

UNIVERSITY “ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI” – BITOLA

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**THE ROLE AND THE IMPACT OF MODERN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES  
IN THE PROMOTION, SALES AND QUALITY OF HOTEL SERVICES,  
CASE STUDY KOSOVO**

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*// a self-assessment of the doctoral thesis //*

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Unlike product markets, the tourism market is characterized by: strong demand dominance, high level of interpersonal relationships, demand elasticity and inelasticity, inability to store services, etc. This is exactly what directly affects the characteristic dominant position of demand in the tourism market.

Today, mostly tourists not only meet the basic offers, but also look for and expect a lot of accompanying content, which in the modern hotel industry is one of the ways to differentiate the offers. If the actors on the hotel supply side are flexible and responsive to change, if they are able to quickly adapt to the growing demands of tourists, they are more likely that the hotel company will attract more guests and achieve positive economic results.

The promotion of hotel services, thanks to modern information and communication technology, primarily the Internet and the development of Internet distribution systems and social networks, is experiencing extremely major changes. Previously, with the traditional concept, promotion was quantity-oriented, and the most common forms of promotion were television advertising, in magazines, various brochures, posters, performances at fairs, and various events and manifestations.

Today, most of the tourists who use hotel services are looking for information on the types of services, content, prices and availability of internet capacity. Classic visits to travel agencies are increasingly being replaced by: hotel websites, internet distribution systems (such as Booking.com, Expedia, Travelocity, etc.), profiles and fan sites of hotel companies on Facebook and other social networks.

Thanks to IDS and social communication networks and promotion, it becomes a two-way process in which responsibility and support are not only in hotel companies, as information providers, but also potential guests, as users who actively participate in the information process and its exchange with other potential users.

Describing its needs and perceptions of used hotel services, the service user allows the operator to see how service quality can be improved by learning more from first-hand information. Today, one of the most widespread social networks, which has the most active users is Facebook, for which we will pay special attention in one part of the research.

When it comes to Internet distribution systems (IDS), we must say that very important in the promotion of hotel services, the key advantage offered by hotel companies is the ability to sell hotel services around the world.

On the other hand, these systems have many benefits when it comes to hotel service users or tourists. Some of the key benefits, of course, are the information on the types of

services offered by the hotel, the content available, the ability to check prices and the availability of capacity, the large number of photos available, and so on.

Also, there is the possibility of booking and paying for services in the selected hotel. Due to the great popularity of IDS and the attractiveness of the topic itself, most of the research in this paper will be dedicated to IDS and their role in the work of hotels in Kosovo.

The development of tourism in Kosovo in recent years raises the question of future directions of development and ways for this branch as a whole to rise to a higher level and thus achieve the results of the most developed countries in Europe, in order to be up to date with the latest information trends.

Therefore, it is of particular importance to understand the importance and role of the promotion and sale of hotel services in the modern tourist market in Kosovo, based on above. Primarily, in this paper we will analyze the promotion of hotels in Kosovo, social networks and the sale of hotel services through Internet distribution systems.

As mentioned above, the subject of research in this paper will be focusing on:

- theoretical definition: distribution channels and promotions as instruments of the marketing mix;
- quality in the hotel industry;
- defining the system for distribution of hotel facilities over the Internet (IDS or online travel agencies);
- analysis of the promotional activities on the social network Facebook;
- analyzing the ways of selling hotel facilities;
- the relationship between direct and indirect sales;
- IDS selection criteria;
- systematic price coordination and available hotel facilities on IDS pages;
- advantages and disadvantages of cooperation with IDS;
- evaluation of the analyzed hotels on Booking.com;
- defining the target segments of the demand for analyzed hotels;
- feedback and comments on Booking.com, their impact on the quality of hotel services and market positioning;
- assessments of the importance and actual state of the attributes of the hotel product by the guests of the hotel;
- differences in the attitudes of the guest groups (segments);

- assessments of the importance and current status of the attributes of the hotel product by the hotel managers;
- comparative analysis of ratings and attitudes of guests and hotel managers;
- attitudes and assessments of the guests about the impact and accuracy of the information on the IDS sites;
- comparative analysis of the rating of the surveyed guests with the rating of the observed hotels on Booking.com.

