Use of Marketing Communication Tools in Tourism in Accommodation Facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract
The spread of the infectious disease COVID-19 throughout the world in 2020 caused a global pandemic, which, with subsequent measures, seriously affected the global tourism industry. The main purpose of the research study was to identify and analyse the use of marketing communication tools in tourism in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic during the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper adds to the existing literature by offering a better understanding of the link between the effectiveness of marketing communication tools within the marketing strategy and the financial losses of the hotel sector. As part of the research, a total of 140 controlled, structured interviews were conducted with managers of selected accommodation facilities, in which the scope and primary forms of use of marketing communication tools during the COVID-19 pandemic were investigated. Research objectives were verified through research questions and hypotheses. The main findings of the research revealed that more than half of the monitored accommodation establishments in the Czech Republic did not change their promotion strategy during the pandemic. In contrast, almost 13% of the accommodation establishments surveyed did not use any tools to communicate with the customer. The research also showed that marketing communication of accommodation facilities takes place mainly in the form of websites and social media, while the most effective communication is via social networks. Therefore, the authors recommend professional associations operating in tourism and hospitality focus their educational activities on the possibilities of using innovative marketing communication tools to communicate with customers. The research was carried out for the requirements and needs of society and practice in connection with the effects of the pandemic crisis so that it was possible to communicate more effectively with the customer segment in the tourism sector.

1. Introduction

In the last two decades, the tourism industry has been affected by several crises, which meant a decrease in tourists worldwide and a serious impact on the tourism industry. However, several tourism experts consider the terrorist attacks in 2011, the outbreak of SARS in 2003, the financial crisis in 2008-

2009, or the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease, which was the most devastating, to be the most significant crises that have affected the tourism industry.   (Aldao, et al., 2021).

As several authors point out (Cró & Martins, 2017; Estevão & Costa, 2020; Perić, Dramićanin & Conić, 2021), the tourism industry, especially the demand for international tourism, is very vulnerable to crises or disasters, as it poses a risk to health and personal the safety of potential tourist clientele. COVID-19, which was declared a coronavirus pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, has significantly affected the global economic, political, and socio-cultural systems (Sigala, 2020). Thereby, it is possible to say that the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak modified the tourism model worldwide. (Castanho et. al, 2021) The introduction of health measures (e.g. significant restriction of mobility, self-imposed or mandatory quarantine) had an impact on all types of tourism, accommodation, and hospitality facilities. According to Wang and Su (2020), the effects of the pandemic on tourism were due to three specific reasons: the official travel restrictions, the cancellation of mass events, and the fear of the risk of coronavirus infection among travellers. Moreover, as noted by Matiza (2020), the global tourism industry faces several challenges, both in demand for tourism (perceived health, social and psychological risk) and in the supply of tourism (large fiscal deficit, loss of employment, liquidation of companies). COVID-19 has had a significant impact on international travel, tourism demand, and the hospitality industry, which is one of the world's largest employers (Chang, McAleer & Ramos, 2020; Gavurova et al. 2023), with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic visible across all areas of the tourism industry (Chinazzi et al., 2020). The global domain of the virus, coupled with its control in quarantine, reduced mobility, and isolation, have dramatically impacted domestic and international tourism (transport, travel agencies, hospitality, trade, and event tourism) (Hoque et al., 2020). International travel and the related sphere of trade have stagnated and suffered significant losses. activity (Gössling et al., 2021). As Bahar & Celik Ilal (2020) state, the pandemic has made it clear that tourism-related spending is sharply declining. Within a few months, the framing of the global tourism system shifted from over-tourism to non-tourism (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2021). In this context, several authors recommend (Chen, Huang, & Li, 2020; Ivanova, Ivanov & Ivanov, 2021) to research and study the tourism crisis caused by COVID-19 from the aspect of examining the attitudes and perceptions of consumers themselves as well as business entities operating in this area, to understand changes and characteristics of tourism demand.

Negative impacts on tourism

In the Web of Science database itself, it is possible to find over 200 research studies that deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in the world. A substantial part of the research studies consists of contributions focused on the hotel sector. Only a small part of the contributions is oriented towards tourism research in the Czech environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all economies and has likely forced hotel businesses that come from less typical emerging economies, such as Czech small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to face similar challenges as their counterparts from typical emerging economies (Pelikanová, Cvik & MacGregor, 2021). L. Novotný and P. Pellešová (2021, p. 199) pointed out that although the Czech Republic compensated the financial losses of tourist guides, such compensation was insufficient according to the guides themselves. The research showed a negative evaluation of tourism guides with adopted legislative measures and crisis legislation.

