

TRANSFORMATION OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY AND CONTEMPORARY MEDIA TRENDS

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Abstract: *The paper examines the transformation of the tourism industry under the influence of contemporary media trends, with particular emphasis on their importance in tourism communication, the promotion of tourist destinations, and changes in tourist behaviour. In the context of intensive technological development and increasingly pronounced media connectivity within society, the ways in which tourism information is created, distributed, and interpreted are undergoing significant changes, whereby the media are becoming one of the most important intermediaries between tourism supply and demand. The aim of the paper is to examine the impact of contemporary media and communication systems on the development of the tourism industry, as well as to understand their role in shaping the image of tourist destinations and improving marketing activities in tourism. Particular attention is given to social media and online platforms as dominant spaces for the exchange of experiences, communication, and decision-making processes in tourism consumption.*

TRANSFORMACIJA TURISTIČKE INDUSTRIJE I SAVREMENI MEDIJSKI TRENDovi

Ključne riječi: *turizam, medijski trendovi, društvene mreže, turistička komunikacija, turistička industrija*

Sažetak: *U radu se razmatra transformacija turističke industrije pod uticajem savremenih medijskih trendova, sa posebnim naglaskom na njihov značaj u turističkoj komunikaciji, promociji turističkih destinacija i promjenama u ponašanju turista. U kontekstu intenzivnog tehnološkog razvoja i sve izraženije medijske povezanosti društva, načini na koje se turističke informacije kreiraju, distribuiraju i interpretiraju prolaze kroz značajne promjene, pri čemu mediji postaju jedan od najvažnijih posrednika između turističke ponude i potražnje. Cilj rada je ispitati uticaj savremenih medijskih i komunikacionih sistema na razvoj turističke industrije, kao i sagledati njihovu ulogu u oblikovanju imidža turističkih destinacija i unapređenju marketinških aktivnosti u turizmu. Posebna pažnja posvećena je društvenim mrežama i onlajn platformama kao dominantnim prostorima za razmjenu iskustava, komunikaciju i procese donošenja odluka u turističkoj potrošnji.*

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1. Introduction

The development of the information society represents one of the key characteristics of the contemporary era, in which communication and information systems play an increasingly important role in almost all areas of social and economic life. The media, as the primary channels of communication and information transfer, have become an indispensable part of the everyday functioning of individuals, organisations, and institutions, while their role continues to expand in accordance with technological and social changes.

Alongside these processes, the tourism industry is undergoing intensive transformation, becoming increasingly dependent on the availability, speed, and quality of information. Tourism, as a complex socio-economic phenomenon, is largely determined by communication flows, which is why media systems occupy an important position in the processes of informing, promoting, and supporting the decision-making of potential tourists.

In this context, the Internet and social media have a particularly significant impact, as they enable direct interaction between tourism stakeholders and users, as well as the continuous exchange of experiences and visual content. Consequently, new patterns of tourist behaviour, destination selection processes, and interpretations of tourism experiences are being shaped, while media trends become a key framework within which contemporary processes of tourism communication and tourism development take place.

2. Media as a Communication Framework of Tourism

The media represent one of the key pillars of the information society and can be viewed as institutionalised communication systems that enable the transmission of information, ideas, and symbolic content to a wider audience. Their primary function is reflected in mediating between information sources and end users, while their technological foundations and communication forms have simultaneously transformed throughout historical development. From traditional mass media, such as print media, radio, and television, development has gradually evolved towards contemporary media systems based on the Internet, mobile technologies, and interactive platforms. In contemporary tourism, information and communication technologies can be considered a major source of innovation, strategic differentiation, and competitive advantage for tourism organisations and destinations (Damnjanović et al., 2015). This transition represents not only a technological change but also a structural transformation of communication relations, as audiences are increasingly positioned as active participants in the process of content creation, distribution, and interpretation.

Such changes in communication structures have far-reaching consequences for contemporary society, as media systems no longer perform solely an informational function but simultaneously fulfil educational, cultural, entertainment, and economic-promotional roles. Their involvement in shaping perceptions of social and economic reality is particularly significant, as well as their ability to direct public attention towards specific phenomena and processes. In this regard, the media become an important factor in social and economic dynamics, as they influence the formation of attitudes, value orientations, and individual decisions in various areas of life.

Considering such a role of the media in contemporary society, it is evident that their influence extends to areas directly related to economic and social activities, among which tourism occupies a significant position. Tourism is defined as a complex socio-economic phenomenon that encompasses the temporary movement of people outside their permanent place of residence, motivated by various reasons, including leisure, recreation, business activities, cultural needs, or education. As a multidimensional phenomenon, tourism simultaneously incorporates economic, social, and cultural aspects, which is why its development is conditioned by the interaction of numerous interconnected factors.

