

THE ATTITUDES OF ENTREPRENEURS AND MANAGERS REGARDING THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN ALBANIAN TOURISM ENTERPRISES

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ABSTRACT

Albania after a long period of transition and economic reforms after the 1990 's, has significantly increased the level of modernization and use of information technology in different business sectors, such as tourism. Given the fact that the costs are relatively low relating the internet access, compared with the other countries of the region, the tourism enterprises are using extensively the information and communication technology (ICT) which enables them to make their daily operations more quickly and easy, and to communicate with customers, partners, etc worldwide faster and cheaper. The overall aim of this study is to identify the attitudes that managers or entrepreneurs of tourism enterprises (accommodation units , travel agencies and restaurants) have, on the use of information technology in their organizations and how these attitudes affect the image, the decision-making process etc. To realize the aim, are raised the research questions and hypotheses. The research instrument used was a questionnaire with 72 statements. The sample consisted of N = 208 participants, representatives of tourism enterprises concerned. The study was extended to five districts of Albania: Tirana, Durres, Shkodra, Vlore and Saranda. The results show that majority of them believe that IT provides valuable information and encourages better decisions. Also, provides them with the possibility to access, collect and share information more easily. Also, the results show that attitudes towards IT have a positive relation with the use of it for marketing purposes and the know- how for IT.

Keywords: Marketing, information technology, tourism enterprises, Albania, internet.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry in Albania during the last years is considered as a sector with a lot of opportunities, both for the business that is involved in various services for tourists, and the public sector which benefits from the tourism revenues and investments in this sector. A very important element of the daily operations at tourism enterprises is the information technology which those enterprises use in order to realize their marketing activities, sales, reservations, etc. But is this technology at appropriate levels? Do the Albanian entrepreneurs understand the importance of ICT? This study will give an answer to these questions and many others related to information technology. The high dependence on technology is bringing rapid change at the tourism market. Booking online and communication via e-mail, is experiencing a significant effect on the process of bookings, the organization of conferences (business tourism and conferences) and travel packaged with attractive offers .

Often, there are the businesses themselves the promoters of investments in information technology and not the new technologies which dictate that, driven by suppliers of services or equipments related to technology. Consequently, business managers are often self- interested. Meanwhile , the business case is somewhat controversial. Why are taken two risks at the

same time - which means a new business, based on new technologies? According to Sevrani et al. (2011): “The main failures during use of IT are based on a better technology and worse business vision. Success comes from a very good technology and very clear understanding of customer needs.

It is important to note that professional skills, related to the use of information technologies in tourism, are essential. Usually, the level of technical skills required by the staff, which has to carry out their duties with high performance, varies according to the nature and specifics of the job. However, it seems that there is a unique concept associated with general skills, which are thought to be required from all, or at least from the majority of the staff, who work in various tourism enterprises.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is to identify the decision-makers attitudes in the tourism enterprises towards the effects that has the IT use in the image of the enterprise and the appropriate decision-making.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

Research questions

- 1- What are the attitudes of entrepreneurs/managers towards the information technology and how they affect at the level of it's use?
- 2- How can be the relation between entrepreneurs/managers attitudes towards IT and marketing as well as the know –how about?

Hypothesis

H₁: It is suggested that positive attitudes towards ICT from managers / entrepreneurs will have a positive correlation with the use of ICT as a marketing tool, with the know - how of enterprise for ICT

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is the main source of foreign currency earnings for a third of developing countries and is among the three main sources of export earnings for nearly half of all least developed countries (LDCs). It provides an effective way for achieving the objectives of development and further integration into the world economy (UNWTO, 2011). The tourism industry consists of many business activities such as: the accommodation sector, travel agencies, restaurants, bars, various activities for tourism transportation, product manufacturing activities, crafts, cultural activities, sports, different parks (archaeological, natural, national, etc.), museums etc .

But, in this study, the focus will be on the accommodation sector, travel agencies and restaurants as the main activities in Albania that use extensively information and communication technologies for business purposes. According to Nafziger (1997 and 2006), the entrepreneur can be viewed in at least four ways:

1. as the coordinator of other production resources such as – land, labor, and capital;
2. as the decision maker under uncertainty;
3. as the innovator; and

4. as the gap filler and input completer.

There is a growing body of work that shows that entrepreneurial behavior is dependent on social and economic factors. For example, countries which have healthy and diversified labor markets or stronger safety nets show a more favorable ratio of opportunity-driven rather than necessity-driven women entrepreneurs. Empirical studies suggest that men entrepreneurs possess strong negotiating skills and consensus-forming abilities (Balachandran and Sakthivelan, 2013).

The use of ICT as a marketing tool in the field of tourism services

Tourists are looking increasingly more information, faster and more reliable using ICT. These requirements are fulfilled through the provision of appropriate and accurate information. It is estimated that consumers will be the main winners of technological developments, and they will have more choices, more interactivity and more personalized products from which to choose. Never before consumers have had the power they have today and never before the consumers would not be able to influence their tourism product than in the 21-st century. (Gorica dhe Vela, 2007). This makes successful entrepreneurs to require more investments and professional staff to be engaged in daily operations related to information technology.

