

PRODUCTIVITY OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE: EXPLANATORY RESEARCH ABOUT BASIC STRATEGIES IN TOUR COMPANIES

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Abstract

The research work analyzes effectiveness and efficiency of the customer service in tour companies. The basic strategies and solutions to improve the productivity of the service are given by examples based on SERVQUAL model. As a result, this study argued that there is a considerable impact of the service quality on tourist satisfaction, and therefore service quality plays a significant role in tourism by increasing the level of tourist satisfaction.

Key words: Customer service, travel agency, service quality, efficiency, customer satisfaction, SERVQUAL, social media

1.Introduction

Service quality in the hospitality industry becomes one of the most essential factors for gaining sustainable competitive advantage and customer's confidence in the highly competitive marketplace[1-P.195]. Providing great customer service can generate more marketing and sales opportunities. Therefore, meeting customer's satisfaction is paramount to keep business growing successfully. Recent theoretical developments have revealed that customers are satisfied if the company meet customer expectations. It is important to set the right level of expectations. If expectations are set too low, it might satisfy those who buy but fail to attract new customers. If expectations are raised too high, buyers might be disappointed[2].

In today's global economy, company has to consider customers more than ever. Satisfying customers is one of the most important keys for company's success. Increased competition in the tourism sector brings more pressure for the companies to win and keep customers. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are the goal for business to success[3].

This research project will provide basic strategies to achieve productivity of the service in tour companies.

2. Problem statement

There are many challenges that tour companies face. One of the biggest concerns for a travel agent is to establish and maintain a reliable online booking and website. Only having your own website is not sufficient to help you be visible in such demanding competitive area. Your website shows your online presence, however, without responsive website, it is difficult to deal with bookings and answer your clients' questions efficiently. For example, there are more than 420 tour companies in Uzbekistan. But only 100 of them are active in terms of online[4].

2.1 Lack of information on social media

The main practical problem that confronts us is advertisement on social media. Tour companies make advertisement on social media but they don't include all information that customers require. For example, you can not see fee of tour package on advertisement. In order to find out fee of tour package, customers should send application and tour operator will connect with them after couple of hours or days which makes customers furious.

2.2 Targeting on social media

A well-known problem with tour company is that it does not take into account the posts on social media platform. For example, tour companies put posts about different tours and tour packages especially on Instagram, but number of viewers are very few. Tour companies don't hire specialists or targetologists to make advertising more attractive on social media. As a result, tour companies can't be famous or can't sell their packages to the audience.

3. Preliminary literature review

Other previous studies shows primarily service quality and customer satisfaction. Only a few studies have shown efficiency and effectiveness of the service that are also important in order to increase customers and gain loyalty. However, limited progress has been made on applying basic strategies to improve productivity of the customer service in tour companies.

Parasuraman et al.,(1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality including 22 items in five dimensions: reliability, tangible, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. These dimension have specific service characteristic link to the expectation of customers. The SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1986) scale was basically developed for the service marketing environment first and then extended to other service sectors.[8]. Several researches have confirmed that SERVQUAL instrument is applicable in tourism industry and hence it is used in this research to measure service quality[9-P.343],[10-P.130].

In addition, there have been studies by researchers such as Jung and Hong(2008) who have studied performance in terms of factors such as customer satisfaction,

