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Hotel Internet Marketing Strategies

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Msc in E-business, Innovation Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

My thesis submitted is from the E-business, Innovation and Entrepreneurship 2016 program which takes place at the International Hellenic University.

The last few months I have gained so much from the university. I am also truly interested on what marketing strategies Greek hotel industries use.

In the very beginning there are two essential things to take into consideration. Those are the strategy and planning of what you have to do.

The Internet has rapidly changed the way people behave and the techniques that are used and in my thesis I will demonstrate techniques that hotels need to take into consideration such as PPC (Adwords), SEO, SEM (Search Engine Marketing), Remarketing and third party websites (such as booking, trivago etc). There are many success stories that take place in Greece mainly in 4 and 5 stars hotels that led to conversion rate, booking and revenue increase and at the same time to a bounce rate decrease. All these meanings are going to be covered in details.

Special thanks to my family, colleagues from IHU, and to my supervisor Dr. D. Drosos.

Keywords: Marketing strategies, Greece, hotel marketing, 4 and 5 stars hotels

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1. Introduction

As I mentioned previously the Internet has changed the way hotels act. In other words, Internet is a distribution channel. In Greece, most of the hotels, more than 93% of the total population, use the Internet in order to be more competitive.

In this paper, first of all will be analyzed the literature review identifying the basic trends and strategies in Greece using each digital marketing strategy. The literature review chapter contains the differences that exist in the hotel companies over the time and how hotels are affected by these changes. Booking.com have changed the traditional way of things and have forced industries to become digital. More than 50% of the total population books online while in the previous years only 1 out of 12 used to book and that have changed in a significant way the entire procedure. Then it will be mentioned the advantages and the challenges of Internet Marketing and how Internet is combined with a hotel industry underlying the meaning of IoT. There are many devices connected to the Internet and that forces a hotel industry to become online. The number of the devices that are connected is rising over the time period and it is estimated to be 50 billion in the next few years.

Moreover, another thing that will be examined is the statistical documents about tourism in Greece. It will be referred to the meaning of total and direct contribution to the GDP now and the forecasts for what is going to happen in the next 10 years not only in the GDP but also in the employment underlying the rankings of Greece regarding size and growth. After that and according to TripAdvisor there will be demonstrated the top 25 hotels in Greece with their trends, outlooks, challenges, highlighting the performance of Greek tourism in spite of the uncertainty due to the financial crisis.

Therefore, a SWOT Analysis will be done to demonstrate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Greek tourism and SMTEs. SMTEs play a significant role in the Greek industry because they represent 60% of the total companies. A SWOT Analysis is an essential tool to analyze the existing role of the industry and after carefully examination of the threats and opportunities to improve the company in the near future.

After the literature review chapter, then will be analyzed the importance of being online by having mobile presence. Statistics have shown that 3 out of 5 people use their cell phones for search and 80% use them to purchase. A potential guest's first contact with the hotel will highly probable is online, making digital marketing one of the most influential ways to improve financial success. Then, regarding the pricing of the hotels and in order to survive from the emerging competition both small hotels and luxury hotels need to follow some essential steps.

Furthermore, there are many hotel marketing strategies that each hotel has to incorporate. It is crucial to have their own website, SEO/SEM, social media presence, E-mail marketing and to be advertised in third party websites, etc. It will be demonstrated how these strategies are used by the hotels, why to use each strategy and which are the effects of using each one. After examining the hotel marketing strategies in general, then will be displayed the strategies that Greek hotels the most, if there is room for improvement and why Greek hotels play 'safe' and do not try to expand using as many as possible strategies.

Last but not least, the fourth chapter is about the questionnaire. The things that are going to be mentioned is the design of the questionnaire, the piloting (testing the questionnaire for potential problems or misunderstandings), the sample, the data collection (from which geographical area and how many people responded to the questionnaire) and the method (Likert type questions, multiple choice, etc.). The main core of the questionnaire would be to study the extent to which consumers are influenced by online reviews in order to book accommodation online and what factors are the ones that ultimately affect them for reading the online reviews and what are the correlations between those things. So, the results and the findings of

the study are going to be covered in details referring also to the correlations between the results.

Finally, the conclusion which is the last chapter will briefly explain the inference of channels that hotels use in Greece and this will be evaluated. Last but not least, the results of the research questions are going to be covered in details.

2. Literature Review

The literature review chapter probes the history of tourism and hotel industry, identifying the basic trends and strategies in Greece using each digital marketing strategy.

