industry representatives are confident that the development of domestic tourism will become a trend. There has always been an interest in traveling in Russia, both by compatriots and foreign citizens. In recent years, this has been facilitated by changes in the rules governing the possibility of certain categories of Russian citizens traveling abroad, a decrease in the share of Russian tourists traveling abroad, and the instability of the ruble exchange rate against major world currencies. New sanitary requirements adopted not only in Russia, but also around the world, increase the operating costs of companies. Traditionally, when an organization is experiencing financial difficulties, first of all, advertising costs are reduced. This raises the question of finding effective advertising tools with minimal costs. One of these, in our opinion, is the use of social media. This article reveals the role of social networks for the promotion of accommodation facilities. The author identified the most popular social networks in Russia and in the world, outlined some specific features of the social media use by the world's largest hotel chains operating in Russia, revealed promotion problems in social networks at the regional level (on the example of one of the largest economic centers of Russia - the city of Samara). General recommendations for the promotion of accommodation facilities in social networks are given.

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past ten years, the Russian advertising market has seen a significant increase in demand for advertising on the Internet. According to the Association of Communication Agencies of Russia, in 2010 the volume of advertising in the Internet segment was 26.65 billion rubles, for first 9 months 2020 – 169-171 billion rubles. The Internet is a leader in terms of collected advertising budgets. This segment accounts for 53% of the total market volume (Association of Communication Technologies Agencies in Russia, 2020).

Availability of information about the company in the global network means its presence in the national (regional) and international markets. This is especially important for organizations whose potential customers are not limited by geography. An important point here is the availability of information (Grankina et al., 2020). Currently, along with banner, contextual, teaser and other types of online advertising, promotion in social networks is becoming more and more popular (Chernova et al., 2019). According to Mediascope (2020), on average, about 48.9% of the Russian population use social networks every day. If earlier communities and profiles in social networks were created by representatives of small businesses, at the moment more and more companies see development prospects in this resource (Aleksushin et al., 2020; Kisteneva et al., 2020). However, for some hotel business owners, the effectiveness of promotion in social networks raises questions. Not all accommodation facilities use the social media resource to promote their services in full.

## 2. Problem Statement

Services of accommodation facilities have their own characteristics. They cannot accumulate over time as a commodity. Services that were not sold on time are irretrievably lost profits. Of particular importance is the seasonal nature of demand and attachment to a certain territory, the relation to the travel goals – a business trip or vacation. The main means of communication of hotels with the target audience is advertising (mainly placement of information on popular booking services, the official website) and personal sales. The choice of advertising tools is determined by the scale of business, the geography of business activity, and the specifics of the work (for example, some hotels are aimed at business tourists). Potential clients of the accommodation facility can be people from different parts of Russia and the world. The remoteness of customers causes certain restrictions in advertising activities. Thus, one of the most important tasks of the placement tool is to maximize the presentation of information about your activities, including through social networks.

Social networks are an effective resource for building two-way communication with the audience and have a lot of advantages: availability (world-famous chain hotels and small hotels get the same opportunities for promotion regardless of the size of their advertising budget); interactivity (social networks allow you to communicate with guests, potential customers and partners, while instantly receiving feedback, which helps to increase the loyalty of contact audiences); extensive opportunities for positioning the company and advertising a specific offer; creating an audience database with which you can regularly interact for free or with a minimum cost of contact; reaching new customers through the operation of the

word of mouth mechanism. Analysis of the promotion of accommodation facilities in social networks will allow you to identify the main problems and offer some recommendations to solve them.

### **3. Research Questions**

The main questions that are important in the process of conducting research can be divided into two groups. The first one includes issues that characterize development trends of social media in the world and in Russia. Which social networks are the most popular? What is the target audience of popular social networks? What are the prospects for the development of social networks? Of course, these are questions that need to be studied at first. The second group includes aspects about the research base. What list of accommodation facilities should the research database include? What should be considered to make the sample reliable? A clear formulation of research questions will contribute to the organization of the scientific search process and the correct choice of research methods.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Setting the goal of the study allows you to look in advance at the research result which should be obtained. In our case, the purpose of the study is to develop recommendations for the promotion of accommodation facilities in social networks. In accordance with this goal, we outline the main tasks of the study:

- study the statistics of social networks, identify the most popular ones both in Russia and around the world;
- analyze the promotion of accommodation facilities in social networks;
- identify the main problems in the considered area;
- develop a number of recommendations for the promotion of accommodation facilities in social networks.