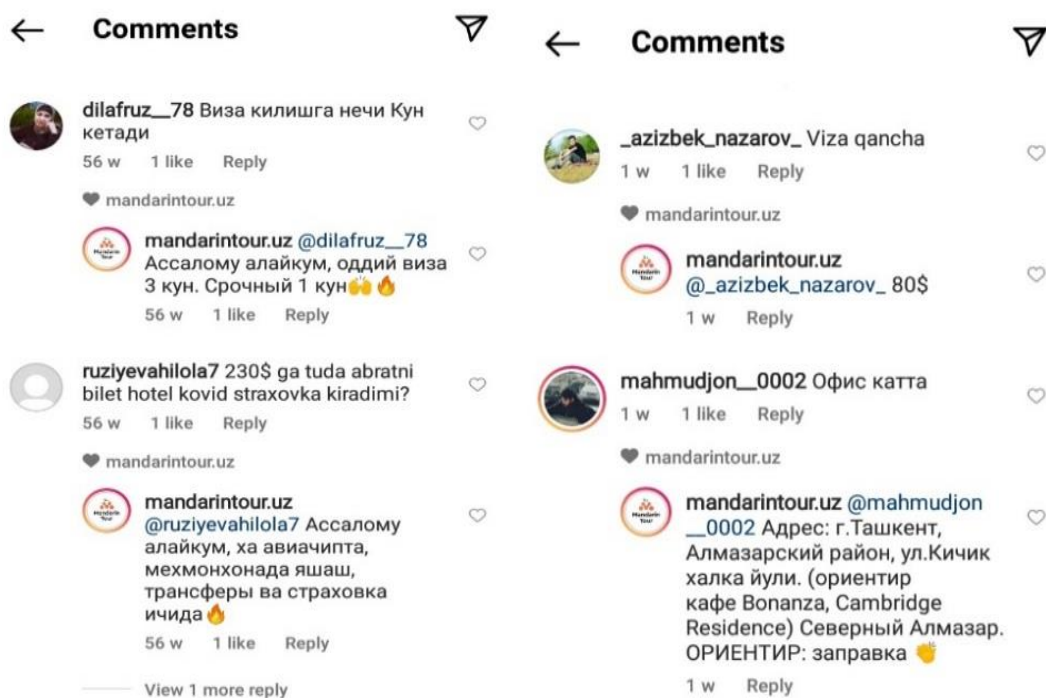
employee morale, productivity, defective rate, warranty claim and cost of quality[11-P.795].

Previous research has investigated mostly destination attractions, customer loyalty, customer expectations and service quality. However, when comparing our results to those of older studies, this research work will focus on efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

4. Discussion

The role of social media is important for tour companies which helps to advertise their product. Tour companies offer services to their customers through responding to comments and direct messages. On Instagram platform, we assessed around 6 tour companies (Mandarin Tour, Asialuxe Travel, Club Travel, Global Green Tour, Central Tour and Tourist.uz) in Uzbekistan. Instagram is specifically being used extensively in the area of tourism[12]. Direct messages have been sent in order to analyze how and during what time they respond.

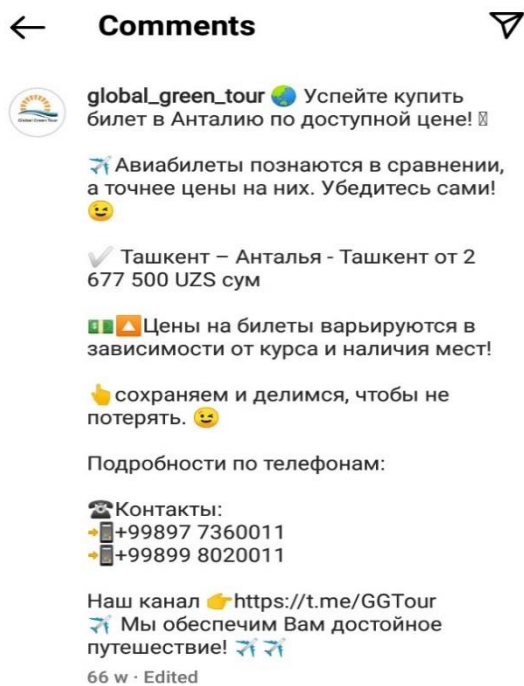
According to the data that has been gathered, 70% of them respond to comments while 30% didn't reply at all. These tour companies were analyzed in terms of Instagram and as a consequence, the following cases were noted:

