

SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG CZECH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DURING THE TRAVEL PROCESS

Lucie Sara Zavodna
Jan Zavodny Pospisil

Review

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Abstract

Purpose – The paper aims to determine how students, ranking among one of the important tourism market segments, use social media during the overall travel process, as well as to explore the possible impact of cultural differences on the use of social media during the students' travel process.

Design, methodology, approach – A structured questionnaire was employed for the quantitative research focusing on the use of social media during the three different phases of the travel process—pre-travel, on-travel, and post-travel. The data were collected by means of an online survey via Google Drive, and descriptive statistics was used to interpret the acquired data.

Findings – The research offers an important insight into the use of social media among students. It shows what drives Czech students to use social media during the three phases of the travel process, and what the main reason is for social media use. Interestingly, 54% of students make use of social media during the travel process, because they want to get other people's opinions. Research has shown that the most popular social media site among traveling students was Facebook (82%), followed by Instagram (56%) and YouTube (35%). The research also showed that despite the abundant use of social media by students, conventional sources of information were still important, too. Contrary to theoretical assumptions, the research did not prove that cultural differences fundamentally influenced the use of social media among Czech and Croatian students.

Originality of the research – The results are useful for marketing professionals as the research yields highly valuable data on social media use by a particular group of Czech students. At the same time, the results are an important extension of the current theory on the use of social media during the travel process.

Keywords social media, travel process, students, cultural dimensions, tourism market

INTRODUCTION

The recent worldwide increase in the use of social media has been significantly changing the means of communication. The changes occur in social and marketing communication. Thanks to the use of social media, professionals from various market branches have ideal opportunities to more effectively win, satisfy, and maintain their customers. This holds true also in tourism, as the users of social media render highly valuable data on their behavior to marketing professionals.

It has been established that the wide use of the Internet and social media has been changing people's everyday life, as well as their travel experience. Social networks are frequent tools among travelers to share their experience online on-travel and post-travel.

They may also obtain recommendations from tourists with personal experience about the destination in question (Lee, Reid and Kim, 2014).

The role of social media in different areas has been growing, including tourism. In order to use the media actively in terms of commercial marketing needs, it is vital to know the media users' behavior. Despite a wide range of studies in the field, there are still gaps in the knowledge of specific areas or nations. Therefore, we attempted to replicate the research according to Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015), whose aim was to analyze Croatian students' use of social media before, during and after traveling, and to highlight the dimensions driving the students' use of social media during each of the phases. The aim of our article is to verify the conclusions of the above-mentioned paper on a sample of Czech respondents, as well as to expand the information on the particularities of social media use in the Czech Republic. This paper also focuses on the ways cultural differences may affect social media use among the students.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The tourists' use of social media may be claimed to be, in principal, identical to the behavior of daily social media users. According to Wesler et al. (2007), each role of a social media user is a combination of certain sets of behavioral, meaningful, and structural attributes that form the social structural relations in the online world. Taking the generic approach to social media, we recognize three basic user roles—information seeker, self-presenter, and content-creator (Bechmann and Lomborg, 2012). Despite this classification of basic roles predominantly reflecting research of social media such as Facebook or Twitter, we may assume that in principle these roles will apply similarly to the use of social media in tourism (Mkono and Tribe, 2016). Taking the general view on user behavior on social networks, we may determine six different roles or personal types of behavior. According to Li (2007), they are creators, critics, collectors, joiners, spectators, and inactives.

The previous research implies that social media satisfies different types of users and their needs (Mkono and Tribe, 2016). When applying this knowledge to the domain of tourism, we may observe users via the prism of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which, in relation to the use of the Internet and social media, assumes that users use such social media in order to satisfy their needs and achieve gratification (Quan-Haase and Young, 2010). This is analogous to the behavior of tourists on social networks and their attitude to social media (Mkono and Tribe, 2016).

Within social networks, it is the case of user-generated content. This content is considered to be a more reliable source of information than other online sources, namely due to its authenticity (Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). Social networks are thus becoming strong marketing-communication tools for companies not just in the area of tourism (Nam, Manchanda, and Chintagunta, 2010).

