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Faculty of tourism and business logistics -
Gevgelia**

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ISCTBL**

CHALLENGES OF TOURISM AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



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PREFACE

The Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics in Gevgelija, at the Goce Delcev University - Stip, hosted the First International Scientific Conference, "Challenges of Tourism and Business Logistics in the 21st Century".

The conference was held on 24 and 25 October 2017 in Gevgelija with an optional visit to Dojran - Dojran Lake.

32 works of 60 authors from Serbia, Latvia, Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Macedonia were presented at the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference is exchange of ideas and experiences of the participants coming from Macedonia and abroad, and establishment of cooperation for further development of tourism and business logistics in Macedonia and beyond.

The results of the Conference are visible through publication in a collection of papers, which is presented to a wider scientific audience and the public.

In this way, we want to promote the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, to promote Gevgelija and Dojran as the most visited settlements in the south-eastern part of Macedonia.

Gevgelija - Stip,
December 2017

Editor
Nikola V. Dimitrov Ph.D. *Dean*

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ONLINE BOOKING: BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES

Tanja Angelkova Petkova 1; Cvetanka Ristova 2; Suzana Đorđević Milošević 3

Abstract

Online booking represents the easiest and most efficient way to organize your holiday. Its advantage comes from saving time in terms of visiting numerous travel agencies, with offers for numerous tourist destinations opposite the option where with only one click you will be able to access your desired destination and booked it. The statistics showed that two-thirds of those who used the internet, planned their holiday at least twice through online booking in the same year.

From the statistics in this paper regarding the online booking and its representation in the world, it is safe to conclude that this type of booking has attracted considerable attention in the last few years. A survey has been done on how the population in Gevgelija sees the benefits of this type of reservations and how often they apply the online booking in their planned holidays. The research noted that the population actively participates in online booking, whether it is a hotel that offers online reservation, restaurant or a transportation.

Key Words: *growth, tourism, internet, hotels, tourist destination.*

JEL classification: Z3; Z32;

Introduction

Nowadays, due to the Internet evolution, we can buy travel services like flights and vacations. The Internet has allowed the tourist facilities to publish more detailed information about their services, including videos. The price comparison tool, makes it easy to access cheap flights and accommodation. This means that today the average Internet use has more information available as opposed to the travel agency five years

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ago. Accordingly, many potential tourists today will book their holiday through online booking.

Tourism represents a unique area of business in the sense that a product or service cannot be monitored and tested until it is directly used. It is well known that presentations about tourist destinations have always been an important factor and the key factor for the success of the tourist industry. Travel agencies have been very successful in their efforts to create illustrated catalogs that allow potential clients with enough information to be thrilled with aesthetic photos, useful tips, maps and more.

However, today it is much more difficult and harder for travel agencies to compete with websites offering online booking. One of the primary reasons why people are increasingly booking their reservations online is exactly the online experience they offer through better visual tourist destinations. Here we will mention 3D interactive tours, which offer real-life impressions of the desired tourist destination. And as we can see, this is quite a big advantage, which the tourists will surely have in mind when choosing the way of booking.

Applying the online booking

Major hotel chains, such as Hilton and Marriott offer room bookings through the web that cost millions of dollars, where for example, Hilton had bookings of hotel rooms worth 3,5 billion dollars via the Internet. In addition to the increase in online booking business, Hilton made 80% of that reservation through their own websites. Hilton is a typical representative of the industry, which now receives over 80% of its online reservations through the direct channels of the hotel brand. 40% of the today's internet booking accounts are made online. The planned revenues from groups and conferences booked over the internet have already exceeded 40%. Now, almost all hotels brands offer guaranteed low prices for online booking through their websites. This encourages guests to book directly with the hotel company, not through an intermediary. Further encouragement is provided by some hotel companies that offer only points, if guests reserve through the hotel company's website. Of all the guests who booked through the brand hotel, more than half booked directly for the points. The Internet has become such an important channel that some companies, such as Hyatt Hotels, have introduced the position of vice president of electronic distribution.

Restaurant companies also use the Internet as a distribution system. Pizza Hat and Domino have online booking systems. The Olive Garden has its online menu and encourages customers to call the restaurant and order food. One of the most popular online booking companies is Open Table. They say that it brings an average of 253 customers per months in 8,500 restaurants they have signed. Open Table charges 1 dollar for any reservation received through its website and 0,25 dollars for each reservation the client makes directly to the restaurant after linking through Open Table. Open Table makes over 3,5 million reservations per month.