Under the conditions of contemporary global trends, tourism is developing as one of the most dynamic economic activities, strongly influenced by globalisation, technological development, and increased population mobility. The improvement of transport and communication infrastructure, together with the growth of living standards, has contributed to the intensification and diversification of tourist movements, making tourism an increasingly accessible and diverse form of social and economic activity. In addition to its economic importance, reflected in its contribution to gross domestic product, employment, and local development, tourism also has significant social importance through processes of cultural exchange, interaction between different value systems, and the strengthening of international relations.

From the perspective of contemporary social and communication flows, the development of tourism cannot be fully understood without considering the role of media systems. Information about destinations, services, and experiences represents the key basis upon which potential tourists form their decisions, while the decision-making process largely depends on the availability, credibility, and manner of information presentation. Furthermore, the Internet has enabled companies to receive feedback quickly, facilitating the control of various activities, while placing greater emphasis on audiences and public relations (Vukasović, 2013). In this context, media systems become an important intermediary between tourism supply and demand, establishing a direct connection between communication processes and tourism activities.

This interconnection is particularly evident through the way in which media content shapes the perception and image of tourist destinations. Whether they involve institutional, promotional, or user-generated content, such materials contribute to the formation of perceptions about destinations, their characteristics, and value attributes. Over time, the perception of tourist destinations has become increasingly less based on direct experience and more dependent on media-mediated information circulating through various communication channels. Within this framework, particularly in the contemporary media environment, social media and online platforms occupy a central position in creating expectations, motivations, and decisions of potential tourists, thereby significantly influencing the dynamics of contemporary tourism development.

3. Media Transformation of the Tourism Industry

The transformation of the tourism industry under contemporary conditions cannot be observed separately from the broader process of the evolution of communication and information systems, which significantly redefine the functioning of economic and social sectors. In the tourism sector, this transformation is reflected in the transition from traditional

to digital channels of communication, reservation, and promotion, which significantly affects the overall user experience. Online booking platforms, mobile applications, artificial intelligence in offer personalisation, as well as presence on social media, have become key tools in contemporary tourism management (Novović & Petrović, 2025).

Tourism, as an activity that largely depends on the availability of information and the perception of service value, has become particularly sensitive to changes in the structure of media trends, whereby traditional organisational models are increasingly being replaced by network-based and interactive forms of communication. Today, destinations and companies reach consumers directly through a range of shared digital platforms. The sharing economy and virtual cross-sector platforms for providing information and facilitating communication between consumers based on the »peer-to-peer« model (communication between equal computer users) have become characteristics of the new state of the tourism business (Boškov, 2021). Within this process, Internet platforms and digital communication systems represent the basic infrastructure of the contemporary tourism market. Their role is not limited only to the transmission of information but also involves creating conditions in which tourism supply and demand are directly connected without traditional intermediary structures. This leads to a reduction in the importance of traditional tourism intermediaries, while simultaneously increasing market transparency, information availability, and the speed of decision-making. In such an environment, tourism users have the opportunity to access a large amount of data in real time, compare offers, and make decisions based on a wide range of available information.

A particularly prominent aspect of this transformation is the development of platform-based systems, which, by integrating offers, user experiences, and evaluation mechanisms, create centralised digital systems of tourism communication. These systems operate through data aggregation and algorithmic information processing, enabling the personalisation of offers and the adaptation of content to individual user preferences. In this way, there is a gradual transition from standardised to individualised forms of tourism supply, which represents one of the key characteristics of contemporary tourism development.

Within contemporary media systems, social media have a particularly important role as digital platforms of interactive communication. Their widespread popularity, rapid growth, continuous technical and technological improvement, as well as numerous advantages offered to both senders and recipients, have led social media to become one of the most important channels of strategic communication, primarily through new opportunities for sending and receiving messages and building quality relationships with stakeholders (Je-
vić et al., 2021).

Social networks represent an additional level of transformation, as they introduce the dimension of interactivity and user participation into the process of creating tourism content. They enable the creation of communities of travellers through which tourist destinations are promoted. Before deciding to visit a particular tourist destination, travellers obtain information through social networks about products and services available on the market. On the other hand, service providers are interested in using social networks to gain insight into tourists' needs in order to adapt their offers to their requirements (Todorov, 2025). Unlike traditional communication models, where information was distributed in a one-way manner, the contemporary environment enables continuous exchange of content among users, whereby tourism experiences are not only shared but also interpreted,

supplemented, and redefined through networks of digital communication. This form of communication leads to the creation of a collectively constructed image of tourist destinations, which significantly influences the perceptions and expectations of potential tourists.

In this context, algorithmic mediation of information also gains importance, as recommendation systems and personalised content direct users' attention towards specific destinations and forms of tourism supply. This process contributes to reducing information uncertainty, but at the same time may limit information diversity, as users are exposed to selectively filtered content that corresponds to their previous interests and behavioural patterns.

Tourism has experienced a significant increase in popularity precisely due to its connection with social media. Photographs, videos, comments, and recommendations represent an important source of information when making the final decision regarding the choice of a travel destination (Sudarević et al., 2024). The visual representation of destinations often has a stronger influence on decision-making than textual information, indicating a shift from an informative towards an experiential model of communication. In this regard, tourist destinations are increasingly evaluated according to their ability to generate visually attractive and emotionally engaging content.