The purpose of our research is the classification according to the achievement of scientific and social contributions. We will present the current position of hotels in Kosovo on the social network Facebook and determine the representation and importance of Internet distribution systems (IDS) in the sale of hotel services, as well as their impact on improving the quality of the hotel industry.

According to our knowledge (insight into the available literature) research of this type has not been conducted previously in our country and therefore we can expect significant scientific contribution in both theoretical and practical terms.

So, the task is to give directions for successful operation in the changed conditions through a symbiosis of science and practice. Based on the defined subject and purpose of the research, the following tasks could be identified to which this research is expected to respond:

- What is the place and role of modern information systems in the distribution of hotel services?
- What is the place and role of social media in the promotion of hotel products in Kosovo?
- What are the features and types of modern hotel information systems?
- What is the situation with the hotel industry in Kosovo?

The content processed in this doctoral dissertation is conceived in five thematic units that enable the elaboration of the materials of the separate parts of each thematic unit separately.

With the development of modern information and communication technologies, many changes have taken place in the promotion and sale of hotel services. Performance management, optimizing capacity, maintaining customer relationships and other activities take on a new look under the influence of modern technology.

Central place to this paper takes the empirical research using a questionnaire we sent to hotel managers in Kosovo, as well as guests at hotels whose answers we will learn about their views and opinions on how to sell / purchase hotel services, quality of hotel services and the application of modern information technologies.

This approach to the study of this specific issue aims to answer the question of how similar or different Kosovo is to more developed tourist countries, in terms of the action and role of modern information technologies in the promotion, sale and quality of hotel services. The application of these guidelines will be a necessity if we want Kosovo to become an attractive tourist destination in the future.

For the realization of the goal when conceptualizing the subject of the research, which is a current topic and insufficiently processed in our country, we usually are guided by the deductive method, i.e. we started from the general laws and principles from which the special ones are revealed.

During the elaboration, official data presented in all types of documents are presented, such as the reports and announcements of the international hotel associations, the Statistical Office of Kosovo, the reports of the hotels, i.e. we will analyze the most relevant data and information to confirm the real picture of the situation. relationship system. Based on that data, we will construct appropriate conclusions.

In the elaboration of the paper we will use appropriate literature from well-known experts and scientists from tourism, as well as definitions that are commented, explained and supplemented.

The appearances for which there is no official information, and which are important for perceiving the conditions and tendencies in the field of hospitality will be qualitatively analyzed, ie from the obtained knowledge we will perform those characteristics that most determine the analyzed phenomenon.

At the same time, this paper will be based mainly on the use of desk research and using empirical data and indicators that the professional literature knows. We will do some field research using the Internet as a medium that contains a lot of secondary data.

The primary data will be obtained through a field survey, i.e. a questionnaire that will be sent to the managers of all major hotels in Kosovo, but tourists who will give an opinion on the quality of services received in accommodation facilities during their stay will also be surveyed. The data obtained from the conducted survey will then be statistically processed with the help of T-test, Hi square test and Correlation Analysis.

The data obtained through the survey are of primary importance for the purposes of this paper, as we will receive them from the main institutions concerned with the research problem and those data will give us directions on which issues and problems the hotels in Kosovo face and how those problems would be overcome, all in order to more successfully implement modern internet distribution systems in hotels in Kosovo.

The basic hypothesis (H) from which this dissertation was started is that the quality, promotion and sale of hotel services largely depends on the cooperation of hotels with internet distribution systems and social media can be significantly strengthened in accordance with the comments and rating of visitors to these portals.

Based on the research hypothesis, we will set the following specific hypotheses:

- Most guests, when choosing a hotel, make decisions based on the information available on the Internet distribution systems - IDS.
- Social media is an important tool for informing and booking hotel services.

By conducting research and providing answers to the set of tasks, I hope that a solid foundation will be created for further scientific studies and practical application of the proposed models to increase the promotion of hotels in Kosovo, and thus in Kosovo as a tourist destination.

The content that will be processed in this doctoral dissertation is conceived in five thematic units that enable processing of the materials of the separate parts of each thematic unit separately.

