Chapter 50
Customer Satisfaction Evaluation for Greek Online Travel Agencies

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of tourist supply and demand makes Information Technologies (IT) significant, and thus, they increasingly play a more critical role in tourism marketing, distribution, promotion, and coordination. IT influences the strategic management and marketing of contemporary organisations as a paradigm-shift is experienced, transforming the best business practices globally. IT is one of the main key influences of competitiveness in the tourism/travel industry. The original purpose for adopting IT systems was simply to provide an automatic means of store and manage data (e.g. on flights and accommodation). At the same time, IT in the tourist sector enables an increased volume of transactions to be handled rapidly and effectively. This chapter presents an original customer satisfaction survey in the Greek Online Travel Agencies. For the collection of the data, a Website questionnaire was used in order to better record the customers’ views on the service overall as well as their satisfaction levels on particular aspects of the service. The survey was conducted within the period September – November 2012. Final input data consists of 510 questionnaires.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era that we live in, IT has a major role in every organisational aspect. Practically, every company and institution is considering the new opportunities offered by innovative technology. Kekre et. al. (1995) clearly states that IT is one of the most important issues discussed in management nowadays, and that there is high chance of improving the performance of organisations by adopting the appropriate information system.

In addition, Colier et. al. (2003) become more specific and describe the immense expansion of the web technology, claiming that internet infrastruc-
tures and practices are the mean for organisational development. Enterprises proceed in the adoption of information systems in order to achieve reduced costs, higher production and high quality services to their customers (Legris et. al., 2003). In fact, IT is “just and an enabler” (Malhotra, 2005) in using this invisible force of knowledge which finally allows organisations to stay strong in business. In contrast to this view, IT, along with competition and globalisation, can be considered as environmental factors that keep pressuring organisations in adopting strategies (Zack, 1999).

Two decades later, the most popular technology which appears to have significant impacts on business is the Internet. The web technology allows the establishment of networks which enable vast amount of information to be transferred around the globe. Considering that the capacity of computers is growing rapidly, Collier et. al. (2003) state that almost all enterprises have been influenced and searched for opportunities provided by the use of internet and information technology.

Benbya et. al. (2004) also note that the use of IT enables organisations to store, and exchange vast amount of information allowing the generation and the sharing of useful knowledge. Thus while, the business world is transforming around technology, the e-business appears to be steadily expanding and the use of knowledge is becoming important for organisations that are looking for extensive information technology opportunities in order to adapt more quickly in the knowledge – based global economy.

The tourism industry is one of the largest users of IT and has some of the largest computer installations in the business world. IT provides both opportunities and challenges for the tourist industry (Buhalis, 1994). The development of new technologies is making the tourism world a much smaller place. The communication between tourism organisation and the customers is now faster and more flexible. Tourist organisation is already taking big advantages of the new technologies to increase the scope of their products.

According to D. Buhalis (2003) IT, is one of the most dynamic motivators of global economy. IT is a powerful tool for economic growth for the industry to continue being competitive and to provide strategic opportunities. Information technology can reduce costs, enhance operational efficiency, and most importantly improve service quality and customer experience. Technology in this case has been described as a profit and efficiency maximisation tool that revolutionises the way business is conducted and removes all geographical boundaries.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Tourism as an Industrial Sector**

The subject of tourism – travel is exciting and fascinating. Tourism as a whole is one of the fastest growing industries in Europe and worldwide. In recent years, growth rates in tourism have been higher than those of the overall world economy (E-Business Watch, 2006). Human beings have been moving from place to place for about 1 million years. Since the time of wanderings of ancient people, we have been travelling in ever-widening patterns around the earth.

From the days of such early explorers as Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus, there has been a steady growth in travel. Tourism is a composite of activities, services, and industries that delivers a travel experience: transportation, accommodations, eating and drinking establishments, shops, entertainment, activity facilities, and other hospitality services available for individuals or groups who have been travelling away from home. It encompasses all providers of visitor and visitor-related services.

Tourism is usually defined as services provided for people travelling and staying outside their usual environment for less than one consecutive year, for leisure or for business purposes (E-Business Watch, 2004b). Tourism is the entire world indus-
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