The use of social media in connection with the travel process is discussed in terms of a three-phase view of a tourist's behavior—pre-travel, on-travel, and post-travel (Choe, Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017). For example, during the pre-travel phase, tourists may use

social media to identify and plan their journey. During the on-travel phase, tourists may use social media mostly as tools for seeking relevant information required for the decision-making processes on-travel (Gretzel et al., 2006). At the same time, tourists use social media to communicate with their friends and family in order to share their experiences. During the post-travel phase, tourists may use social media in order to re-experience the trip or provide useful tips to others. Indeed, this is one of the numerous possible and probable descriptions of scenarios of how travelers may use social media during the pre-travel, on-travel, and post-travel phase.

There are a number of studies that deal with tourist behavior on social media, as well as the use of social media during all phases of the travel process (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Kang and Schuett, 2013). Despite these aspects being fairly well covered, there are still gaps in the published research regarding knowledge of the behavior of specific groups of tourists. And if the behavior of a particular group is defined, it lacks a local focus. This is the case for the tourist segment constituted by students. This type of research was carried out by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015), who mapped the behavior of student travelers in relation to social media in Croatia. The authors themselves claimed that their research was local, and it needed to be replicated in other socio-cultural settings (Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb, 2015).

There is also a strong need to anchor the use of social networks by students who belong to Generation Y. There exists a wide range of literature on the issue of Generation Y, starting with the Generational concept (e.g., Mannheim, 1952; Howe and Strauss, 2000; Huntley, 2006), therefore it's not necessary to make new contributions to this theory. But what is important is to position the students who were surveyed within this theory. As a result, Generation Y must be briefly described.

According to a wide range of theorists in the field, such as Howe and Strauss (2000), Huntley (2006), and Fields et al. (2008), it's possible to describe the basic characteristics of the aforementioned generation. Those authors describe members of Generation Y as independent individuals who focus on brands, friends, fun, and digital culture. But even though they want to be independent, they tend to collaborate in teams, and they are also strongly influenced by friends and peers. They find themselves to be special and different, and safety is one of the most important values for them. As was mentioned by the United Nations (2005, p. 2), "...young people today are different from any of the previous generations of youth."

These differences are also visible in the field of tourist behavior. One of the older but often-quoted studies conducted by the World Youth Student and Educational Travel Confederation (WYSETC) investigated over 8,500 Generation Y travelers. According to this study, Generation Y tourists travel more often, want to explore more destinations, are able to spend more money on travel, and want to maximize their enjoyment. Furthermore, they do most of their booking through the Internet, and use the Internet during the travel process. (Richards, 2007)

With respect to our research, it's also necessary to mention the fact that the members of Generation Y are also considered to be Digital Natives (Prensky, 2006). They were born into the Information Age, so they have a completely different approach to digital

technologies than any previous generation. As Pendergast (2010) states, Digital Natives are characterized as operating at twitch speed, employing random rather than linear access, preferring graphics to text, preferring to play rather than to work, needing to be connected in order not to stand alone, and getting more screen time (TV, computer) than fresh air.

The last statement can be quite well-illustrated by the research that took place in Australia. According to Thomson and De Bortoli (2007), 97% of Australian Generation Y students have access to computers at home, including 82% of indigenous students. In addition, 74% of students use the Internet frequently as a tool for finding information, and almost 70% for communication.

This level of Internet usage also leads to adequate use of social networks. Based on the previous research, regarding social media, we may assume that Generation Y students will behave similarly on social networks as travelers during the travel process as they do in everyday life. Zavodny-Pospisil and Zavodna (2014) recently investigated how much time Czech students spend on social networks. The research has revealed that regardless of the social networks used, a high number of users (35%) spent less than an hour a day using their favorite social network. A large group of users (31%) spent 1-2 hours a day on social networks. About 23% of the respondents confessed to an extensive use of social networks in the range of 2-4 hours a day. The remaining 11% of the respondents spent 4 or more hours of their day using social networks (Zavodny-Pospisil and Zavodna, 2014).

For the needs of tourism, it is important to understand the elementary models of social media use during the overall travel experience. It is crucial to determine the marketing targets of organizations in order to achieve more effective marketing and communication strategies (Choe, Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017). We already know how students as tourists behave on social networks in general, and how specifically Croatian students as tourists behave on social networks. This article aims to answer how Czech students use social media during their travel process.