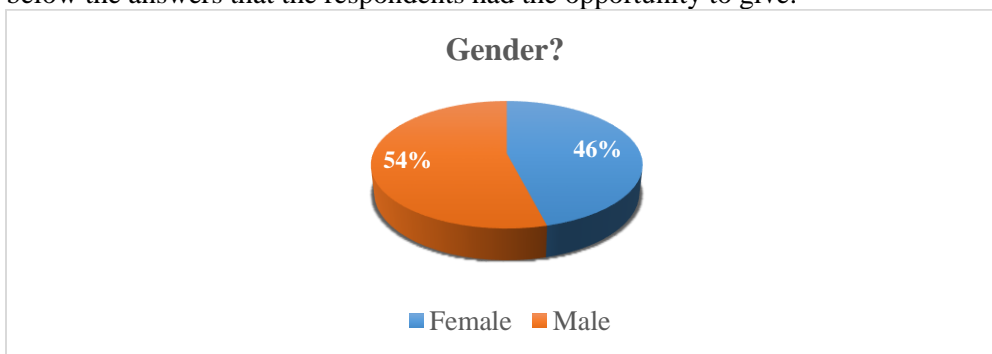
Some of the advantages of the Internet is that it never closes, it is open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, it has a worldwide coverage and can transmit color images. The ability to transmit color-photos to millions of people in the world makes the Internet an exciting distribution channel. It allows companies to make their

products tangible by using color-photos and videos. Grand Aleutian is a remote resort 1,287 km southwest of Anchorage. It attracts fishermen and those who want to explore the islands of Aleutian. Similarly, Rutledge Victorian can show color-photos of his interior and his rooms. Hyatt provides video surveillance to Park Hyatt in Tokyo. These examples show how small independent properties as well as multinational brands can use the Internet to gain access to travelers traveling to and from the country. With the rise in international markets in India and China, online offers are a way to make the product available on these markets. However, to be able to access the international markets, the website must be translated into many languages.

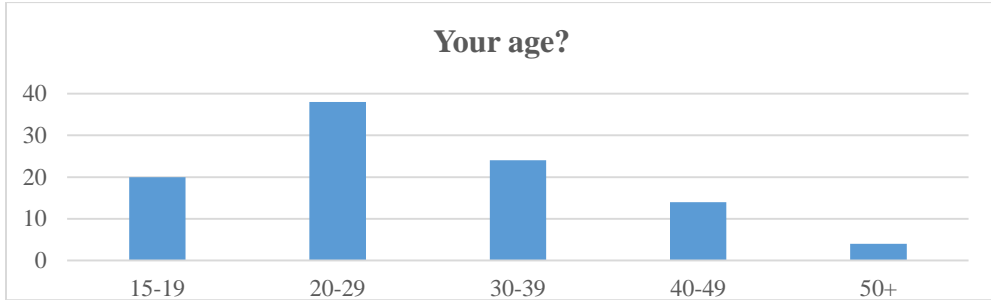
Application, types and analysis of the online booking in the municipality of Gevgelija, Republic of Macedonia

The statistics in this paper regarding the online booking and their representation in the world shows that we can understand that this kind of reservation had attracted considerable attention in the last few years, so a survey had been done on how much the population in the municipality of Gevgelija sees the benefits of this type of reservations and how much it applies in the tourist industry. What we can see is that for the use of online booking in Gevgelija, we are actively noticing the citizens' using the web pages, whether it is a hotel that offers online booking, restaurant, transport services, or travel agency for reservation.

