

USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN HOTELS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31410/EMAN.2019.1>

Abstract: *Development in information and communication technologies have caused great changes in the tourism sector. This development has increased competition in the tourism sector and has taken it out of the regional dimension, and brought it into a global competitive environment. Information and communication technologies enable businesses to be more effective and productive, and to improve quality at a lower cost.*

Information and communication technologies provide competitive advantage to tourism enterprises in introducing, distributing and bringing tourist products to the market. Tourism companies need to follow innovations to be one step ahead of their competitors and benefit from information and communication technologies as much as they can. Businesses operating in the tourism sector should carefully use the innovations and advantages provided by information technology. In the globalizing world, the increase in tourism demand due to the correct and effective use of information technology is very important for enterprises. This study aims to demonstrate the use of information technologies in the hotels of Konya which is one of the most important centers of religious tourism in Turkey.

Keywords: *Information, Communication Technologies, Tourism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past century, development in the world have gained tremendous pace and have undergone major changes. The industrial sector, which is regarded as the basis of development, has left its place to information along with this changing process (Turunç, 2006:1). The easiness of access to information and resources from the early 1990s with the developments in technology and the Internet has greatly reduced the effectiveness of traditional marketing (Özturan and Roney, 2004: 259). Information technology greatly affects our life in various ways as well as our business life (Çalış, 2014: 94). The Internet, which is among the indispensables of human life, is a result of the rapid development of information and communication technologies (Karataş and Babur, 2013: 23). The use of information technologies is also very important in the tourism sector. As far as the benefits of technology are concerned, information technology practices are known to reduce costs, improve productivity and improve service quality (Alford and Clarke, 2009: 580). Thanks to information technology, it is possible to monitor innovations and reduce the cost of transactions. As a result of the development of computer and communication technologies, the speed of communication has increased with globalization and the company can work comfortably anywhere in the world. The more information technology is utilized in the tourism and travel sectors, the easier it is to be ahead of the competition and to be among the preferred ones (Ay, 2007: 119). New information technologies are interested in the efficiency of travel companies particularly, as well as helping businesses to increase their competitiveness and to make their marketing activities more effective. It is extremely unlikely to survive for the businesses that cannot keep up with today's emerging information technologies (Yüksek, 2013: 54).

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2. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN TOURISM

The development of information technology is causing change both in the economy and in businesses. In the microeconomic level, information technologies influence strategically and functionally the enterprises and make them recompense, while determining competition in the global market, providing the development and prosperity of the regions at the macroeconomic level. Thanks to information technology, new business locations can be established, and existing business locations can be renewed and recruited to competition. Operators' managers and employees can easily communicate with each other (Buhalis, 1998: 412).

The efficiency of the tourism sector depends on communication and information technology. Information technologies have a huge impact on businesses in preparing and implementing marketing tactics, and also, they can create new working opportunities by using the information (Benli and Kızılgın, 2002).

Factors that help tourism operators to offer new and flexible competitive services are technological innovations such as electronic ticketing and the use of websites for sales (Pirnar, 2005: 29). Today, the use of information technology in the tourism sector has become compulsory. The self-regulated businesses can advertise with their web sites and communicate with their customers easily and cheaply. In this way they can save time and money. Consumers can make their air ticket reservation, hotel reservation, car rental, etc. thanks to these web sites from the internet whenever and wherever they want (Şimşek, 2005: 1).

According to Sarı and Kozak, the benefits of the internet in regional tourism competition can be examined under three headings:

- 1) Benefits to businesses: Possibility of convincing customers with easy and continuous information, to use the speed of computer and information networks, to do a lot of business in a short time, to reduce bureaucracy with electronic money and brochures, equal access to information, low cost promotion and marketing, cheaper internal information sharing, developing faster cooperation strategies, faster and less costly communication with customers.
- 2) Benefits to consumers: Making individual reservations and purchasing directly, getting detailed information, reducing dependence on intermediaries to obtain information, making use of personalized products, alternative comparison.
- 3) Benefits to tourism areas: The possibility of virtual collaboration by establishing a virtual reservation network at the regional level, the possibility of reaching millions of potential customers by using the Internet, the possibility of differentiation through multimedia applications, the possibility of equal access to all regions, the easy acquisition of regional customer profile, the promotion of zone at low cost on global level, and regional and inter-regional communication opportunities (Sarı and Kozak, 2005: 256).