The statement of these tasks will help to identify the essential features and criteria of the phenomenon under study, formulate the main problems and understand conditions for their successful solution.

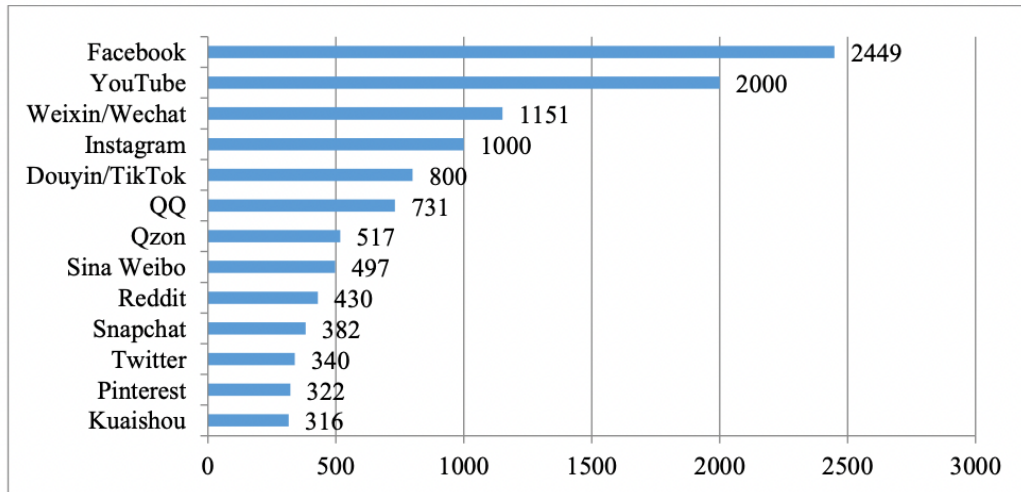
### **5. Research Methods**

In the course of the work, various research methods were used. At the theoretical level of this research, the following methods were used: analysis and synthesis, abstraction, induction and deduction. On the empirical level, we used methods of observation, comparison, measurement. Graphic methods were also widely used. Their application helped to give the correct characterization of the studied issues, make the conclusions clear and credible.

Along with the used methods, it is necessary to identify the information base of the study. It consists of official information sources: data of the Federal Agency for Tourism, Department of Tourism of the Samara region, the results of the market assessment of the Association of Communication Technologies Agencies in Russia (2020), data of research companies, information on the official websites of the accommodation facilities, as well as the results of independently conducted studies.

## 6. Findings

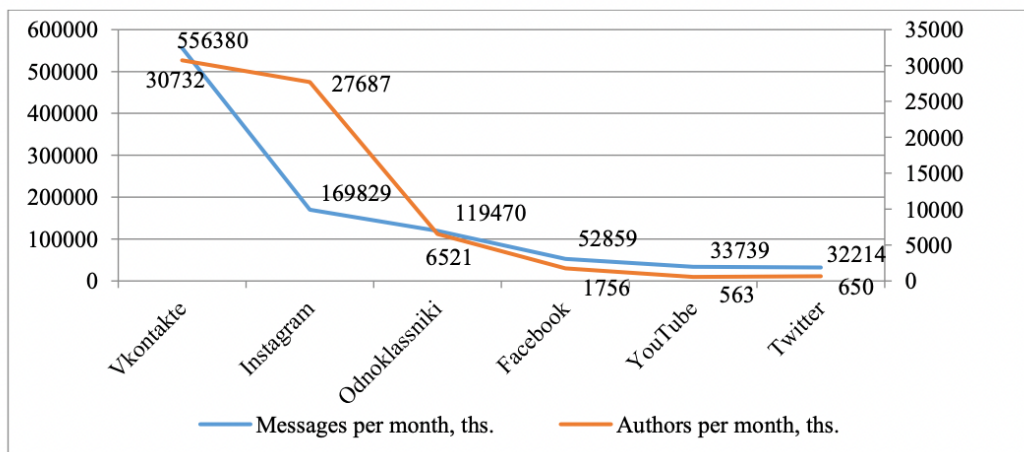
The most popular social networks in the world are Facebook and YouTube (Figure 1) (Kuzmenkova, 2020). Despite the popularity of Facebook worldwide, the reach of its audience in Russia is only 7% and this social network ranks fourth in the overall list (Mediascope, 2020) (Figure 2).