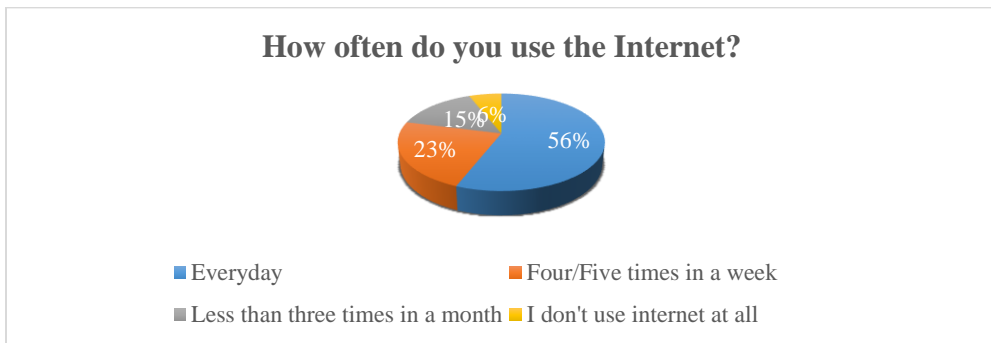
The survey was conducted on the territory of the municipality of Gevgelija with the purpose of getting to know their knowledge and utilization of online booking. A total of 100 respondents were interviewed in an anonymous questionnaire, 54 males and 46 female respondents, aged 15 – 50+. You can see in the survey statistics below the answers that the respondents had the opportunity to give.



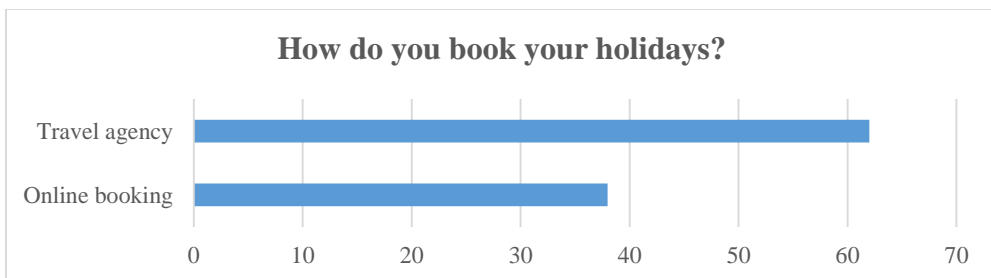
Respondents from 20 to 29 years old were most active on the questionnaire with a total of 38%, followed by the respondents from the age of 30 to 39 years old with a total of 24%. A small difference exists between the respondents from the age of 30 to 39 and respondents aged 15 to 19, meaning, they participated in the questionnaire with a total of 20%. Lastly, we have the respondents from aged 40 - 49 with 14%, and respondents of 50+ with 4%. This questionnaire enables us to conclude that the online booking is actively used mainly by the Millennials.



When asked how much you use the Internet, we got impressive results. Namely, 56% of the total of 100 respondents answered that they frequently use the Internet, followed by the 23% who answered that they use the Internet only four to five times in a week, 15% for less than three times a month, and only 6% said that they did not use the Internet at all. The questionnaire showed that the Internet is actively used by the Millennials, but it is also used by respondents from 40 over 50.

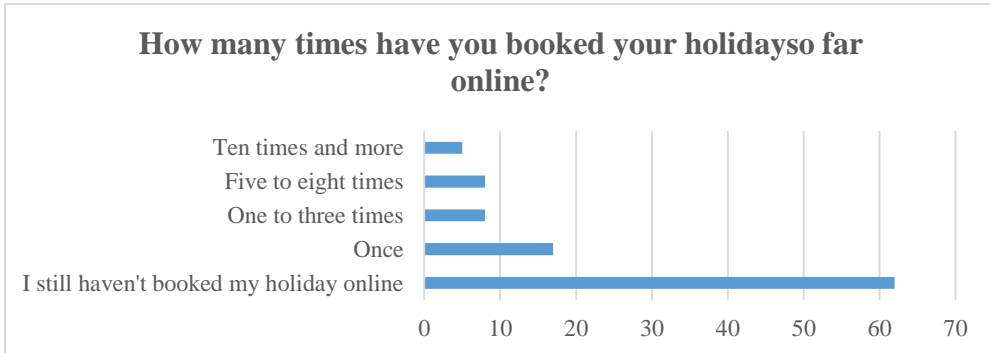


Despite the frequent use of the Internet, online booking is far behind reservations with travel agencies in the municipality of Gevgelija. A total of 62% respondents answered that they still use and contact the travel agencies in Gevgelija and the Republic of Macedonia for reservation of their holidays. Only 38% of the total of 100 respondents answered that they use the Internet for online booking of their holidays.