2.1 Changes in the Hotel Industry

It is believed that many things are going to change in 2020. Digital technologies are changing being more customers centric. Consumers are also changing at the same time. It is said that the main consumer market in 2020 will become the digital natives who really like local experience. The future of hotel industry will be the personalization. Consumers expect hotels to give them many personalized services. So, the most important element are the user-friendly applications that allow mobile check in while at the same time almost half of the millennial agree that when apps do that they are more keen on to return. It is believed that until 2017 there will be a huge change with the data analytics in the hotel sector. Most hotels until now are not that ready for the digital era which is going to make things differently. It is high important for them to hire data scientists, social media experts and more.

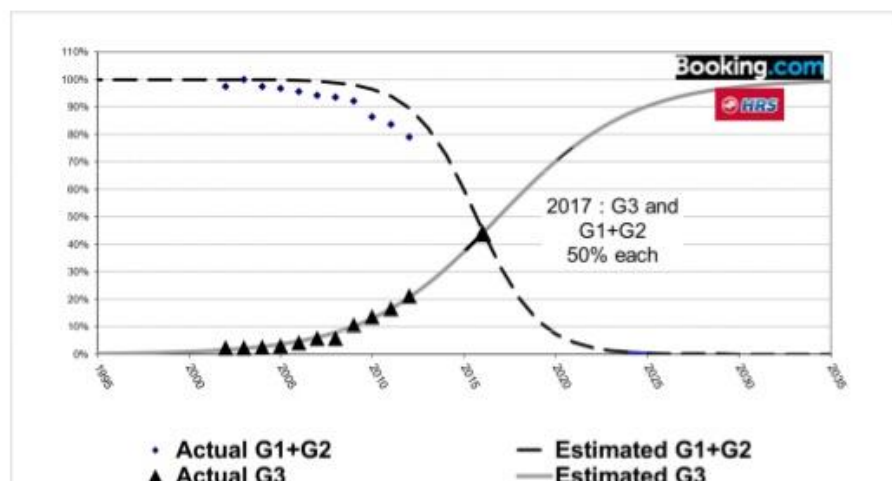
Researchers have shown that 30% of the hoteliers are planning to hire people especially for social media purposes. In the near future, hotels will understand who the customers are and what they are seeking for and then they will make their businesses more customers centric. The most important factor for success in the hotel industry is for hotels to communicate to their customers through mobile, social media and send them messages more effectively in order to remain competitive in the next few years.

2.2 How Internet has changed hotels

According to the Cornell University, there are new and old players that make a try to gain control of the distribution channels. There exist third-party websites (Booking) and traditional travel agencies. Most of the hotel owners try to force people book online from their webpage but most of the times they cannot achieve that because booking and other T-P websites have the knowhow to do that by their own. Also, travel agencies have developed valuable strategies of providing additional services to their customers. Because of the Internet, electronic hotel distribution makes booking more efficient than any other approach especially the last years. In 2002, 1 out of 12 people used to book online but in 2015 more than 60 % book online. That makes the marketing strategy of a hotel the most necessary tool in the competitive environment.

Future Evolution of Distribution Channels: a Simulation Approach for Switzerland

Hes·so VALAIS WALLIS
Haute école de Gestion & Tourisme
Hochschule für Wirtschaft & Tourismus



Source: Schegg & Scaglione (2014). Substitution effects across hotel distribution channels. ENTER 2014



2.3 Advantages and Challenges of Internet Marketing

The Internet gives the opportunity of getting closer to the customers. There are many advertising and marketing opportunities. Internet provides fast ways to communicate and eliminates costs making them close to zero. Because of the fact that the Internet works in the cyberspace we can say that there are no borders either geographical or even national.

There are also some challenges of Internet marketing that are going to be shown in the near future. The most important is that it affects consumers' decisions. Internet can force people either to buy online or to do some things that would not have happened otherwise. For example, if we take TripAdvisor we observe consumers can find whatever they want about everyone, opinions and advices from other consumers on what to do. Products and services can be either criticised or praised if they are well or not.

In order to deal with that issue, it is important to make customers feel that they are necessary for the online buying process by taking care of their opinions and by building strong relationships with them because they consist the main core of the business, not only in the past but also nowadays.

