



Department of digitalization and Smart Tourism in
Kazakhstan Association of Hotels & Restaurants

Summary of digital skills in Kazakhstani touristic organizations

Express report and recommendations to improve

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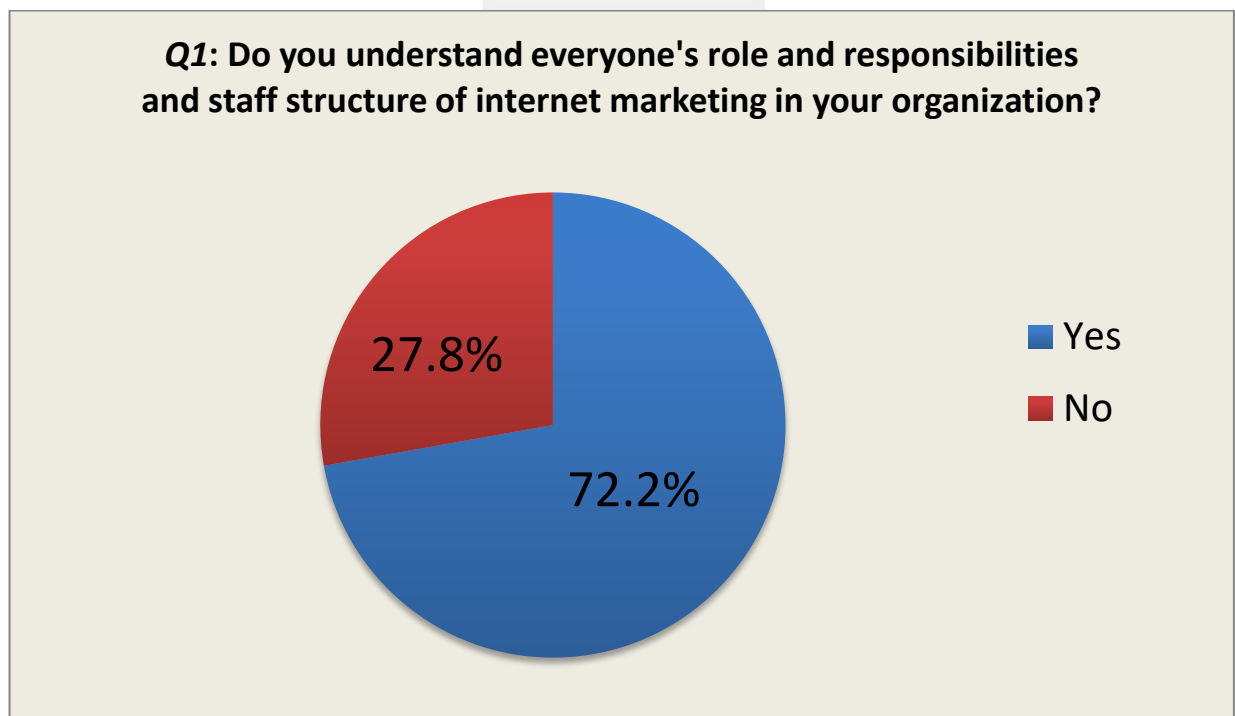
Introduction and methodology

This report is based on survey undertaken by touristic organizations in Kazakhstan and participants of the online group “Digital Wednesday”. The survey consists of 10 questions aiming to identify weaknesses or lack of knowledge in internet marketing and digital skills required for any touristic organization. Nowadays, internet is a huge field of propagating information and working online correctly is very important for any respected organization. It is not always obvious what skills are the most important and what direction to work in. On the way we provide an outline of what are the important digital skills. The purpose of the research: identifying the digital skills of people working in tourism enterprises in Kazakhstan, detecting their problems of using them and finding growth opportunities in this area. On the example of Kazakhstan, we demonstrate what could be typical issues in terms of the digital skills of people working in the industry of tourism. Further, we give recommendations on how to deal with these issues and how to train the employees in this essence. As will be seen in upcoming sections, most of the mistakes are made due to lack of understanding of very fundamental and basic concepts of digital marketing. Most of our suggestions are not about complicated technical skills but rather about the right approach to work on the internet. Each section will be dedicated to a question of the survey and will touch one area of internet marketing.



Section 1. Understanding staff structure

First, the key to the success in online work is knowing responsibilities of each participant of the team. Building the structure of tasks and responsibilities is the first step that many organizations fail to do. Based on the results of our survey among touristic organizations in Kazakhstan we observe the following picture.



We see that more than a quarter of organizations do not have a clear idea of how internet marketing should be structured and how responsibilities should be distributed among staff members. This is significant weakness as 27.8% represents huge number of organizations on the scale of a country.