According to the authors' findings (Lee, Su & Chang, 2022), up to a 1% increase in the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reduces the number of tourist visits by 0.10%. Quantifying the impact, they found that US hotel industry revenue losses accumulated to more than $30 billion between March 2020 and May 2020 (Ozdemir, et al., 2021). Lin & Chen (2022) found that international tourist hotels with high product variety and five-star hotels suffered more revenue loss than other types of hotels. As the authors Anguera-Torrell, Aznar-Alarcon & Vives-Perez (2021) state, the hotel industry is one of the economic sectors most negatively affected by COVID-19. Its recovery depends on the

ability to control the pandemic and on the macroeconomic effectiveness of the policies adopted by public institutions to strengthen the general recovery of the economy. In this context, hotel industry stakeholders must assess the economic impact directly attributable to the development of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged tourism across the globe and impacted hospitality in the hotel industry severely." (Mehta, Kumar & Ramkumar, 2021). Another study by Yu, Lee & Hyun (2021) demonstrated that the perceived risk of COVID-19 and PTSD have a significant negative effect on hotel revisit intention, while emotion regulation ability was found to play a moderating role in this process. Based on the study, experts from Mexico (Herrera et al., 2020) recommended a conceptual theoretical framework for understanding the crisis in tourism and proposed a conceptual model for managing this crisis in tourism, based on a process that integrates risks and crises. According to the authors Malachovský, Knizka (2016), best practices for the tourism and hotel industry open up chances to accelerate development and increase competitiveness.

Positive impacts for tourism

On the other hand, in addition to the negatives brought about by the pandemic crisis, it is also necessary to mention the positives for tourism as part of the research of the effects of the coronavirus crisis. Several findings pointed out that during the COVID-19 pandemic there was a focus on the domestic market within the tourism industry. A survey of a sample of 637 respondents pointed to changes in the summer vacation plans of the Czech Republic in 2020 as a response to the severe restrictions adopted by the Czech government during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 and specifically to a shift towards domestic tourism (Sagapova & Dušek, 2021, p. 271). Last but not least, it is also necessary to discuss the challenges for tourism brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of research on 51 Portuguese hotels showed that 92% of hotel managers agreed that COVID-19 is promoting the digitization of processes, with the majority of organizations believing that online meetings and technological productivity tools are here to stay. The digitalization of hotels has the potential to generate high efficiency gains in operations intended for the public as well as in back-office operations (Antonio & Rita, 2021, p. 46). The main research goal of the presented paper is the analysis of the current use of marketing communication tools in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic for the demands and needs of society and practice in connection with the effects of the pandemic crisis so that it is possible to communicate more effectively with the customer segment in the tourism sector. The authors examined not only the scope, but also the main forms of application of marketing communication tools. The researchers further focused on the effectiveness of the implemented marketing and communication activities in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic during the pandemic crisis. The main output of the solved project will be specific proposals and recommendations for more effective marketing communication in the tourism industry with current clients and potential customers, which, with their content focus, will enable them to use modern marketing methods and communication tools with the intention of making their business more efficient.

To achieve the main research objective, we set the following research questions:

RQ1: Did the promotion strategy in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic change in 2020 to mitigate the effects of the pandemic crisis?

RQ2: What main marketing communication tools did managers use to mitigate the effects of the pandemic crisis in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic in 2020?

RQ3: What was the effectiveness of the implemented marketing communication activities in the monitored determinants (website visits, social network visits) during the pandemic crisis in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic in 2020?

For a deeper analysis of the research objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: We assume that the change in a promotional strategy for accommodation facilities occurred in the regions where the largest cities in the Czech Republic are concentrated (Prague, Jihomoravský, Moravskoslezský) as in other regions in the Czech Republic.

H2: We assume that there are differences between the use of marketing communication tools in individual types of accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic.

H3: We assume that there are differences between the use of marketing communication tools in accommodation facilities between individual regions of the Czech Republic.

