
THE INTERNET IMPACTS' ON THE TRAVEL HABITS OF THE HUNGARIAN TOURISTS

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ABSTRACT

When people travel anywhere these days the first place they look for information is the Internet. Due to this, a new demand has come into sight for complex, easily available and reliable information. The fast development of Information Technology has changed the tourism industry. New trends, new suppliers (on-line travel agencies, low-cost carriers, budget hotels etc.), 'new' well-informed customers appeared on the market.

Among the new technologies, internet-based booking systems can be considered most widespread. A new tool appeared in tourism marketing: the 'impersonal' on-line sale; on-line shopping.

As pointed out above, we have to realize that a new type of tourism, E-tourism, will replace traditional tourism; because it can satisfy the new virtual demand of our modern society.

In my primary research, I was curious to know if the travelling habits of the hungarian consumers were influenced by the above mentioned phenomena.

Keywords:E-tourism, On-line travel agency, Low-cost airline, E-ticket

INTRODUCTION

Tourism worldwide is one of the most dynamically developing sectors. The fast development of information and communication technologies has changed the tourism industry. New trends, new suppliers (on-line travel agencies, low-cost carriers, etc.), 'new' well-informed customers appeared on the market.

The expansion of the Internet has showed a new direction for stakeholders in tourism, e.g.: for the suppliers of commercial accommodations, catering units, additional products (e.g. insurance, rent-a-car services, money exchange, etc.) as well as transportation companies. A new tool appeared in tourism marketing: the 'impersonal' on-line sale; on-line shopping.

New notions emerged in the "dictionary of tourism" such as on-line travel agencies, low-cost airlines, E-tickets.

Since the emergence of the Internet, travel planning (e.g., travel information search and booking) has always been one of the main reasons that people use the Internet. (Buhalis 2003). When people travel anywhere these days the first place they look for information is the Internet. Due to this, a new demand has come into sight for complex, easily available and reliable information.

As a consequence of today's accelerated lifestyle, traveling habits have also changed.

In spite of the growth of the practical importance of tourism, the scientists have started to involve with its theory just in the 1920-30, and had tried to attempt to define the definition of tourism. Since then Plog (1972), Cohen (1972, 1974), Smith (1989) made researches on the typology of tourists, Bernecker (1962), Morrison (1992), Holloway (1994), Tasnádi (2002) involved with the motivation of the tourists, Leiperhez (1981), Kaspar (1983) Lengyel (1994) focused on the system of tourism, Puczkó - Rátz (2002) examined the impacts of tourism. But not too many researchers involved with the relation between tourism and the internet, in Hungary almost none.

The recognition of this shortage motivated me to examine the impacts of the application of the internet from the point of view of the customers.

Rationale

The goal of my empirical research is to give a complex picture of the different forms of internet's application during the leisure travel organization.

The relevance of the survey in 2009 was provided by the following factors:

