Report example

Selective research of the main problems in online work of small travel businesses in Kazakhstan

The initiative of the research belongs to the Department of Digitalization and Smart Tourism of the Kazakhstan Tourism Association in June 2023.

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Introduction and methodology

This report is based on a mini-research of publicly available data on online work among 100 randomly selected small tourism businesses such as hotels, travel agencies, tour operators, museums, etc. The purpose of the research: identifying the internet marketing tools widely used by tourism enterprises in Kazakhstan, detecting their problems of using them and finding growth opportunities on the internet. The research is aimed to show how touristic businesses in Kazakhstan are dealing with the challenges of working on the internet. The main aim of this report is to demonstrate the methodology of detecting the main problems in the overall approach of touristic organizations at some particular destination. To do so we take a sample of touristic businesses in Kazakhstan and provide the analysis for this case study.

In order to obtain data, the survey has been sent to thousands of touristic organizations based in Kazakhstan. These organizations are taken from the list of our contacts. Most of them are aware of our initiatives. Time to time these organizations try to reach us for some collaboration. However, less than 10% of these organizations have filled a short survey consisting of ten questions. This already shows the first issue – laziness of heads of touristic organizations to engage in something for the overall benefits of touristic area and for their own benefit. To see the other issues let us proceed to looking at the results of the survey in the upcoming sections.

Section 1. Website

In this section we are going to analyze the main technical indicators of the websites of travel organizations. This includes basic parameters such as loading speed of a website and availability of mobile version. It is worth noting that these fundamental parameters affect the rankings of the websites in the search engines. Nowadays, the expectations of internet users are quite demanding. Lots of users would not wait more than 3 seconds for a website to load, which means that slow websites could very easily lose significant part of visitors just due to their speed. Let us look how many touristic organizations in Kazakhstan actually have website loading speed less than 3 seconds for desktop version as well as mobile version.

**Website technical indicators for touristic businesses in Kazakhstan**
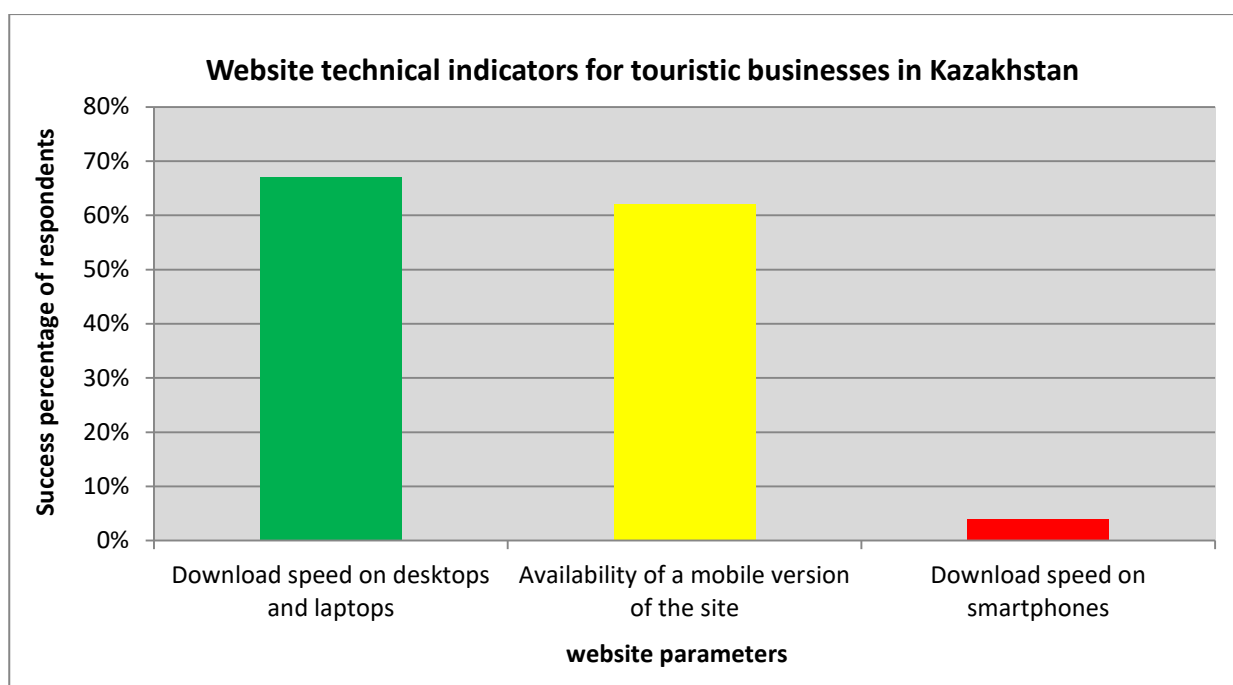
We observe that 67% of websites have a desktop version loading speed of less than 3 seconds. Therefore, 33% of the websites lose traffic due to the fact that customers simply do not wait for the website to load. In addition, low speed reduces organic search results in search engines, such as Google and Yandex. Further, only 62% of sites have a mobile version. We strongly believe that this number should be close to 100% in the modern world. It is hard to imagine that a business could become successful if they do not attract customers who use smartphones. In addition, 38% of sites that do not have a mobile version are breaking the Google Mobile friendly policy, which results in losing positions in organic search results. Finally, only 4% of the considered websites have a mobile version loading speed of less than 3 seconds, which is far from the norm. Once again, this has strong negative impact on the