Recommendations on Section 1

It would be useful for heads of various touristic organizations to compare their staff structure with the modern instruments of internet marketing. The easiest way to do so is to fill the following table with the main responsibilities and corresponding staff members:

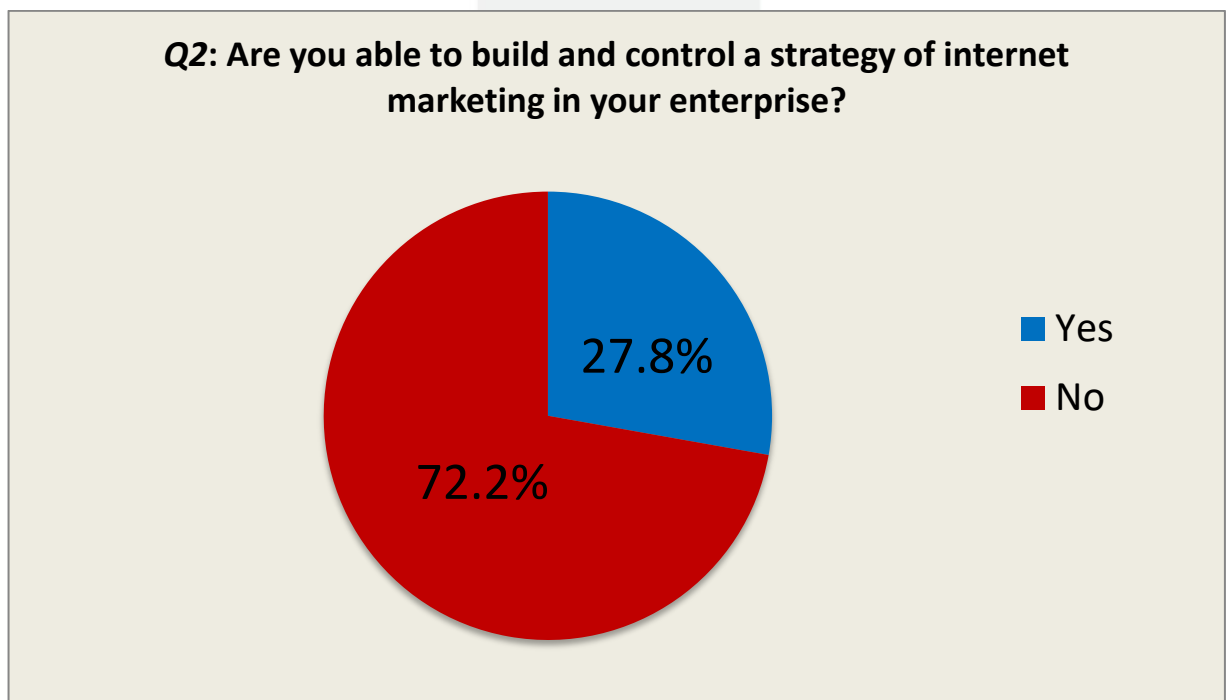
Type of the job	Staff member, [Full name]
Development of strategy and controlling it. Management of promotion budgets and its effective usage. Analysis of online statistics.	e.g. John Smith
Maintaining positive reputation of the company on the internet. Responding to reviews and comments on social networks. Posting valid information about the company in various resources such as e-maps or news portals.	
Writing articles, texts, scenarios for advertising posts and other content for the website and social networks.	
Filming and installation of video content.	
Implementing strategy of internet marketing. Purchasing advertising equipment. Distribution of the budget.	
Setting contextual advertising in search engines and other sources.	
Management of advertising in social networks. Uploading posts. Tracking validity of up to date information. Evaluating and analyzing statistics in social networks.	
Optimization of the website and content there in order to have better promotion in organic search.	
Organizing e-mails distribution. Management of data bases.	
Analyzing effectiveness of online activities in terms of attracting traffic to the website. Evaluating quality of the traffic and website conversion.	
Website maintenance, tracking its conditions and updates, fixing bugs and updating website content.	
Producing various graphical materials for the website and advertising.	
Total number:	

Some of the job types could be replaced by other or deleted. Some other job types could be added to the table. Once the table is filled it is quite easy to detect unused instruments or some tasks being undertaken multiple times.



Section 2. Understanding internet strategy

Defining and understanding internet strategy of your organization is another fundamental step to reaching the success in online work. This includes explicitly stating the objectives of the company, planning the budget to achieve these objectives and setting deadline to run the strategy before reevaluating and setting a new strategy. Strategies of digital marketing may vary quite a lot, but having one is necessary in the modern reality. Let us look at the level of awareness of digital marketing strategies among respondents of our survey.



We observe that only 27.8% have an idea of how to build internet strategy and manage it. This statistics is very disappointing as such a low level of building strategies leads to overall ineffectiveness of online promotion of touristic businesses in Kazakhstan. In particular, this means there is absence of the system that would benefit everyone. This further results to overspending of budget on internet marketing of individual organizations and destination in general. Internet strategy is an important tool that requires some knowledge of digital marketing. We created the list of recommendations on improvements that would be beneficial to follow for any organization.



