

THE CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY, 2019

get ready for  
 **Generation**

*Collection of Papers*

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Novi Sad | Vojvodina | Serbia

University of Novi Sad | Faculty of Sciences  
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, TOURISM AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT

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# IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONG YOUNG PARTICIPANTS OF MUSIC FESTIVALS IN VOJVODINA AND HUNGARY

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## Abstract

*In the recent years the Y and Z generations have become a target group of various economic sectors and they are playing an increasingly large role in the tourism industry as well. Since these generations are “digital natives”, they are using information intensively from the web in their decisions and they adapt rapidly to trends. Users share an increasing number of experience and knowledge on the Internet which affect others’ consumption habits, (touristic) decisions, image and opinions on different places and events. Within the studied age groups, the tourist behaviour of Z generation are given particular importance, becoming a priority target group, since they will enter a stage of life in the next decades, in which they are able to spend the most on tourism. Knowing about travelling habits and decision-making processes of young generations can be useful for the tourism service suppliers, because their habits can substantially affect the future tourism development directions. During our research we analysed the relationship between social media use and travel decision-making among the young participants of music festivals in Vojvodina and Hungary. On the one hand we made a questionnaire survey among the Y and Z generations of two festivals in the study area (in the Youth Days of Szeged and in Green Future of Ada), and we also asked the students from the University of Szeged. As social media can indirectly contribute to the promotion of festivals and settlements through the public posts of the festivals, on the other hand we analysed the posts of a popular photo-sharing site (Instagram), searching the headings (hashtags) for references to the geographical places associated with the selected music festivals. Based on the results it can be concluded that young people’s travel and festival decisions are increasingly influenced by the social media, so the role of online marketing can be significant to reach these generations. Therefore, the shared social media content linked to festivals can strengthen the attractive potential of a tourism destination and with appropriate marketing, they can make some places better known by changing their image.*

**Keywords:** *Y and Z generations, Travel habits, Festival tourism, Social media, Destination image*

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## Introduction

With the explosive development of technology and mobile communications, Internet plays a major role in everyday life and also in tourism. Within the Internet, one of the most conspicuous is the growth of social media, creating new trends and opportunities for tourism. Users have more and more available information and shared experiences on social media sites (Dudás et al., 2017) which have an impact on others' consumption habits, (tourist) decisions, and opinions on different places (Málovics et. al., 2015). The accelerating globalization, and competition for tourists makes the marketing ideas, that can shape the image of a destination more and more important, because different tourist benefits can come from image building (Michalkó, 2014). Social media content plays a major role in the choice of the tourist destination, which can be observed mainly in the Y and Z generation (born after 1980), creating new trends and opportunities for tourism. Today's young people travel a lot to diverse destinations, to different events (such as festivals) where they can enjoy community experiences. Most people book on the Internet, crave for information, use the opportunities provided by the Internet to make the most of their trips and share their experiences instantly on different social sites (Pendergast, 2010). Therefore, it is worth examining the behavior of these generations, as they are the travelers of the future, influencing each other's consumer habits. Visiting the festivals provides good conditions for the creation and enjoyment of non-routine experiences, thus making festival tourism more and more popular for them. In particular, music festivals are very popular among them, so we had focus on light music festivals, which are the most popular among younger generations, so we can examine the significance of new opportunities provided by technology in festival tourism. Our aim was to assess the relationship between social media usage and travel decision-making process among young festival visitors who are participating in festivals in Vojvodina and Hungary. To do this, we made a questionnaire survey among the Y and Z generations of two festivals in the study area (in the Youth Days of Szeged and in Green Future of Ada), and we also asked the students from the University of Szeged. Since social media can indirectly contribute to the promotion of festivals and settlements through the entries of the festivals, we also analyzed the posts related to festivals by an increasingly popular image sharing site (Instagram).