organic promotion of the website. Thinking of users, tourists mainly use mobile devices during the trip, as they might not want to carry a heavy laptop around when on a trip. Hopefully, it is obvious how crucial it is for a touristic business to have a working website with a reasonably good loading speed. For the moment of this report, the results are very disappointing.

Recommendations for section 1

From this point, we recommend all travel businesses to regularly check their website loading speed here: https://pagespeed.web.dev/. It is worth remembering that speed might sometimes change due to some website updates. After clicking the given link, a window will appear where you should enter the website address and click the Analyze button:
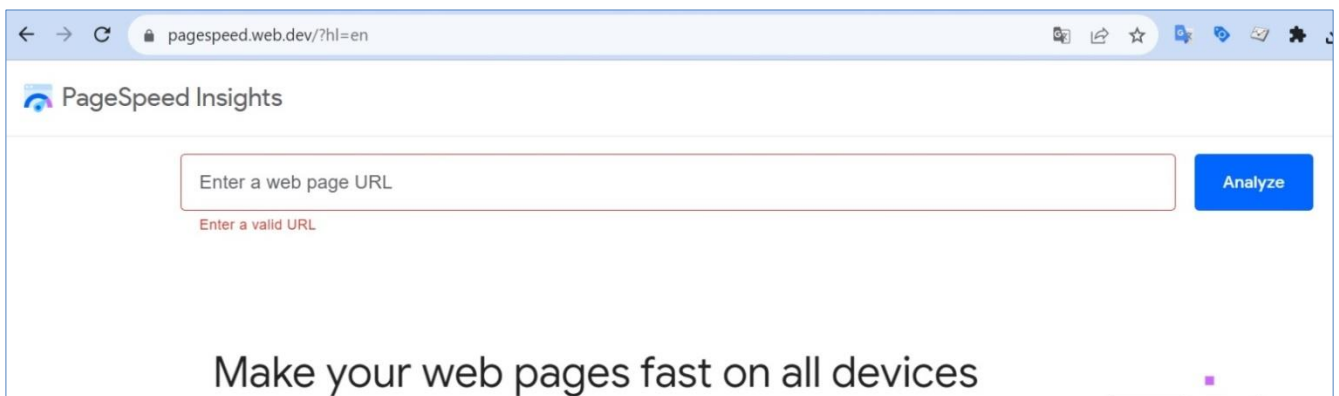