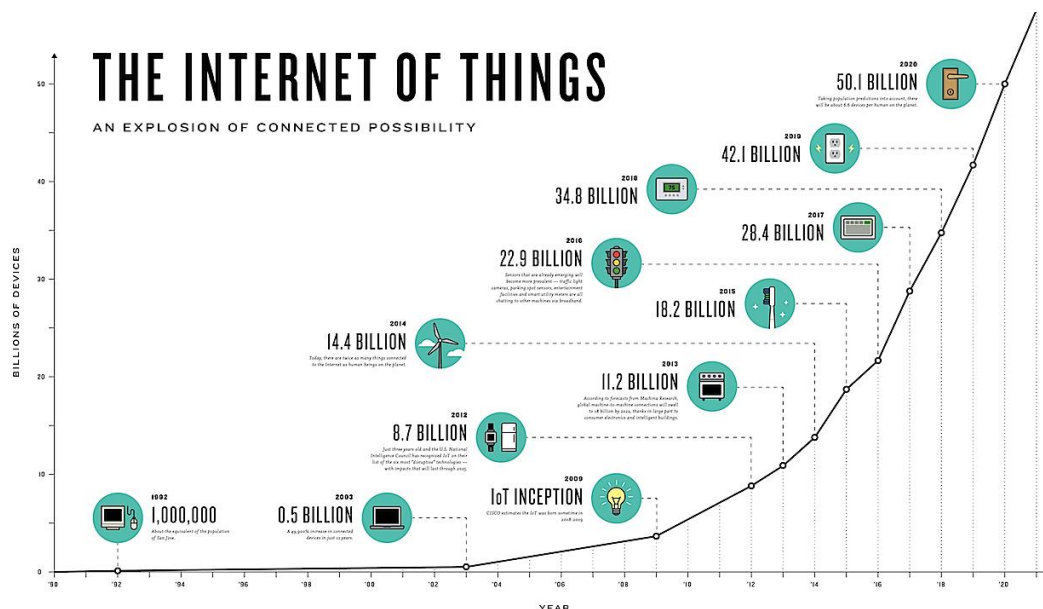
2.3.1 Tourism and Hotel Industry

Small businesses have been far away from big ones because of the financials. The marketing which is treated as a strategy plays a significant role. It is certainly believed that tourism is good worldwide. The number of new destinations has raised a lot. Due to the competition it's extremely hard to incorporate a technique to follow because the business environment is fully complex. That means that there are very different profiles between segments that each one needs to be reached in a

different and specific way. Apart from these things, the hotel industry can lead to more jobs which can also lead to higher growth.

2.3.2 Hotel Industry and the Internet

Many changes have occurred in the hospitality sector. Not only new technologies but also new competitors have risen. That kind of changes not only causes threats but they can also bring opportunities. According to the SWOT Analysis, there are new players, new tools, and of course new risks and opportunities. All these things affect the travel and hotel companies in many ways.



A research has proven that in 2013 there was one device connected to the internet per person on earth. It was predicted that in four years from now there will be a 90% increase in that number. Right now there are 80 devices connected to the internet every second but we will see this figure rise to more than 250 devices connected to the internet every second in a few years from now. This is a significant change.

To sum up, the two critical components of travel and IoT are mobility and convenience. As I mentioned previously in a very detailed way, when we talk about convenience we mean convenience about the customer. Consumers are the ones that are going to use the services so they need to feel very comfortable when they use them.

2.4 Tourism Sector in Greece

According to the Authority of travelling, the travel and tourism sector had a huge income of trillion US \$ and created million of jobs in 2014. The field of travelling is growing at a very fast rate each year. The expansion is predicted to continue being much stronger than the last year.

Greece

2015 ANNUAL RESEARCH: KEY FACTS¹

GDP: DIRECT CONTRIBUTION

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was EUR11.8bn (7.0% of total GDP) in 2014, and is forecast to rise by 3.6% in 2015, and to rise by 3.6% pa, from 2015-2025, to EUR17.5bn (7.9% of total GDP) in 2025.

GDP: TOTAL CONTRIBUTION

The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was EUR29.4bn (17.3% of GDP) in 2014, and is expected to rise by 3.2% in 2015, and to rise by 3.7% pa to EUR43.8bn (19.8% of GDP) in 2025.

EMPLOYMENT: DIRECT CONTRIBUTION

In 2014 Travel & Tourism directly supported 340,500 jobs (9.4% of total employment). This is expected to rise by 3.8% in 2015 and rise by 2.4% pa to 446,000 jobs (10.4% of total employment) in 2025.

EMPLOYMENT: TOTAL CONTRIBUTION

In 2014, the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 19.4% of total employment (700,000 jobs). This is expected to rise by 3.9% in 2015 to 727,000 jobs and rise by 2.7% pa to 951,000 jobs in 2025 (22.2% of total).

