

Impact of digital marketing on the purchasing behavior of modern consumers in the field of tourism

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Abstract. In the current digital environment, digital marketing plays a crucial role in shaping and influencing consumer preferences and decision-making processes. With the increasing digitalization of society and the abundance of online information, digital marketing has become an inseparable part of promotional strategies in the field of tourism. This study aims to explore several forms of promotion, with an emphasis on digital marketing, and analyze their impact on Slovak consumers in the tourism sector. The findings reveal that while traditional media, such as television, remain significant in promotional strategies, digital marketing is increasingly influencing consumer behavior, particularly among younger, digitally active demographics. The study highlights the importance of credibility in digital marketing content and the growing consumer interest in innovative approaches, such as virtual and augmented reality, for enhancing engagement. These insights provide actionable guidance for the development of

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integrated marketing strategies that combine traditional and digital methods to address the evolving needs and expectations of diverse consumer groups in the tourism industry.

Keywords: digital marketing, consumer, tourism, consumer behavior, promotion

JEL Classification: M3, Z3

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing and tourism represent two closely interconnected fields that are increasingly merging due to advancements in technology and shifting consumer preferences. The analysis of numerous Slovak and international studies reveals that digital marketing provides the tourism sector with a wide range of tools and communication channels to effectively target, engage, and interact with customers (Gavurova et al., 2021). These tools include personalized advertising, interactive content, social media platforms, and analytical technologies for monitoring consumer behavior.

One of the principal advantages of digital marketing in this sector is its ability to precisely target specific audiences, thereby improving the effectiveness of communication strategies. This capability is critical not only for acquiring new customers but also for retaining the loyalty of existing ones. Research shows that customer satisfaction with products and services directly influences repeat purchases, which highlights the importance of consistent and well-targeted marketing communication. However, the success of such efforts requires a comprehensive understanding of consumer purchasing behavior, encompassing needs, preferences, and expectations.

Customers play a decisive role in determining the success of businesses in the tourism sector (But, 2024). They are at the heart of every organization, and their satisfaction constitutes a primary goal of strategic initiatives. Successful businesses not only address customer needs but also actively work to sustain their loyalty through continuous improvements in products and services (Kašparová, 2024). Moreover, organizations should focus on strategies to attract new customers to ensure continuous growth. In this regard, using innovative approaches is essential, for example leveraging artificial intelligence for predictive analytics, implementing interactive online campaigns, or adopting tailored solutions (Skare et al., 2023a, b).

Digital marketing offers the tourism sector unique opportunities to respond to dynamic changes in consumer behavior and competitive environments. The key to success lies in thoroughly understanding customers, their needs, and expectations, as well as translating these insights into innovative and effective marketing strategies that strengthen businesses' positions in a global context.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Amin and Priansah (2019) explained that the simplicity of marketing communication provided by online markets or e-commerce significantly influenced consumer decisions in selecting and choosing to purchase products online.

In recent years, online shopping has become much more convenient and practical. Consumers buy various products or services from all over the world, anytime and anywhere, using computers, mobile phones, or tablets. Powerful e-commerce platforms have greatly facilitated the creation of e-shops, enabling anyone of us to engage in online business (Koch, Frommeyer & Schewe, 2020). However, this also entails several risks from the consumer's perspective.

Currently, tourism is experiencing tremendous growth thanks to digital marketing. Whether it's booking a hotel, reserving a seat on a plane, or obtaining information about a chosen tourist destination (Martín-Martín et al., 2023). We can say that online marketing has the potential for significant expansion in the field of tourism in the coming years. Digitization has also made it easier for businesses in the tourism and travel sector to connect with potential customers (Erdmann et al., 2024; Gavurova et al. 2023). The tourism industry utilizes various forms of online marketing policies and strategies to enhance awareness of their products or services. As a result, organizations can easily reach out to their potential customers anytime and from anywhere in the world (Negi & Chaurasia, 2021; Vargová et al., 2021).

In their publication, Jekabson and Gudele (2020) reference an extensive theoretical overview of studies highlighting the positive impact of e-commerce on business. They identify economy, efficiency and speed as key factors creating a competitive advantage (Birknerová, Ondříjová & Čigarská, 2022; Buvár & Gáti, 2023). Based on their own empirical findings, they note that significant differences exist among entrepreneurs who fully utilize the opportunities of e-commerce and those who do not utilize these opportunities at all. Rivza et al. (2020) describe that in the context of globalization, the e-commerce system is a generally important research topic. This subject is becoming increasingly pertinent particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises.