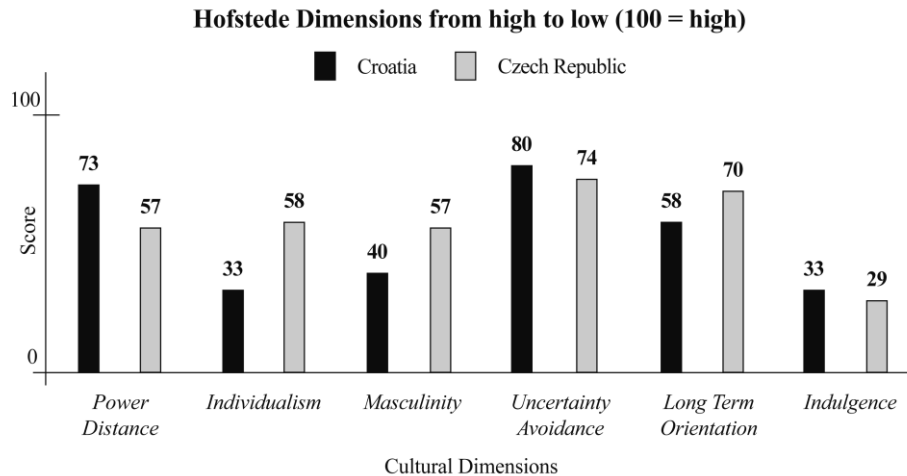
1.1. Cultural Differences Involved

Even though the main traits of Generation Y will be similar worldwide, there is a need to take into account the cultural differences that may affect social media use and touristic behavior. An interesting contribution to the power of cross-cultural differences as a driving force in the process of motivations for using social network sites was made by Kim et al. (2011). The authors found significant differences in the approach to the social sites influenced by the culture of the users. However, the main issue of this study lies in the fact that students from the USA and South Korea were examined. There could be no doubt that those cultures are different in many ways.

On the other hand, from a distant perspective the Czech Republic and Croatia may seem to be very similar. As former "Eastern Bloc" countries, they have more significant similarities than differences in their history, economy, size, etc. But a precise approach must be applied to confirm or refute this assumption. With respect to the main focus of the paper, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory can be utilized. According to Hofstede (2001), six different cultural values can be taken into account—power distance,

individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. Graph 1 below shows the main values valid for both the Czech Republic and Croatia.

Graph 1: Croatia compared to the Czech Republic



Source: Geert-Hofstede country scores, Geert Hofstede Web Site. (2012). Retrieved September 28, 2017, from <http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>.

The data show that the very first assumption of similarity between these countries is not so significant. Even though there are some similarities, the main difference is in the level of individualism/collectivism in each country. With 33 points, Croatia is considered to be a collectivistic country, whereas 58 points for the Czech Republic makes it an individualistic country.

Collectivistic cultures put emphasis on interdependence among people, whereas individualistic cultures consider themselves to be independent (Triandis, 2001). This difference in cultures is essential, especially in the fields of communication and social media use. According to Aaker & Maheswaran (1997), Moon & Franke (2000), and Srite & Karahanna (2006), cultural differences were very often examined through the comparison of these prototype cultures. Therefore, there is a question of whether there are any differences in how people use social media sites and, of course, whether their cultural differences influence their behavior.

2. METHODOLOGY

To determine how and why students use social media during the overall travel process, we adopted the scale developed by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015). According to their methodology, we designed a structured online questionnaire via Google Drive. In this way, we aimed to compare their findings with those obtained from Czech students. The questionnaire was referred to during university lectures and seminars, and made public

on the social networks of Palacký University in Olomouc, the Czech Republic. It is not possible to quantify how many students knew about the questionnaire, but 204 respondents completed it. The data were collected in March 2017. At the end of March 2017, the questionnaire was closed, and the data were downloaded from Google Drive into a computer, and were processed using MS Excel and online Free Statistics Software.

In contrast to the methodology in Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015), we made all questions compulsory, so that for all questions we obtained $N=204$. The questionnaire included socio-demographic questions about the respondents, and twenty-two statements on social media use during the travel process. There were also additional questions, which differed from the original paper by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015). They focused on the relevancy of information resources and the specific use of social media, and their aim was to get more detailed information about social media use.