## Literature review – The role of social media in tourism

Nowadays, when the usage of Internet is common, the easiest and fastest way for tourists to get information about the potential travel experience is searching on the Internet. The various interactive communication interfaces have become the most important source of information, where users together make the content and share their travel experiences (Eszes, 2007). These include social networking sites (e.g. as Facebook, Twitter), photo and video sharing portals (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat), travel-related blogs, and special tourism-related websites (e.g. TripAdvisor, Foursquare). These sites are information gathering platforms and also sharing interface for potential travelers. These are especially used by the Y and Z generations, as the travel decision of the younger generation is mostly based on others' opinions and shared experiences (on the recommendation of friends and acquaintances). These generations have the most friends on social network sites, so the relevant information is easily and quickly accessible to them (Málovics et. al., 2015). According to Streit (2014) and Málovics et. al. (2015), the members of these generations are more informed, more aware, faster, more adventurous and more mobile

than the previous generations in their ages, and the most important motivation in choosing a destination is to get experiences (Kovács, 2014; Iványi – Bíró-Szigeti, 2016).

Sharing experiences online, on social media sites, and keeping track of others' posts is becoming increasingly popular among them (Klausz, 2017). Although in user-generated content, such as websites and tourist service ratings, high personal tastes and subjectivity can be seen, nevertheless young users feel more confident making decisions based on the opinions of others (Fotis et al., 2012). These generations trust in the opinion of the Internet community (in other consumers) and they are very active in social media networks, where they become opinion leaders, so these networks are becoming the main and the most important and trusted source of information for them (Segarra, 2015). This is especially true for generation Z, who are digital natives, so, they no longer need to learn how to use the Internet, since this has been the part of their daily lives since childhood (Málovics et al., 2015; Klausz, 2017). In many cases, text messages are obsolete to them, in pictures and videos is possible to efficiently transmit information, besides that the interaction allowing channels, the creation of content and the sharing of opinions are especially important to them. That is why special attention has to be paid to young people in marketing of different destinations, since according to WYSE Travel Confederation analysis, travel among young people has become one of the fastest growing segments of international tourism. Thus, in the coming years, it is expected that tourism will be mainly shaped by the Y and Z generations, as they enter the age to make their own tourism decisions (Mester, 2008). They decisions between destinations most often are already made on mobile Internet and on smartphone in the pre-travel phase, and information is also searched on the Internet during their trip, so they can get quick, immediate answers and guidance (Veres et al., 2017). They completed their journey by sharing their experiences and opinions on the web, so the Internet and social media cover the entire travel process.

The use of different social media sites for marketing purposes is also gaining importance, despite this sites were originally made for communication between individuals. Various events and destinations not only assess the needs of potential tourists by actively participating in major social networking sites, but these platforms give them access to visitors' feedback through reviews (Oklobdžija, 2015). If an event, or a branding specialists from different destinations on these interfaces targets these segments and conveys their message to them, then young people will follow and like their pages, so they will constantly receive information about it. They are loyal to beloved brands in the long run, but if the page for some reason is no longer interesting to them, it stops being liked and this stops following (so they don't get any more information). Therefore, based on a well-designed brand the potential tourist identifies this information as quality, so it influences the content of their imagination about that brand or destination, and this can influence their travel decisions, too (Spiegler, 2010).

## Research methodology

In the course of the research, we conducted an online questionnaire survey among the students who are participating in festivals, and we asked the participants of two music festivals on the Hungarian-Serbian border area: the Green Future (in Ada) and at the Szeged Youth Days (so-called SZIN) in Szeged. For comparability, the aim of the research was to ask the university students age group - 18 - 25 years old people -, so we could not apply probability sampling, which resulted the overrepresentation of the examined age group. The sample was also not representative of territorial coverage, since both the online and the personal questionnaire

survey were mainly answered by young people from Vojvodina (north part of Serbia close to the Hungarian border) and from South Plain (south part of Hungary close to the Serbian border). Online 84, at the Green Future 148, and at the SZIN 119 questionnaire was filled out. The survey covered several issues, in this study our aim was to assess the relationship between the social media usage and travel decision-making process among young festival visitors. Since social media can indirectly contribute to the promotion of festivals and settlements through the entries of the festivals, we also analyzed the posts related to 10 examined festivals (Table 1) by an increasingly popular image sharing site (Instagram).