While studies on the internet as one of the advertising media (Bruner & Kumar, 2007; Chiagouris & Lala, 2009; Birknerová et al., 2018; Cetulean & Stoian, 2024) have examined the combination of channels for delivering persuasive advertising messages, the research into their impact on consumers has been relatively limited to a few studies (Chang & Thorson, 2023; Drăghici & Constantinescu, 2024; Gremer & Diefenbach, 2020; Mensah & Amenuvor, 2021; Zeng et al., 2022). Social media have evolved in the past few years to encompass a variety of input capabilities, various features and unlimited Internet access, and powerful location awareness function (Civelek et al., 2024; Keller & Ercsey, 2023). Importantly, the increased capabilities of the mobile application support thousands of social media which extend the functionality of social media to a wide range of information services such as specialized information search and marketing (Habes et al., 2018; Alghizzawi, 2019; Dima et al., 2022; Mazare et al., 2024;). For this reason, further research is essential to address the gaps in this area of advertising research and to explore the potential of both traditional and non-traditional media, such as the internet. Furthermore, the effects of media have not been adequately demonstrated, and researchers have mostly focused on individual medium and the combination of online and print advertising. Therefore, this gap should be filled with a comprehensive study that integrates both traditional and non-traditional media advertising.

The evolution of the internet and its related technologies has given rise to new forms of interactions for acquiring goods and services through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Online shopping has transitioned from being solely on websites to becoming an integral part of social media (Fafilek et al., 2024). The process of online shopping now involves engagement through social media and is shaped by customer reviews, recommendations from the social community, user endorsements, and customer ratings. The rise of social media enables users to share and access information within their social community (Avinash et al, 2016; Xu, Chen & Ow, 2023; Matušíková et al., 2023).

The world is witnessing significant development in communication due to the widespread use of technology and information dissemination via the internet through various media channels, such as smartphones, social media platforms, and electronic word of mouth (Stephen, 2016; Al-Qaysi & Al-Emran, 2017; Al-Qaysi et al., 2020; Alshurideh et al., 2019.) Digital presence has become essential for every company to deliver vital information to their target audience, attract new visitors, and cultivate long-term relationships with customers (Pacana et al., 2023). Business and retailers provide information and promote their products and services in an efficient and cost-effective manner to attract their target audience, influence their

decisions, and thereby expand their customer base. Digital marketing also helps organizations monitor and analyze user behavior on their company websites, social media, and other digital platforms in real-time, focusing on reach, engagement, and conversion (Al-Marooof & Al-Emran, 2018; Gupta, 2019).

Social media must be a part of every company's marketing budget because they offer an effective way to connect with the target audience. From Instagram to LinkedIn, there are virtually limitless ways to interact and share market information about products (Petrovský et al., 2023). Social networks enable connecting with new customers and maintaining contact with existing ones. Social media enhances customer service by providing accessibility for customers who seek instant feedback (Moravec et al., 2024). Consumers rely on social pages to learn about products and services from various market companies. Optimized profiles and valuable information create a positive first impression of online businesses (Kayumovich & Kamalovna, 2019).

Koufaris (2002) found that both the enjoyment of shopping and perceived usefulness (website) strongly predict the intention to repurchase through the internet. Conversely, Lee and Lin (2005) discovered that shopping pleasure can increase the intention of new customers to purchase, but it does not influence customers to return. An e-commerce store utilizing value-added search mechanisms and providing customers with a satisfying experience can indeed amplify customers' shopping pleasure.