Tourism enterprises operating in the tourism sector should be able to compete by constantly improving their performances in order to survive (Turunc, 2006: 2). For this reason, the hotels benefit from the Accommodation Management System. Accommodation Management System manages subsystems such as reservation, sales marketing, pre-payment, telephone, room service, door lock, accounting and inventory control through computers (Emeksiz, 2000: 34). Technological development in accommodation businesses focuses on two areas. These are management's activities and customer service. Both of them aim to increase productivity. Management activities are generally management information systems, decision support systems, revenue and database management (Zhao, 1998:

288). These applications can improve management decisions. Technology is also applied in the field of customer service. Examples include: automatic registration, exit procedures, security in the hotel, room climate, electronic consultation, intra-hotel communication applications can be shown. The use of technology in smart hotel rooms is very broad and satisfying. For example, it plays an important role in communication of international tourists with the outside world (Öztürk, 1996: 111).

3. RESEARCH ON THE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN THE HOTELS

3.1. Method

This study aims to examine the use of information communication technologies by Konya hotel companies. It is descriptive and exploratory, and a survey technique is used for data collection. Expert opinion was received for the validity of the questionnaire. Pilot application is done. The reliability test was performed and the Cronbach Alpha was found to be 0.82. The Convenience Sampling Method was used in the sample. With the face-to-face survey technique, data was collected from 85 hotel managers and tried to measure their attitudes towards technology use. The questionnaire used in the research was taken from Mehmet Kaşlı's Masters graduate thesis. The research was conducted in October 2018.

3.2. Findings

The reliability of the questionnaire used in the research was analyzed and the Cronbach Alpha value was found to be 0.73. 85 hotel managers have participated in the research for star and starless hotel status. Among the hotel types there are international chain, national chain and independent company hotels. All of the hotels have a website. The hotels receive their bookings through their own site or travel agency.

Table 1 shows the priorities of the hotel managers participating in the survey as business. According to this, the priorities of the hotel managers are „to be recognized in the country”, „to increase the market share of the business”, „to increase the usage of the information technology to provide communication with the external environment of the business”, „and „to increase the profitability of the business”. Hotel managers are also thinking about investing in information technology and contributing to recognition, communication, profitability and increasing market share.

Table 1. The Priorities of Businesses

	n	%
To be recognized in the country	64	74,4
To increase the usage of the information technology to provide communication with the external environment of the business	62	72,1
To increase the profitability of the business	61	70,9
To improve the productivity of employees	34	39,5
To increase the market share of the business	63	73,3
To increase occupancy rates	41	47,7
Train employees to adapt to changing conditions	37	43,0
Improve service quality	44	51,2
To increase service diversity	39	45,3
To be recognized abroad	51	59,3

The answers given by the owners to the question of why they invested in information technology are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Reason Why They Are Investing in Information Technologies

	n	%
Increase sales revenue	59	68,6
Reduce costs	56	65,1
Prevent labor and time loss	48	55,8
Communicate better with intermediaries	26	30,2
Stay competitive	33	38,4
Facilitate service provision	29	33,7
Communicate better with suppliers	38	44,2
Opening to new markets	44	51,2

Hotel managers participating in the research are primarily investing in information technology in order to „increase sales revenue”, then „reduce costs”, „prevent labor and time loss” and „communicate better with suppliers”. Hotel managers are investing in information technology to increase sales, reduce costs, prevent labor and time loss, and stay competitive.