For the 22 original statements, we used a Likert-type scale to ask about the frequency with which respondents used social media for a specific travel item (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=often, 4=always). Afterwards, according to the chosen methodology, the questions were split into the three phases of the travel process: a) Before travel (pre-travel), b) During travel (on-travel), and c) After travel (post-travel). Also, within these phases, the questionnaire items were assigned to specific groups (dimensions) based on factors previously identified by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015).

For first phase of the travel process, there were two dimensions, called "Search for Options" and "Information and Comparison". For the second phase, dimensions named "Sociability" and "Information" were set, and for the last phase, one dimension, named "Sociability", was used. The dimensions were named with respect to the meaningful composition of the items contained therein. The final inclusion of questions within the specific travel phases and dimensions is shown in Tables 2-4. For the description, we applied descriptive statistics with mean values and standard deviations.

As there was an assumption that the approach to the use of social media by Czech and Croatian students may vary because of above-mentioned cultural differences, we asked the following research question in order to verify this assumption.

The Research Question: Are there any differences between Czech and Croatian students in the identified reasons for using social media?

Our data collection style was not entirely comparable to the previous study. As well there was no raw data available from the original research. That is why we decided not to undertake t-test for independent samples. Thus, there can't be specified whether there exist statistically significant differences between the results of the two pieces of research. Examined differences among the results of the two studies describe the average values differences and cannot be generalized.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Profile of the respondents

In total, there were 204 respondents who completed the questionnaire used for the analysis. Women represented 65% (134) of the respondents. Regarding the distribution of the respondents' ages, 15 were under 20 years old (7%), 76% (157) were 21-22 years old, 12% (25) were 23-25 years old, and the rest (3%) were older than 26 years of age. All the respondents claimed to be full-time university students. Data regarding the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: **Profile of respondents** [$n=204$]

Characteristic	Sample profile
Gender	Female 65% / Male 35%
Age group	Majority formed one group: 21–22 years (76%)
Education level	Full-time university students
Frequency of travel	Once a year (9%) / Twice a year (61%) / More than twice a year (28%) / Did not travel (1%)
Preferred social medium	Facebook (82%) / Instagram (56%) / YouTube (35%) / TripAdvisor (5%) / Twitter (2%)

Source: Authors

As for the frequency of travel, the results revealed that 9% (19) of respondents traveled once a year, 61% (125) twice a year, 28% (58) more than twice a year, and 1% (2) did not travel, other than for one-night overnight stays. In agreement with the results of the original article by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015), our research shows that Facebook was the most popular social medium among 82% of the respondents. The respondents used it together with Instagram (56%) and YouTube (35%). Some also voted for TripAdvisor (5%) and Twitter (2%).

3.2. Behavioral profile of the respondents

The original article by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015) did not take interest in the reliability of the information the respondents obtained from social media. As the content on social media is user-created, the information may be distorted or even untrue. Therefore, we also asked the respondents whether they verified the information they obtained on social networks. While 62% of the respondents claimed they verified the information elsewhere, 38% of them did not do so. Regarding the credibility of information respondents receive through social media, most respondents (84%) considered such information to be partially trustworthy, while 10% did not trust it. Only 6% of the respondents trusted unconditionally the information on social networks.

According to our results, the respondents (54%) make use of social media during the travel process because they want to get other people's opinions. Other reasons are "Get up-to-date information" (25%) and "Otherwise I don't get enough information" (9%).

The other reasons, “Get reliable information”, “Simple use”, and “Meet new people from the area”, did not exceed 5%.

YouTube ranks among the most recent social media in the Czech Republic. This medium is used by many young people who travel a lot and upload their travel videos there. We were thus also interested whether YouTubers influenced the choice of destination or spending leisure time at the destination by means of their videos. About 35% (72) of the respondents identified YouTube as a social medium they used during one of the phases of the travel process. Out of these, 41 (20%) respondents let themselves be inspired by videos on YouTube when choosing a destination, and 15 (7%) respondents watched videos about the destination directly on site. This was driven by the desire to find out more about the sights to see (10), shopping options (8), and curiosity about the experiences of other travelers (3).

3.3. Detailed descriptive statistics of the three phases of the travel process

Tables 2, 3, and 4 show detailed descriptive statistics of the twenty-two statements on social media use during the travel process among Czech university students. Each of the tables is devoted to a specific phase of the travel process, where the questionnaire items are sorted according to the previously mentioned dimensions. For each answer, mean values and standard deviations are shown.