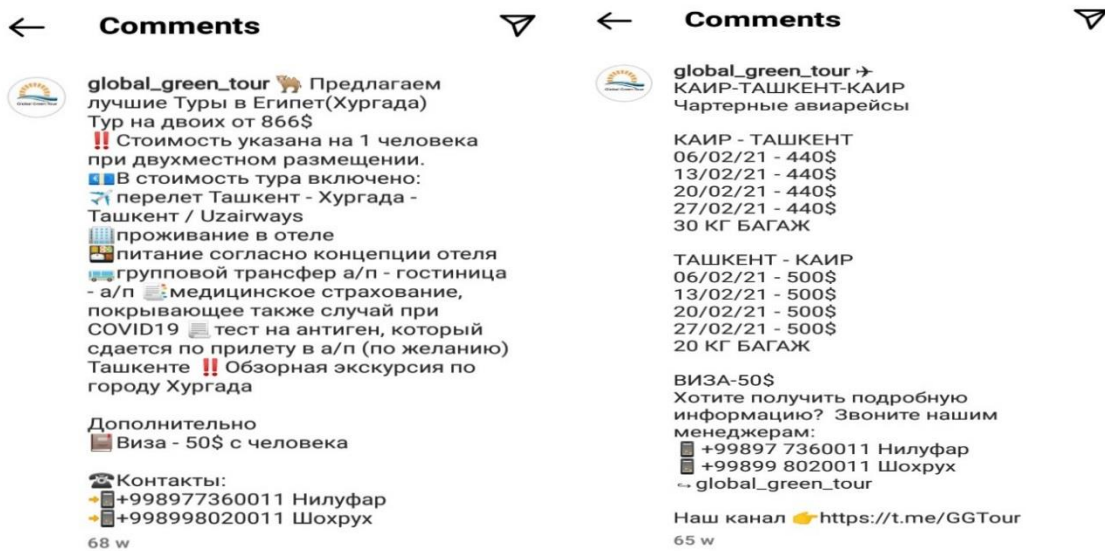




Appendix 1. Mandarin Tour

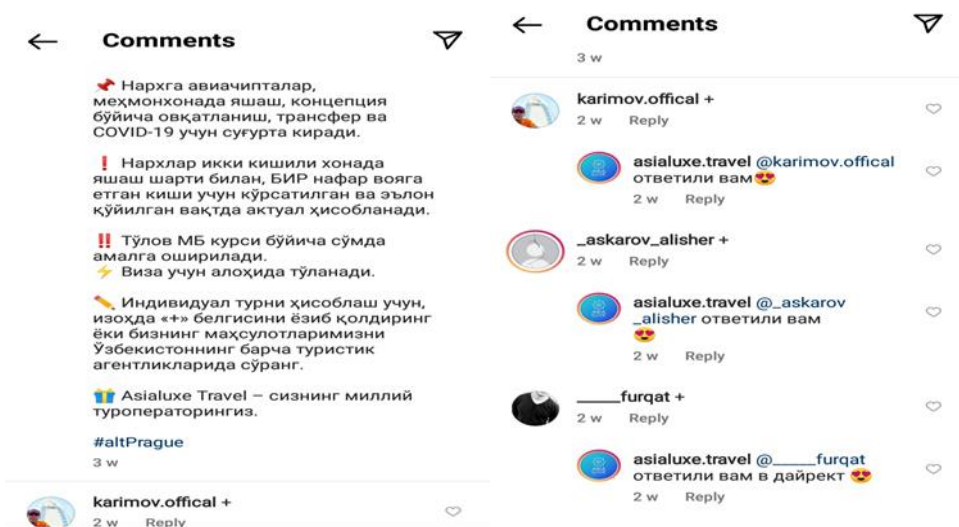
According to the data that has been gathered, Mandarin tour has the most followers and many posts to attract audience. They reply to the questions of customers immediately and also gives required information. 10 clients of Mandarin tour asked questions about the tour package and were answered their questions on time.