VISITOR EXPORTS

Visitor exports generated EUR12.2bn (24.5% of total exports) in 2014. This is forecast to grow by 2.1% in 2015, and grow by 3.0% pa, from 2015-2025, to EUR16.7bn in 2025 (21.4% of total).

INVESTMENT

Travel & Tourism investment in 2014 was EUR2.8bn, or 13.7% of total investment. It should rise by 3.6% in 2015, and rise by 4.7% pa over the next ten years to EUR4.4bn in 2025 (14.2% of total).

¹All values are in constant 2014 prices & exchange rates

2015
forecast



WORLD RANKING (OUT OF 184 COUNTRIES):

Relative importance of Travel & Tourism's total contribution to GDP

29

ABSOLUTE
Size in 2014

41

RELATIVE SIZE
Contribution to GDP in 2014

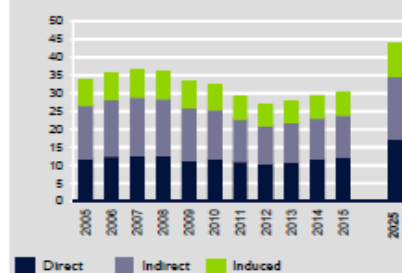
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GROWTH
2015 forecast

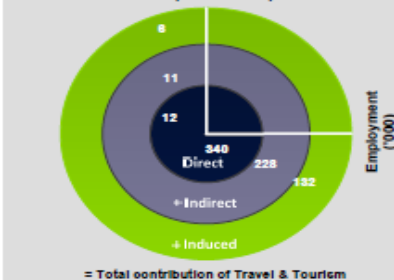
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LONG-TERM GROWTH
Forecast 2015-2025

Total Contribution of
Travel & Tourism to GDP
2014 EURbn



Breakdown of Travel & Tourism's Total
Contribution to GDP and Employment 2014



Source: WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015

As it shown in the previous figure, from the 2015 annual research it is proven that the total contribution of travel and tourism industry in Greece was 17.3 % of the GDP in 2014 in other words 11.8 billion Euros contribution. In the next few years it is expected to be a growth in the employment. Visitors from other countries generated 12.2 billion Euros which is the 24.5 % of the total exports. Greece is taking better and better positions in the world ranking (out of 184 countries). Right now the tourism

sector is the number 29 in size in the world. The forecasts predict that in 2025 there will be a huge increase to the GDP of the travel and tourism sector. While until now and for the last 10 years is almost 30 %, it is predicted to be more than 45% in the 2025.

Summary Tables: Estimates & Forecasts

	2014 US\$mn ¹	2014 % of total	2015 Growth ²	US\$mn ¹	2025 % of total	Growth ³
Greece						
Direct contribution to GDP	15,724.3	7.0	3.6	23,259.6	7.9	3.6
Total contribution to GDP	39,054.9	17.3	3.2	58,246.6	19.8	3.7
Direct contribution to employment ⁴	340.3	9.4	3.8	445.6	10.4	2.4
Total contribution to employment ⁴	699.9	19.4	3.9	951.2	22.2	2.7
Visitor exports	16,951.0	20.4	6.2	27,296.2	18.6	4.2
Domestic spending	12,216.5	5.4	-0.6	15,072.6	5.1	2.2
Leisure spending	27,455.5	6.6	4.8	41,615.8	7.3	3.8
Business spending	1,711.9	0.4	3.3	3,391.3	0.6	6.7
Capital Investment	3,666.0	13.7	3.6	5,919.8	14.2	4.5

¹2014 constant prices & exchange rates; ²2015 real growth adjusted for inflation (%); ³2015-2025 annualised real growth adjusted for inflation (%); ⁴'000 jobs

	2014 US\$bn ¹	2014 % of total	2015 Growth ²	US\$bn ¹	2025 % of total	Growth ³
Europe						
Direct contribution to GDP	779.7	3.4	2.7	1,057.7	3.6	2.8
Total contribution to GDP	2,136.0	9.2	2.4	2,833.1	9.8	2.6
Direct contribution to employment ⁴	13,975	3.6	2.1	16,668	4.1	1.6
Total contribution to employment ⁴	35,214	9.0	1.5	40,094	9.9	1.2
Visitor exports	568.0	5.6	3.4	851.5	5.8	3.8
Domestic spending	1,162.5	5.0	1.9	1,476.4	5.1	2.2
Leisure spending	1,344.6	2.6	2.4	1,819.2	2.8	2.8
Business spending	385.8	0.7	2.6	511.3	0.8	2.6
Capital Investment	215.1	4.7	2.4	301.7	5.0	3.2