The formulation of the hypotheses is based on the following theoretical and empirical facts. In its marketing activities, a company is significantly influenced by the marketing environment and the factors that act in it. A company's marketing and communication strategy tends to change if there is a change in the marketing environment in which the company operates (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Světlík & Vavrečka, 2022; Svec, Mura, 2020). The research findings of Lin & Chen (2021) indicated that during the COVID 19 pandemic, international chain accommodation facilities suffered less revenue loss than other types of hotels. The research of Kukanja, Planinc and Sikosek (2020) mentions that there are statistically significant differences in the use of different crisis management procedures in the field of implementation of marketing and communication tools between different types of small and medium-sized enterprises. In order to maintain business continuity, in this context several authors (Le & Phi, 2021) pointed to a proactive change in the field of marketing decisions implemented in the marketing and communication strategy of business entities.

H4: We assume that in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic that use social media, social network traffic increased compared to accommodation facilities that did not use this tool of marketing communication.

H5: We assume that in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic that use websites, website traffic has increased compared to accommodation facilities that did not use this tool of marketing communication.

The formulated hypotheses were established based on the findings of Kwok, Linchi, Lee & Han (2021) and Antonio & Rita (2021), who pointed out that COVID-19 supports digital direction, the use of online marketing communication tools, which have the potential to generate an increase in the effectiveness of communication outreach towards to customer segments. Since physical interaction in the marketing environment was limited in the pandemic situation of COVID 19, the importance of using digital communication channels increased, when target groups of customers began to search for relevant information on websites. Thus, businesses used the possibilities of digital marketing tools to stay in touch with customers and stimulate them to buy (Vavrečka, Mezuláník & Durda, 2018; Arzhanova, Beregovskaya, Silina, 2020; McTeigue et al., 2021).

2. Literature review

Managers of the accommodation facilities in the field of tourism have at their disposal a wide range of tools of the marketing mix of services as part of strategic marketing decisions. In addition to the classic tools of the marketing mix (product, price, distribution, marketing communication), they can use elements of the extended marketing mix in services (Ďaďo 2006; Cibáková 2008; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). As stated by several experts in the field of marketing (Akroush, 2011, Džupina, 2017), there is a general agreement that organizations providing services need to modify the traditional concept of the marketing mix in terms of 4P to 7P, in the form of adding other strategic elements of 3P (material environment, people, processes), which affect the performance of the company. Marketing communication is an integral part of marketing mix tools (Koliščáková, 2020, p. 53) In preparing the concept of integrated marketing communication, the manager shall carefully combine communication tools and create a coordinated communication mix. The manager could use the main tools of the

communication mix to influence behaviour: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, direct marketing (Kita et al., 2010; Kotler & Armstrong 2018).

Among the significant changes that have taken place in marketing, the impact of digitization on marketing strategy is definitely included. Digital and social media marketing are clearly among the fastest growing forms of direct marketing. Marketing managers should therefore direct their attention not only to website marketing, online marketing, but also to email marketing, online videos, blogs, wlogs and online forums, or mobile marketing (Armstrong, Kolter & Opresnik 2017; Mura & Lincényi 2015, Vavrečka, Mezulaník & Durda, 2018). Due to the growing influence of blogs, various industries have adopted blogs as an advertising and marketing strategy. (Tsai, Wang, Chang & Hu, 2021).

One of the great advantages in the field of tourism today is that they can manage crises more effectively thanks to the use of new marketing communication trends. As stated by Kádeková and Holienčinová (2018, p. 92) "more and more brands and companies are focusing on their marketing activities in order to find new opportunities for presentation." New trends include, among others, influencer marketing, YouTube, Instagram, vertical videos, voice search, personalization, marketing automation and behavioural targeting, decision-making based on data, interactive content or marketing funnels (Lincényi, Fabuš 2021). One of the most popular communication channels, which in recent years has seen an exponential growth in use and at the same time has become a centre of information distribution, is social media (Papcová, 2020, p. 120). Vavrečka, Mezulánik and Durda (2017, p. 225) also mention this: "This is also confirmed by the authors Vavrečka, Mezulánik and Durda (2017, p. 225), according to which the use of digital marketing, mobile marketing and marketing on social networks is growing. The role of social media is largely underestimated by SMEs and such enterprises have untapped capacity for using social media in their management. (Belás et al., 2021) Among other things, Singha and Munjal (2021) who examine digital trends in hospitality and tourism in India suggest that influencers and online reviews influence technology purchase decisions in travel and tourism.