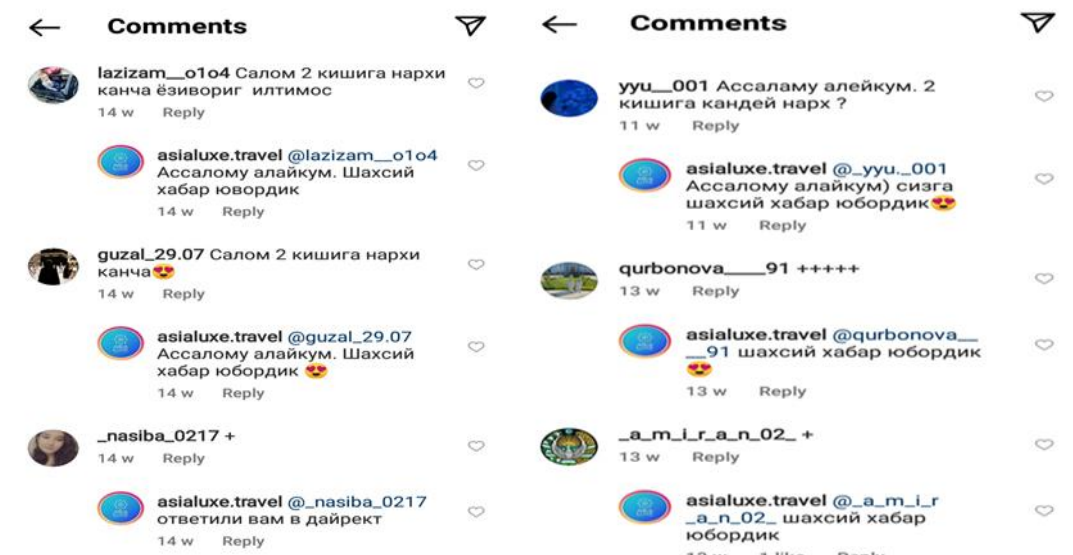




Appendix 2. Global Green Tour

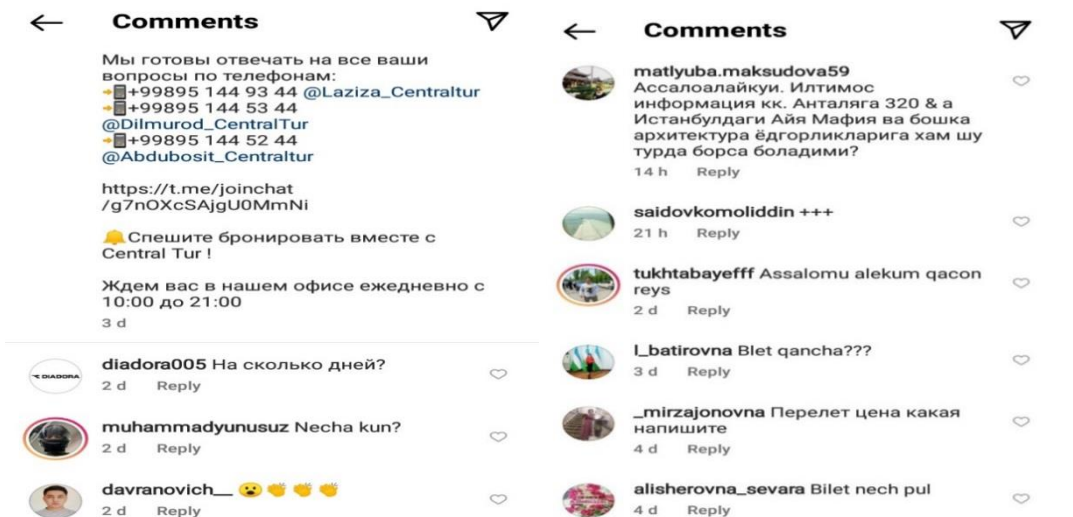
Global Green Tour has the fewest followers and posts. According to the data, they don't put new posts on social media very often. New posts should be put to increase and attract customers. Moreover, we can see that Global Green Tour don't have comments or messages of clients on Instagram(Appendix 2).





Appendix 3 Asialuxe Travel

Asialuxe Travel is one of the famous tour companies and has many followers. It is said that in order to calculate individual tour package, leave plus(“+”) sign. If the customer leaves plus(“+”) sign, the data will be sent directly to the customer who is interested. This is the way that attracts customers and makes them interested. In addition, Asialuxe Travel replies to the customers immediately.



