

Digital Marketing as an Innovative Communication Tool in the Health Tourism System

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Abstract — The article examines the essence of internet marketing and digital marketing in the context of their role in the system of integrated marketing communications in the field of health tourism. The leading sites of companies working in the field of health tourism are analyzed. The use of modern digital marketing technologies, in particular crowd marketing and its basic tools in the field of health tourism, is investigated.

Keywords — health tourism, health tourism portal, marketing communications; Internet marketing; digital marketing; crowd marketing.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Relevance of the Research Topic

According to the latest World Tourism Barometers of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), destinations worldwide received 1.1 billion international tourist arrivals over the first nine months of 2019, which is 43 million more as compared to the same period in 2018. The contemporary world tourism market is characterized by a vigorous growth of the new type of tourism – health tourism, which includes not only medical and dental tourism but also some subtypes that have a preventive and cosmetic focus.

B. Problem Statement

The positive trend in international health tourism flows is strongly influenced by the development of information technologies. Factors of the development of information technologies in tourism include an unlimited amount of information, which enables to submit detailed information of a tourism company on its projects; the audience outreach scale; 24/7 access; possibility of prompt updating; interactive mode; complete access statistics and so on.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital marketing represents a complex that uses not only the Internet but also other types of marketing. Today, it actively uses traditional forms of advertising, such as digital billboards on the streets, communication facilities and QR codes.

Major digital marketing channels include affiliate marketing, where a partner is paid a fee for each buyer depending on his/its efforts to sell a product; display advertising aimed at attracting audience attention by means of banners and logos; e-mail marketing pays the most in digital marketing, which establishes a direct channel of communication between the consumer and the producer; search engine marketing aimed at increasing website consumer traffic; social networks, video advertising, and information graphics.

Of all the variety of marketing trends, only in digital marketing consumers are given the opportunity to get the commodity they really want; they can create it themselves. By introducing a unique product to the market, even a small company can notify its potential customers without spending lots of money on advertising. The use of Internet technologies in marketing of health tourism is widely covered in scholarly works by V. Baiev, K. Kucherenko, O. Humenna, N. Strokovska and others.

However, there is a need to improve the classification of health tourism online resources and digital marketing tools in this area.

III. TASK DESCRIPTION

In view of the above said, it is possible to formulate the task of the research, which consists in studying the principles and schemes of digital marketing in the field of health tourism, tools of crowd marketing, classification of Internet resources of health tourism and tools of digital marketing in this area.

IV. PRESENTATION OF BASIC MATERIAL

Contemporary health tourism is experiencing a real and obvious boom: there is a steady need and a growing demand in the healthcare market for medical services abroad [1]. This trend is due primarily to the fact that today the patient has the opportunity to choose to which country or to which medical institution to go for diagnostics, medical treatment and rehabilitation. An important reason for health tourism also lies in its economic levers [2]. Most health tourists prefer to receive medical services in medical institutions of countries with an optimal quality-price ratio of medical care, as well as comfortable conditions of stay [3].

The global health tourism market is projected to grow at a level of 16.1% in 2019-2025. The global health tourism market has seen strong growth over the last few years, but is driven by the high cost of medicinal treatment in developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, as most tourists traveling outside their countries come from North America and Europe [4].

The effectiveness of applying information technologies in tourism globally is assessed by the following indicators: the number of Internet users in the world; worldwide volumes of online sales of tourism services; and number of bookings by global distribution systems [4].

Modern computer technologies have a major impact on sales of tourism products in the field of health tourism. First of all, it concerns the possibility of forming new marketing channels for promotion and distribution of tourism products.

In terms of the online presence level, health tourism resources can be classified as follows:

- general-purpose sites with sections on medical treatment in the country of residence and abroad;
- specialized portals and sites dedicated to health tourism;
- direct booking systems for treatment and prevention;
- sites of health tourism companies;
- sites of medical-preventative and sanatorium-resort facilities providing services as part of health and dental tourism; and
- personal pages of people who are treated and restored to health abroad.