After that, the measurement results for mobile devices will appear, which can be seen on the Mobile tab:
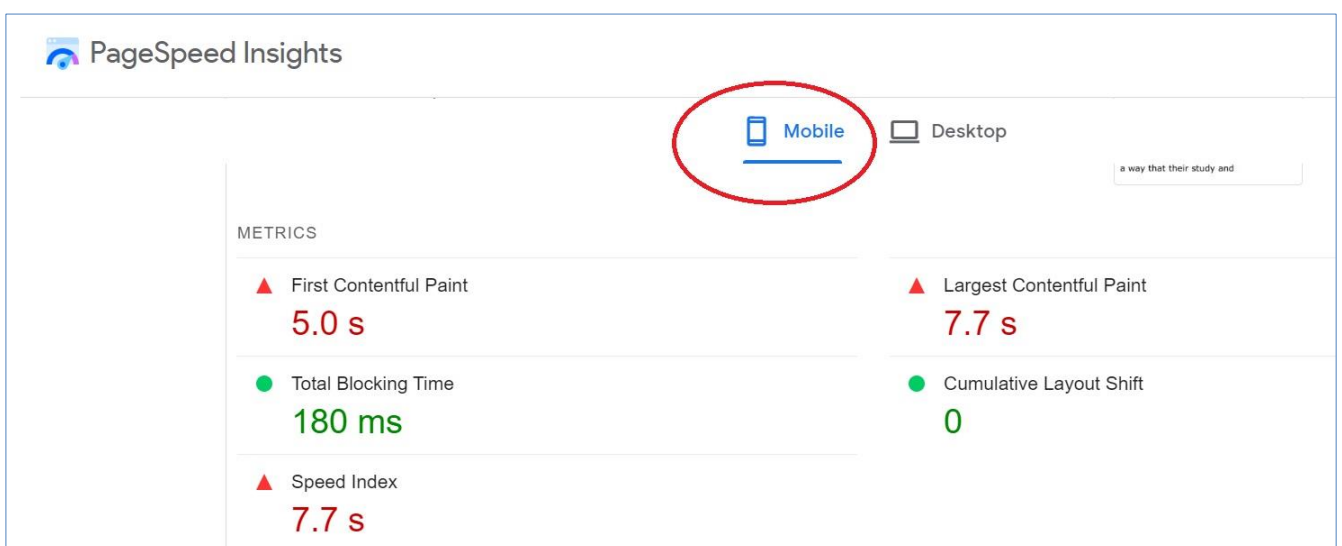
Similarly, one can do the test for the download speed on desktop computers and laptops by opening the Desktop tab:
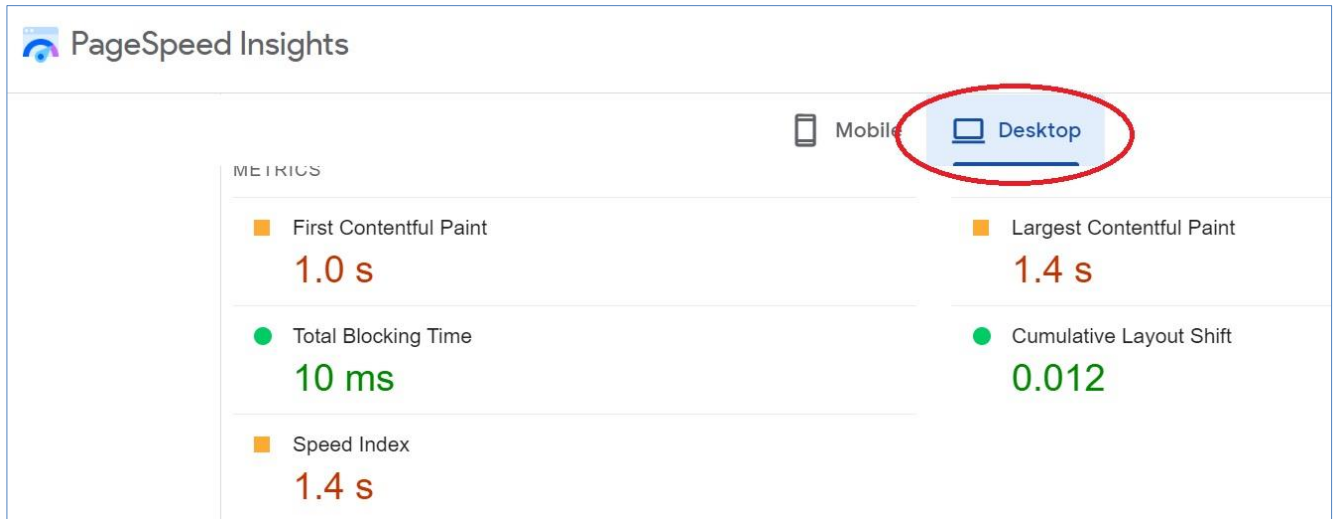
In order to check the optimization and adaptation of any website for mobile devices, follow the link https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly and enter the website address in the appearing box:
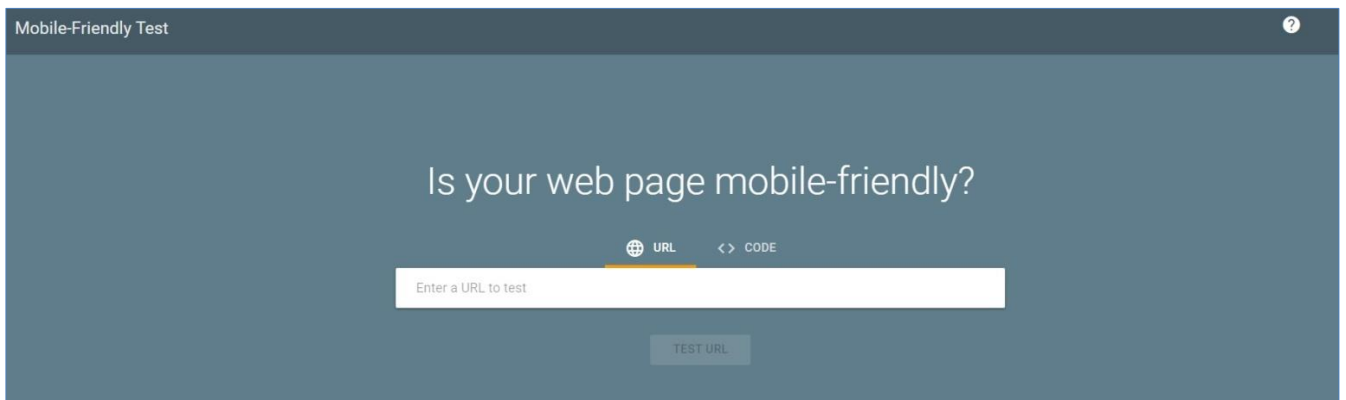