Recommendations on Section 2

We strongly recommend touristic organizations to start learning the basics of building internet strategies. It is further worth trying to build a simplified internet strategy as the first step. Such strategy should follow the following plan:

1. Determining achievable and measurable aims of internet promotion for a certain period of time.
2. Determining target audiences, their online habits, commonly used internet resources and other features.
3. Modeling the path of the clients to the aim and internet interaction points.
4. Sketching sales funnels for different segments of target audience and variety of offered services.
5. Evaluating online competitors – how they manage their websites, social networks, paid advertising, etc.
6. Choosing channels and instruments of online promotion. Remember to pay attention to the influence of these channels on target audience, level of competition and availability on the market.
7. Determining and calculating budgets for the given period of time.

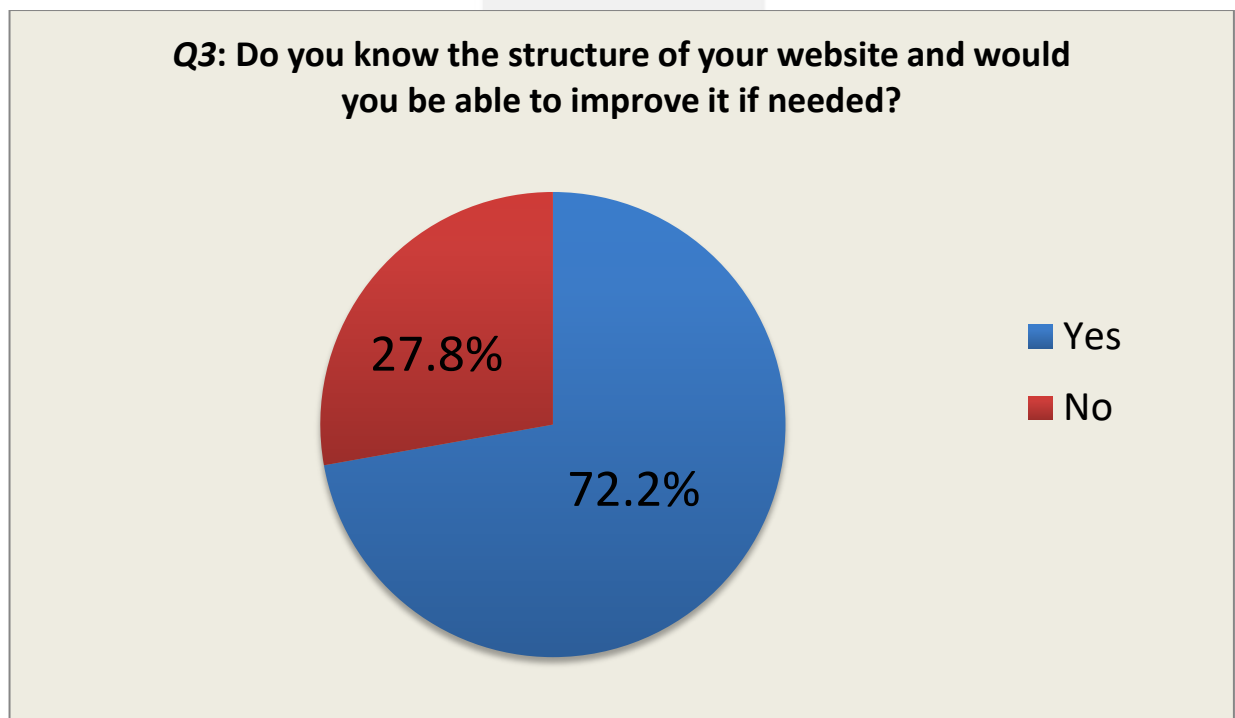
In the case of facing any difficulties with building strategy for your company, we recommend to spend time on additional self-learning of the basic of building strategies based on available online materials. We also recommend our guideline on the basics of digital travel marketing:

<https://centersmarttourism.world/for-tourism-organisations/materials/basics-of-digital-travel-marketing-ru/>



Section 3. Understanding website structure

In our practice we see that many touristic organizations make the same mistakes. It is very common to overspend the budget on displaying advertising in social networks without realizing that website is the visit card of any organization. Making sure that your website looks attractive and it is easy to use is much more important than showing your logo on every corner. For convenience of usage website should have a certain well-built structure. One could expect that 100% of touristic organizations would know the structure of their website and how to change it. However, this is not the case as we can see from the results of our survey in the diagram below.



Of course, more than a half respondent know the structure of their own website. We still believe that 27.8% is sadly high number for those who did not pass this test. This is especially important to attract tourists from abroad. If 100% of touristic organizations in Kazakhstan had websites with the convenient structure built for the comfort of the visitors, this would have positive impact on the image of the particular organizations and the destination as a result. For those who have difficulties with this, we have the following recommendations.