In the current context, health tourism operators use the Internet in the following ways:

- creation of a web page with information on a health tourism operator;
- advertising of leading clinics and medical programs;
- participation in news sharing groups; and
- communication via e-mail, ICQ, and IP-telephony.

Booking Health™ is the leading international portal for direct booking of health tourism services using Internet technologies. Booking Health™ hosts on its site more than 250 internationally accredited

clinics worldwide. When booking medical services supported by Booking Health™, patients receive the necessary service and full medical support, cost-effective diagnostics with a cost of treatment ranging from 40% to 70% as compared to treatment in clinics. Booking Health™ is the first company in the field of health tourism to receive the international quality control certificate ISO 9001: 2015.

The Internet data portal of Booking Health™ offers the following services:

- diagnostics – programs for the diagnosis of known diseases;
- medical treatment – programs aimed at treating relevant diseases;
- rehabilitation – recovery programs with the opportunity to choose time and duration; and
- rejuvenation and wellness – spa, check-up, detoxification, and slimming programs.

The tourist package of Booking Health™ includes the following products:

- analytical selection of the best clinic and accelerated booking of the place;
- audit of financial expenses;
- services of an individual manager-coordinator in a clinic for the whole period of the medical program;
- consultations of other specialists to solve challenging medical issues;
- issuance of prescriptions for the purchase of original medicines upon completion of the program;
- an interpreter;
- translation of medical documents;
- visa support;
- transfer: airport-clinic-airport; and
- insurance against a cost increase in case of complications with coverage of €200,000 for the duration of 48 months [5].

In recent years, in the segment of the Internet services market in the area of health tourism, an increasing share of requests of patients and travel agents of health tourism has fallen on the international Bookimed Internet platform, which has been operating in the market since 2014 and is focused on selecting clinics organizing medical treatment. About 300,000 users visit Bookimed every month. The site presents information on 611 clinics that have international certification and provide medical assistance in the health tourism system. On the Bookimed online platform, it is possible to get advice on diagnostics and medical treatment in clinics, book flights and accommodation, and read feedback from patients [6].

DoctorGEO is a portal of health tourism. The company's website is focused on providing information on the possibilities of examination, rehabilitation and medical treatment in 418 internationally certified clinics. The distinctive feature of DoctorGEO lies in coordination of its work with Russian-speaking patients. In addition, DoctorGEO's website provides information on 76 world-renowned resorts. In order to apply digital

communications, DoctorGEO uses social networking sites, in particular Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook [7]. Company Medical Expert makes extensive use of its own website and social networking sites for advertising purposes. Medical Expert is an international consulting company that has been active in the Ukrainian health tourism market since 2006 and sells tourism products of the following main types – medical treatment abroad; air medical service; rehabilitation abroad; and sanatorium-resort care [8].

Specialized portals and sites can be geared towards both building a full package of services in health tourism and advertising clinics and doctors, offer educational tourism services for doctors, interns and mid-level medical personnel. It can be exemplified by the TopMedClinic website -- an information resource for organizing medical treatment abroad. This project was created as an information field for the B2B segment in the sphere of health tourism. The TopMedClinic site focuses on Russian-speaking patients, medical agents, doctors and insurance companies.

A request from the site is sent to the international department of a clinic or to a representative of TopMedClinic Company overseeing a specific geographical area. The company itself does not create or organize travels for medical treatment purposes; it is an information resource for the target audience of professional medical agents, concierge services, doctors and insurance companies. In addition, TopMedClinic's business includes promoting clinics with international quality certification and their medical programs; organizing professional private meetings for medical agents; information support for internships of doctors and interns, and practical training of students of medical tertiary institutions [9].