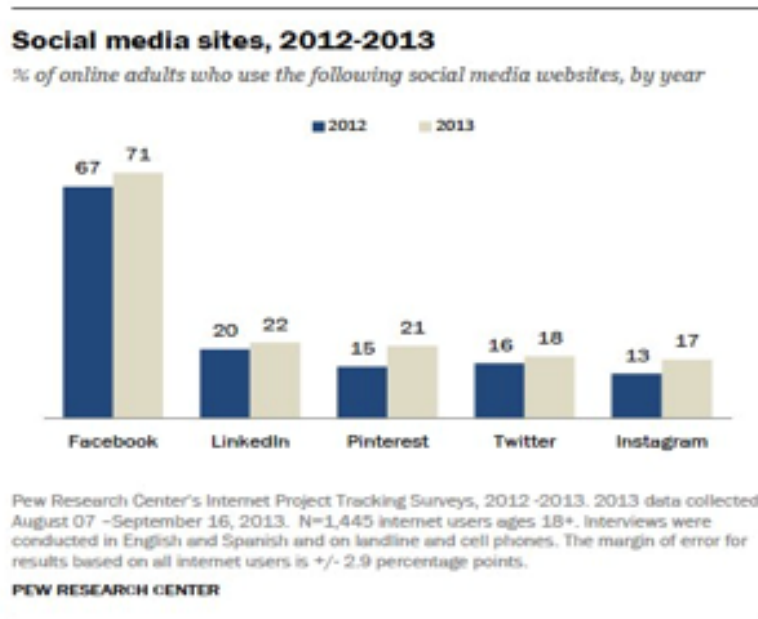
1. More and more travel agencies (60%) operate via websites in addition to "traditional" printed travel brochures in Hungary. (source: <http://www.piacprofit.hu/?r=9387>)
2. As of the beginning of January 2008 the International Air Transport Association (IATA) will launch E-tickets for "traditional" airlines. The IATA (International Air Transport Association), which represents international traditional airlines, wanted to put an end to paper-based flight tickets by the end of 2007. It means that all international airlines should have launched the e-ticket from the 1st of January 2008, but due to some technical problems it happened only from the 1st of May in Hungary. (Turizmus Trend 2006/9)
3. The number of the internet users is constantly increasing. (source: http://www.nrc.hu/hirek?&news_id=403&page=details&newsprint=1)
4. The turnover of the low-cost airlines in Hungary is growing rapidly. (source: <http://fapadosutazas.hu/cikk/?id=146&r=7>)

Due to the rapid changes of the technology, the role of the new online tools like social media and mobile applications formed a very strong influencing power on the customers' decision making procedure on travelling.

As a trend research, in 2013 I'd completed my research with the above mentioned factors.

5. The launch of **Facebook** heralded the beginning of a new concept in the online travel experience: sharing. Travellers turned to Facebook (and later Twitter, FourSquare, Pinterest, Instagram et al) as a platform to, let's face it, show off to their "friends" where they had been or were planning to go on holiday. Most consumer-facing travel companies now have a presence on at least one of these networks, allowing them to interact with customers and – still in its relative infancy – make bookings. (Kevin May 2014) (Figure 1)

Figure 2: Social media sites 2012-2013



Using the web to discover and discuss other people's experiences can help you decide where next to take a holiday. It's called "Travel 2.0" by some - a twist on Web 2.0, the name given to websites that are all about social networking, online communities, slick technologies and user-powered content. (Ryan Carson 2006) 42% of online adults use multiple social networking sites, but Facebook remains the platform of choice. (Duggan & Smith 2013)

85% of the hungarians, between the age of 18-75 who are using internet, have profile on the facebook, Based on the Research of the NRC Market Research company- among 1000 hungarian internet users.

(http://www.mmonline.hu/cikk/ezenek_a_kozossegi_oldalakon_toltjuk_az_idot2014.03.06)

6. Though not directly responsible for the evolution of online travel the launch of the Apple iPhone- giving the users access to the web via their handsets- had a huge influence on what became the start of travel services on mobile devices. (Kevin May 2014)

In the end of the year 2013, 29% (2,4 million) of the Hungarian adults-mainly young educated men from Budapest- had smartphones, based on the research of eNET-Telekom. 60% of them use the smartphones for writing emails, searching on the internet and using social media sites, mainly Facebook. (<http://www.enet.hu/hirek/mar-okostelefon-felhasznalo-a-magyar-lakossag-tobb-mint-%C2%BC-e/?lang=hu>)

Research Method

Before the beginning of my researches I had defined those goals of examination along my researches went by. To be able to fulfill my goal, with the help of secondary and primary researches I've examined: the impacts of the tools of information and communication technologies on the system of tourism, the phenomena of E-tourism in the world and Hungary, the usage of the appliances of E-marketing in tourism, and through the attitude of the customers the differences between the old and new customers, and the relations between the suppliers of the tourism industry and the new technologies.

Although the application of the internet is significant in the tourism industry, there is no relevance source (literature) in Hungary which ensure the importance of my researches.

On the demand side: the concentrated tourism market, I've chosen the quantitative research method and within that the format of the questionnaire.