¹2014 constant prices & exchange rates; ²2015 real growth adjusted for inflation (%); ³2015-2025 annualised real growth adjusted for inflation (%); ⁴'000 jobs

	2014 US\$bn ¹	2014 % of total	2015 Growth ²	US\$bn ¹	2025 % of total	Growth ³
Worldwide						
Direct contribution to GDP	2,364.8	3.1	3.7	3,593.2	3.3	3.9
Total contribution to GDP	7,580.9	9.8	3.7	11,381.9	10.5	3.8
Direct contribution to employment ⁴	105,408	3.6	2.0	130,694	3.9	2.0
Total contribution to employment ⁴	276,845	9.4	2.6	356,911	10.7	2.3
Visitor exports	1,383.8	5.7	2.8	2,140.1	5.6	4.2
Domestic spending	3,642.1	4.7	3.7	5,465.0	5.0	3.8
Leisure spending	3,850.2	2.3	3.3	5,928.8	2.5	4.1
Business spending	1,175.7	0.7	4.0	1,679.0	0.7	3.2
Capital Investment	814.4	4.3	4.8	1,336.4	4.9	4.6

¹2014 constant prices & exchange rates; ²2015 real growth adjusted for inflation (%); ³2015-2025 annualised real growth adjusted for inflation (%); ⁴'000 jobs

% of total refers to each indicator's share of the relevant whole economy indicator such as GDP and employment. Visitor exports is shown relative to total exports of goods and Domestic spending is expressed relative to whole economy GDP. For leisure and business spending, their direct contribution to Travel & Tourism GDP is calculated as a share of whole economy GDP (the sum of these shares equals the direct contribution). Investment is relative to whole economy investment.

Source: WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015

What we actually observe from the table Estimates and Forecasts is that the forecasts in Greece for the next 10 years are very optimistic and that are going to give Greece more income and at the same time to increase the % of GDP. Greece increases in the percentages for the next year is almost 3.5 % in each sector. Not only will the direct contribution of GDP increase but also the total contribution. This is going to increase the employment and create many vacancies. There will also be a significant increase in the time people are going to spend for vacations and especially for those who are businessman. Greece has higher proportions in each sector than the other European countries. The sector that is going to have much more growth is the visitor exports, spent in a country by its residents and this is going to happen because the time that people spend in other countries have been much higher. If Europe and let alone Greece represents a small sample, then the worldwide results have also a significant impact. The parameter that is going to be increased the most, by 5%, is the capital investment.

2.5 Top 25 Hotels in Greece in 2015

According to TripAdvisor which travellers from all over the world share the experience they get, the top 25 hotels in Greece are the following.

- 1. Lindos Blu (Rhodes)**
- 2. Sani Asterias Suites (Chalkidiki)**
- 3. Sani Beach Hotel (Chalkidiki)**
- 4. Trapezaki Bay Hotel (Kefallonia)**
- 5. Canaves Oia Hotel (Oia)**

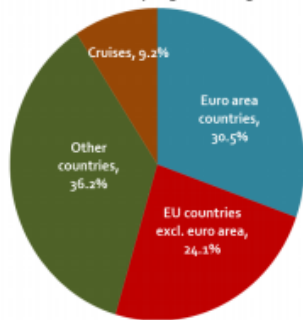
6. **Hotel Ammos (Chania)**
7. **Myconian Villa Collection (Mykonos)**
8. **Porto Sani Village (Chalkidiki)**
9. **Elite Suites by Amathus Beach (Rhodes)**
10. **Lindos Mare Hotel (Rhodes)**
11. **Saint Andrea Seaside Resort (Paros)**
12. **Vencia Hotel (Mykonos)**
13. **Atlantica Kalliston Resort & Spa (Chania)**
14. **The Magnolia Resort (Kefallonia)**
15. **Atrium Prestige Thalasso Spa Resort & Villas (Rhodes)**
16. **Atrium Platinum Hotel (Rhodes)**
17. **Bourtzi Boutique Hotel (Skiathos)**
18. **Hotel Kouros (Mykonos)**
19. **Ikos Oceania (Chalkidiki)**
20. **Yiannaki Hotel (Mykonos)**
21. **Avithos Resort (Kefallonia)**
22. **Apollonion Resort & Spa (Kefallonia)**
23. **Hotel Achtis (Chalkidiki)**
24. **Bellonias Villas (Santorini)**
25. **Regina Dell Acqua Resort (Kefallonia)**