Internet resources aimed at introducing modern technologies designed to organize international health tourism can be placed into another category of information portals. This category of information portals may include Elite Med, which aims to search for and organize optimal medical routes for the needs of a particular patient. To organize a travel, Elite Med provides tourism services that can be components of a specific travel package. These include:

- organizational services that precede a tourist trip: translation of medical records; sending medical records to several clinics and scientific medical centers for provisional diagnosis by foreign specialists;

- formulation of several offers for a travel package, which includes a description of the medical trip itinerary, a description of medical interventions, and their cost;

- ensuring communication with doctors of overseas medical centers;

- health insurance and insurance against risks of complications from medical interventions;

- transfer organization; and

- visa support [10].

Business tourism aimed at improving the skills of doctors, interns, mid-level and junior medical personnel is a special type of health tourism. International Center Medical UNION is a project of DoctorGEO Agency & Journal represented by its own website and using social networking sites Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Medical UNION enables medical personnel and the management of medical and preventive treatment facilities to not only select leading clinics for advanced training, get access to new diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation methods and technologies introduced in leading clinics around the world, but also establish appropriate partnership relations with foreign clinics and medical scientific centers [11].

Insurance companies are gradually beginning to enter the health tourism market that not only offer insurance services but also give the opportunity to get a complete tourist product: travel organization, medical treatment, travel and accommodation of accompanying persons and insurance against possible complications and iatrogenic diseases, which can be caused by diagnostic tests or rehabilitation treatment. Advertising materials of ARX insurance company, which is a member of the international Canadian insurance group Fairfax Financial Holdings, are widely featured on the Internet. This insurance company implements the “Medicine without Borders” program, through which patients can receive quality medical services abroad with the purpose of medical treatment of malignant tumors, coronary artery bypass grafting, heart valve replacement and restoration, neurosurgical interventions, transplantation of an organ from a live donor, bone marrow transplantation etc. The ARX travel package can include additional options, in particular services of an administrative coordinator and a medical interpreter/translator, a travel package for accompanying persons, repatriation and reinsurance risks in Further [12].

Modern digital marketing is ensured by several digital channels, namely:

- 1) the Internet network and devices giving access to it (computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones etc.);

- 2) mobile devices;

- 3) local networks (Extranet, Intranet);

- 4) digital television; and

- 5) interactive screens, POS-terminals.

The following can be considered as the main methods of digital marketing in the field of health tourism:

- contextual advertising – Google Adwords, Yandex Direct;

- Big Data technologies – mass data arrays;

- retargeting – reorientation of clients from the site of one clinic to the site of another clinic in order to compare offerings of medical programs;

- mobile marketing;

- e-mail;

- viral marketing;

- SMM (social media marketing);
- SMO (social media optimization);
- SEO (search engine optimization); and
- SEM (search engine marketing).

Digital marketing in the field of health tourism provides additional opportunities for both healthcare providers and patients and their legal representatives. As compared to Internet marketing, digital marketing offers more opportunities for health tourism marketing by introducing new possibilities of mobile communication:

- text messages (SMS);
- interactive voice response (IVR);
- multimedia messages (MMS);
- local radio communication between communication tools (Bluetooth);
- wireless data transfer protocol (WAP);
- mobikode – a combination of figures enabling to make payments or receive discounts on medical programs;
- QR-code – an image on printed matter enabling to quickly transition to a virtual environment;
- Click To, Flash SMS, and Location Based Services (LBS) technologies – technologies for easy download of software products.

The health tourism system uses well-known digital marketing tools [13]. They include:

- search engine optimization – SEO;
- search engine marketing -- SEM;
- the customer-oriented strategy for the development of tourism enterprises on the Internet -- e-Customer Relationship Management, ECRM;
- contextual advertising;
- social media marketing -- SMM
- viral marketing – word-of-mouth marketing, WOM),
- creating an image of a tour operator, travel agent or health tourism portal on the Internet – Public Relations, PR 2.0;
- video search marketing – VSM;
- affiliate marketing – AM; and
- retargeting.

Two main forms can be distinguished in digital marketing of health tourism:

1. Pull form – a patient or his/her legal representative independently examines the information (content) he/she requires and goes himself/herself to an appropriate clinic. In this case, the patient uses what he is offered.