During the pre-travel phase (see Table 2), according to the mean values, Czech students use social media mostly to “Search for comments and reviews about tourism supply” (mean = 3.25) and to “Search for information about destinations” (mean = 3.19). Also, an important reason for using social media seems to be the need to search for “information about affordable tourism supply” (mean = 2.98) and “ideas about the travel” (mean = 2.98). One item had a mean score below the average, which was 2.5 on the four-point Likert-type scale: “Comparison of tourism supply” (mean = 2.42).

Table 2: Detailed descriptive statistics of the first phase of the travel process: pre-travel

No.	Items Used in the Questionnaire	Dimension	Mean	SD
1.	Search for comments and reviews about destinations	<i>“Search for Opinions”</i>	2.77	0.595
2.	Search for comments and reviews about tourism supply		3.25	0.750
3.	Search for opinions about the specific tourism supply or travel		2.67	0.796
4.	Comparison of destinations	<i>“Information and Comparison”</i>	3.05	0.691
5.	Comparison of tourism supply		2.42	0.766
6.	Search for affordable tourism supply		2.98	0.834
7.	Search for ideas about the travel		2.98	0.750
8.	Search for information about destinations		3.19	0.717
9.	Search for information about tourism supply	2.53	0.750	
Valid N			204	

Source: Created by Authors using Free Statistics Software (v1.2.1) and MS Excel

Analogous to the original research by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015), on-travel (see Table 3), Czech students used social media mostly to “Stay in touch with friends and acquaintances” (mean = 3.18). The second most important reason was “Personal promotion” (mean = 2.72) and the frequently related reason of “Sharing photos and videos about the travel” (mean = 2.63). The least decisive reason in this category was “Share opinions and impressions” (mean = 2.14). As for marketing in tourism, it is important to note that there is a lower emphasis on the use of social media as a means for “Exchange of information about the travel” (mean = 2.24).

Table 3: Detailed descriptive statistics of the second phase of the travel process: on-travel

No.	Items Used in the Questionnaire	Dimension	Mean	SD
10.	Leisure purposes	<i>“Sociability”</i>	2.26	0.822
11.	Personal promotion		2.72	1.104
12.	Share opinions and impressions		2.14	0.811
13.	Share photos and videos about the travel		2.63	0.733
14.	Stay in touch with friends and acquaintances		3.18	0.868
15.	Exchange of information about the travel	<i>“Information”</i>	2.24	0.963
16.	Get additional information about the travel		2.40	0.744
Valid N			204	

Source: Created by Authors using Free Statistics Software (v1.2.1) and MS Excel

During the post-travel phase (see Table 4), for Czech students, the dominant drive to use social media is to “Share photos or videos about the travel” (mean = 2.72). In terms of marketing in tourism, the post-travel phase is important as students often use social media to “Share opinions and impressions about the travel” (mean = 2.19). Contrary to the findings by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015), Czech students use social media more to “Develop relationships with other travelers” (mean = 2.15). Interestingly, during the post-travel phase, Czech students use social media much more for “Personal promotion” (mean = 1.79). As mentioned above, this reason is significant especially during the on-travel phase.

Table 4: Detailed descriptive statistics of the third phase of the travel process: post-travel