Subsequent studies focusing on consumer typologies in the context of online shopping have identified factors such as price sensitivity, engagement, purchase intent, and retail channel choice. Online shoppers have been grouped based on personal shopping traits and cultural factors into the following categories: skeptical risk aversion (reserved and skeptical towards new experiences), open online shoppers (high trust in online sellers), and reserved information seekers (primarily use the internet for information search). A new aspect of consumer behavior in the realm of social media presents a fresh style of information seeking, depicting information-active skilled researchers and information-passive internal users of online content. This introduces a new classification of consumer based on their approaches to online information seeking about products (Štefko et al., 2023; Civelek et al., 2023). The info-active and passive modes allow for more appropriate consumer segmentation concerning their sensitivity and the impact of both marketing-generated and user-generated content. This novel consumer segmentation type enables marketers to craft a marketing mix for each variation of information-seeking style (Nastišin et al., 2022). This new segmentation, comprising information-active and passive information-seeking style, assists marketers in devising suitable strategies for various market gaps emerging on social media website (Gligorijevic, 2014).

2. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was to determine the impact of selected forms of promotion and digital marketing on the purchasing behavior of Slovak consumers in the field of tourism. The research focused on consumers residing in the Slovak Republic. The research sample was chosen randomly. The collected data was processed using statistical software Statistic. To test the hypotheses, the Kendall's correlation coefficient and the Chi-squared test were employed. The hypotheses in this study were formulated to align with the research objective, which aimed to determine the impact of selected forms of promotion and digital marketing on the purchasing behavior of Slovak consumers in the field of tourism. Specifically:

H1: We assume that there is a statistically significant relationship between the age of respondents and their preference for selected forms of digital marketing in the field of tourism.

H2: We assume that there are statistically significant differences in the perception of promotions by companies operating in the tourism industry based on the gender of the surveyed respondents.

3. SURVEY RESULTS

The research sample consisted of a total of 168 respondents. The sample size of 168 respondents was determined using a combination of statistical calculations and practical considerations. For a population of approximately 5.4 million (the total population of Slovakia), a sufficient sample size is typically calculated based on desired confidence levels and margins of error. Due to resource constraints and the practical challenges of data collection, particularly in an online survey format, the final sample size was adjusted to 168 respondents. Efforts were made to ensure that the sample reflects the diversity of the target population, with considerations for key demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and geographic distribution, to provide meaningful insights into Slovak consumers in the tourism sector.

The study included 67.2% women and 32.8% men. The majority of the surveyed respondents were in the age groups of 18-29 years (42%), followed by respondents aged 30-39 years (27%). The third group comprised respondents aged 40-49 years (19%), while respondents aged 50-59 years accounted for 12% of the sample. The smallest group consisted of respondents aged 60-69 years (1%).

Consumer behavior during the shopping process is changing more and more in today's world, mainly due to modern technologies that are more effective than in the past. Consumers pay attention to the origin of desired products, their composition, and approach their spending on purchases significantly. Present-day consumers, with their unique and specific lifestyle, crave experiences and are saturated with a multitude of information obtained from media and the internet (Matiová & Musová, 2018). Various conducted and published domestic as well as foreign studies indicate that digital marketing has a significant impact on the informational and decision-making processes of consumers in the tourism industry. Consumers are increasingly turning to social media to gather information about travel destinations, hotels, restaurants, as well as various attractions. Information and photos shared on social media allow them to obtain authentic and up-to-date information from fellow travelers. This information directly influences their purchasing decisions when selecting a specific destination or service provider.

Preferred traditional forms of promotion for companies operating in the tourism industry encompass various methods and media that effectively reach out to consumers/travelers and encourage their interest in traveling. These promotional methods remain important even as digitization become increasingly prominent. Selecting suitable promotional methods based on the target audience, budget, and company's nature is crucial. Traditional forms of promotion can work well in tandem with modern online and digital strategies, achieving a comprehensive and effective approach to promoting the travel company. In the context of this issue, our questionnaire survey focused on determining which are the most preferred forms of promotion for companies in the tourism industry, according to surveyed consumers. Respondents were given the opportunity to choose multiple options that represented selected promotional methods.

The first option was television promotion, as television promotion in the tourism industry constitutes an important tool to capture the attention and interest of potential respondents. This form of promotion enables companies in the tourism sector to present their services in a visually rich environment. The second option was radio promotion. Although it's a less commonly used form of promotion for companies in the tourism industry, it is an intriguing method to engage and grab the attention of potential consumers. While often focused on auditory communication, it can have a strong impact on the target audience. Printed promotion remains effective in prompting consumers towards purchasing behavior. For this reason, we included printed promotion as the third option. Printed promotion in the tourism industry encompasses various material used to showcase destinations, attractions, accommodations, and other tourism services. It can take various forms and plays a vital role in capturing attention and informing consumers/travelers. Online promotion in the tourism industry is a key tool to reach and engage modern consumer. As internet accessibility and online communication popularity grow, digital marketing has become an inseparable aspect

of promoting companies in the tourism industry. The last option was telemarketing, as telemarketing in the tourism industry involves direct communication with customers. This approach allows travel companies to personally address potential consumers, answer their queries, and share information about offers and services (Table 1).