← **Comments** ▾


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 Ориентир : напротив Алайского рынка


Наш канал 🗨️🗨️🗨️
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 ТУРЫ ПО ВСЕМУ МИРУ | ТАШКЕНТ
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 **kimran_sharapov** Соглашусь. В этом туре вы буквально сгорите от жары) 2 d Reply


 **forever_0617** Bir shi unmi 360 3 d Reply


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 **matlyuba.maksudova59** Ассалоалайкуи. Илтимос информация кк. Антальяга 320 & а Истанбулдаги Айя Мафия ва бошка архитектура ёдгорликларига хам шу турда борса боладими? 14 h Reply

 **saidovkomoliddin +++** 21 h Reply

 **tukhtabayeff** Assalomu aleikum qacon reys 2 d Reply

 **L_batirovna** Blet qancha??? 3 d Reply

 **_mirzajonovna** Перелет цена какая напишите 4 d Reply

 **alisherovna_sevara** Bilet nech pul 4 d Reply

Appendix 4. CentralTur

CentralTur has some followers and put post very rarely. However, they don't reply to the questions of the clients at all.

← **Comments** ▾

 **shoxrux_00bro** Beliti ichidami 3 d Reply

 **clubtravel_uz** @shoxrux_00bro huddi shunday 3 d Reply

 **shoxrux_00bro** Delphin Imperial 5*-1990\$ bu 5 kishi uchun tulovmi? 3 d Reply


 **clubtravel_uz** @shoxrux_00bro 1 kishiga 3 d Reply


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Hide Replies


 **clubtravel_uz** @edeem.e xa 4 d Reply

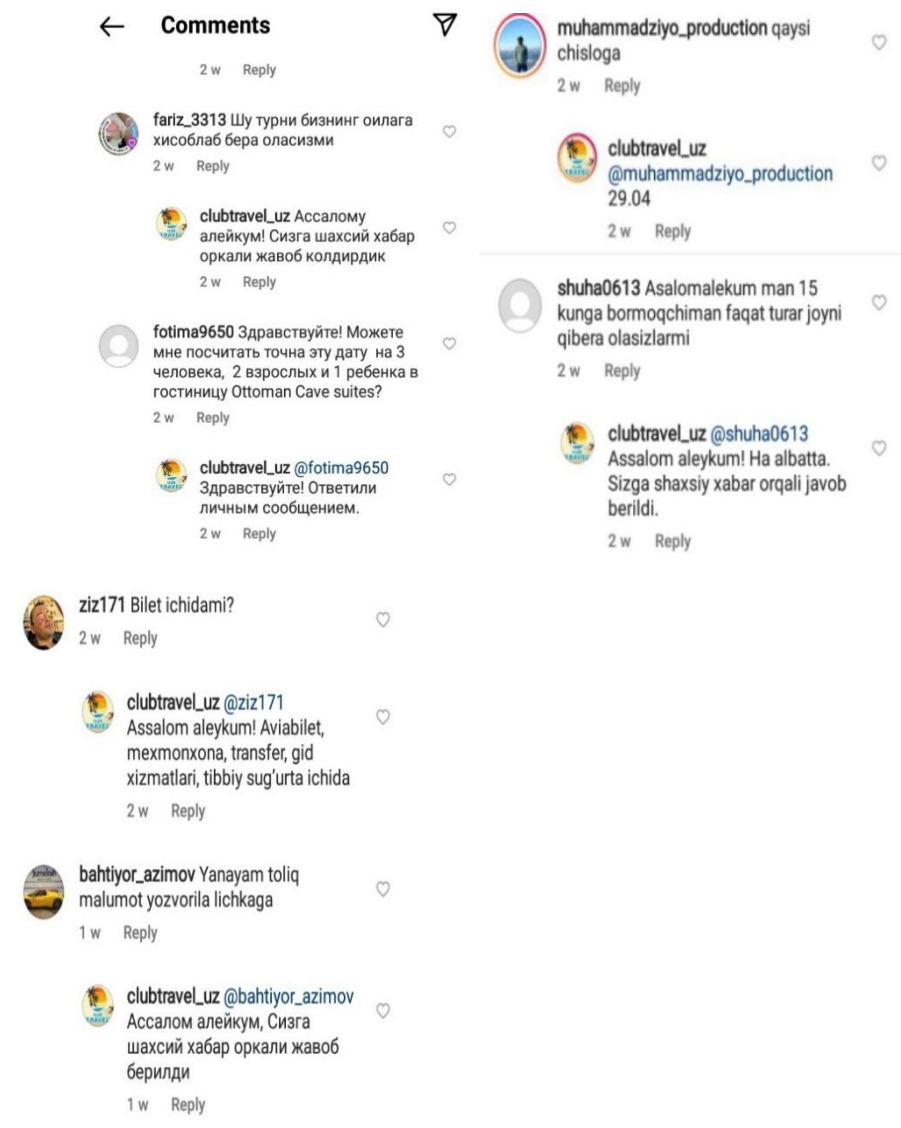
← **Comments** ▾

 **thebotir** visa garant %? 1 w Reply

 **clubtravel_uz** @thebotir Ассалому алейкум сзга шахсий хабар оркали жавоб берилди 1 w Reply

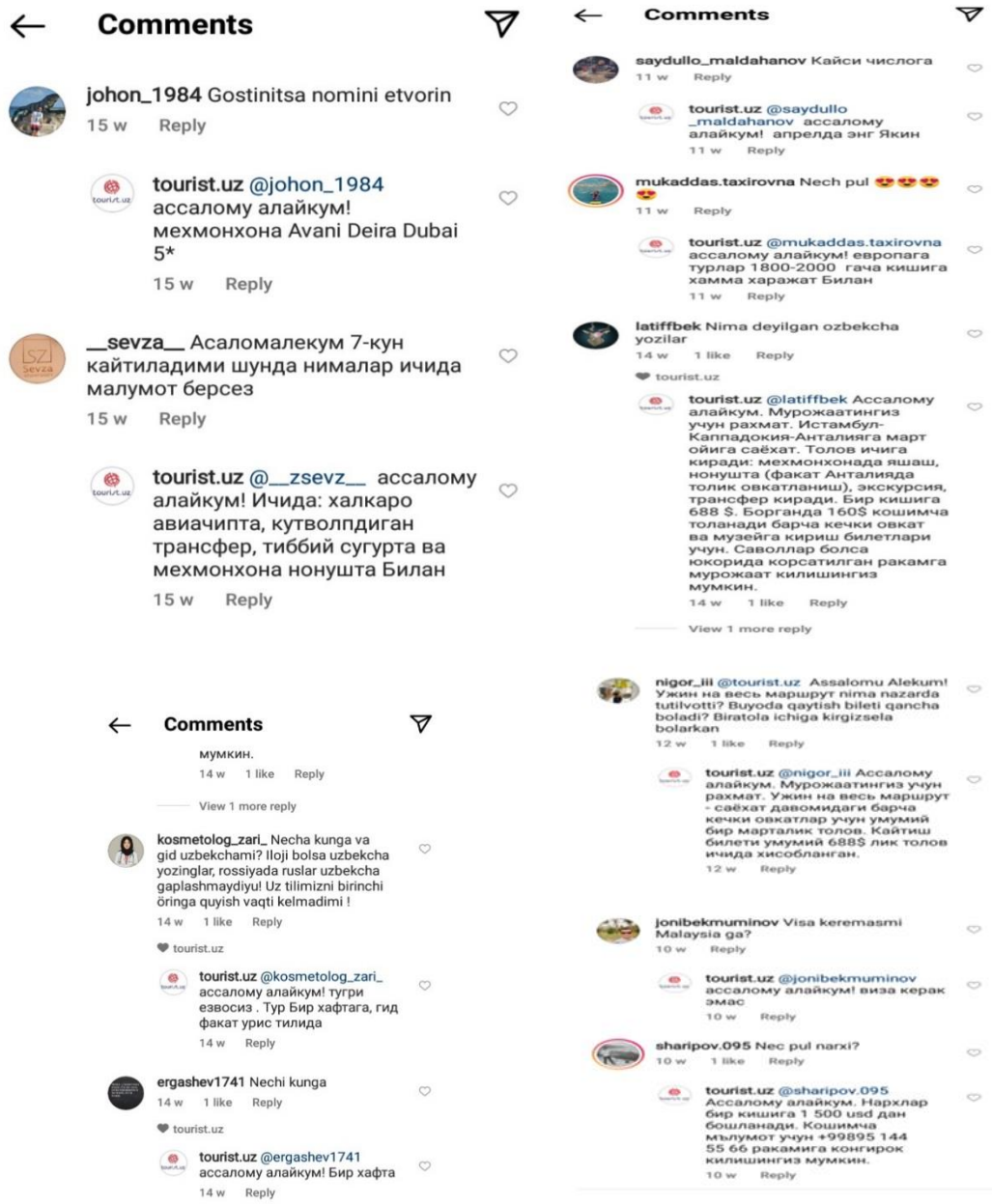
 **javboevfirdavs** Ассалому алейкум ростан борса буладими сайохатга 1 w 1 like Reply