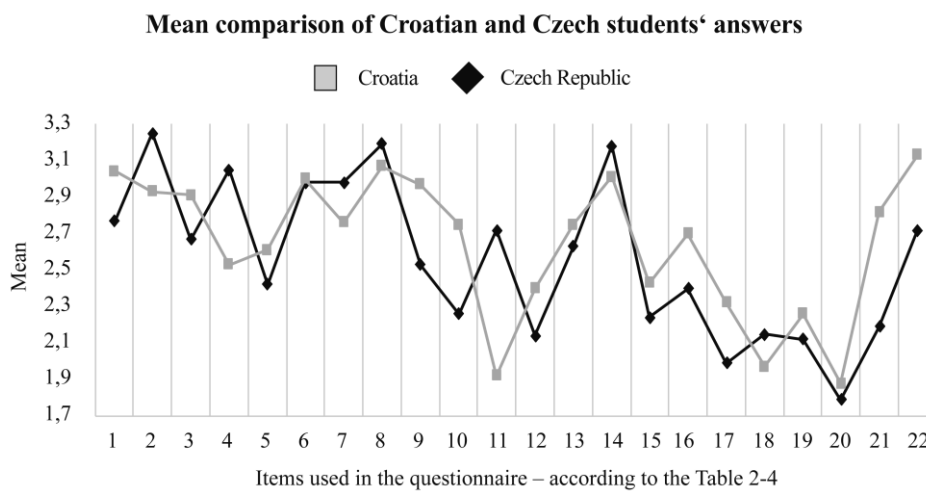
No.	Items Used in the Questionnaire	Dimension	Mean	SD
17.	Compare opinions and impressions about the travel	<i>“Sociability”</i>	1.99	1.017
18.	Develop relationships with other travelers		2.15	0.897
19.	Evaluate suppliers or destinations		2.12	0.965
20.	Personal promotion		1.79	0.874
21.	Share opinions and impressions about the travel		2.19	0.860
22.	Share photos or videos about the travel		2.72	0.837
Valid N			204	

Source: Created by Authors using Free Statistics Software (v1.2.1) and MS Excel

3.4. Comparison of the results of the two research studies

In examining the research question, the results showing reasons for using social media and how they differ between the two cultures were compared. Despite the fact that the resulting average values of both studies do not differ much in general, some of the particular indicator's average values, are relatively different from the original research by Nemeč Rudež and Vodeb (2015). Such values may reflect a certain shift in the attitudes and uses of social media among students during the three phases of the travel process (see Graph 2).

Graph 2: Croatia compared to the Czech Republic



Source: Created by Authors using MS Excel

During the first, pre-travel phase, Croatian students use social media predominantly to “Search for information about the destination”. Czech students also search for information, but in contrast to their Croatian counterparts, it is more important for Czech students to “Search for comments and reviews about tourism supply”. According to the results, we assume that a model Czech tourist—student—first searches for inspiration for traveling on social media, and subsequently searches for information about the given destination. Whereas a Croatian tourist—student—already has a certain idea about the destination when s/he searches for the information on social media.

There are even more interesting result differences within the on-travel phase, namely in the item “Personal promotion”. Both Czech and Croatian students ranked the item of “Stay in touch with friends and acquaintances” as the first reason for the use of social media. However, while Croatian students do so because of “Leisure purposes” and “Sharing photos and videos about the travel”, Czech students do so to show off to their friends in order to improve their “Personal promotion”.

Comparing the data from both studies, differences in average values among the student's tourist behavior, are also evident during the post-travel phase, even though they are minor. Let us mention the different results values in the item "Compare opinions and impressions about travel", which is lower for Czech students than for the Croatian ones. On the other hand, Czech students use social media during the post-travel phase to "Develop relationships with other travelers". Also, there are no differences in resulting values of the two nationalities of students in some important categories, such as "Share photos or videos about travel".

3.5. Results comparison in the point of view of the Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

The differences in the research results also point to the possible impact of cultural differences on the behavior of social media users (Kim et al., 2011). This is also important in accordance with the research question that focused on possible differences in the identified reasons for using social media between Czech and Croatian students. Comparing the answers of Czech and Croatian students shows that there is always one item that is different between the two nationalities during each of the three travel process phases (see Graph 2). During the pre-travel phase, the resulting average values for a reason "Comparison of destinations" differs the most, it is more important to Czech students. During the on-travel phase, the previously mentioned "Personal promotion" plays an important role, which again is more important to Czech students. During the post-travel phase, the resulting average values for a reason "Share opinions and impressions about the travel" differs the most between Czech and Croatian students, and in this case, it is more important to Croatian students. But there is still a question of whether those differences in the average values are caused by the influence of culture.

In line with Hofstede's theory, one major difference in value orientation was identified between the Czech Republic and Croatia, which was individualism/collectivism. Czech culture is regarded as individualistic, whereas Croatian culture is considered to be collectivistic. According to Gudykunst & Nishida (1986), the difference in this value orientation in cultures affects the communication styles of individuals. Consequently, it can affect how individuals perceive and use social media.