Table 3. Perception in Information and Communication Technologies

	Mean	Standard Deviation
1) Internet helps to provide information from competitors and other businesses.	4,5882	,54103
2) Internet provides personal service to the target groups.	4,6706	,47279
3) Internet marketing is a separate work area.	4,0235	,78644
4) Internet is suitable for last minute purchases.	4,1765	1,11458
5) In order for the Internet to be effective in terms of promotion, it must be integrated with other communication tools (radio, TV, etc.)	3,8471	,74811
6) The Internet has security issues within the current technology.	3,3647	,99818
7) Internet facilitates the distribution of products and services.	4,0941	,36591
8) The use of the Internet ensures that the economic losses arising from the cancellation of the reservation are compensated in due time.	4,4353	,66273
9) The use of the internet in promotional and sales development is directed to individual consumers.	2,4706	,79565
10) The hotel website is difficult to find in the mixed environment of the internet.	2,3529	,64928
11) The presence of an impressive and functional web page gives the image that the business is in the technological direction.	4,5176	,85373
12) Information technology and internet usage reduce booking, promotion and sales costs.	4,4471	,62689
13) Information technology used in business has a direct impact on staff and business productivity.	4,1412	,95310
14) It is imperative that information technology is used at the accommodation businesses/ travel agencies.	4,3412	,64647
15) Hardware and software costs of computerized reservation systems are high.	3,3765	,87255
16) An agent that is not included in the computerized reservation system is weak in marketing and sales.	4,2824	,76550
17) Preparing a web page does not provide a significant contribution to creating a demand.	1,5294	,66526

18) Web site, installation and publishing costs are high practices.	2,3529	,66737
19) The use of internet and information technology is a must when marketing touristic products to foreign countries.	4,0824	,75926
20) Information technology and the internet provide low cost, fast and interactive communication.	4,4235	,62443
21) The use of information technology and the internet allows to develop relationships with intermediary institutions and clients.	4,0471	,59574
22) The use of information technology reduces the booking costs in the reservation.	4,2588	,75833
23) One of the important factors preventing the development of tourism in our region is due to lack of promotion.	3,4118	1,39125

The opinions of the hotel managers regarding the judgments on the use of information technology are shown in Table 3. According to this, the highest average is „Internet helps to provide information from competitors and other businesses”. Secondly, the phrase „Internet provides personal services to the target groups”. Thirdly, there is a judgment that „the presence of an impressive and functional web page gives the impression that the business is in the technological direction”. Fourth is „Information technology and internet usage reduce booking, promotion and sales costs”. According to these averages, hotel managers in Konya saw the importance of providing the information provision function of the internet to provide personal service. The use of information and communication technologies has a high attitude score in terms of reducing costs. They also think that they need a good web page. Moving from these averages, hotel managers are well aware of the functions of technology.

3. RESULTS

Tourism, one of the sectors most influenced by information technology, has been the biggest supporter of businesses seeking to gain competitive advantage. Unlike durable consumer goods, tourism services are not available before to examine. That is why the information provided by businesses through information and communication technologies is used to generate consumer opinions.

According to the results of the research; Hotel managers are also thinking about contributing to recognition, communication, profitability and increasing market share by investing in information technology. Hotel managers participating in the research are investing in information technology in order to „increase sales revenue”, „reduce costs”, „prevent labor and time loss” and „communicate better with suppliers”. Hotel managers are investing in information technology to increase sales, reduce costs, prevent labor and time loss, and stay competitive. Hotel managers think that an impressive and functional web page should be eligible. Managers believe that the used technologies will reduce the cost of booking, promoting and selling. Hotel managers think that information and communication technologies will provide low cost, fast and interactive communication.

In today’s world of globalization, the importance of information and communication technologies is increasing. It is a necessity for tourism companies to pay more attention to advertising, marketing, new advertising techniques, especially made via internet and social media, than other enterprises. The ability of tourism businesses to compete in the global market majorly depends on their ability to adapt the new developments. For this reason, the hotel should closely monitor and apply changes in technology.

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