**Table 1.** *The examined festivals, and their organizing settlements*

Name	Organizing settlement	Analyzed keywords	N.o. of analyzed records
Sziget	Budapest (Hungary)	#sziget2017	6386
VOLT	Sopron (Hungary)	#volt2017	2828
EFOTT	Velence (Hungary)	#efott2017	2451
Balaton Sound	Zamárdi (Hungary)	#balatonsound2017	4412
East Fest	Mezőtúr (Hungary)	#eastfest2017	126
SZIN	Szeged (Hungary)	#szin2017	645
Malomfesztivál	Orom (Serbia)	#malomfesztival	246
Kanizsa Feszt	Magyarkanizsa (Serbia)	#kanizsafeszt	182
Green Future	Ada (Serbia)	#greenfuturefestival	211
Exit	Újvidék (Serbia)	#exitfestival2017	1812

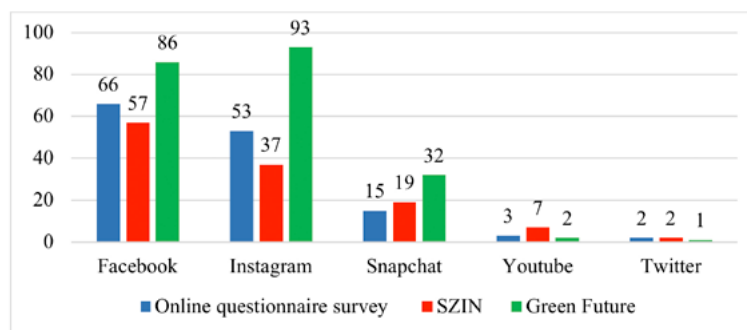
On Instagram the searched keyword (hashtag) was simply the name of a festival (e.g. the #greenfuturefestival, #malomfeszt), but in the case of some major festivals we limited the search results for the year 2017 (e.g. #balatonsound2017, #volt2017). As the result of the search we analysed 19 299 public records in varying proportions from festival to festival (Table 1).

## The main results of the research among young festival participants

It can be observed by the questionnaire survey which was filled out by festival participants in Vojvodina and Hungary, that the information gaining and the travel decision making is significantly affected by what the potential tourists saw from the social media sites. Looking at the information gaining process we can observe that interviewed festival visitors are mostly searching for information on the Internet. The online respondents used primarily Facebook, besides that, other media contents and websites of the festivals also play an important role before the trip. It is no coincidence, because the questionnaire was shared on Facebook, but also during the personal interviews participants identified community networks as a source of information, so the Internet plays a significant role in this process. Besides that, a part of visitors still prefer to get information from their friends, but as Facebook is primarily used by friends, it actually enhances the traditional information gaining process with a new channel, but extends the possibilities of finding recommendations by making visible the posts for strangers.

During our research, we have examined whether the respondents' travel decisions are influenced by their friends' social media posts and experiences. More than half of the respondents (62%) were interested in the published posts of others, related to festivals. However, when we

asked the participants of the research whether their decisions on travel and festival were influenced by social media posts, almost half of the respondents (44%) said that entries had a role in decision making, in this case most of the posts influenced them positively (85%). Even so it is important to emphasize that social media posts can not only play a motivating role, as a negative experience can also be very decisive, which may affect the realization of travel intentions. The survey also shows that, although someone is interested in others' shared information and experiences about their travels or festivals, it doesn't necessarily have an impact on their decision, as 56% of the respondents did not make their travel decisions based on this. Despite the fact that less than half of the respondents were influenced by the published posts of others' in the travel decisions, more than half of the respondents (66%) share their own experiences related to festivals on some social media interfaces, mostly on Facebook and Instagram. The interviewed Serbian festival visitors – who were the youngest among the respondents – use more Instagram and its hashtag function to share their experiences, which support the fact that nowadays this is the most popular image and video channel for young people. Among Hungarian festival participants using Facebook for searching information or sharing experiences has been more popular than Instagram, yet (Figure 1).