 **clubtravel_uz** @javboevfirdavs assalomu aleykum ha albatta 1 w Reply



Appendix 5. ClubTravel

ClubTravel has many followers and puts posts every day. They respond to the questions of the clients on time and politely. 10 clients of the tour company asked questions especially about what is included in the price, when is the tour started and to calculate the tour package for the family (Appendix 5. ClubTravel). ClubTravel sent direct messages to 50% of the clients while 50% replies were given directly to the questions on Instagram comments.



Appendix 6. Tourist.uz

According to the data gathered, Tourist.uz has many followers and interactive posts. They reply to the questions of the clients respectfully and immediately. Different questions were asked about the tour package (Appendix 6 Tourist.uz). Tourist.uz responded to the all questions and gave full information required. In addition, they answered the questions about the price of tour with more detailed information .

5. Findings

When we talked with specialists of tourism industry in Uzbekistan, they informed about the order of tour companies in terms of tour package sales. We noticed that Mandarin tour has the most clients followed by Asialuxe travel while Global Green Tour has very few customers. Social media plays an essential role in developing the product and brand of tour companies. Instagram is considered the fastest growing

social network with high potential for brand awareness and management purposes [13-P.135].

Instagram of 6 tour companies in Uzbekistan were analyzed in terms of the replies to the comments. According to the data gathered, Mandarin tour has the most followers followed by Asialuxe travel. Despite having few followers, Tourist.uz and Club Travel have more interactive posts. Different questions were asked particularly about how much is the price, what is included in the price, when is tour started and calculation of the individual tour package and this research analyzed tour companies' service quality according to the replies to the questions. 50% of tour companies (Mandarin tour, Tourist.uz and Club Travel) replied to the questions of the clients on time and respectfully. Moreover, 16% of tour companies (especially AsialuxeTravel) sent direct messages to the customers immediately while 34% of tour companies (CentralTur and Global Green Tour) didn't respond to the comments on Instagram.

CentralTur and Global Green Tour companies don't have many followers, posts and even targeted advertising. Therefore, they are not active and well developed tour companies. These tour companies don't focus on customer service as they don't respond to the comments on Instagram. As a result, this effects their productivity and can lead to the decrease of the clients.

5.1 Recommendations:

- 1) Reply to the comments and messages of customers on time;
- 2) Create attractive posts;
- 3) Put new posts daily or weekly
- 4) Find appropriate social media platforms to attract audience;
- 5) Know your target audience.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study aimed to improve effectiveness and efficiency of customer service in tour companies. Customer satisfaction and customer expectation are important to develop tour companies effectively. Therefore, company should focus on customers more than ever. Satisfying customers is one of the most important keys for company's success.

In addition, social media plays an important role in the productivity of the customer service in tour companies. The success of tour companies depends upon the activeness on social media. The research work analyzed 6 tour companies on Instagram as most of the tour companies use Instagram to reach their audience. It shows that Mandarin tour has the most followers and respond to the comments immediately and politely. This tour company is also active on social media. Global Green Tour doesn't

reply to the questions of the clients and is very slow tour company while Tourist.uz answers the questions on time and gives more detailed information.

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