**Figure 1.** The most used social media in the world

Source: author based on (Kuzmenkova, 2020; BrandAnalytics, 2019)

The most popular social network in Russia is VKontakte (556,380 thousand messages per month account for 30,732 thousand active users) (Figure 2). This platform leads by a wide margin. Instagram Facebook, Odnoklassniki, and others are on the second place in popularity (Mediascope, 2020).



**Figure 2.** The most used social media in Russia

Source: author based on (Mediascope, 2020; BrandAnalytics, 2019)

In July 2019, the social network VKontakte had 58.8 million registered users. The main part is people from 35 to 64 years old. More than half of the audience (54.4%) are women. Instagram continues to gain popularity in Russia. The monthly audience of this social network is 30.7 million users. 14.3 million

people visit this resource every day. On average, users of the social network spend 25 minutes a day in it. According to Mediascope, the core audience is young people (people from 18 to 34 years old). The monthly audience of Odnoklassniki is 23.4 million users, 9 million users visit this social network daily, and 61% of users are women. The most active age group is 35-64 years old. 10.3 million Russians visit Facebook at least once a day, and 1.7 million use the social network daily. The main group of users is people from 35 to 64 years old (Mediascope, 2020). In total, Russian social networks account for 54.8% of active users, 44.1 per cent of them use the world's popular (Facebook, YouTube and Instagram).

Let's turn to the analysis results of the promotion of accommodation facilities in social networks. According to the Federal Agency for Tourism, the number of collective accommodation facilities in 2019 amounted to 28,302 units (+ 0.8% compared to the previous year), including 21,312 hotels and similar accommodation facilities. The volume of paid services of hotels and similar accommodation facilities amounted to 179.8 billion rubles. The main market share belongs to hotels of the world's largest chains (Federal Agency for Tourism, 2020). According to Rychagov (2019), the rating of the largest international hotel chains with accommodation facilities in Russia includes 15 companies. We studied their representation on social platforms (Table 1). Each of the hotel chains (except Louvre Hotels Group) has a Facebook page. Along with this platform, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter are in demand too. InterContinental Hotels Grop, Kempinski Hotels, Rocco Forte Hotels and Louvre Hotels Group use LinkedIn to disseminate information about their activities. It is worth noting that two of the hotel chains, the Russian Azimut Hotels and the Finnish Sokos Hotels, are represented in the social network VKontakte, it is indicated on their official websites.

**Table 1.** Representation of the largest international hotel chains on social media platforms

№	Name of the hotel chain	Name of the social network								
		Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube	Pinterest	Weibo	LinkedIn	Google+	VKontakte
1	Marriott International	*	*	*	*					
2	Radisson Hotel Group	*	*	*	*	*				
3	Accor Hotels	*	*	*	*	*	*			
4	InterContinental Hotels Grop	*		*				*		
5	Hilton Hotels & Resorts	*							*	
6	Azimut Hotels	*	*		*					*
7	Hyatt Hotels Corporation	*								
8	Lotte Hotels & Resorts	*	*		*					
9	Kempinski Hotels	*	*	*	*		*	*		
10	Sokos Hotels	*	*	*	*					*
11	Belmond LTD	*	*	*						
12	Rocco Forte Hotels	*	*	*	*			*		
13	Corinthia Hotels International	*	*	*						
14	Louvre Hotels Group			*	*			*		

Source: author.

Facebook and Instagram are the most popular social networks in the world, and when analyzing the maintenance of the pages and profiles of the above-mentioned companies in these networks, we note:

- high publication activity (frequent updating of posts);
- visual quality (page design elements, photos that differ in brightness, naturalness, using a minimum amount of text and graphic components);
- use of targeted advertising.

Advertising activities of chain hotels are usually implemented at two levels: national – by the representative office of the chain and regional (local) one – by a specific accommodation facility included in the chain. Let's consider specific features of promoting hotels at the regional level on the example of the city district of Samara.