2. Push form – a patient, regardless of his/her desire, receives information on clinics and medical programs (sms-mailing, spam etc.). This form has a significant disadvantage – the information thus obtained often is not paid ample attention, and therefore such efforts can be unavailing.

Digital marketing in the health tourism system solves such tasks as sustaining the image of healthcare providers; supporting introduction of a new brand (medical program, diagnostic method) into the market; increasing a brand or diagnostic or

treatment method awareness; and encouraging brand sales of diagnostics, medical treatment, and prevention.

Online booking sites are the most effective way of promoting recreational resort enterprises within the system of wellness tourism, which is considered as a separate component of health tourism. The bulk of online bookings are made through booking.com, Hotels.com, trivago.com, agoda.com, expedia.com etc.

It is important for recreational resort enterprises to employ up-to-date incentive methods that induce consumers to submit reviews, photos and videos on online websites such as booking.com, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Typically, this is introduced through social media campaigns. Recreational resort complexes offer free medical treatment or additional services to consumers of sanatorium services (they can include excursion services). Positive ratings and comments left by consumers can be a powerful tool for attracting new tourists seeking prevention and treatment services.

The development of health tourism is characterized by extensive use of crowd technologies. According to the definition suggested by O. Humenna [13], crowd technologies mean tools for organizing and using the results of activities of communities and other unstructured groups on the Internet network based on social interaction of members of such communities.

The main task of crowd marketing in the health tourism system is to manage feedback from patients and their legal representatives on the quality of medical care in clinics and medical services provided by health tourism companies. Such feedback affects the volume of sales of health tourism products from an appropriate company or Internet platform. On the other hand, crowd marketing significantly raises the rating of clinics and strengthens the positions of websites of Internet platforms, international consulting companies and health tourism portals in Google search results. Crowd marketing is a happy blend of several types of web promotion: reputation management, sales promotion through communication with the audience, and SEO.

The main tools of crowd marketing in the health tourism system include:

- Google – search for questions and feedback on medical treatment, diagnostics, rehabilitation, sanatorium and health resort services on sites and message boards.
- Google Alerts and Talkwalker – notification of new reviews and questions.
- Disqus – tracking comments in blogs on the quality of delivered medical care.
- Kribrum – monitoring social networks and message boards.
- Tagboard, LiveTweet, and Tweetdeck – monitoring the Twitter social network.

- Facebook, Google Plus, ВКонтакте, and Twitter – communications with potential patients and their legal representatives.

- Google Analytics – analysis of transitions to the site of a clinic or a sanatorium-resort facility and of behavior of consumers of a health tourism product on such a site.

When visiting the site of a clinic, patients and their representatives are interested not only in the list of medical programs and technologies but they wish to receive information on the clinic's international certificates and the leading doctors. Therefore, when working in the system of health tourism, clinics pay great attention to social networks as a tool to enhance their prestige.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Creation of digital services offers the following opportunities to be used in marketing activities of health tourism companies:

1. Up-to-date and comparative information. The use of digital services enables to get prior advice from doctors and compare offerings of medical technologies used by clinics and medical scientific centers. It is possible to compare price offers of various medical centers and sanatorium-resort facilities on a real-time basis.

2. Quality and the integrated nature of information. Mass media offer ad placement to medical clinics and sanatorium-resort facilities for money, while using digital services makes it possible to use free advertising. In addition, there is a short period of time between ad placement and the phone call of a potential clinic patient. Digital marketing tools, including crowd technologies, enable to expand activities of clinics from the local market to the national and worldwide ones. This idea is particularly essential for the development of international dental tourism, because its services can be provided not only by leading dental clinics but also by dental offices.

3. Integrated promotion of a tourism product. Leading health tourism portals and medical clinics with international quality certificates generally offer a complex tourism product that includes patient transportation (using scheduled flights or air ambulances), comprehensive diagnostics and medical treatment, consultations by an outside specialist, accommodation, administrative support, translation etc.

Unlike traditional marketing methods for promoting health tourism products, digital marketing gives a clear statistical picture of the effectiveness of a marketing campaign.

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