In my primary research, I was curious to know if the travelling habits of the hungarian consumers were influenced by the above mentioned phenomena in the year of 2009 and whether further changes occurred in the year of 2013 compared to 2009.

Travel 2009, the 32nd Travel Expo here in Budapest, ensured the opportunity for the 40000 visitors; Travel 2013, the 36th Travel Expo ensured the opportunity for the 45000 visitors to meet numerous traditional and online travel agencies. My survey was conducted during the Travel Expo.

The questionnaire

In my research I've examined the different leisure travel organization habits of the customers, the relations between travel information, the internet and the accessibility of

the travel services, and the attitude of the customers to the off- and online travel agencies' services.

Sample from the concentrated tourism market: Travel Expo 2009. and 2013. The survey was administered among 1500 visitors between the ages of 14-70.

The structure of the questionnaire- The questionnaire of the exploratory researches of customers

The structure of the customers' questionnaire include six cascading part in the topic of the leisure travel organization from the general information about the travelling habits (like the frequency of the travels, the motivation, the type of travel organization) to the specific ones in coherence with the internet (like booking the offline and online travel agencies' services online, searching travel information on the internet, and the types of onlinepayment methods). The demographic figures (sex, age, level of education, place of the resident) can be found in the end of the questionnaire.

Focusing on the order of the questions my aspect was to start with the general travel habits and continue with the special needs and methods of travel organization particularly the role of the internet.

At the closed type of questions I've applied the nominal level of measurement. I've measured only those variations which attributes match to the exclusion of completeness and correlation.

Because of the lack of the primary researches in my project the ratio of the open questions are higher than the closed ones. I also had to explore the possible answers, because there were no predefined answers yet (I could have used). Cause of the open questions, for certain types of questions 100 different kind of answers arrived. To be able to process the data I've divided the answers into different codegroups, and made the data cleaning. The encoding was a very important issue because of the output of my researches, therefore I'd made it by myself posteriorly. Therefore in 2013 the questionnaire was simplified, and completed with some new aspects, like the effect of the economic crisis on the frequency of the travelling, and with the usage of new tools like social media and mobile applications.

Testing and proofing the questionnaires

Before the field work would have started, I've tested the questionnaires on those sophomore tourism students of our College who became the interviewers. My goal was to find and eliminate the possible problems of the questionnaire at the ambiguous or not clearly understand issues.

The questionnaire is a thorough lack of knowledge of adverse effects in the examination, such embarrassing situations, long lead time for questioning. Therefore, students from each participating in the survey that asked them to read aloud the survey questions and interpret them as well. Having thus 'interviewed' questionnaires, no one has reported any problems, the interviewers that the instructions were given to the questions verbatim in the questionnaire, as described on the basis of their research to the success of implementation.

Further on I asked the interviewers to be very polite with the consumers and appear to be well maintained and clean (Babbie (1998)). The well-prepared interviewers asked their question personally on the research fields.

The results of the field research

Henceforward I will evaluate the answers based on the topic of the leisure travel organization.

The survey was administered among 1500 (N=1500) visitors between the ages of 14-70. Demographical features (Table 1)

Table 1 Demographical features in 2009 and 2013

	2009 (number of visitors)	2013 (number of visitors)
Sex		
Women	825	903 (78)!
Men	675	597
Age		
14-18	46	38

19-25	465	471
26-35	346	326
36-50	324	366
51-65	265	263
66-	54	36
Level of Education		
Primary school	62	38
Secondary school	562	663 (101)!
College/University	808	761
Other	62	30
No answer	6	8
They are from		
Budapest	1142	952
Countryside	358	548 (190)!

As we can see it on the table, during the past 4 years the following significal changes occurred in the demographic features. The number of the women visitors increased (78), and on the other hand the number of the men visitors decreased. Focusing on the age not too many differences happened. Among the participants, the biggest difference was showed in the secondary school category in the level of education. It is also remarkable that more and more people from the countryside had participated on the Travel Expo.