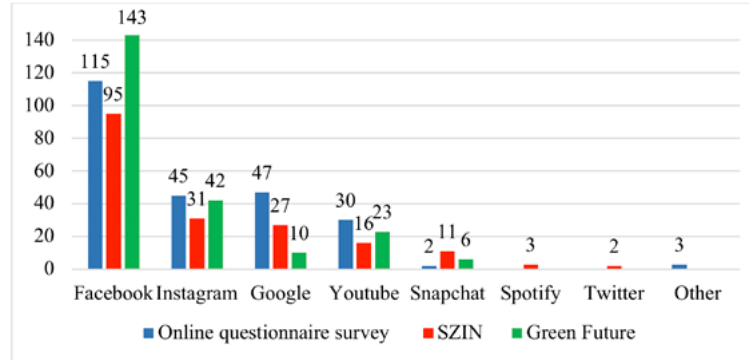


**Figure 1.** Distribution of experience sharing on different social media platforms

*Source: Own editing based on questionnaire survey (2017)*

Respondents are not only sharing their experiences but they are also curious about what others have posted. Among the respondents Facebook was also dominant in searching for shared experiences, due to the fact that this social media site serves the best (most people-used) interface. It is true that during the sharing of experiences among the festival participants in Vojvodina – contrary to the Hungarian festival visitors –, Instagram has been already ahead of Facebook, but if they are searching for others' posts, then the Facebook is the most important community channel for them, too. Besides Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube community channels are also popular, but Google was also often used for searching recommendations among the respondents (Figure 2).

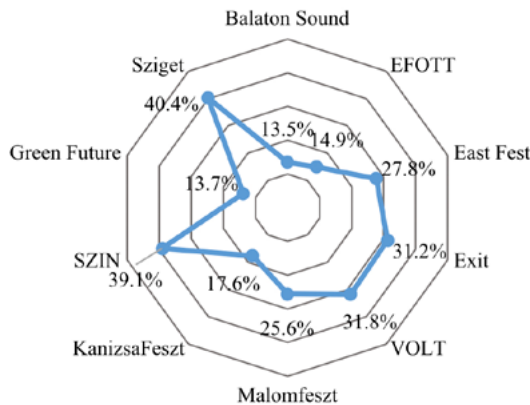
In the case of Instagram, which is an increasingly popular image sharing site, users assign tags to their images, which means that these pictures or videos are tagged with keywords, making it easier to search for entries. Searching for a particular hashtag, all posts with that labels will appear, and experiences can be viewed. For example, if potential tourists are browsing for a festival, the settlement that organizes it may also appear between the labels and vice versa. They can see any public shared experiences what also influences their travel related decisions. In addition, the festival and the settlement can strengthen each other's image and raise awareness/popularity. Thus, in the case of Instagram posts, we analyzed how close is this rela-



**Figure 2.** Distribution of searching for others' shared posts on social media  
 Source: Own editing based on questionnaire survey (2017)

tionship between the festivals and host-settlements, and how much can the festival contribute to the promotion of the settlement (Figure 3).

Among the analyzed hashtags, in the case of SZIN festival, Szeged (the host-settlement) was mentioned in some form 252 times out of 645 posts (39%), while related to Green Future, we found from 211 posts only 29 references to Ada (the host-settlement) (13.7%) (Figure 3). In the case of SZIN, most of the posts were only tag #szeged (197), but the #szeged #iloveszeged (14) and the #szeged #suncity (10) keywords have occurred together. In the case of Green Future, the most common hashtag was also simply the name of the settlement: #ada (20), besides, there was also #adica (the festival) and #adatour (a created name from the city and tourism). For #sziget2017, we found 2 579 references to the settlement out of analyzed 6 386 posts, which is the highest mentioning rate (40,4%), so there is a strong connection between the Sziget Festival and Budapest (the host-city). The most common hashtag of the analyzed keywords was the name of the city (2 492), but #obuda (15), and also the #budapestgram (14) occurred several times. In the case of VOLT festival, we found 900 references out of 2828 public entries, which is the second-best mentioning rate of the analyzed Hungarian festivals (Figure 3). The VOLT festival has also produced a good result from previous research too, so there is a close relation-



**Figure 3.** The proportion of the mention of the analyzed festival's host towns in all the posts relating to the festival

Source: Own editing based on the research on Instagram (2017)

ship between the town and the festival, therefore they can mutually contribute to strengthen each other's image and attracting more visitors.