Table 1

Most preferred forms of promotion for companies in the tourism industry from the perspective of respondents

| Forms of promotion | N | % | Valid % | Cumulative number |
|--------------------|-----|--------|---------|-------------------|
| Television | 96 | 57.10 | 57.10 | 57.10 |
| Radio | 22 | 13.10 | 13.10 | 70.20 |
| Print | 14 | 8.30 | 8.30 | 78.60 |
| Internet | 29 | 17.30 | 17.30 | 95.80 |
| Telemarketing | 7 | 4.20 | 4.20 | 100.00 |
| In total | 168 | 100.00 | 100.00 | |

Source: Own processing

The first table presents the results of a survey question designed to identify the most preferred forms of promotion for companies in the tourism industry. While respondents were able to choose only one option, the predominance of television as the most selected form (57.1%) underscores its enduring relevance in delivering impactful advertising. The results, though somewhat anticipated, also revealed interesting contrasts, particularly the relatively lower preference for digital forms of promotion, which suggests that television still plays a vital role in tourism marketing strategies despite the digital shift. These findings provide actionable insights for businesses seeking to align their promotional strategies with consumer expectations. Based on the aforementioned results, we can conclude that more than half of the respondents, i.e., 63 (57.10%), prefer television promotion as part of various forms of promotion for companies operating in the field of tourism. This result surprised us, as digital technologies currently dominate the world. However, the results reaffirmed that television promotion remains one of the effective methods for presenting companies in the tourism industry. Through television commercials, a wide range of potential consumers can be reached, and an emotional connection with the travel brand can be established. In second place in terms of respondent preferences is internet promotion (29; 17.30%). 22 (13.10%) surveyed respondents indicated a preference for radio promotion, and 14 (8.30%) respondents prefer the printed forms of promotion for companies in the tourism sector. 7 (4.20%) surveyed respondents expressed the opinion that telemarketing is their preferred form of promotion for companies operating in the tourism industry.

The credibility of content in the digital marketing of companies operating in the tourism sector is a significant contribution that influences the decisions of potential customers. With the increasing influence of the internet and media on travel selection and planning, companies are increasingly using social media and various marketing campaigns. The main aspects of the digital era are incorporated into marketing strategies. Consumers expect relevant information about destinations, hotels, attractions, and more. In the following questionnaire question, we focused on determining whether the surveyed consumers perceive the content of digital marketing by companies in the tourism industry as credible (Table 2). In the selected questions, respondents had the opportunity to express their opinions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – agreement to 5 – disagreement.

Table 2

Credibility of content in digital marketing of companies in the tourism industry from the perspective of respondents

| Likert scale | N | % | Valid % | Cumulative number % |
|----------------|-----|--------|---------|---------------------|
| Strongly agree | 35 | 20.80 | 20.80 | 20.80 |
| Agree | 75 | 44.60 | 44.60 | 65.50 |
| I do not know | 38 | 22.60 | 22.60 | 88.10 |
| Disagree | 20 | 11.90 | 11.90 | 100.00 |
| In total | 168 | 100.00 | 100.00 | |

Source: Own processing

Based on the results processed in Table 2, we can see that 110 surveyed respondents out of a total of 168 leaned towards the opinion that they consider the content of any form of promotion by companies in the tourism industry to be credible. 20 surveyed respondents do not believe in the content of various forms of promotion by companies in the tourism industry, and 38 respondents were unsure whether they find the content of digital marketing by companies in the tourism industry to be credible.