General information about the travelling habbits of the hungarian travellers

Including the questions, such as: 'How often do you travel?', 'What factors influence the frequency of your travelling?', 'What is the motivation behind your trip?'(more motivations can be ticked) 'Who organises your trip?'

In 2009, 40% of the visitors travel once a year, 32% travel twice a year, 18% three times a year and the remaining 10% twelve times a year. Those who are travelling twelve times a year, mainly those, who are visiting their friends and family, who are living in the countryside. In 2013, 33% of the visitors travel once a year, 30% travel twice a year, 18% (the same in 2009) three times a year 6% twelve times a year, and the remaining 4% not even once a year. This figure (4%) was the biggest difference between 2009 and 2013.

I was interested in about the factors, which influence the frequency of the hungarian travellers' travelling. The result was not surprising. Most of our visitors can not afford travelling quite often because of the lack of money, on the other hand because of the decreased freetime, and it seems that fashion does not play any role in their frequency of travelling. In the category of Other, some consumers have mentioned the season, the mood, the concrete programme – the supply, and the good company in 2009, but in 2013 the effect of the **economic crisis** also appeared. Due to the economic crisis the Hungarian tourists either cut down the costs of travelling with choosing lower category of accommodation, or make the length of the trip shorter.

In both years the most popular motivations were: 1. Holiday- on the first place: longer period (1-2 weeks), mainly summer time, when most of the children are free of school, 2. City tours: long-week ends, many times due to the national holidays, the employees do not need to ask for days off, therefore the Hungarian travel agencies always put together special packages for this period. 3. VFR – Visiting Friends and Relatives: in Hungary everything (job opportunities, business, entertainment facilities, etc) is very much concentrated on the capital Budapest, so the result is very understandable. 4. Wellness – Hungary is very famous about her spas, thermal- and wellness treatments, and mainly during the national holidays, the tourists are very keen on these places. The other leisure motivations were: the sport, language course, and the religion, with not too many answers.

In 2009 and in 2013 as well most of the travellers organize their trips mainly themselves, secondly the travel agency follows, thirdly the family. There was no significant changes in the figures.

Specific information about the travelling habits of the Hungarian travellers in coherence with the internet

Including the questions, such as: 'If you go to a travel agency (offline), what are the services you take?' 'Do you have a favourite travel agency?', 'Do you use Internet for finding travel information?', 'If you organize your trip on your own, which websites do you use?', 'Do you read the travel Forum, when you organize your trip?', 'Have you ever ordered any tourist services through an off or on-line travel agency?'

If the Hungarians using offline travel agencies for their trips they buy the following services: 1. Accommodation, 2. Insurance, 3. Programme, 4. Flight ticket, 5. Coachticket, 6. Car rental, 7. Money exchange, 8. Package tour, 9. Railticket

Both years 75% of the travellers do not have any favourite travel agencies. The remaining 25% (mainly the age group above 50) named the well-known Hungarian travel agencies with reasons, like: reliable, well-known, reasonable prices, good standard of services, great programmes, well-prepared tour guides, good personal experiences. Most of the travellers answered their own experiences as the most important aspect here. Then it was followed by the quality of the services and then the price, and at last but not least the opinions of their friends play important influencing factors in these decision making procedures. From the answers it turned out that most of the travellers are not able to make a difference between an on-line travel agency and an off-line travel agency with web site. Unfortunately, it also turned out that the visitors did not have enough information about the national on-line travel agencies eg.: Hurranyaralunk.hu; Go.hu.

In 2009, 83% of the travellers used the Internet for finding travel information. In 2013 was not just higher this number (92%), but in this year the visitors highlighted the role of the social media, mainly Facebook, and the mobile devices as influencing factors in their decision making process. In both years the number one website among the travellers' preferences is the Google, which is followed by the different Internet portals like the www.startlap.hu especially the sites of lap.hu; and the Information providers like the www.dunakanyar.hu, or the websites of a concrete destination. Here below are the results in each category (Table 2 the websites the travellers use for finding travel information).