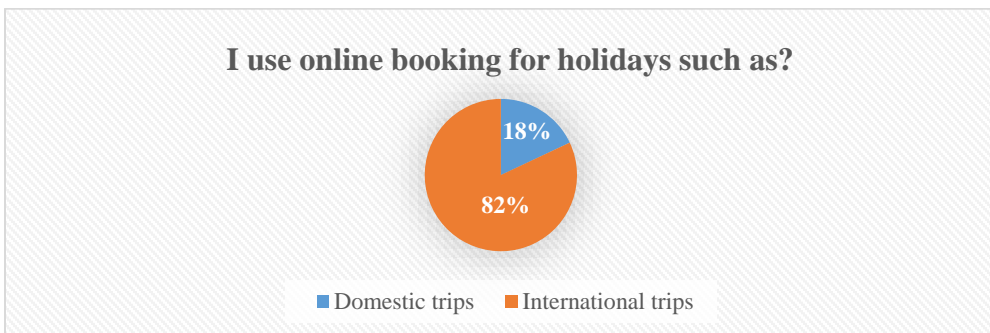


From the following question, which is directly connected with the previous one, the 62% that still use travel agencies for the reservation of their holidays, still have not booked their holidays online. But from the 38% that use the Internet for online booking, 17% of the respondents once booked their holiday online, 8%

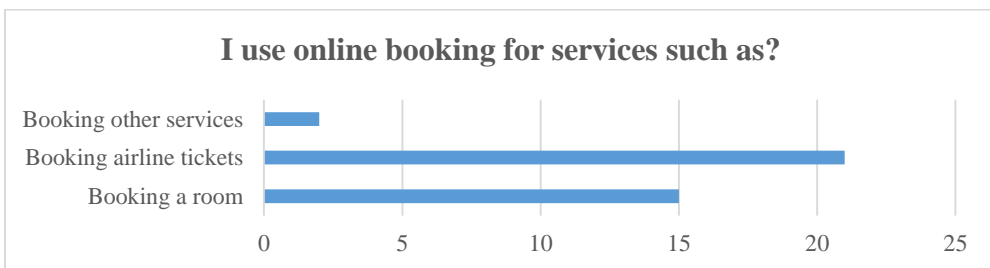
answered that they booked their holiday from one to three times, and the same percentage of respondents answered that they booked their holiday online from five to eight times so far. Only 5% of the total of 38% that use the Internet for online booking, booked their holiday at least ten times.



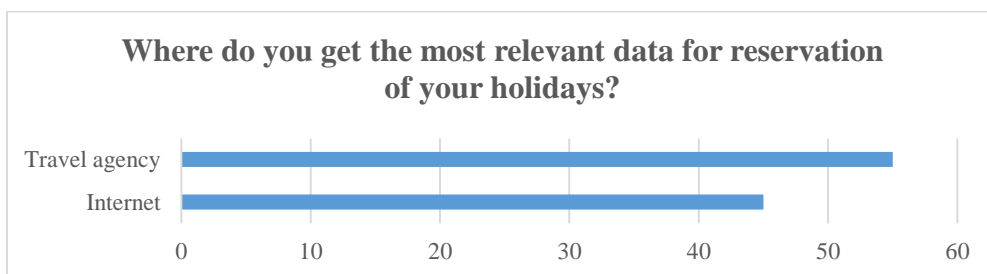
When analyzing the data, from the 38% of the respondents who previously answered that they use online booking, we saw in the following question that 82% of them are using online booking for international trips, and only 18% of the respondents have used online booking for domestic trips.



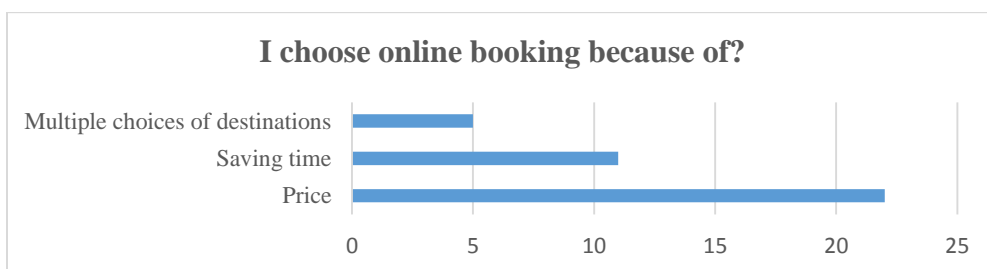
From the next question, also connected with the previous ones, we can see that the respondents can mainly use online booking for booking airline tickets a percentage of 21%, and booking a room with 15%. Only 2% have used the Internet for booking other services such as rent-a-car, tickets for tourist sites.