After a few minutes, the result of the test will appear as follows.
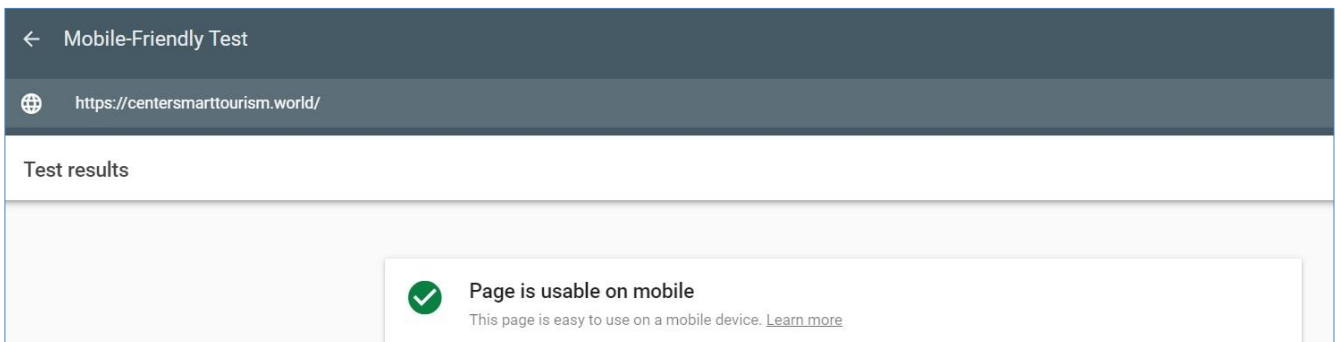
These three tests are essential for any business with online presence, which is particularly important for organizations working in tourism. This is the quickest and easiest way to quickly assess the most important indicators of a website. As discussed, the tested parameters are not only important for obvious reasons, but also directly affect the position of any website in the organic search. If any of these tests are not passed, it is necessary to work on the refinement and technical improvements of the website as soon as possible. The loading speed should be no more than 3 seconds. If this is not the case, immediate actions are required. Further on, regular check is important as any website updates could possibly affect the loading speed of the website. We guarantee that following these recommendations will be the first step on your way to successful activity on the internet and attracting many customers there.