Table 2 The websites the travellers use for finding travel information

1. For accommodation : www.szallaskereses.hu; www.danubiushotels.hu; the websites of a concrete hotel; www.szallas.hu, the websites of a concrete city; www.hostels.com; www.hostelworld.com; www.accore.com; www.neckermann.hu; www.booking.com; www.hurranyaralunk.hu; www.expedia.hu; www.limba.com; www.hunguesthotels.hu; www.octopus.hu

2. For flight booking: www.malev.hu (2009); www.wizzair.com; www.airfrance.fr, startutazas.hu; www.skyeurope.com; www.ba.com; www.vilaglato.hu; www.easyjet.com; www.airberlin.com; www.ryanair.com; www.pelikan.hu; www.fapadosutazas.hu; www.airtours.hu

3. For sights: www.tourinform.hu; the website of a concrete country; www.itthon.hu; the website of a concrete city; www.startlap.com

4. For time

schedules: www.elvira.hu; www.volán.hu, www.menetrend.hu, www.mavstart.hu; www.bkv.hu; www.bud.hu

5. For car rental: www.hertz.com; www.avis.hu; www.foxautorent.hu

6. For other information: utazas.lap.hu;

www.világjáró.hu; www.google.hu; www.startlap.hu; www.travelport.com; www.msn.com; horvátország.lap.hu; szlovákia-sípalya.lap.hu; www.nagyutazas.hu; www.lastminute.hu; www.utazzolcson.net; www.utazasapro.hu; www.dunakanyar.hu, www.tripadvisor.com (2013)

Focusing on the airlines' websites, we can conclude that the Hungarian consumers do know many low-cost airlines, even more than traditional ones. Unfortunately, the Hungarian National Airline: MALEV bankrupt in 2012. The Internet and e-business have re-regulated the market of air transportation as well. New competitors, the low-cost carriers appeared, such as the Easyjet, Germanwings, Ryanair, Wizzair, etc. The new companies have changed the life of traditional airlines, and gained new customers. (Grotte 2008)

It was not surprising that almost everybody wrote about the websites of MAV (Hungarian State Railways Private Company by Shares) and VOLÁN (National Coach Company) in the category of time schedules.

In 2009 for the question 'Have you ever ordered any touristic services through an offline travel agency's website?' The number of the answers were quite surprising: Yes, I've already ordered: 473 visitors, No, I have not: 931 visitors, No answers: 96 visitors. In 2013, Yes, I've already ordered: 495 visitors, No, I have not: 817 visitors, No answers: 188 visitors. It seems that the Hungarians are still afraid of buying travel services online, in spite of the fact that more and more customers are using the online tools for travel organization! On the other hand, the Hungarians are still do not know the differences between the offline and online travel agency.

In 2009 52% of the travellers do read the travel Forum, 44% do not, altogether 1447 visitors answered to this question. In 2013 most of the tourists read the Tripadvisor, and some of them reading blogs as well.

Most of the travellers think that an ideal on-line travel agency has an up-to-date website, which should contain many reliable, clear information with illustrations and pictures; the work on the website should be easy to manage, eg.: to be able to pay out the services by credit card through the Internet. They believe that good price equals to good travel agency, being fast is important, and that transparency is significant.

In 2009 and 2013 for the question 'Have you ever ordered any tourist services through an on-line travel agency?(Table3)

Table 3 'Have you ever ordered any tourist services through an on-line travel agency?

Answers	2009	Visitors	2013
Yes, I have	273 – 18%!!!		840 – 56%
No, never	627		289
No, but I'm going to	538		N.A.