With the development of modern information and communication technologies, many changes have taken place in the promotion and sale of hotel services. Performance management, optimizing capacity, maintaining customer relationships and other activities take on a new look under the influence of modern technology.

We will analyze that in the first chapter of the dissertation. Thus, we will focus on getting acquainted with the intelligent business systems in tourism and we will try to answer the question of how they will affect the operation of hotels in the future. In addition, this section covers factors that affect the choice of information systems in the hotel industry.

The second chapter is divided into two parts. As part of the first part, the focus of the research will be on the following activities: theoretical definition of Internet distribution

channels and promotion of hotel services through social media, design of systems for distribution of hotel services through the Internet.

In the second part of this chapter, we will first look at how e-wom is changing today's marketing approach to tourism (especially hotel) businesses and destinations themselves. The role of social media in modern tourism and hoteliers. Next, we'll look at social media classification. At the end of this section we will look at social networks, their role and the impact on the quality of hotel services.

In the third chapter, the attention will be paid to defining the quality of the tourist enterprises in general, i.e. the hotels at the level of customer satisfaction with the service. Namely, consumer orientation is a central aspect of modern management and marketing and therefore all hotel efforts must be focused on identifying and meeting the needs of consumers/tourists.

Satisfaction should be a general attitude towards the consumer, i.e. the buyer, of a certain product or service, which will be based on an emotional reaction according to the difference between what is expected and what is obtained in terms of fulfilling a goal, desire or need. We will end this section by analyzing the impact of Internet distribution systems on the quality of hotel services.

In the fourth chapter, attention is paid to the analysis of the tourist offer in Kosovo, considering the existing accommodation facilities and projecting the future needs for accommodation. Emphasis is also placed on the need to transform and create a competitive and recognizable tourist product in Kosovo.

In order to complete the question of the importance of tourism in the economic activity of Kosovo, a detailed analysis was made which shows its contribution to the overall economic activity of the country, its impact on employment and the effects it causes on balance of payments.

An important place in the last part of this chapter will be taken by the analysis of hotel management in Kosovo, taking into account the development strategy, guidelines and limiting factors. We will end this chapter by analyzing the potentials for the development of hospitality in Kosovo.

In the last fifth chapter of the doctoral dissertation we will focus more specifically and in an analytical way we will try to show the impact of modern information technologies in the promotion, sales and quality of hotel services in Kosovo.

At the end of the paper, the conclusions from the whole paper are given, abstracting the most important knowledge in theory and practice in order to see the role of information technologies in the promotion, sales and quality of hotel services.

Investing in hotel facilities (construction of new ones and renovation of existing ones) in the last few years has influenced hotels with 3, especially 4- and 5-star hotels in Kosovo today to be in a completely new light with modern style, elegant ambience and modern equipment. In this paper we have analyzed their activities on social networks, as well as the presence and importance of modern forms of distribution of hotel services over the Internet.

The results of the survey show that all 3, 4- and 5-star hotels in Kosovo do not pay much attention to promotion and sales through social networks, while the situation with IDS is slightly different.

However, there are significant differences in accessibility and activities in this area. It is an indisputable fact that these two things are very related (Hotels that actively post content allow their passengers and visitors to give the contents of the comments, while in passive hotels the situation is reversed).

Accordingly, hotels are positioned on social networks, resulting in the number of users who follow them. So, the conclusion is that social networks require investment (primarily in the form of dedicated time and activities to achieve certain effects, which become more and more obvious as time goes on).

Unlike traditional advertising (online and offline) where the effects range from the moment of payment of the advertising funds (i.e. from the beginning of the advertising), the money is not invested directly in the social networks, but the time for engaging and dedicating the daily activities on the social networks is insisted. The effects on social media are often expected after a few months.

When it comes to IDS, we have seen that the analyzed hotels use their services, ie they sell hotel services through these systems. The results of the research showed that it is very important for hotel managers that IDS, with which they cooperate, cover as much as possible and enable them to make a larger number of reservations.

As we have seen, Booking.com dominates Kosovo. Expedia is ranked second (52%) and Hotels in third. The surveyed managers, as very important opportunities offered by IDS, marked the number of realized reservations (100%), followed by market coverage (76%), followed by costs (69.4%).