Recommendations on Section 3

Very good step to start building structure of the website would be to draw a scheme of your website on a piece of paper. It is important to understand the concept of the website and what sections need to be there. The next step is to visualize the path of the visitors. Is it easy to find required information on the website? Do all pieces of information correspond to the created sections? Are there not too many and not too few sections?

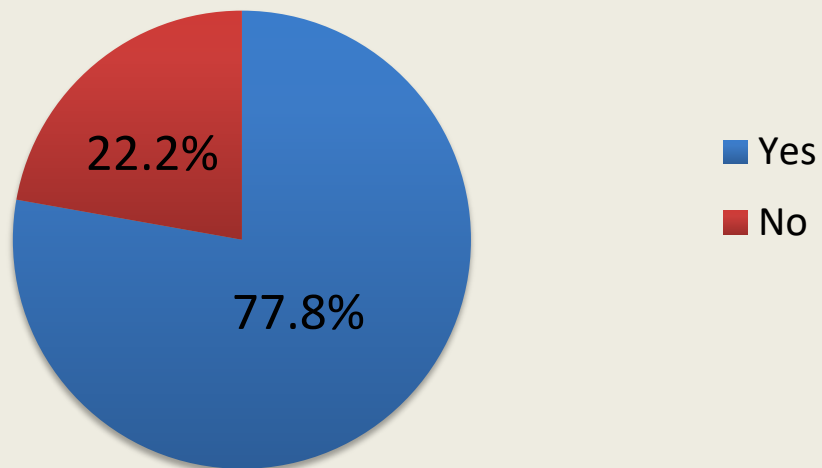
Nowadays, online users have certain expectations of how website should look like and what sections there should be. This could be compared to a sugar jar on a table of a restaurant – it has typical shape, so that customers do not need to try every jar on a table to find where sugar is. Hence, we recommend to follow the traditional approach to creating sections on the website, so that visitors would not need to click everywhere trying to find what they need. The list of necessary sections include the following: Main/Home page, Goods and Services, About Us, Contacts. Common but not necessary sections could also be the following: Blog, News, Partners, Shop, Online Booking, Sales and Offers, etc. It is worth noting that for different types of businesses there could be different suitable structure of the website. For this reason, prior to creating a website we recommend to make a quick research of competitors websites and websites of organizations working in the same area. Try to pay attention to the pros and cons of their websites – what do you like about their websites and what could be done better. With this information it will be much easier for your to create your own competitive website.



Section 4. Managing website skills

Website is somewhat complicated organism. Just creating website is not enough. Any website should be regularly updated with fresh content. Otherwise, website would lose all its popularity and would not appear on the first pages of the results in organic search. Hence, we asked touristic organizations the following question.

Q4: Do you know how to manage your website: update content, upload images, add sections and so on?



As we can see, almost 78% of the respondents know to manage their website. This is not too bad, as quite often heads of organizations hire someone to create a website and then they have no idea how to update it. Of course, this is not a good way to go, and would always result in dying traffic of the website. There are still 22% of companies who are not yet on track, but we hope that this number will be decreasing in the nearest future. We give the following recommendations regarding website management.



Recommendations on Section 4

For those who have a website, but do not know how manage it, the first step would to find out what system or engine website is built on. If you do not have a website, do not forget to take a note of what system is being used to create the website. The next step is to learn about administrating the website. This depends on the previous step, that is on what platform website was built on. These platforms typically have their own website with the support, where you could ask for help. Most of the website are built on well-known systems, which are the following:

- <https://ru.wordpress.org/>
- <https://tilda.cc/ru/>
- <https://ru.wix.com/blog>

All of these systems have support section and free learning materials available. This is only the question of time you spend to figure out what you need at the current point and at the current state of your online work. Another option is to ask specialists that offer maintenance of websites. They could surely teach you how to administrate your website on the way.

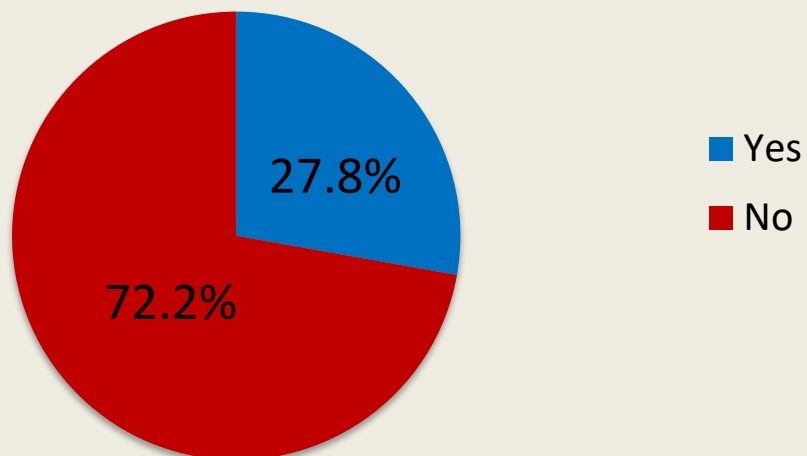
We absolutely believe that this skill is necessary as this gives opportunity to quickly update your website content when needed. Having up to date information on your website is critical, as users look for fresh news, offers, events, etc. Do not forget to update contacts as well. Further, it is sometimes needed to optimize content in order to control the loading of the website. Finally, search engines would favor websites that have regular updates.