Samara is a major economic, scientific, educational and cultural center of the Middle Volga region of Russia. This city, along with others, hosted the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. According to the Department of Tourism of the Samara region, the modern hotel infrastructure of the city and region offers high-quality service and a large number of accommodation options (Department of Tourism of the Samara region, 2020). There are hotels of all levels, ranging from hotels that provide a set of elite services, and ending with mini-hotels that specialize in economy class accommodation. In Samara, there are hotels of major global chains: Lotte (Lotte Hotel Samara, five-star category), Inter Continental Hotels Group (Holiday Inn, four stars), Marriott (Renaissance, four stars), Hilton (Hampton by Hilton, three stars), Accor (Ibis, three stars).

The Table 2 provides information about the use of social media by Samara's hosting facilities. The choice of accommodation facilities was based on data from the register of collective accommodation facilities in the Samara Region. The basis for the study was made up of hotels that were assigned the category of three and four stars, since they represent the largest number of accommodation facilities (Department of Tourism of the Samara region, 2020).

**Table 2.** Use of social networks by accommodation facilities of the city of Samara

№	Name of the accommodation facility	Name of the social media resource					
		Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube	Pinterest	VKontakte
1	Lotte Hotel Samara	*	*				*
2	Holiday Inn	*	*				*
3	Renaissance	*	*	*			
4	Hampton by Hilton	*	*				*
5	Ibis	*	*				*
6	7 AVENUE HOTEL & SPA	*	*				*
7	7terrace Boutique-hotel	*	*	*		*	*
8	Hotel Graf Orlov	*	*				*
9	Boutique Hotel «Sivre Estate»	*	*				*
10	Ost West Club Hotel	*	*				*
11	Russian Hunting		*				*
12	Moya Glinka		*				
13	Vestrum	*	*				*
14	Prague	*	*		*		*
15	Green Line Samara	*	*				*

16	Dubki		*	*
17	Russia	*	*	*
18	Oktyabrskaya Hotel	*	*	*
19	Hotel Equator Lite	*	*	*
20	Nice Hostel Samara			*

Source: author.

To inform about their activities, 80% of the accommodation facilities use 3 or more social networks. Instagram, Facebook and Vkontakte are used by 85% of hotels. The choice of resources is objective. However, not all hosting pages/profiles are active. Only a third of hotels constantly interact with the audience, the rest either use one of the above-mentioned social networks (mainly Instagram or VKontakte), or do not update information at all. On average, hotels post news once or twice a week. The topic of publications is formed spontaneously, the content plan is usually absent. When posting information, mostly unique hashtags are used, less often specialized ones, which limits the search for the hotel by interested users. Thus, we can conclude that most of the accommodation facilities neglect the use of social media in order to promote their business or do not fully use their capabilities.

Based on the analysis results, it is advisable to make some recommendations.

Initially, the main tasks of promotion in social networks may be: increasing the number of subscribers to the community / profile, informing potential customers about the hotel's services, increasing the number of views of materials, building two-way communication with community users. At the second stage, we can talk about the possibility of using social networks for sales purposes.

The promotion of hotels in social networks should be carried out continuously. For the purpose of complex interaction with the audience, it is necessary to adhere to the content plan, which includes information, entertainment, and selling posts. Important attention should be paid to the visual component of profiles, the style of communication with the audience (Kharlamov & Pilgun, 2020). It is necessary to respond to questions and comments from subscribers in a timely manner. For the purpose of advertising specific types of services (for example, offers for newlyweds), it is recommended to use targeted advertising and work with bloggers.

At the moment, promotion in social networks is a rather complex, multi-faceted work that requires special knowledge and should be carried out by professionals. In this regard, the management of the accommodation facility needs to make a decision to attract specialists from outside for the implementation of this direction, or to attract a new employee to the staff, improve skills of existing ones.

## 7. Conclusion

The importance of social networks for promoting the hotel business in the regions is underestimated. Meanwhile, the promotion of accommodation facilities in social networks is another opportunity to broadcast the "voice of the brand", work with reputation, a way of communicating with guests, and in case of systematic, effective work, it is a good sales channel. Building positive trusting relationships with your audience allows you to achieve high results. At the first stage, people get acquainted with information about the hotel, at the second stage, they evaluate, and then make a purchase. The peculiarity of promotion in social networks is that using the service, a guest on his own initiative, regardless of the hotel, can attract

new guests by clicking the "share news" button. Social media are actively developing, introducing new technologies and tools for interacting with the target audience. Accommodation facilities that skillfully use this resource can strengthen knowledge about their brand, increase audience loyalty and their competitiveness in the market.

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