After carefully examination of the top 25 hotels we observe that all of them have a website. Most of them have the same simple but useful template. All the websites have images that change when someone leans on the image or after some seconds without even scrolling the website. By useful template we mean that almost all of them have usability elements. Users can book online in a few minutes. They just put the date that they are going to visit the hotel, the nights, the rooms and if they are going to be any children with them. Then they can book from the available options either the cheapest solution or a solution that fits them (i.e. family rooms). Many websites need to pay before visiting the hotel while others just need to keep the credit card details. Almost all of the hotels that are previously mentioned have accounts everywhere, for example Face book, Twitter etc. This happens because they want to increase traffic and to reach wider audience. Last but not least, a very important element that most of the hotels offer is the ability to book a room that is in an offer. People are driven by the need of a cheap solution and they tend to search for offers by using the keywords i.e. “cheap hotels” so those who plan for the hotel’s digital marketing strategy need to be very careful.

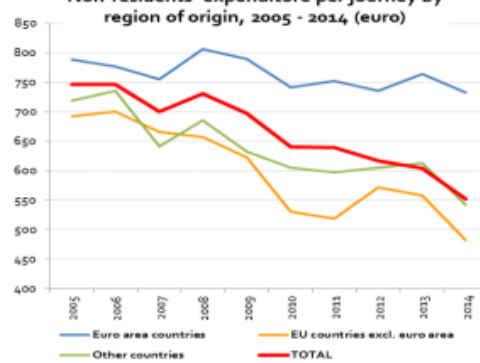
2.6 Greek tourism sector: recent trends, outlook and challenges

Eurobank research, which took place in 2015, discusses the importance of hotel sector to the Greek economy based on its contribution to GDP and employment and presents the significance of the sector’s competitive position. The key findings of the report were that Greek hotel industry had a strong performance in 2014 with a significant contribution to the economy and a good competitive position which needs to be preserved.

Share of inbound travelers by region of origin in 2014

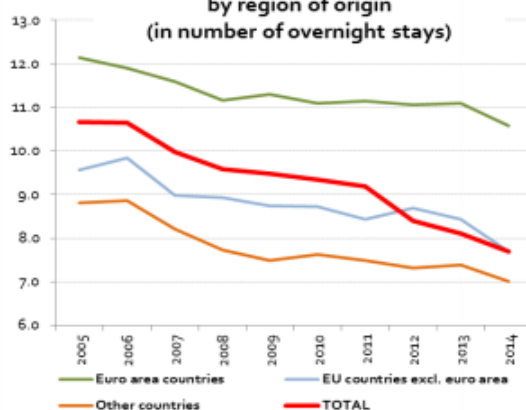


Non-residents' expenditure per journey by region of origin, 2005 - 2014 (euro)

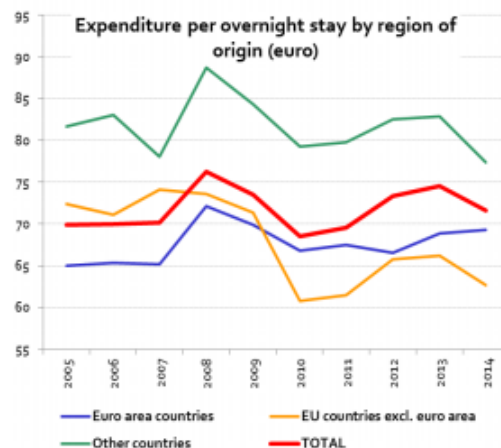


First of all, regarding the performance of the tourism sector we have to consider the balance of travel services. The surplus of the balance of travel services in 2014 reached 11.31 million Euros which is significantly higher than it was the previous year, 10.3 million Euros (an increase of almost 10%). Also, as we can see from the figure the total travellers to Greece in 2014 increased by 20.7 % compared to 2013. Not only travellers from European Union increased, but also travellers from outside EU had a raise and that is very important regarding the income that hotels gain. Moreover, based on the data from Greece main airports like Athens, Thessaloniki, Rhodes, Santorini , Mykonos e.g. international tourist arrivals increased by 15% compared to the same period in 2013.

Non-residents' average duration of stay by region of origin (in number of overnight stays)



Expenditure per overnight stay by region of origin (euro)



From the figure above, we observe that expenditure per journey has declined not only in Greece but also in the whole European Union by almost 4%. Apart from the expenditure per journey, another parameter that decreased was the average duration per journey. From 7.7 overnights in 2014, there was a decrease of 5% compared to 2013. This negative development is attributed to the significant rise in arrivals from countries outside the EU, which have a shorter average duration per journey and expenditure per overnight stay.