62 visitors did not answer at all in 2009. These are the services what the travellers have ordered. 1.Accommodation, 2.Flight ticket, 3.Insurance, 4. Programme, 5. Package tour,6. Skipass 7. Car rental. The following on-line travel agencies were named: www.hurranyaralunk.hu; www.invia.hu; www.vilaglato.hu; www.lastminute.hu, www.neckermann.hu; www.e-travel.hu; www.go.hu; www.octopustravel.com; www.interfocus.hu; www.accord-travel.ro/en/; www.nettravel.hu; www.booking.com; www.hotelclub.com

In 2013, 56% of the visitors have ordered and paid online, for travel services! Comparing to the year of 2009 it is a huge development. It means, that during the past 4 years, the visitors who said in 2009 (36%) "No, but I'm going to", started to buy travel services online. The difference between 2009 and 2013 in this case is about 38%! That also means that the Hungarian travellers are much more comfortable with the usage of the touristic services in the online environment. The other reason is the e-ticket. One of the most important changes is that the paper-based flight ticket will be replaced by the e-ticket. It is known that on a yearly basis 300 million paper-based tickets are issued, and they cost 10 USD each. On the other hand, e-tickets cost only one dollar.

The e-ticket is a special electronic code, which is sent by the airline when the traveller has booked and paid the flight ticket by credit card through the Internet. The use of e-tickets saves 3 billion dollars every year for international air transport. This special method of issuing tickets is not just cheaper, and faster than the traditional one, but it has a positive impact on the environment as well. (Horváth 2006, 2007)

The cost of tours can be high, consequently, good prices always play an important role in the planning and selection of a holiday destination. Nowadays on-line travel agencies with their good prices and special travel packages come before traditional, or off-line travel agencies in popularity.

Most off-line or traditional travel agencies have their own websites already. Although, not every traditional travel agencies' websites allow customers to 'buy', trend-predictions show that the number of 'information provider' websites decrease, and on-line sales increase.(Grotte, Veres 2009)

Conclusions

The Internet is the most important innovation since the development of the printing press (Hoffman 2000). The expression:"Global Village" describes how the globe has been contracted into a village by electric technology.(McLuhan 1964).

Tourism is very information-intensive and information is often dubbed the "life-blood" or "cement" of the industry which holds together the different producers within the travel industry - airlines, tour operators, travel agencies, attractions, car rental, cruise lines, and other supplies.(Zhenhua Liu,2000)

It is a well-known fact that the appearance of the internet has fundamentally changed the whole tourism market. New trends, new suppliers (on-line travel agencies, low-cost carriers, etc.) have showed up in the sector. The appearance of low-cost airlines in Hungary(2003), ensured the chances for those who could not afford to use this fast and comfortable means of transportation because of their low income. In my above written primary research, I was curious whether the travelling habits of the hungarian travellers have been influenced by the Internet. Here are the conclusions:

Although the tourism market has changed lately, and new suppliers offer good prices, most of the hungarian travellers still can not afford themselves more than one trip a year, because of the lack of money on the first place or the lack of freetime.

Their main motivation for travelling is naturally the holiday to relax, but they are also interested in about the different cultures and sights of a capital city, mainly it appeared among those Hungarians who ticked semi-annual at the frequency of traveling, therefore stands the city tour on the second place. Many people have friends and relatives, who are living in another city or country apart from their own, so visiting friends and relatives became the third important motivation among those who are traveling quaterly.

Because of the lack of money, most of the travellers organize their trips on their own; and do not use the services of a travel agency, but use the internet to find the tourist information. From my primary research it is also turned out, that the Hungarian travellers can not make a difference between an online travel agency and an offline travel agency with website. Furthermore, it is even more disappointing that many of the travellers have never booked any services through the internet at all.

Although, on-line tourism is getting more and more popular among the travellers, it seems that the Hungarians are still afraid of using the services of an on-line travel agency, which can be explained with the lack of money and credit card.

In the past 25 years many changes occurred in our technological environment. The appearance of the Internet was just the beginning. Due to the new tools of the online environment, we had started to manage our travellings on a different way.

We'd learned how to book accommodations online, and travellings by the websites of the Online Travel Agencies. We'd realized that paper based flight tickets no more exist, but e-ticket. We became good tour organisers by reading the travel blogs and reviews.

According to Carson (2006) in the future, we can expect to see more of these "mash-ups" - mixing maps with reviews, ratings, photos and services (car rental, hotels etc).

More applications will be built that take advantage of mobile phones.

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