

E-TOURISM: THE USE OF INTERNET AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN TOURISM: THE CASE OF HOTEL UNITS IN PERIPHERAL AREAS

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Abstract

E-tourism is essentially the digitalization of the whole touristic industry and infrastructure. Some of the advantages of e-tourism are the reduction of seasonality, the more successful communication with the customers and the raise in reservations and sales in general. The use of the Internet has forever changed the structure and the principles of the touristic industry. The consumers-tourists are now capable of easily choosing their destination, of comparing prices and managing their financial exchanges. Information and Communication Technologies and Internet, if wisely used, can prove to be highly innovative strategic tools in the hands of the tourism entrepreneurs, that would help them upgrade the position of their facilities.

The aim of the research is to study the use of ICT by the Greek touristic industry and more precisely by non-coastal touristic units. The field of the research is the Municipal district of Loutraki Pellas. The research was realized in October 2012 and it was based on structured questionnaires that were completed by the means of personal interviews. The total of the 16 hotels located in Pozar participated in the research. The questionnaires are structured on five units of both open and closed-type questions.

The conclusions are showing that:

The touristic businesses in Greece, even in small peripheral places, seem to be using Information and Communication Technologies.

The online reservation system is being used by the most of the units and it is expected that they will be double in five years' time. The use of e-marketing is on satisfactory levels and the majority of the respondents believe that e-marketing is absolutely necessary for the well-being of an enterprise.

It seems that most of the touristic units are not familiar with the electronic customer relationship marketing systems (E-CRM). The cooperation with electronic travel agencies and the participation in social networking sites are useful tools for the efficient communication of a touristic unit with a potential customer. Online reservations have contributed to the rise of customers' arrivals and this fact gives to the touristic industry a measured optimism, even though we are in the middle of the financial crisis.

Keywords E-tourism, internet & information technologies, peripheral areas, Greece

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