In the analysis of the 126 public posts of the #eastfest2017, we found references for the settlement in 35 entries, which is the third best rate of the analyzed Hungarian festivals (Figure 3). In the case of Exit, in the 1 812 public posts, we found connection to the host settlement 566 times, in which the most commonly used keywords were #novisad (the town) and #petrovaradin (the name of the place). This mentioning rate (31,2%) is the best of the analyzed festivals in Vojvodina. During the analysis of the Balaton Sound Festival (#balatonsound2017), between 4 412 posts we found only 595 links to Zamárdi (the host-settlement) in some form (13,5%), which is the worst mentioning rate among all the festivals involved in the survey (Figure 3). In the case of EFOTT festival, we have found 2 451 posts, where the host-settlement was only 366 times mention among the hashtags (14.9% mentioning rate). During the analysis of the Malomfesztivál we found 246 posts, where the settlement was mentioned 63 times, so it is still quite weak reference to the settlement, but compared to the fact that this is a new festival, we can observe the second best mentioning rate (25,6%) among the analyzed events in Vojvodina (Figure 3). Finally, in the case of the Kanizsa Feszt, from 182 posts we found only 32 references to Kanizsa, which seems very few taken in consideration that the name of the settlement appears in the name of the festival.

## Conclusion

The use of social media for tourism purposes has brought about a significant change. Users trust the community's opinion and they feel that they can make more informed travel decisions because of others' opinions. Social networks are becoming more and more popular among young people in Vojvodina and Hungary, and this will cause a major change in pre-travel information gaining. Searching on the Internet becomes dominant, in the choice of destination and also in the search for attractions in the destination area. In our research a significant proportion of the young participants of festivals use the Internet for browsing. For searching information and sharing experiences they especially use some different social networking sites (about 55% of them use Facebook). The taken photo, video, or live sign-up is instantly uploaded to a social networking site (e.g. Facebook) or to an image- or video-sharing portal (e.g. Instagram), so the experience is not only enjoyed by the person who was living it, but friends and even unknown people may also be involved. More than half of respondents (66%) share their experiences on some social media sites (mostly on Facebook and on Instagram). Based on the survey searching for others' experiences is also popular among young people, 62% of them is interested in others' posts related to festivals. Among the respondents Facebook is the most significant interface for searching travel related posts, but also Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Google are popular. These entries may have an effect on the others travel decisions, because half of the respondents (44%) were influenced by other's experiences and mostly in positive way (85%). If the shared experience is positive, it can motivate others to travel, but some bad experience, negative shared content can completely eliminate travel motivation. In our research some people's decision was negatively affected (almost 15% of the respondents) by the public posts what they have seen before, so shared experiences also can have a bad effect for tourism. In contrast to Facebook, where shared posts can affect travel intentions mainly among friends, Instagram gives the opportunity for everyone to search for places and events by using headlines. This way, we can track the images and videos of different people without even knowing them, what may influence travel decisions even more widely.

The results of the research on the Instagram confirm that festivals can play a major role in knowing a destination, shaping the image of the settlement, and spreading it to a wider audience. The analyzed Instagram posts suggests that the closest connection between the festival and the settlement is likely to be in the case of the Sziget and the VOLT Festival. So, they can contribute to increasing each other's awareness and to strengthening a positive image. However, the size and reputation of a festival does not necessarily coincide with the fact that the respondents also know the host settlement, which can be seen in the case of Balaton Sound, where the organizing settlement is unknown to many people. It can be observed in the analysis of hashtags, that in the case of the Exit and the Malomfesztivál, the mention rate of the host settlement is high, so despite the novelty of a festival and the small number of posts on Instagram, the reference to the settlement can be high (e.g. Orom – Malomfesztivál).

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