The main directions of using innovative marketing technologies in the field of tourism services are considered to be: release of new types of tourism products, change in the organization of production and consumption, identification and use of new markets, as well as the use of new equipment and technology (Skare et al. 2023). Modern hotels and chains try to present themselves not only in the global distribution system (GDS), which has become a powerful advertising tool, but also in the alternative distribution system (ADS), which is needed primarily by hotels focused on the business segment. The Global Distribution System (GDS) is also closely integrated with well-known reservation systems such as Booking.com, HRS, Agoda, Travelocity, Expedia, etc. Another group is food and beverage (F&B) inventory management technology. (Barna & Semak, 2020)

The concept of innovative marketing (INMARK) represents businesses' opportunity to establish themselves on the market more successfully than their competitors. (Mura, 2020, p. 56) According authors (Cuevas-Vargas, et al., 2021), marketing innovation showed a considerable impact on a business performance.

2.1 Development of information and communication technologies in tourism

COVID-19 has especially affected those businesses in the travel industry that were not the first adopters of disruptive technologies. Reserves in communication with customers in the travel sector have been confirmed by several research studies. The authors Kukanja, Planinc, and Sikosek (2020) surveyed 574 tourism facilities using a questionnaire and found that there are statistically significant differences in the use of different crisis management procedures between different types of small and medium-sized enterprises during the global coronavirus pandemic COVID-19. Considering the current situation, according to the authors Dey, Vaculčíková and Tučková (2021, p. 218), Travel service providers must invest in modern technologies and ensure the same expansion among employees.

As stated by the authors' collective (Sun et al., 2022), the hotel industry should continuously adapt its products and services based on effective information obtained from customer reviews to activate and revitalize the hotel industry during the epidemic period. The mentioned indicates the fact that the pandemic has changed the way of communication towards target customer segments. Tourism business entities, which concentrated their communication activities in the offline environment, gradually transformed them into the online sphere. The dynamic development of information and communication technologies and online marketing in the tourism industry significantly changes the behaviour of customers (Gavurova et al. 2022). It emerged from the results of research aimed at measuring the visual attention of potential clients when choosing an accommodation facility online, which was carried out by experts from the University of Business in Prague. (Lustigová, Jarolímková & Žufan, 2021, p. 89) A survey of Spanish hotel managers showed that the measures that have a greater impact on the possibilities of recovery are measures in the field of work, especially plans to regulate temporary employment, innovation and differentiation strategies, reorientation to narrower markets and obtaining information from official sources as a guarantee of their security, hotel business. In addition, the government measures that contribute to improving the financial situation of companies can play a significant role in the recovery of hotels (Hidalgo, Martin-Barroso, Nunez-Serrano, Turrion & Velazquez, 2022). Findings from five-star hotels in Egypt indicated that the Egyptian government and chain-managed five-star hotels have implemented a number of initiatives and procedures focused on financial policy, health and hygiene, workforce and training, marketing, domestic tourism, booking flexibility, cancellation policies, community support, holidays and contracts (Salem, Elkhwesky & Ramkissoon, 2022). The results of the analysis of online customer reviews showed that the quality of services during COVID-19 has an impact on the hotel's performance criteria and, consequently, on customer satisfaction. In addition, the results showed that although customers are always looking for hotels with better performance, they are also interested in the quality of related services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Nilashi. et al., 2021). Another study assessed internet users' attention to hospitality companies' Covid-19 messages on social media. For the analysis, 657 messages from the social network Facebook and 754 messages from Twitter were used, which were initiated by the world's eighth largest hotel chains in the monitored period from January to mid-June 2020. The analysis showed that hotels shared five types of messages related to Covid-19 (prevention, reminder, thank you, sacrifices and updates). And it was news related to covid-19 that got more reactions, comments and shares/retweets than other news. (Kwok, Linchi, Lee & Han, 2021).

The usage of marketing communication tools has always been a potent strategy for businesses to increase their performances and profitability in all sectors. (Civelek, Ključnikov, 2021, p. 685) Proper optimization of marketing processes, in terms of impulsive and thought-through purchases too, positively influences the user experience and the satisfaction with the purchase process. (Stefko, Bacik, et. al., 2022)

3. Methods

The main method of data collection was a guided structured interview. In tourism research, the interview method is most useful for gaining a deeper understanding of the topic, where possible or important differences in perception, attitudes, impacts, behaviour (Hillman & Rade, 2018) as well as used practices falling within the field of marketing and communication activities are expected. It is mostly implemented through direct contact between the researcher and the researched person, although nowadays indirect forms are increasingly being used, e.g. by phone or online. Due to the pandemic measures, we decided to implement a controlled structured interview, which we conducted in an indirect electronic form, either by phone or online. The structured interview was based on a standardized structure, the questions were prepared in advance, formulated in the same way and asked to the entire set of participating respondents. The evaluation of the interviews consisted of the

quantification of the obtained data using prepared contingency tables, which were subjected to statistical analysis in the IBM SPSS Statistics program. Descriptive statistics methods were used in data evaluation. The relationships between individual variables were reflected by Pearson's chi-square test (statistical significance was determined at the level: $\alpha= 0.05$) and the contingency coefficient of Cramer's V (Field, 2009). Subsequently, the results were interpreted and concrete suggestions and recommendations were formulated.