Section 2. Website content

Creation of well-operating website with good loading speed is important, but the core of the website is also crucial to work on. Any website is created to present some content to online users. The content should be interesting and useful for the visitors of a website. In order to understand how users value your content there are simple instruments of analytics to use. We decided to check how many touristic businesses in Kazakhstan use analytics of their website. On top of that we wanted to see how many of them have more than one minute of the average duration of the visit. This allows to understand if visitors find the presented content interesting or just leave the website after a few seconds. Further, we check how many websites have more than 1,000 visits per month and how many websites have content in English. The results are summarized in the histogram below.
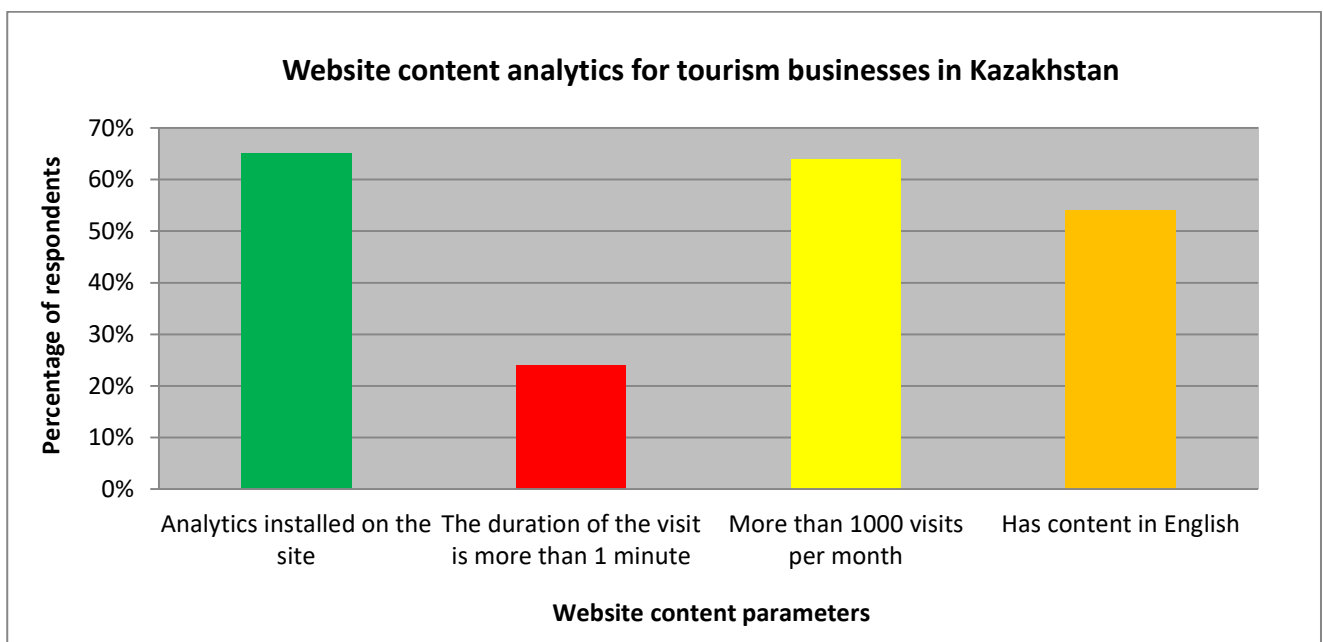
We immediately observe that only 65% of tested websites have analytics installed. The remaining 35% of enterprises cannot effectively evaluate the interaction of their website with tourists and evaluate the promotion and quality of their content. This numbers are very surprising in the modern reality, where almost all businesses spend money on the promotion of their enterprise online. Even more sadly, we see that only 24% of the websites have average visit duration of more than 1 minute. This suggests that users do not stay long on 76% of these websites, because, apparently, they consider the content not interesting or useless, or do not find what they were looking for.

For the next parameter we decided to take the number of visitors of the website with the threshold of 1,000 visits per month. This threshold is very low in modern reality and still only 64% of tested websites have more than 1000 visits per month. This means that 36% of sites are poorly configured for search engines or their content is not interesting to users. Finally, 46% of the tested websites do not have English content. It is surprising and disappointing to see that almost half of touristic businesses miss the opportunity to attract tourists from abroad and communicate with them. This puts the development of international tourism in Kazakhstan under a big danger.

Recommendations for section 2

1. Managers, owners and marketers of tourism organizations should get free training and install GA4 on their website. This step could be done here: https://skillshop.exceedlms.com//student/path/66729-discover-the-next-generation-of-google-analytics.

2. Getting a free GA4 certification is also important and could be done here: https://skillshop.exceedlms.com//student/path/508845-google-analytics-certification.