In the end, they expressed their views on the biggest drawbacks of the greater use of IDS, and that is the fact that Internet distribution systems are very expensive, with high fees that bring hotels to the brink of economy. Then, as an important drawback, is the inability to communicate directly with guests and jeopardize the image with a low rating.

Based on the results obtained from the survey of guests who visited the monitored hotels, as many as 95% have heard of IDS, and 70.8% use them to inform and book hotel services, while over 50% consider them significant and important for informing and booking hotel services.

When it comes to influencing decision making, almost 90% think that other users' reviews and comments influence decision-making when choosing a hotel to stay in. The views of the guests and their assessments, comments and other information on the Booking.com website, showed that most of the respondents (93.3%) believe that they are true. Most respondents (80.5%) point out that Internet distribution systems will be used in the future.

As we have already mentioned, when it comes to the importance of the attributes of the hotel product, the largest percentage of the answers of the guests were given to the employees, followed by: comfort, cleanliness, free internet, location and content.

And when it comes to visitors' views on the actual status of the hotel's attributes (whose validity has been previously assessed) in which they are remote, they are manifested by deviations in the order and amount of the rating, in terms of validity ratings. In the first place is the content, location and free internet, while the lowest rating is comfort.

As for the opinions of hotel managers regarding the selected quality attributes, we found that the real situation is not at the level that managers think it should be. The results of the managers' answers showed that almost all the results are negative, except for the content and the location, where we have positive gaps (0.05) and (0.03) respectively, which means that managers' perceptions of the delivered service quality are higher than the importance of that attribute.

As for the other attributes, the largest gap appears in the "comfort" attribute (-0.73), then the high gap appears in the "staff" (- 0.68) and "purity" (- 0.51):

- The quality, promotion and sale of hotel services largely depends on the cooperation of hotels with Internet distribution systems and can be greatly improved according to the comments and ratings that guests leave on these portals.

- Most of the guests, when choosing the hotel, make decisions based on the information available on the Internet distribution systems.
- The managers of the analyzed hotels do not have a realistic picture of the importance and the real status of certain theaters of hotel products.
- There are significant differences in the assessments and attitudes of managers and guests on the importance and real condition of the attributes for the quality of the hotel product.

In the context of the above conclusions, we have confirmed the basic hypothesis, and that is that Internet distribution systems are an important tool for informing and booking hotel services, could contribute to increasing the quality of hotel services in Kosovo.

As for the special hypotheses, we rejected both hypotheses. Namely, we rejected the hypothesis that there are no statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the managers about the importance of the actual condition of the attributes for the quality of the hotels.

In other words, we have found that the real situation in hotels is not at the level that managers think it should be. As for the second special hypothesis that there are no statistically significant differences in the views of the guests on the importance and actual state of the attributes for the quality of the hotels, we also rejected that led us to the conclusion that the real situation in the hotels is not at the level they think they should be.

As a general conclusion, and based on the given hypothesis, as well as the special hypotheses, we can say that the scientific contribution of this research can be perceived from two aspects: theoretical and practical. From a theoretical point of view, the contribution of the research is seen in the new approach to the use of Internet distribution systems (IDS) by internal stakeholders (primarily hotel managers), which clearly shows the importance of these systems and their effect is not only on promotion. and the sale of hotel facilities, but also the delivery of quality services.

Based on the comparative analysis of the views and assessments of the segments that assessed the perceived quality of the services used by IDS, the views and assessments of the segments that we conducted directly (during the stay of the guests in hotels), obtained results that show that in this way the deviations in the quality of the services and the identification of the weak attributes (shortcomings) of the hotel product can be determined very accurately, with the removal of which the specific needs of all tourists can be more efficiently met.

When it comes to the practical contribution of research, it is seen in the analysis that can be used by hotel managers categorized with three four and five stars, in Kosovo, to improve the quality of service, and thus improve the overall operation of the hotels they manage.

Based on the results of the research with hotel guests, the experiences of the guests who have used the hotel services can be seen and they can see how much the assessments and comments of the IDS websites are, as well as based on what information they can determine. their expectations of the services they plan to use in the future.