3.1 Research file

As part of the research, we conducted 140 controlled structured interviews with managers of selected accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic in the fourth quarter of 2020. The research sample consisted of the following accommodation facilities according to their categorical type: from 55% (N=77) hotels, 35% (N =49) boarding houses, 10% (N=14) from other accommodation facilities. The respondents from the research group came from the Moravian-Silesian Region (39.3%; N=55), South Moravian Region (17.1%; N=24), Olomouc Region (10.0%; N=14), Zlín Region (5.7%; N=8), The main city of Prague (5.0%; N=7), Central Bohemia Region (5.0%; N=7), Vysočiny (4.3%; N=6), Královohradecký Region (3.6%; N=5), South Bohemia Region (2.9%; N=4), Pardubice Region (0.7; N=1), while 9 respondents refused to state the region. The respondents belonged to the group of small and medium-sized business owners, one of the groups significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic operating in the tourism industry. At the same time, the respondents held managerial positions in the business entities in question and were responsible for marketing and communication activities. A random selection was used in the selection of respondents. The research file is not representative because of the total number of hotel facilities in the Czech Republic. The stated representativeness of the research sample in the researching period could not be achieved due to the ongoing measures of the global pandemic of the infectious disease COVID-19, as well as intensive restrictions in the investigated hotel facilities. On the other hand, we may state that the chosen method of structured interviews provided us with a number of interesting findings for research.

4. Results

We present the results of the research in visualized graphs and tables that reflect the individual steps of the implemented statistical analysis with primary data obtained through controlled structured interviews. For the first research question (RQ1), we investigated whether accommodation establishments changed their promotion strategy in 2020. The results show that more than half of accommodation establishments (58.57%; N=82) did not change their strategy, while over a third (34.28%; N=48) was changing its strategy, we did not get an answer from the remaining accommodation facilities (7.14%; N=10) through the managers we asked.

The second research question (RQ2) investigated the main marketing communication tools used by managers to mitigate the effects of the pandemic crisis in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic in 2020. The accommodation facilities in question used the most websites (83.6%; N=117) and social media (68.57%; N=96). From social media, Facebook (76.43%; N=107) and Instagram (39.29%; N=55) were used the most, LinkedIn (2.14%; N=3), Twitter (1.43%; N=2), Messenger were rarely used. (0.71%; N=1). Among the communication tools, the least used were online advertisements (32.86%; N=46), e-mailing (31.43%; N=44), PPC advertising (22.86%; N=32), sales support (16.43; N=23 hotels). Of the accommodation establishments approached, 12.86% (N=18) used other marketing communication tools. It should be noted that for this question respondents could give several answers, and several accommodation establishments used a combination of marketing communication tools.

The outputs related to the third research question (RQ3) reflect the effectiveness of the implemented marketing communication activities in the monitored determinants (website visits, social media visits) during the pandemic crisis in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic in 2020. They showed that, overall, accommodation facilities recorded a higher traffic of social networks (increased in total by 57.1%; N=80 respondents) than websites (49.3%; N=69 respondents). It is also worth noting the fact that, while in the case of the monitored criterion of traffic to social networks, the most respondents indicated an increase in traffic in the range of 16-30% (21.4% of respondents; N=30), in the case of the monitored criterion of website traffic, the most respondents reported an increase in websites to level of 5-15% (18.6% of respondents; N=26). More table no. 1 and table no. 2.