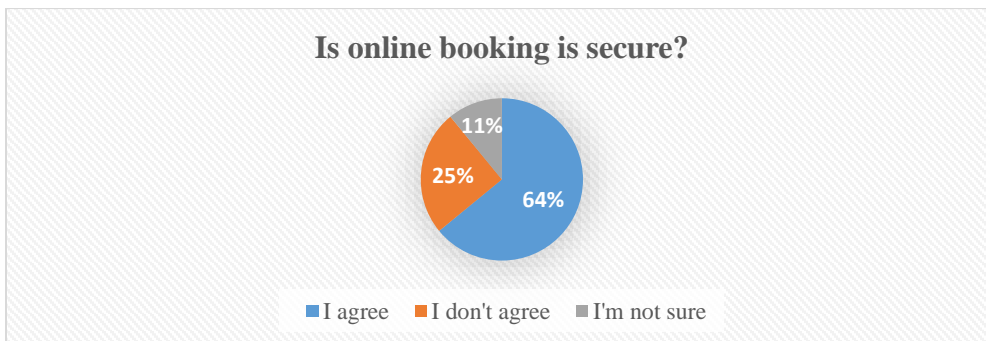
In addition to showing us the way of reservation of the holiday, the question shows us that although the respondents from the municipality of Gevgelija use travel agencies for reservation, they are also using the Internet for information about the destination, a hotel, villa and other. Nevertheless, despite that, the respondents still think that the information from the travel agencies is more relevant than that on the Internet, 55% and 45% respectively.



For the respondents of the municipality of Gevgelija who use online booking, for 22% the price remains the main reason why they have chosen online booking. However, saving time is also a factor for choosing online booking for 11%, and at last we have the factor, multiple choices of destinations chosen by 5%.



Regardless of whether the respondents of the municipality in Gevgelija use travel agencies or online booking, 64% of them agree that online booking is secure. Only 25% of them disagree and 11% are neutral. The pie chart clearly states that 64% went for secure, but as seen from the previous question only 38% of the respondents use online booking. This needs to be further examined, i.e. why the respondents answered that they agree that is secure, but are not using it. Maybe they need some guidance in the process of making an account, online payment and other problems that can be solved with simple tutorials. A similar question was placed as a last one, but we think that is far from understanding the problem.



As a last question, we asked: What do you think could improve online booking and increase its use? We mostly got the following answers:

- Bigger coverage on the social media
- Easier accessibility to these types of websites for the tourists, meaning a larger advertising campaign
- Brochures, instructions for using online booking
- Reliability, data protection.

However, there were also respondents who did not specifically answer this question, but pointed out that whatever improvements would be, they would still choose the travel agencies, and respondents who said they did not know how this type of service could be improved. In addition, there were also answers from respondents who already use this type of service, and think it did not need improvement.

Conclusion

From the conducted research, we can conclude that there is an increased the representation of online booking as well as travel agencies. The population in the municipality of Gevgelija has been active in the past few years in this area, and with the different offers and cheap flights, the trips have increased even more. However, in spite of that representation, during the implementation itself and the later analysis of this research, we noticed respondents who are not familiar with this type of service, and consider that in addition to the improvements, it is still unreliable and they would not choose it as a way of booking their vacations, but some of them are open to opportunities, although they have declared themselves neutral, but there were also those who did not show a desire or an opportunity to get to know it better. Although it is mainly about airline tickets, this suggests the possibility of further expansion. And with their opinions on improving this type of service, we believe that online booking would have a greater role and representation in the planning of their holidays.

Online reservations are the means that can connect the consumer (tourist) with numerous destinations. It is true that travel agencies today offer many exotic and new destinations. Nevertheless, the figure is limited. The world really takes advantage of online booking, as an example of what we mentioned the Hilton Hotel, but when it

comes to the Republic of Macedonia, the country understands online booking as an offer, and it is placed as an offer on its menu, but is not active. This is a negative picture, which is primarily reflected on the hotel itself, a travel agency and so on. And this is the reason that regardless of whether it is Macedonian tourists or foreigners it creates insecurity so they simply ignore this kind of reservations without thinking of the huge advantages. This means that more attention needs to be put by the facilities for this type of reservation, if they would like to achieve results, since it is a fact that today they mainly realize their profits precisely through this type of reservation.

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