The interest of consumers in new forms of digital marketing in the field of tourism is continuously growing, with digital technologies providing new and intriguing ways to provide information and experiences to travelers. Some of these forms of digital marketing, from a consumer's perspective, include virtual reality and augmented reality. Virtual reality and augmented reality allow consumers to have vivid and captivating travel experiences (Lewicki & Florek, 2024). Travelers can engage in virtual tours of destinations, hotels, and attractions, which can help them better envision their travel plans. As this is a very current issues, we focused on determining, in the following survey question, whether surveyed respondents are interested in new forms of digital marketing from companies in the tourism industry (Table 3). Surveyed respondents had the opportunity to express their views again on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – strongly agree to 5 – strongly disagree.

Table 3

Interest in new forms of digital marketing in the field of tourism from the perspective of respondents

| Likert scale | N | % | Valid % | Cumulative number % |
|-------------------|-----|--------|---------|---------------------|
| Strongly agree | 30 | 17.90 | 17.90 | 17.90 |
| Agree | 82 | 48.80 | 48.80 | 66.70 |
| I do not know | 40 | 23.80 | 23.80 | 90.50 |
| Disagree | 14 | 8.30 | 8.30 | 98.80 |
| Strongly disagree | 2 | 1.20 | 1.20 | 100.00 |
| Total | 168 | 100.00 | 100.00 | |

Source: Own processing

The results processed in Table 3 indicate that almost half of the surveyed respondents, 82 (48.8%), and 30 (19.9%) would welcome companies in the tourism industry to utilize more new trends and forms of digital marketing in their marketing communication. 2 (1.2%) and 14 (8.3%) of the surveyed respondents expressed those new forms of digital marketing in the field of tourism would not appeal to them. 45 (26.8%) of the surveyed respondents were unsure about this issue. The significance of this questionnaire question lied in determining the success or failure of incorporating new forms of digital marketing within the promotion and engagement of consumers in the tourism industry.

The aim of research hypothesis H1 was to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the age of respondents and their preference for selected forms of digital marketing in the field of tourism. This hypothesis was examined based on two questionnaire questions. The first question was focused on determining whether the form of promotion used by companies in the tourism industry influences the choice of the surveyed respondents. The second question aimed to find out whether the surveyed respondents would welcome new forms of marketing communication in the promotion of companies in the tourism industry.

Table 4

H1: Kendall's correlation coefficient

| | | | Question 5 | Question 12 |
|-----------------|-----|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Kendall's tau_b | age | Correlation coefficient | -,020 | ,157* |
| | | p | ,763 | ,018 |
| | | N | 168 | 168 |

Source: statistical software SPSS Statistics 20

For the purpose of evaluating H1, the Kendall's correlation coefficient was used (Table 4) to determine the intensity and direction of the relationship between two ordinal variables, specifically in this hypothesis between age and questions 5 and 12. The values of the correlation coefficient can range from -1 to 1, where values closer to these extremes indicate a stronger relationship, and values closer to 0 indicate a weaker relationship. Regarding the relationship between age and question 5 (Does the form of promotion used by companies in the tourism industry influence your choice?), the coefficient is -0.020 ($p=0.763$), indicating a very weak relationship. Therefore, we reject the stated hypothesis for this question. In relation to question 12 (Would you welcome new forms of marketing communication in the promotion of companies in the tourism industry?), the correlation coefficient is 0.157, which is also a weak relationship, but statistically significant ($p=0.018$). Thus, we can assume that this relationship exists not only in the observed sample but also in the entire population. The correlation coefficient is positive, meaning that with increasing age, respondents would be less welcoming of new forms of marketing communication. Out of the two relationships examined, only one was statistically significant, so hypothesis H1 was not confirmed.

Table 5

Effectiveness of perceiving promotion of companies in the tourism industry from the perspective of respondents

| | | | Question 13 | | | | In total |
|----------|--------|---|----------------|-------|---------------|----------|----------|
| | | | Strongly agree | Agree | I do not know | Disagree | |
| Gender | male | n | 10 | 19 | 25 | 9 | 63 |
| | | % | 15.9 | 30.2 | 39.7 | 14.3 | 100.0 |
| | female | n | 24 | 43 | 32 | 6 | 105 |
| | | % | 22.9 | 41.0 | 30.5 | 5.7 | 100.0 |
| In total | | n | 34 | 62 | 57 | 15 | 168 |
| | | % | 20.2 | 36.9 | 33.9 | 8.9 | 100.0 |

Source: statistical software SPSS Statistics 20

The aim of research hypothesis H2 was to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the perception of promotion by companies in the tourism industry based on the gender of the surveyed respondents. To test this hypothesis, the chi-square test of independence was used, which provides a contingency table and evaluates the statistical significance of the relationship.