Table 1. **Website traffic**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	it did not increase at all	33	23.6	32.4	32.4
	5% - 15%	26	18.6	25.5	57.8
	16% - 30%	23	16.4	22.5	80.4
	31%-50%	13	9.3	12.7	93.1
	more than 50%	7	5.0	6.9	100.0
	Total	102	72.9	100.0	
Missing	99	38	27.1		
	Total	140	100.0		

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table 2. **Social networks traffic**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	it did not increase at all	24	17.1	23.1	23.1
	5% - 15%	27	19.3	26.0	49.0
	16% - 30%	30	21.4	28.8	77.9
	31%-50%	14	10.0	13.5	91.3
	more than 50%	9	6.4	8.7	100.0
	Total	104	74.3	100.0	
Missing	99	36	25.7		
Total		140	100.0		

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Variables were selected from the obtained data, among which possible dependencies and their degree were determined, which reflected the formulated hypotheses. Below in the tables we present the resulting findings related to the verification of established hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5).

In table no. 3 and table no. 4 show the results of the analysis related to the verification of hypothesis H1. The indicator of Pearson's chi-square test (Table no. 3) is higher than the established statistical significance (p=.078>0.05) as well as the value for Cramer's φ (φ =.341) and Phi (Table no. 4). These facts show that hypothesis H1 was not confirmed and there was no statistically significant relationship

between the change in the promotional strategy of accommodation facilities in the regions with the concentration of the largest cities in the Czech Republic.

Table 3. **Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14,165[a]	8	,078
Likelihood Ratio	16,494	8	,036
Linear-by-Linear Association	,103	1	,749
N of Valid Cases	122		

a. 12 cells (66,7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1,38.

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table 4. **Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,341	,078
	Cramer's V	,341	,078
N of Valid Cases		122	

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table no. 5, table no. 6, and Table no. 7. reflect the results regarding the existence of differences between the use of marketing communication tools for individual types of accommodation facilities. The p-value indicator (p=.189>0.05; p=.358>0.05; p=.157>0.05) in the mentioned tests is not significant. This is because the p-values from the Pearson chi-square test are higher than the statistical significance, which was set at the level: $\alpha= 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between the use of marketing communication tools for individual types of accommodation facilities; thus, hypothesis H2 was not confirmed.

Table 5. **Chi-Square Tests (Type of accommodation - website)**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,329[a]	2	,189
Likelihood Ratio	5,569	2	,062
Linear-by-Linear Association	1,957	1	,162
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 1 cells (16,7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,30.

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table 6. **Chi-Square Tests (Type of accommodation facility - PPC advertising)**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
	2,053[a]	2	,358
	2,113	2	,348
	,464	1	,496
	140		

a. 1 cells (16,7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3,20.

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table 7. **Chi-Square test (Type of accommodation facility - social media)**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,705[a]	2	,157
Likelihood Ratio	3,691	2	,158
Linear-by-Linear Association	2,372	1	,124
N of Valid Cases	140		

a. 1 cells (16,7%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4,40.

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table 8. **Chi-Square tests (Region - social media)**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17,450[a]	9	,042
Likelihood Ratio	18,561	9	,029
Linear-by-Linear Association	,105	1	,746
N of Valid Cases	131		

a. 14 cells (70,0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,31.

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table no. 8 and Table no. 9 show the testing results related to hypothesis H3. By means of the Pearson chi-square test for two independent samples with equality of variance, we tested hypothesis H3 about the difference in the means of the two groups. We used the test to verify whether the difference in averages found from the samples is statistically significant. Considering that the indicators of p values (p=.042<0.05; p=.026<0.05) from Pearson's chi-square test are smaller than the established

significance level, hypothesis H3 was confirmed. It was confirmed that there are differences between the use of social media and other marketing communication tools in accommodation facilities between individual regions of the Czech Republic. They communicated the most via social media in accommodation facilities in Prague, the Central Bohemian Region, the Olomouc Region, Vysočina, South Moravia and the Moravian-Silesian Region. They communicated the least via social media in the South Bohemian region.

Table 9. **Chi-Square tests (Region - others)**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18,919[a]	9	,026
Likelihood Ratio	13,915	9	,125
Linear-by-Linear Association	3,959	1	,047
N of Valid Cases	131		

a. 12 cells (60,0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,12.

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

The statistical analysis presented in Table no. 10 and table no. 11 which related to the testing of hypothesis H4 revealed the following. In table no. 9 is an indicator of p values (p=.000<0.05) from Pearson's chi-square test are smaller than the established level of significance. Through Cramer's V (Cramer's φ), which is based on Pearson's chi-square test, the degree of relationship between nominal quantities was determined. Cramer's φ coefficient ranged from 0 (corresponding to no correlation between variables) to 1 (perfect correlation). The value of statistical significance p for Cramer's φ was the same as in the case of Pearson's chi-square test. Considering the value indicators for Cramer's φ (φ =.0453) and Phi (Table no. 10), the hypothesis H3 was confirmed, that in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic that use social media, social network traffic increased compared to accommodation facilities that did not use this tool of marketing communication.