Section 5. Using Web Analytics

Being aware of how effective different aspects of your internet work are is critical when building and executing your internet marketing strategy. Web Analytics is the great instrument to evaluate and visualize effectiveness of internet marketing strategy. Web Analytics is a little bit more complicated than parameters discussed before. Of course, it requires some time to learn but makes any tasks related to digital marketing much easier and faster. Unfortunately, as we are going to see below, majority of companies neglect this powerful instrument.

Q5: Do you understand Web Analytics reports and know how to analyze them?



From the survey, we observe that 72.2% of respondents do not understand Web Analytics and hence do not implement it. This means all these enterprises perform a lot of tasks blindly. They cannot evaluate effectiveness of their online work. Such approach usually leads to losing revenue, as a lot of money is spent ineffectively. On the other hand, those companies that use Web Analytics are likely to achieve positive results and profit from their online promotion strategy.



Recommendations on Section 5

As discussed, Web Analytics is must have instrument when speaking of internet marketing. Promoting a company without it results in losing money one way or another. This might look complicated from the first look, but we believe that head of any touristic organization would find it quite easy to learn and implement. Hence, we recommend organizations to do the following.

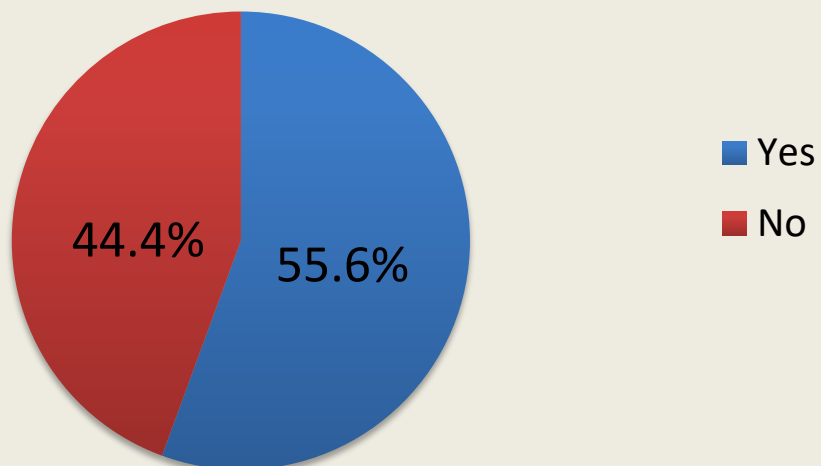
1. Install and implement modern and precise Web Analytics from Google. Currently, the latest appropriate version is **Google Analytics 4 (GA4)**.
2. Heads, owners and marketing managers of touristic organizations need to complete free course on using GA4. For instance, this could be done here:
<https://skillshop.exceedlms.com/student/path/66744-google>
3. Complete free GA4 certification test:
<https://skillshop.exceedlms.com/student/path/525084-sertifikatsiya-po-google-analitike>



Section 6. Analyzing statistics from social networks

Social networks take a big part of life of many people around the world. Hence, placing advertising there is a big part of almost any internet strategy. In our experience, many organizations make a mistake of overspending budget on advertising in social networks. This mainly happens due to lack of understanding of the effectiveness and validity of social networks for the aims of chosen internet strategy. To avoid this, one needs to understand statistics of the posts in all used social networks, as well as general statistical parameters of the pages in social networks. The next question in our survey relates to this aspect.

Q6: Do you understand statistics of separate posts and general statistics of your enterprise in different social networks?



As we can see, almost half of the respondents are not aware of the proper usage of statistics in social networks. In most cases, these companies still have placements in social networks and run paid promotion there. However, no evaluation is done, which leads to non-optimal usage of resources and much lower revenues than possible.