3. Check the content on the website – how unique, useful and relevant it is for the needs of tourists. How easy it is to find all the information of interest to the tourist? Content checklist developed by Google is available under the following link: https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/creating-helpful-content?hl=en.

4. If the organization serves tourists from far abroad, make sure to have content in English language on the website for the convenience of arriving tourists. This also improves the development of international tourism in Kazakhstan. In the future, for the internationalization of tourism, strive to create content in six official UN languages and the languages of their main markets. The six official UN languages are the following: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Section 3. Online reputation and Geoservices

Nowadays, geoservices are very important to attract tourists and help them navigate during their trip. Users of such services can directly search for restaurants, bars, hotels and other touristic locations directly on the electronic maps. We decided to take the most popular Geoservices for our analysis: Google maps, Yandex maps, 2GIS and Tripadvisor. Especially in the area of tourism, it is important to have a placement of your organization there. Based on the chosen sample we get the idea of what percentage of touristic businesses in Kazakhstan have placement in these services. The results are as follows.

Presence of Kazakhstani touristic businesses on e-maps
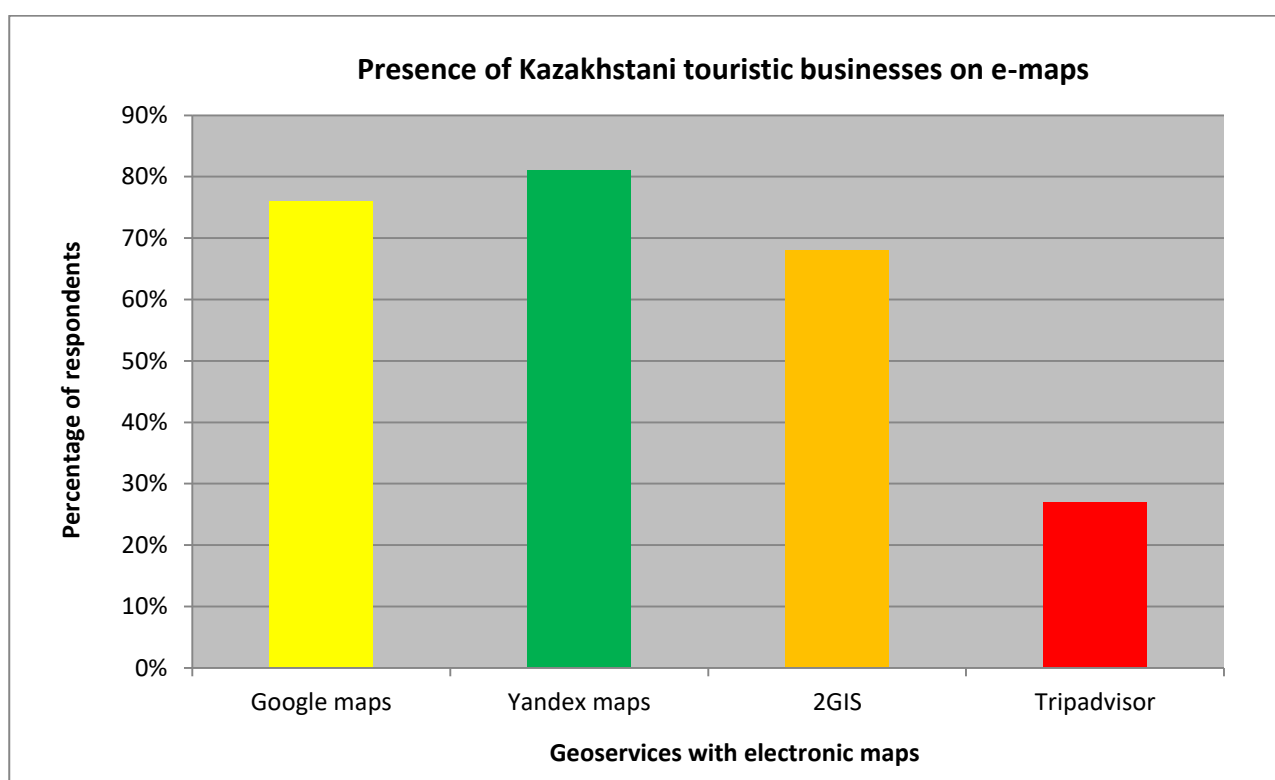
The results in this section are somewhat better than in previous ones. It seems that usage of electronic maps and geoservices is not that big of an issue for touristic businesses in Kazakhstan. However, we should not forget that this data corresponds to the sample of organizations that were willing to take the survey. It could be the case that those who ignored the survey, could also ignore placement of their company on e-maps. For the analyzed sample we observe that 76% of touristic organizations are placed on Google maps. We further find out that the average rating there is 4.5 out of 5 possible, which is very good result. Next we see that 81% of the organizations are placed in the Yandex directory. The average rating there is 4.3 out of 5, which is also quite strong. We observe a bit less popularity of 2GIS service, with