Table 10. **Chi-Square tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21,306[a]	1	,000		
Continuity Correction[b]	18,275	1	,000		
Likelihood Ratio	17,810	1	,000		
Fisher's Exact Test				,000	,000
Linear-by-Linear Association	21,101	1	,000		
N of Valid Cases	104				

a. 1 cells (25,0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3,23.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table 11. **Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,453	,000
	Cramer's V	,453	,000
N of Valid Cases		104	

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table no. 12 and Table no. 13 reflect the output of the analysis related to hypothesis H5. The formulated assumption that the number of visitors to the websites of hotel facilities in the Czech Republic using websites increased compared to hotel facilities that did not use this marketing communication tool was not confirmed. In table no. 12, the value indicator from Pearson's chi-square test is higher at the level of established statistical significance ($(p=.202>0.05)$ as well as the value for Cramer's φ ($\varphi =.242$).

Table 12. **Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5,963[a]	4	,202
Likelihood Ratio	5,586	4	,232
Linear-by-Linear Association	,172	1	,678
N of Valid Cases	102		

a. 5 cells (50,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is ,14.
Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

Table 13. **Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,242	,202
	Cramer's V	,242	,202
N of Valid Cases		102	

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

In the following table (Table No. 14) we provide an explicit summary of the verification of established hypotheses, where it is clear that H1, H2 and H5 were rejected, while hypotheses H3 and H4 were confirmed. Pearson's chi-square test and Cramer's φ coefficient were used for statistical verification of hypotheses.

Table 14. **Hypotheses Testing Results**

Hypotheses	Outcomes
H1: We believe that the change in the promotional strategy for accommodation facilities occurred in regions where the largest cities in the Czech Republic	Unsupported

are concentrated (Prague, Jihomoravský, Moravskoslezský) than in other regions in the Czech Republic.	
H2: We believe that there are differences between the use of marketing communication tools for individual types of accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic.	Unsupported
H3: We believe that there are differences between the use of marketing communication tools in accommodation facilities between individual regions of the Czech Republic.	Supported
H4: We believe that in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic that use social media, social network traffic increased compared to accommodation facilities that did not use this tool of marketing communication.	Supported
H5: We believe that in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic that use websites, website traffic has increased compared to accommodation facilities that did not use this tool of marketing communication.	Unsupported

Source: Own processing from the conducted research.

5. Discussion

For the first research question (RQ1), we investigated whether accommodation facilities changed their promotional strategy in 2020. A surprising finding was that more than half of the monitored hotels (58.57%; N=82) did not change their promotional strategy at all during the corona crisis. The stated fact can have several explanations: First of all, it is necessary to state that in the Czech Republic, in the field of small and medium-sized businesses, it is still possible to identify subjects of accommodation facilities that only make limited use of marketing communication activities, which is influenced by the low level of marketing communication literacy as well as information literacy. and technical literacy. The second reason may be that the management of the accommodation facilities did not sufficiently try to intensify communication with current or potential customers, as they were primarily solving existential problems. We believe that it was precisely the gaps in professional knowledge in the effective application of marketing communication tools as well as the lack of financial resources that made it difficult for accommodation facilities to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly affected performance as well as existence itself, as pointed out by several studies (Dey, Vaculčíková & Tučková 2021; Sun et al., 2022).

The analysis carried out to answer the second research question (RQ2) showed that, during the pandemic crisis, accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic most often used websites (83.6%; N=117) and social media (68.57%; N) as marketing communication tools to mitigate the consequences of the crisis. This fact is in line with several scientific studies that reflect the dynamics and increase of communication activities during the pandemic crisis from offline to online environment (Singha and Munjala, 2021). An interesting finding was the low use of new marketing communication tools such as online advertising (32.86%; N=46), which was recorded only slightly less than a third of the subjects in question, as well as PPC advertising (22.86%; N=32), which used less as a quarter of the approached accommodation establishments. The research showed that those accommodation establishments that used promotional activities through social media most often communicated via the social network Facebook (76.43%; N=107) and Instagram (39.29%; N=55). The above is reflected in the long-term trend, when social media has become a popular communication platform for building a brand and