According to the data from SETE (Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises) the direct contribution of tourism to the Greek economy was amounted to 9% of the GDP. Tourism is a significant source of income for Greece that contributes significantly to the balance of payments and supports many vacancies regarding the employment sector. It creates many jobs and in the near future it's going to create much more vacancies because there will be a need of people who know how to promote the industry.

Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report			
Country	Ranking 2015	Ranking 2013	Ranking 2011
Spain	1	4	8
Italy	8	26	27
Portugal	15	20	18
Greece	31	32	29
Croatia	33	35	34
Cyprus	36	29	24
Turkey	44	46	50
Egypt	83	85	75

Considering the previous table Greece is ranked in the first one third which is better than the 32nd position in 2013. Greece fares better than some of its competitors but stacks behind others who did better in 2015. For instance Spain was 1st, while in 2013 was 4th. Each country's ranking is the result of a combination of parameters that show how well each country performs in a number of areas that define a destination's tourism attractiveness.

To sum up, the Greek economy relies much on the tourism sector. The other sectors are not following the same path as the tourism sector so Greece has to remain competitive but many actions should be considered regarding the economic uncertainty.

2.7 SWOT analysis

It is necessary to understand better the competitiveness of the Greek hospitality industry by providing an analysis of the threats, opportunities, weaknesses and risks.

<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility • Tailor-made product delivery • Entrepreneurial activity • Family involvement • Natural and cultural resources • Strong local character • Personalised relationships • Labour loyalty and low turnover 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management • Marketing • Information technologies illiteracy • Dependence upon tour operators • Supporting markets • Lack of economies of scale • Human resources management • Education and training • Transportation and accessibility • Financial management and resources • Seasonality • Lack of standardisation • Lack of quality assurances
<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Union support • European redistribution of labour • Increase in tourism demand size • Trends in tourism demand • Low cost of living in periphery • Information technology • Infrastructure development • Transportation • Olympic Games 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental degradation • Concentration and globalisation • Oversupply • Lack of visibility in CRSs • Infrastructure • Wars/terrorism • Political intervention

Source: Adapted from Buhalis 1991: 60c and Cooper and Buhalis 1992: 108

As we can see from the figure here are the four elements of the SWOT analysis. There are important weaknesses mainly regarding marketing and management while the strengths are not that enough as the weaknesses with the most important one being the flexibility and also the family involvement because most of the companies in Greece are family companies. There is a huge opportunity given the fact that the European Union can support the Greek hotel companies but there is a need of environmental degradation and of course to improve the infrastructure.

3. Hotel Internet Marketing Strategies

3.1 Digital Marketing Trends of 2015



The top trends are the following.

Having mobile presence is the most common trend. More than 80 % of the total population on Earth uses a mobile phone. Before a few years it was difficult to think what was going to happen the last years. People from now on, can do much more things with their cell phones, they can even buy online. So, having mobile presence for a hotel is crucial especially the last few years.

The website of a hotel, in other words the local presence must be user friendly. That means that the consumer has to find easily whatever one needs and to proceed with buying whatever one thinks it's necessary.

Social media are also very important for a hotel. Social media can increase brand awareness and make one hotel industry known to more and more people. Using

images and videos are also essential because they can give a clear image to the potential consumer.

When it comes to the content marketing we mean about the customer journey. Regarding the customer journey Google provides a tool which is called Customer journey where people can see where their company belongs. For instance, one puts the size of the company and the area of the company and one can see very interesting details.

Regarding the user experience it is crucial to have a website with images, blogs and most importantly to scale well in terms of speed and performance. The web pages can be tracked and checked if they perform good enough. Banners are not that accepted to consumers.

Paid search presence such as SEO and SEM are very important for a hotel industry because hoteliers need to promote their business so they have to pay in order to increase visibility and awareness because they want more customers. The most known way for paid search presence is the pay per click (PPC) and the company gets charged when one clicks the advertising.

Moreover, hotels should tap into this journey and personalize as much as possible the content. ROI can be used in every channel due to the fact that is new innovations in the digital tracking software. Hotels need to understand the conversion path, attribute ROI, and see the value of each touch point.

Last but not least, in hospitality, (Ad words/Pay per click) are connected to the social media i.e. Facebook and are designed for conversion (in a usable way). Hoteliers can gain competitive advantage for the business. Google has also launched the useful

tool that helps every single business to understand on what channel they should focus on in order to attract more and more customers. If they do it so, the hoteliers and the company will gain enough.