only 68% of the organizations being placed there. This is a big loss as for many users in Kazakhstan 2GIS is more preferred option that Google or Yandex maps. The average rating of organizations that have placement in 2Gis is 4.2 out of 5. This shows the trend that when Kazakhstani touristic organization chooses to have a placement on an electronic map, they make sure to operate well and have a good rating there. Finally, we see that only 27% of businesses have presence on Tripadvisor. This could be a big mistake as Tripadvisor is very widely used by English-speaking tourists. This once again shows that touristic businesses in Kazakhstan are aimed at attracting only local tourists, rather than globalizing their strategy to attract tourists from abroad. Among those who are placed on Tripadvisor the average rating there is 4.2 out of 5. We further find out that only 36% of these companies always respond to feedback and criticism from tourists. As you can see, tourism enterprises in general have quite high ratings from tourists. However, 64% do not respond to reviews and perhaps do not follow them, which leads to the loss of some customers and reasonable doubt about the existence and nature of a company that does not care about its online reputation. This could bring serious trust and reputation issues, which results in substantial long-term losses.

Recommendations for section 3

We strongly recommend any touristic organization to have a placement in all popular geoservices. If you are not sure, check your placement there for the correctness of data and responses to all reviews. If the result of such check is negative, then register using the links below and respond to unanswered reviews:

1. Google Business Profile (Google map) here: https://www.google.com/business/

2. Yandex directory (Yandex map): https://yandex.ru/sprav/companies

3. 2GIS: https://reklama.2gis.ru/add-info

4. Tripadvisor: https://www.tripadvisor.com/CreateListing.html

This sound like a very simple thing to do, but many organization neglect this step. Instead of trying to implement AI and big data, or overspending on advertising, we believe that the most effective step is to first register in all popular platforms and place good quality content there. In terms of e-maps, the content is up-to-date information of working hours, contacts and pictures.