Recommendations on Section 6

We advise all touristic organizations to learn and implement statistical data for all social networks. It is not as complicated as it might sound. Once you start, statistical parameters will be easy to understand and visualize. The decisions based on statistics would become obvious and very beneficial for your organization. All social networks have special sections “Help”, where one could find detailed instructions of how to extract and use statistics. For the most popular social networks these are:

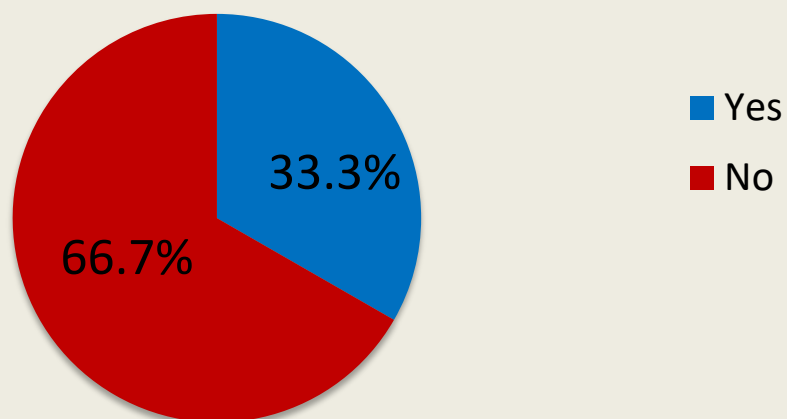
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/help/268680253165747>
- Instagram: <https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/lessons/use-instagram-insights-to-see-how-account-and-content-are-performing>
- Twitter: <https://help.twitter.com/ru/managing-your-account/using-the-tweet-activity-dashboard>
- LinkedIn: <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/reporting-analytics>
- Tiktok: <https://ads.tiktok.com/help/>
- Pinterest: <https://help.pinterest.com/ru/business/article/pinterest-analytics>
- OK: <https://help-odnoklassniki.ru/kak-posmotret-statistiku-gruppy-v-odnoklassnikah/>
- VK: <https://vk.com/biz/article/statistika>



Section 7. Understanding paid advertising on the internet

Promotion on the internet is important concept that all organizations must pay careful attention to. In particular, paid advertising on the internet could be very effective in terms of attracting customers. To benefit from paid advertising one needs to understand how it works and how much it costs. Therefore, next questions in our survey relates to this essence:

Q7: Do you understand where and how to buy advertising on the internet and social networks, how to set up online promotion and how to distribute advertising budget ?



Here we detect another weakness of touristic organizations in Kazakhstan: 66.7% of respondents do not know how, where and at what cost they could buy promotion on the internet. This probably benefits remaining 33.3% of the companies, as they attract even more customers due to lack of strong online competition. This digital skill is very important and a little bit technical, so we recommend spending significant amount of time on improving it.



Recommendations on Section 7

Everyone, who needs to implement paid promotion scheme, should first learn about available sources of paid traffic and how to work with them. With no exception, all paid services have very detailed learning materials and “Help” sections for this purpose. Below we provide the following list of such services with the links to the learning materials.

Google

- Learning and certification of Google advertising:
https://skillshop.exceedlms.com/student/catalog/list?category_ids=2864-sertifikatsii-po-google-reklame
- Learning and certification of Google search advertising:
<https://skillshop.exceedlms.com/student/path/311306-google-ads-search-professional-certification>
- Learning and certification of Google media advertising:
https://skillshop.exceedlms.com/student/path/18080-google?sid=84bbf8d9-759b-4171-9103-ec5a1fdbb58c&sid_i=6
- Learning and certification of Google video advertising:
https://skillshop.exceedlms.com/student/path/18236-google?sid=84bbf8d9-759b-4171-9103-ec5a1fdbb58c&sid_i=8

Yandex

- <https://yandex.kz/adv/edu>

Meta (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp)

- Learning advertising on Meta platform: <https://www.facebook.com/business/small-business/advertise>
- Certification on Meta platform:
<https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/certification>
- Free courses on advertising on Meta platform:
<https://www.facebook.com/business/learn/courses>



Tiktok

- <https://www.tiktok.com/business/ru>

Twitter

- <https://business.twitter.com/en/help/troubleshooting/how-twitter-ads-work.html>

LinkedIn

- <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions>

OK

- <https://ok.ru/business>
- <https://target.my.com/pro/articles/kak-nastroit-target-v-ok>