In fact, as our research showed, among the differences found, the effect of different value orientation is poorly visible. First, it is necessary to mention the fact that the above-mentioned differences among the average values are relatively small regarding the overall approach to the use of social media. Even though there were some differences observed (see above), none of them can be regarded as a result of differences in one value orientation. The only reason (item) for the use of social media that can be associated with the influence of an individualistic culture—"Personal promotion"—is, with respect to the theory, stronger for Czech students during the on-travel phase. But during the post-travel phase, the value of the measured item is practically identical for both groups of students, which precludes the presumption of individualistic/collectivistic cultural influence.

The other differences in average values do not show up on any differences in the way students from the investigated countries use social media sites, or in the types of media, they used before, during, and after the travel process. The overall pattern of student behavior remains nearly the same. They differ slightly only in some specific items.

Therefore, concerning the limitations given by the methodology, as an answer to the research question, it can be stated that there are some interesting, but marginal, differences in the way the students use social media during their travel process. The overall pattern of behavior remained the almost same, and so the differences are not likely to be influenced by the divergent cultural values.

3.6. Limitations of the research

Analogous to Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015), our research is also limited by a certain local character, as the research was carried out in the Czech Republic and the respondents were Czech university students. The national tourist culture greatly influences their behavior throughout the entire travel process (Seddighi et al., 2001) and their approach to searching for information (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010), regardless of the specific segment of tourists. However, we built on the appeal of Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015) to widen their original research, we supplemented more theory, and we expanded the mosaic on the knowledge of the behavior of different groups of tourists.

A clear limitation of the research is the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. The results of the research implemented with students may in no way render a general overview of the behavior of all groups of tourists in their use of social media when traveling.

There is also limitation given by slightly different approaches to the process of data collecting, respectively the absence of raw data from original research. Because the t-test for independent samples hasn't been undertaken, there is not possible to identify whether there exist statistically significant differences between the results of the two pieces of research nor the results cannot be generalized.

3.7. Recommendations for further research

The limitation in the form of the local focus on a relatively narrow segment of tourists—students in the Czech Republic—calls for further research among students in other countries. Considering the requirements for obtaining the best possible information about the desires and needs of consumer by marketing specialists in the tourist industry, it is vital to duly identify the behavior of other important consumer segments.

4. CONCLUSION

The article aimed to determine how students—one of the important segments of the tourism market—use social media during the travel process. The study also aimed to verify the conclusions of Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015) through research carried out with Czech respondents, and to enlarge the information on the specific uses of social media during the travel process.

The research results have revealed that Czech students most often used social media during the pre-travel phase. Most frequently, they used social media as sources of information about the destination, offer of services, and other touristic options at the destinations. In this respect, Czech students were more active than their Croatian counterparts, who used social media during the pre-travel phase as a source of opinion, based on which they formed an idea about the destination (Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb, 2015).

The students' behavior or their relationship with social media in the course of their travels was found to be similar in this study to the results found by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015). Still, an interesting difference was found in the use of social media during the travel process. In contrast to the results found by Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb (2015) and Pempek et al. (2009), Czech students were found to use social media during the travel process for "Personal promotion".

The research yielded interesting results about the question of social media use during the post-travel phase. While Croatian students used social media during the post-travel phase mostly to "Compare opinions and impressions about the travel" (Nemeč Rudez and Vodeb, 2015), Czech students developed relationships with other travelers during this phase by means of social media.

Our research has revealed that despite the fact that, in general, Czech and Croatian students used social media in a similar manner (this also applies to the general knowledge of tourist behavior on social networks), their behavior may slightly differ in terms of the given dimensions. This knowledge is decisive for marketing specialists active in the international market.

In addition, according to our research results, there isn't a strong influence of distinct cultural values; it's more about the differences in overall consumer attitudes, desires, and needs. The results highlight the importance of the socio-demographic factors of different tourist segments, and imply the necessity of further studies focusing on the socio-demographic indicators of the selected segments.

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Lucie Sara Zavodna, PhD, Assistant Professor
University of Economics, Prague
Faculty of management, Department of management
Jarosovska 1117/II, Jindrichuv Hradec, Czech Republic
Phone: +420 774 844 618
E-mail: lucie.zavodna@gmail.com

Jan Zavodny Pospisil, PhD, Assistant Professor (Corresponding Author)
College of Polytechnics Jihlava
Department of Economic Studies
Tolsteho 16, Jihlava, Czech Republic
E-mail: jan.zavodnypospisil@vspj.cz

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