Table 6

| H ₂ : Chí-square test | | |
|----------------------------------|----|------|
| chí-square | df | p |
| 6,416 ^a | 3 | ,093 |

Source: statistical software SPSS Statistics 20

Company promotion in the field of tourism was considered definitely effective by 16% of men and 23% of women, and somewhat effective by 30% of men and 41 of women. The objective was to determine whether there are significant differences in this perception between men and women. The obtained results showed that there are certain differences in opinions between these two groups of respondents. Women exhibited a tendency to have a more positive attitude towards the promotion of companies in the tourism industry compared to men. Despite these differences, the statistical analysis did not demonstrate sufficient significance in these distinctions ($\chi^2=6,416$; $df=3$; $p=0,093$). This implies that even though there seems to be a tendency for differences in the perception of promotion between the genders of the surveyed respondents, these differences are not strong enough to become statistically significant. Thus, in this context, hypothesis H2 was not confirmed.

4. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the impact of selected promotional and digital marketing strategies on Slovak consumers' purchasing behavior in the tourism industry. The findings provide valuable insights into consumer preferences for traditional and digital advertising, as well as their perceptions of credibility and openness to innovation in marketing. The results are contextualized within recent literature and industry trends, highlighting their relevance and contribution.

The study revealed that television promotion remains the most preferred form of advertising among respondents, with 57.1% indicating it as their top choice. This finding underscores the continued relevance of traditional media in tourism marketing, where visually rich narratives are essential for capturing consumer interest. Recent industry reports, such as those by Simulmedia (2022), confirm television's enduring effectiveness, particularly in the travel and tourism sector, where its broad reach and emotional appeal resonate with diverse audiences. However, this result contrasts with global trends reported by Nguyen (2022), which indicate that digital platforms are increasingly replacing traditional media as the dominant marketing channel. This divergence may reflect regional differences, as Slovak consumers appear to maintain higher trust in traditional media compared to consumers in markets where digital marketing dominates.

Internet promotion ranked second in preference, with 17.3% of respondents favoring this form of advertising. This aligns with broader global shifts toward digital engagement, as noted by SpringerLink (2023), which highlights the pivotal role of online platforms in post-COVID-19 tourism marketing. Digital marketing, particularly through social media, has become essential for reaching younger, tech-savvy consumers who rely heavily on online content to inform their travel decisions. Despite this, the relatively lower ranking of internet promotion compared to television suggests that Slovak consumers may still view traditional media as a more credible and effective marketing tool.

The study also assessed the credibility of digital marketing content. Approximately 65.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they found the content trustworthy, reflecting the growing importance of transparency and authenticity in tourism marketing. This finding is consistent with Statista (2023), which notes that credible and informative digital campaigns significantly influence consumer trust. However, a notable 22.6% of respondents expressed uncertainty about the reliability of digital marketing, echoing concerns raised by Simulmedia (2022), which found that oversaturation of online advertisements and lack of personalized content can erode consumer confidence.

In addition to traditional and digital marketing strategies, the study explored consumer interest in innovative methods such as virtual and augmented reality. The findings show that 66.7% of respondents were open to these immersive technologies, recognizing their potential to enhance the travel planning process by offering vivid, interactive experiences. This aligns with *Frontiers in Neuroscience* (2021), which highlighted the effectiveness of virtual reality in engaging consumers and providing a realistic preview of destinations, accommodations, and attractions. Such technologies not only capture attention but also build confidence in purchasing decisions by offering consumers a tangible sense of their prospective travel experiences.

The analysis of hypotheses provided further insights into the relationship between demographic factors and marketing preferences. The first hypothesis (H1), which posited a relationship between age and preferences for digital marketing, was only partially supported. A statistically significant but weak positive correlation was observed between age and openness to new forms of marketing communication, suggesting that younger consumers are more receptive to innovative methods, while older consumers are less enthusiastic. This aligns partially with Zhou et al. (2021), who identified age as a significant factor in digital engagement, although the correlations observed in this study were weaker, reflecting potential cultural or regional nuances.