VK

- <https://expert.vk.com/>

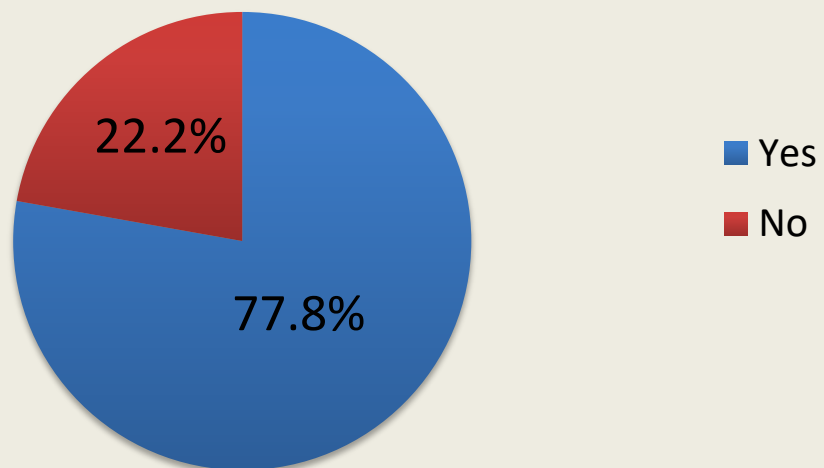
One should not forget that the choice of the promotion channels directly depends on the chosen internet strategy. Placing a lot of advertising in all social networks is usually bad idea, which results in excessive costs and low efficiency. We recommend to choose two or three social networks that seem the most suitable for you and learn all aspects of paid advertising there. Once advertising is set up there, one could start thinking about expanding to other social networks, one by one.



Section 8. Maintaining online reputation

Working on online reputation does not require advanced technical skills. One of the most important things to do is to show that you respect the opinion of your customers and pay attention to the questions of the potential customers. To do so, one needs to always be aware of what people say about their company on the internet. Taking these opinions into account and responding to the comments, reviews and questions is an important part of online work. We asked touristic businesses in Kazakhstan whether they are aware of the opinions of tourists about their organization:

Q8: Do you know what tourists say about your organization on the platforms like Tripadvisor, Google maps and 2GIS?



We see that 22.2% of the respondents do not check what people say about their company on the internet. Clearly, such companies do not respond to comments and reviews on the popular platforms. This is harmful not only for online reputation, but also for the possible improvements suggested by customers. One of the main benefits of responding to reviews is that potential tourists could be reading them before they make a booking or a reservation. If they see that organization is responding to reviews, this increases trust to such organization by a lot. Hence, it is very important to respond to reviews regularly. Let us look at how often it is recommended to respond to reviews, and which platform to pay close attention to.

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Recommendations on Section 8

Anyone who runs a touristic organization should have a rule to perform a global check of reviews at least once a week. It is even better to set up notifications in various platforms that would allow to see fresh reviews immediately when they appear. If you manage to quickly respond to reviews, this would add even more benefits to your reputation online.

Apart from reviews, one needs to check that placement on the platforms is correct and all information there is clear and corresponds to up to date details about your organization. It is quite common mistake to forget to change contacts, working hours or photos on all platforms after a company has some of these updates in real life. If any of the checks has a negative result (e.g. placement of the company is missing on one of the platforms) it is necessary to take the action. We recommend to register and respond to all reviews on the following platforms:

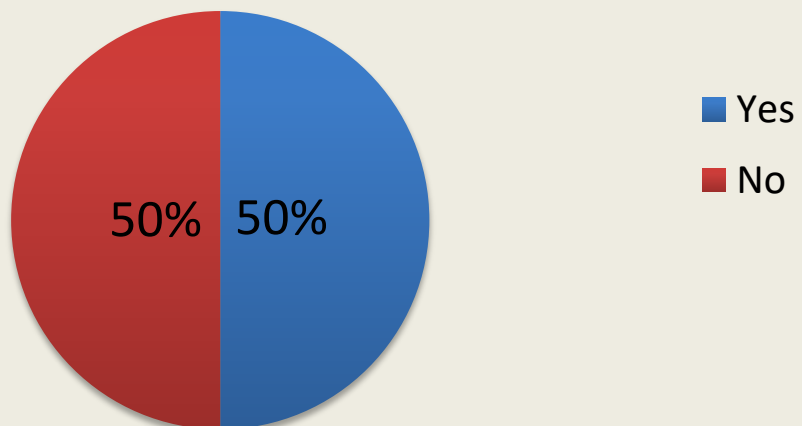
1. Google Business Profile (Google map): <https://www.google.com/business/>
2. Yandex directory (Yandex map): <https://yandex.ru/sprav/companies>
3. 2GIS: <https://reklama.2gis.ru/add-info>
4. TripAdvisor: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/ru-RU/hc/owner/articles/397>



Section 9. Creating and evaluating content

The content placed on the internet should be well thought to be interesting and useful for tourists. Content should be original, unique and have no mistakes in terms of validity and correctness. It is quite often the case when companies do not pay enough attention to creating content. Sometimes they even borrow content from others, which is considered plagiarism and reduces reputation and positions of the website/profile in organic search. The next question in our survey relates to content creation and evaluation:

Q9: Do you know how to create and evaluate internet content about your organization to make sure it is unique and interesting for the tourists?



Content is fundamental part of online activity. It is sad to see that half of touristic organizations in Kazakhstan do not know to correctly create and evaluate content. As discussed, poor content could reduce traffic by a lot both because it will appear lower in results in search engines and because tourists would not stay long on boring website. This would clearly reduce the effectiveness of all online work and the results of online activities would be much lower than initially planned. To avoid this situation, we provide some suggestions below.