awareness of it. At the same time, online marketing communication appears to be one of the effective methods of promotion during the period of limited activity of accommodation facilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Online marketing communication tools provide an opportunity to improve communication strategies and to search for, target, address and communicate with new potential customers, which is stated by several authors in their studies (Glavas & Mathews, 2014, Světlík & Koníček, 2020). When examining the third research question (RQ3), we found that the addressed accommodation facilities had more effective marketing communication activities through social media than through websites. According to the monitoring, social media traffic increased in more than half of the approached accommodation facilities (57.1%; N=80) compared to the increase in website traffic, which reached almost a half of the approached (49.3%; N=69). The stated results correspond to the results of already conducted research studies regarding online marketing in the hotel industry (Dev, Vaculčíková & Tušková 2021, Lustigová, Jarolímková & Žufan 2021, Kwok, Linchi & Lee 2021). At the same time, we suspect that one of the factors that could influence the increased traffic in the social media environment was the creation of more creative communication content distributed in published posts, which more intensively generated more meaningful interactions with the target customer segment. The fact that accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic using websites did not record an increase in their traffic compared to accommodation facilities that did not use them can be interpreted from the point of view of creativity and website production. Světlík and Koníček (2020) draw attention to this in their study, who mention that the main reason why people visit websites is their content. Sites rich in information but poorly designed do not work. The mentioned aspect could thus influence the above-mentioned finding. In this context, it is therefore necessary to consider when designing a website that the website must meet the requirements of "originality, creativity and user-friendliness" (Světlík & Koníček, 2020, p. 107). To achieve the goal of the research, 5 hypotheses were established. To verify the hypotheses, we used the Pearson chi-square test (statistical significance was set at the level: $\alpha = 0.05$) and the contingency coefficient Cramer's V (Cramer's φ), which ranged from 0 (no correlation) to 1 (perfect correlation between variables). Of the five formulated hypotheses, hypotheses H3 and H4 were confirmed, that there are differences between the use of marketing communication tools in accommodation facilities between individual regions of the Czech Republic and that in accommodation facilities in the Czech Republic that use social media, social network traffic has increased compared to accommodation facilities that use this marketing tool. they did not use communication. With this finding, we support the results of previous research, which showed an upward trend in the use of social networks during the pandemic crisis (Lustigová, Jarolímková & Žufan 2021; Kwok, Linchi., Lee & Han, 2021).

This research is not without limitations. First, our study was conducted on a sample of 140 selected accommodation establishments in the Czech Republic, which limits the generalizability of the findings. It should also be noted that the study was based on structured interviews with hotel managers, as well as their willingness to provide data for research. The authors see several perspectives of the future development of the mentioned issue:

- Other stakeholders such as customers, government, industry associations need to be considered, which could enrich and complement the findings of this study.
- An economic analysis of the use of marketing tools with regard to the income of hotel facilities can also be a future direction of research.
- It would be appropriate to carry out the mentioned research in cooperation with other countries, such as the countries of the Visegrad 4, or other EU member countries.
- To carry out similar research on the use of marketing communication tools in the hotel sector in the post-pandemic period, which will allow comparison of results.

7. Conclusion

Tourism recovery is a priority, but the industry must become more sustainable and resilient in the future. Based on the above-presented and clarified results of controlled, structured interviews and subsequent statistical analysis, the following conclusions can be made:

- Marketing communication tools in the hotel industry of the Czech Republic during the COVID-19 pandemic were not used sufficiently in terms of scope and available forms of application. Almost 13% of the monitored accommodation facilities did not use any marketing tools for customer communication. At the same time, more than half of the surveyed hotels did not change their marketing strategy at all during the corona crisis.

- Marketing communication of hotel facilities currently takes place mainly through websites and social networks. However, the most effective communication of accommodation facilities is via social networks, where traffic increases more than on websites.

The authors believe that many hotel owners in the Czech Republic could have had lower financial losses if managers had used more effective marketing and communication tools in communicating with current and potential customers during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, as effective marketing communication increases the competition's ability and position companies in the tourism industry and also contributes to the development of the region.

Therefore, the authors recommend professional associations operating in the Czech Republic's tourism, hotel, and gastronomy sectors to organize training and lectures for members on the importance and possibilities of marketing tools for communication with customers.

The authors do not claim to have scientifically exhausted the mentioned issue. Still, they are convinced that the given contribution has contributed to existing knowledge about how hoteliers responded to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A limitation of the research is its research sample, which was limited precisely because of the difficult conditions caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The authors plan to continue the research in the future.

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