The second hypothesis (H2) explored gender-based differences in perceptions of promotional effectiveness. Although women demonstrated a slightly more positive attitude toward tourism promotions than men, the differences were not statistically significant. This finding contrasts with Johnson et al. (2020), who reported pronounced gender-based variations in marketing responses globally. The lack of significant differences in this study suggests that gender may not play as pivotal a role in shaping consumer perceptions within the Slovak context as it does in other regions, though further research is warranted.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by addressing a gap in research on Slovak consumers in the tourism sector. It highlights the continued importance of traditional media, particularly television, in a rapidly digitizing world, while also emphasizing the growing influence of digital and immersive technologies. These findings provide actionable insights for marketers in the tourism industry, advocating for a hybrid approach that leverages the strengths of both traditional and digital media while incorporating emerging trends like virtual and augmented reality to enhance consumer engagement.

5. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to examine the impact of traditional and digital marketing strategies on Slovak consumers' purchasing behavior in the tourism sector, with a focus on demographic influences such as age and gender. The findings underscore the continued relevance of traditional media, such as television, while highlighting the growing importance of digital marketing and the potential of innovative technologies like virtual and augmented reality.

One of the main findings is that television remains the most preferred promotional method among Slovak consumers, with 57.1% of respondents favoring this medium. This reflects television's ability to

deliver visually compelling narratives and foster emotional connections with audiences. However, the study also reveals that internet promotion, although ranked second (17.3%), plays an increasingly significant role, particularly for younger and more digitally engaged consumers. These results suggest that a hybrid approach combining the strengths of traditional and digital marketing is essential for effectively engaging diverse consumer groups in the tourism sector.

The study also highlights the critical importance of credibility in digital marketing. Approximately 65.4% of respondents consider digital content credible, emphasizing that high-quality, transparent, and authentic communication is vital for building consumer trust. This trust is a key determinant of purchasing behavior and loyalty, particularly in an industry where consumers rely heavily on online information to make decisions. Companies in the tourism sector must carefully manage their digital content to ensure it aligns with consumer expectations, thereby enhancing trust and driving both immediate and long-term engagement.

The analysis of demographic variables, particularly age, reveals nuanced insights. Younger generations, such as Millennials and Generation Z, are more open to innovative digital marketing strategies, including social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and immersive technologies like virtual reality. In contrast, older generations demonstrate a preference for more traditional promotional methods and are less receptive to emerging digital trends. This age-related variation underscores the need for tailored marketing strategies that resonate with specific demographic groups.

Although the study found slight gender-based differences in the perception of promotional effectiveness, these were not statistically significant. This finding suggests that gender may not play a pivotal role in shaping marketing preferences in the Slovak context, but further research could explore this aspect in more depth across different regions and cultural contexts.

Overall, this study contributes valuable insights into the interplay between traditional and digital marketing in the tourism industry. By addressing age-related differences and emphasizing the importance of credible digital content, businesses can design more precise and effective marketing campaigns. Furthermore, the findings highlight the growing role of innovative technologies in engaging consumers and shaping their purchasing decisions. Continuous monitoring of consumer preferences and emerging trends will be critical for companies seeking to maintain competitiveness and foster stronger connections with their target audiences in this dynamic industry.

In conclusion, digital marketing is a powerful yet multifaceted tool for influencing consumer behavior in the tourism sector. By understanding and leveraging demographic insights, businesses can optimize their marketing efforts to meet the unique needs of diverse consumer groups. This research-driven approach ensures that marketing strategies remain relevant, impactful, and capable of driving growth in the ever-evolving landscape of tourism.

This study provides valuable insights into the influence of traditional and digital marketing on Slovak consumers in the tourism sector. However, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The use of an online questionnaire may have introduced a bias toward younger, more digitally active participants, potentially excluding perspectives from less digitally engaged demographics, such as older consumers or those in rural areas. Additionally, the study focuses exclusively on Slovak consumers, limiting the applicability of findings to other cultural or geographical contexts where consumer behavior and marketing practices may differ.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by incorporating more diverse data collection methods to capture a wider range of perspectives, including those less active online. Comparative cross-cultural studies could provide broader insights into how cultural and technological factors influence consumer behavior. Furthermore, deeper exploration of gender dynamics and longitudinal studies tracking changes in consumer preferences over time would enrich the understanding of evolving trends in tourism marketing.

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