But both private sector and entrepreneurs should not be out of this promotional cycle tourism product. And here such a good example is the electronic marketing (e-marketing). Information is the key of tourism industry. IT has become an integral part of this industry. Using the e-marketing leads to the creation of new communication channels between companies and destination management organizations. Each future marketing strategy in the future should invest adequately in the use of new technologies. In recent years there is an increasing use of technology that allows the use of the Internet to create content and marketing. Examples of such tools are social networking sites like "Facebook" and "Twitter" travel websites such as "TripAdvisor" and travel forums such as "lonelyplanet.com". New technologies, especially the use of applications such as "blogs", "links" RSS, "mash-ups" can contribute decisively to improve customer service and provide a qualitative experience throughout the journey of visitors to the tourism destination.

METHODOLOGY

In this study is used the quantitative methods approach through the use of surveys to collect data.

Research Context. The study was conducted in five districts of Albania, particularly in Tirana, Vlora, Durres, Shkodra and Saranda. Although tourism services and related enterprises are not limited to these five districts, according to database for tourism and its development, these areas have greater development of tourism industry during last years. Sampling is based on a list of registered tourism enterprises in Albanian Tourism Association (ATA). Once the respective districts have been selected, then, it is taken a percentage from each district. As registered enterprises were not numerous, it is getting a high percentage of 50%.

Sampling. In this study, was included one of the most common models of non probability sampling called quota sampling.

Inclusion criteria. To participate in the study, participants must be over the age of 18 and had the primary responsibility to manage a tourism enterprise. They could be self owners, key managers or when they were not found, could be old employees. In other cases, have participated ICT specialists employed in the relevant enterprises.

Research tool. In order to realize the study as a research tool was used a questionnaire. At the end of data collection, the final number of questionnaires was $n = 208$.

Procedures of gathering data. The method of data collection for this study was that of a face -to-face interview.

RESULTS

Attitudes towards information technology are generally positive, but sometimes vary. In particular, negative attitudes towards information technology are associated with the old age, because technological changes are not always understandable to middle adulthood. In this study, the age of the participants was not part of the study, but their attitudes towards ICT are very important to understand if they will include / preferred ICT in their daily work or not. Specifically, 94.2% of respondents agree with the view that information technology in their company can provide valuable information, which can lead to better decisions, 55.2% disagreed with the view that information technology takes more time performing mechanical operations and does not allow enough time to carry out with other work, 96.9% were agreed or strongly agreed with the opinion that the use of information technology may improve the managerial image and 93.7% of the participants felt that information technology permitted to access, collect and share information more easily. (Table 1).

	<u>Strongly disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly agree</u>
I think that the use of information technology (ICT) in my company can provide a valuable information, which can lead to better decisions .	.5%	3.8%	1.4%	38.9%	55.3%
I think that information technology takes too much time performing mechanical actions (programming, data entry), and does not allow enough time to carry out other work.	13.9%	41.3%	9.1%	23.1%	12.5%
I thing that using IT give me the possibility to improve the managerial image.	.0%	.5%	2.9%	45.7%	51.0%
I thing that using IT let me to access, gather and share information more easily	.5%	1.9%	3.8%	37.5%	56.2%

4.1 The relation between attitudes toward ICT and it's use

The attitudes of entrepreneurs and managers to information technology could lead to greater or less use of it from the enterprise . In this study, participants had generally positive attitudes towards information technology. In the following tables will be seen the relationship between attitudes towards ICT and marketing, know - how etc.

Table 2. The relation among the attitudes toward ICT and marketing through ICT

		Marketing	Attitudes
Marketing	The correlation coefficient	1.000	.243**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	208	208

** . The correlation is statistically significant at the level 0.01 (2- two directional)

As can be seen in Table 2 , positive attitudes towards ICT have a positive relation with it's use for marketing ($r_s = .243, p < .001$).

At the same time attitudes towards ICT interact with know-how of enterprise for ICT. This can be seen in Table 3, where the correlation between two variables is $r_s = .229, p = .001$, a moderate correlation.

Table 3. Relation between attitudes towards ICT and know-how for ICT.

		Attitudes	Know- how
Attitudes	The correlation coefficient	1.000	.229**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
	N	208	208

** . The correlation is statistically significant at the level 0.01 (2- two directional)

DISCUSSION

In this study, entrepreneurs and managers of tourism enterprises generally have positive attitudes towards the use of ICT. It can be said that this is an advantage for ICT and predicts the future use of ICT in tourism enterprises in Albania. They believed that ICT can provide valuable information, that it's use improves the image and allows management to access, collect and share information more easily. At the same time they did not feel that ICT takes time from the everyday life. Also, correlations have shown that attitudes towards ICT interact positively with the use of ICT for marketing by the enterprise ($r_s = .243, p < .001$) and with the know - how ($r_s = .229, p = .001$). In this way the hypothesis of this study is confirmed. (H₁: It is suggested that positive attitudes towards ICT from managers / entrepreneurs will have a positive correlation with the use of ICT as a marketing tool and the know - how of the enterprise for ICT.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the majority of the respondents had positive attitudes about technology, but there were also those who thought negatively, but this was mainly related to their middle or adult age, which presented difficulties in terms of adapting new technologies on tourism services. The surveyed entrepreneurs think that the information obtained through the use of technology tools, leads to better decisions associated with their activity.

Also, a significant percentage of surveyed people perceive the use of information technology methods as a way to improve the image of the company management. Conducting an analysis of cost - benefit to those enterprises that consider as expensive the cost of creating and maintaining a website for their enterprise.

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