These processes collectively indicate a profound structural transformation of the tourism industry, in which media trends represent not only a communication channel but also an active framework within which relationships between stakeholders are shaped, as well as the ways in which tourism experiences are created and realised. In this context, tourism is increasingly developing as an information- and experience-mediated activity, in which decisions, behaviours, and expectations are formed through continuous interaction with media-structured content.

4. The Influence of Media on Changes in Tourist Behaviour

The transformation of the tourism industry under the conditions of contemporary media trends is largely reflected in changes in tourist behaviour, which has become increasingly complex, multidimensional, and dynamic. The decision-making process is no longer based on a linear model of information acquisition and choice but rather on continuous interaction between various sources of information, experiential narratives, and visual stimuli circulating through contemporary communication channels. In this way, tourist behaviour is increasingly shaped as a result of constant exposure to distributed and fragmented information, which is simultaneously interpreted and evaluated.

Under such conditions, the travel planning process becomes iterative and flexible, with decisions being formed through a combination of rational assessments and emotional impulses. The availability of a large amount of information does not necessarily lead to more rational choices but often creates a situation in which visual impressions, short-term perceptions, and affective responses play a dominant role. This shift indicates an increasingly evident departure from traditional models of tourist decision-making, in which economic and logistical factors had a primary role.

A particularly significant segment of contemporary tourist behaviour relates to the influence of other tourists' experiences, which have become one of the decisive factors in destination selection. Technological advancements of the modern era have enabled tour-

ists to access a large amount of information about potential tourist destinations, thereby facilitating the process of choosing a destination (Stojanović, 2014). Reviews, ratings, comments, photographs, and video content function as a form of collectively generated knowledge, which significantly influences the formation of perceptions about tourist destinations and services. This type of information has a high level of credibility, as it is based on the experiences of real users, contributing to increased trust in non-institutional sources of information.

In this context, evaluation systems and rating mechanisms occupy a particularly important position in contemporary tourist decision-making. The quantification of experiences through ratings and rankings contributes to the simplification of complex information and enables faster orientation when selecting destinations and services. At the same time, these systems influence the reputational structure of the tourism market, as they directly shape perceptions of quality and the competitive position of individual stakeholders.

An important theoretical framework for understanding contemporary tourist behaviour is the concept of the experience economy, within which the value of a tourism product is not primarily viewed through its material dimension but through the quality of the experience it creates. Tourism experiences become the central unit of value, while destinations function as spaces in which emotional, symbolic, and socially relevant experiences are produced. This approach contributes to strengthening the subjective dimension of decision-making and increases the importance of individual perception in the process of choice.

One of the prominent characteristics of contemporary tourist behaviour is the growth of impulsive and visually motivated travel decisions. Visual content, particularly that distributed through contemporary communication platforms, has a strong capacity to initiate an immediate desire for travel. The aesthetic representation of destinations often exceeds the importance of textual and informational content, with visual attractiveness becoming one of the key factors in the processes of motivation and choice.

Alongside this, changes occur in the structure of tourist motivation, where traditional motives such as leisure, recreation, and business travel are complemented by new forms of motivation that include social visibility, digital representation, and symbolic participation in contemporary communication flows. Tourist travel increasingly acquires a communication dimension, as it becomes part of a broader process of experience sharing and identity construction within the public sphere.

These changes indicate that contemporary tourist behaviour cannot be observed through simplified economic or functional decision-making models, but rather as the result of a complex interplay of informational, emotional, and social influences. The process of selecting tourist destinations takes place within continuous interaction between individual preferences and external symbolic and communication stimuli, whereby decisions are formed through the dynamic evaluation of available information and the interpretation of other participants' experiences. In this way, tourist behaviour is increasingly determined by patterns arising from contemporary communication and social trends, while simultaneously redefining the ways in which preferences are formed and travel decisions are made.

5. Conclusion

The development of the tourism industry under the conditions of contemporary media trends demonstrates a pronounced dependence on changes in communication and information processes that shape the ways in which tourism services are presented, distributed, and consumed. The accelerated flow of information, high availability of content, and continuous interaction between different stakeholders have contributed to a significant transformation of the relationship between tourism supply and demand.

In such an environment, the tourism market is becoming increasingly dynamic, transparent, and globally interconnected. Social media and various forms of online communication play a particularly important role, influencing the formation of destination images, as well as the ways in which potential tourists interpret and evaluate available information when making decisions.

Changes in communication patterns have also led to the redefinition of tourism motivation and behavioural processes, whereby visual and experiential aspects are gaining increasing importance. Consequently, the structure of tourist decision-making is changing, becoming increasingly dependent on the combination of information, experiences, and symbolic meanings circulating through contemporary media channels.

The further development of tourism will be conditioned by the continued evolution of communication systems, the strengthening of interactivity, and the growing importance of personalised content, alongside the continuous adaptation of stakeholders in the tourism industry to changing patterns of consumption and user expectations.

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