Section 4. Social networks

In this section, we look at how many companies from the sample have a placement in the most popular social networks. We believe that nowadays it is crucial to have pages in all social networks and use them as a way to contact with tourists. Here we are only looking at the presence of an account or a page, without taking into account the content placed there. In any case, the presence of an account and several posts makes it possible for clients to find the organization in the search within any social network for direct contact with it. This on its own creates an important channel of communication with tourists, improves the trust and reputation of an organization and brings opportunities of advertising in social networks.
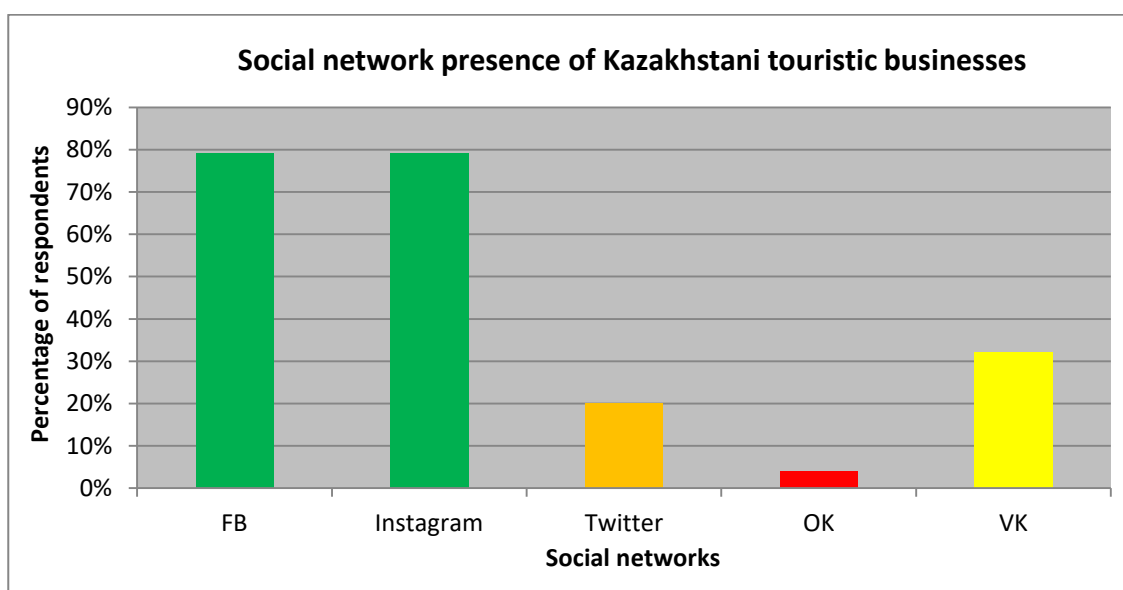
We observe that Facebook and Instagram are quite popular among the organizations in our sample. We see that 79% of them are registered in Facebook. Similarly, 79% have a placement on Instagram. Although this is not a low number, we believe that in modern reality the number should be 100% as it is free convenient resource. Only 20% of responding companies have account on Twitter. This shows a huge leak in attitude of touristic businesses in Kazakhstan, as Twitter is important trusted channel of information among potential tourists. Once again, this shows that organizations ignore opportunities to attract tourists from abroad. Further on, it is surprising to see that only 4% are registered in OK (Odnoklassniki). This social network is popular among Russian-speaking auditory, so not having a page there results in the loss of tourists from neighborhood countries. Finally, only 32% of companies are registered in VK (VKontakte). Once again, this results in a huge loss of Russian-speaking tourists. One can see a bias towards FB and Instagram. Other popular social networks in Kazakhstan are clearly underrepresented.

Recommendations for section 4

The use of a particular social network by touristic organizations strongly depends on their target audience, its preferences and place of residence. Hence, the preference to one or another social network could strongly depend on a destination. Below we give recommendations based on some of the particular common parameters that could be of interest for certain type of organizations.

1. It makes sense for tour organizations dealing with tourists from far abroad to register on Twitter, as tourists often ask questions directly to tour service providers there. More information is available here: https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/create-twitter-account.

2. For organizations providing health, medical or entertainment services for age-related Russian-speaking tourists, it may make sense to create a business profile in OK https://ok.ru/business/topic/153410530190720. It could also be good to create a group there: https://m.ok.ru/help/kak-sozdat-gruppu-dlya-biznesa.

3. Organizations providing services to Russian-speaking tourists should probably create a business page community in VK: https://vk.com/biz/article/s-chego-nachat-stranica.

4. For organizations that provide primarily business services, it makes sense to consider creating a business profile on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/a544882/-linkedin.

Section 5. General remarks

In general, based on the experience of our research and training sessions, questionnaires and surveys, the owners, managers and marketers of Kazakhstani tourism organizations have a poor idea of how everything works on the internet, what should be done, what should be avoided and what and when to use tools. Typically heads of organizations try to implement complicated tools or overspend on advertising without understanding the basic principles of successful promotion on the internet. Based on this, we offer the following resources to everyone interested in promoting their business:

1. Purchase and use the self-study book "Fundamentals of Digital Travel Marketing" as a handbook. The book could be found under the following link: https://centersmarttourism.world/for-tourism-organisations/materials/digital-travel-marketing-fundamentals-book/.

2. For owners of guest houses and representatives of rural tourism, download and study a free manual: https://centersmarttourism.world/for-tourism-organisations/materials/smart-tourism-in-rural-cbt/.

3. For the management of the destination or regional tourism association we recommend to organize special training courses for owners and managers of tour organizations on the basics of internet marketing and promotion on the internet.

End of report

This finalizes an example of a report on a selective research of the work of tourism businesses on the internet for a specific region or destination. Our specialists offer to remotely carry out similar research for any village, city, region or destination. The cost and duration of the research depend on the scope of work.

You can request details via email info@centersmarttourism.com or directly from the head of the Center Smart Tourism GmbH (Dmitry Tin, dmitriy.tin@centersmarttourism.com).

Thank you for your attention!