Recommendations on Section 9

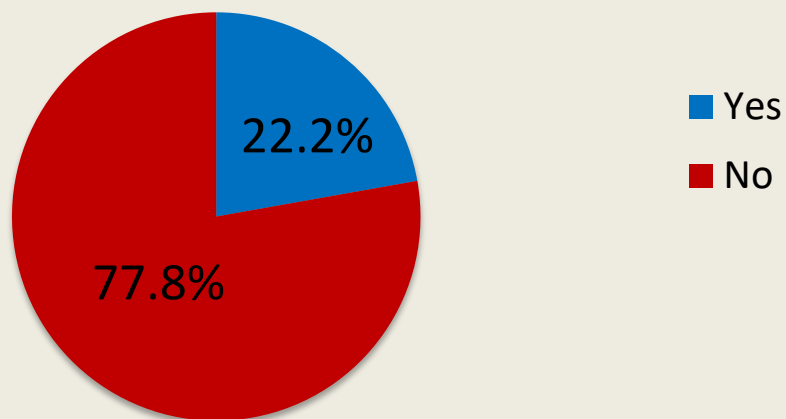
1. Try to test effectiveness of your content on the target audience. This could be done using surveys and interviews.
2. Hire professional copywriter or a writer familiar with the area of tourism.
3. Hire videographer to create video content, and photographer for the content in the form of professional photographs.
4. Make a research of the websites and social network pages of your direct competitors. Further, have a look at the websites and social networks of touristic organizations from abroad. See what ideas could be implemented for your organization.
5. Learn how to keep track of Web Analytics to realize what content is the most effective. You could then create more content of that popular format.
6. Keep track of statistics of your accounts in social networks. Once again, this could help to understand what content is rated better by your target audience. Knowing what content is more popular is very helpful for building your strategy of online marketing.
7. Try to develop your creative and communicative skills as much as possible. These skills are the key to creating interesting content.
8. Communicate with your staff members, who deal with clients. They could give you a hint on which information is missing, what people ask for and what content could be attractive for the potential clients.



Section 10. Controlling online promotion

Summarizing the roles of Web Analytics and other tools discussed earlier, the conclusive crucial skill is whether one is able to control online promotion of the organization or not. This is not only true for the small enterprises, where there is no budget to hire specialists. Even if organization hires digital agency, it is necessary to understand what the agency does and how effective it is in terms of improving numbers. The last question in our survey touches evaluation and control of online promotion scheme:

Q10: Based on objective indicators and numbers, are you able to evaluate and control the work of your employee or digital agency responsible for online promotion of your enterprise?



We observe that 77.8% of respondents are not really aware of how to evaluate and control their work on the internet. Of course, this is partly related to the skills considered in the previous sections. Once all of them are strengthened, we advise to realize the global idea of the methodological and systematical control of all processes related to online promotion of your organization. There are several tricks on how to do so, which we would like to provide below.



Recommendations on Section 10

1. Develop internet strategy with the objectives and intermediate indicators. Chronological plan of various aims is important to achieve your global goals of online work.
2. Regularly study your Web Analytics. This gives understanding of what potential customer do on your website, how effective the channels of promotion are and where it currently better to place more advertising.
3. Regularly check statistics of your social network pages. Possibly, some networks do not bring as much impact as planned and spending of time and money there could be cut.
4. Try to connect indicators of your online performance with the basic indicators of your enterprise (e.g. how paid advertising affects your profit).
5. Always ask your employees and hired part time specialists to provide full explanatory information and not just number of clicks. Some basic analysis should include the ratio of click and conversion, or sales and orders.



General recommendations on digital skills

Based on the results of our survey and other research we make in the area of tourism, there are many mistakes that a lot of touristic organizations make. These mistakes typically appear due to weak digital skills. As discussed in this report, these basic skills are really important not only nowadays, but in nearest future as well. Neglecting the value of learning and implementing digital skills is the biggest mistake made by majority of touristic organizations.

We have the following recommendations for all people working in tourism:

1. Join free WhatsApp chat «Цифровая среда КТА&КАГиР» (Digital Wednesday in Kazakhstan association of hotels and restaurants). The access to the chat will be granted after [registering here](#).
2. Purchase and carefully read self-educating book on digital marketing for tourism: «Basics of digital travel marketing» (<https://centersmarttourism.world/for-tourism-organisations/materials/basics-of-digital-travel-marketing-ru/>).
3. Join the group of one-week course on digital travel marketing and digital skills for any touristic organizations. This would be suitable for hotels, tour agents, tour firms, tour operators, guides, visit centers, restaurants, etc.

Pre-entry for the course, as well as any questions and suggestions are appreciated via the following e-mail: info@centersmarttourism.com.

Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

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