3.2 Importance of Digital Marketing in a hotel's Marketing Strategy

First of all, more than 90 % of all travel purchases begin online. That means that a potential guest's first contact with the hotel will probably be online, making digital marketing one of the most influential ways to improve financial success. Many hoteliers use ineffective tactics. They rely only on online travel agencies and third party booking channels which is a very costly mistake and they do not use direct marketing(SEO,SEM e.g.). There are many things and technologies that a hotel industry can rely on, each one offering different feature, different benefits and of course different pricing. For example, hotels with very limited resources should look for a service provider that can manage all of the digital marketing tasks. When a hotel implements a new digital marketing solution the results are completely dependent on the specific features offered in the technology chosen.



As we can see from the figure, digital marketing contains all these elements. We are in the era of technology. People tend to search for hotels using their mobile phones. It is crucial for a hotel to have online presence in almost all social media. Social media will increase traffic. SEM and SEO are also going to increase traffic by making the hotel industry more visible to the customers. It is very important to implement as many things as possible from those who are in the figure above. Things have changed and digital marketing and online presence are essential for a hotel. Digital marketing takes into consideration the feedback of the customers and uses a more personalized way to convince people to book online. Hotels must change direction and use except for traditional marketing, digital marketing too.

3.3 Essential Hotel Marketing Strategies

According to Word Stream (Online Advertising Made Easy) there are many hotel marketing strategies that will be very successful if hotel companies follow them.

First of all, it's of high importance to use the Ad Words' Hotel Ads. This is some very painful for the hoteliers, because they need to pay, but it's one of the most important that they have to use.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "san diego hotels". The search bar at the top contains the text "san diego hotels" and a blue search button. Below the search bar, there are tabs for "Web", "Images", "Maps", "Shopping", and "More". The search results show "About 69,900,000 results (0.40 seconds)".

Under the "Web" tab, there are several advertisements:

- 175 San Diego CA Hotels - Half-Price Hotels - booking.com**
www.booking.com/San-Diego-Hotels
★★★★★ 2,006 reviews for booking.com
Book your Hotel in San Diego CA
Most Popular Hotels | Best Reviewed Hotels
Budget Hotels | Luxury Hotels
- San Diego CA Hotels - Best Hotel Prices Guaranteed - Expedia.com**
www.expedia.com/San_Diego_Hotels
★★★★★ 17,844 reviews for expedia.com
Choose From 400+ San Diego Hotels
Expedia has 1,248,287 followers on Google+
Popular Hotels - Highest Rated Hotels - Cheap Hotels - Luxury Hotels

Below the advertisements, there is a section titled "Hotels in San Diego, CA on Google" with a "Sponsored" label. It contains a table of hotel listings:

Price	Hotel Name	Star Rating	Score	Reviews
\$55	500 West Hotel	2-star	Score: 23 / 30	168 Google reviews
\$127	Embassy Suites San Diego Ba...	3-star	Score: 24 / 30	125 Google reviews
\$143	Omni San Diego Hotel	4-star	Score: 24 / 30	195 Google reviews
\$159	THE US GRANT	5-star	Score: 23 / 30	161 Google reviews

Below the table, there is another advertisement for "San Diego Hotels" from TripAdvisor:

San Diego Hotels: Compare 270 Hotels in San Diego with 73,968 ...
www.tripadvisor.com/Hotels-g60750-San_Diego_California-Hotels.html
★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - Review by TripAdvisor Travelers' Score

On the right side of the search results, there is a vertical advertisement for "Omni" hotels, showing a photo of a hotel building and the text "Omni". Below this, there is a section titled "Ads" with more hotel-related advertisements, including "San Diego hotels" and "Deals in San Diego".

Hotel ads become easier for them to choose from a list of many choices. Google is the place that most travelers start their hotel booking process. They visit Google, and then they type the name of the place or the area that they are going to visit. If a hotel company chooses the Ad words – Pay per click advertising then the name of

the hotel will be displayed in the first results which are called paid results. This is going to increase traffic so that more and more customers can first visit the site and then choose or not to stay in this hotel.

Apart from the paid results which are Ad Words - Pay per click there are also the organic results (SEO). The SEO increases awareness and visibility. The market is really competitive, so hoteliers need to use all the tools that are available for promotion. The SEO method has positive results because people tend not to move further than the first page when they are searching for something and SEO is presented only in the first page of the Google search engine. That makes the hotel businesses to try to get a top rank position on the search engine. In order to achieve this goal, they need to incorporate SEO and of course to be located in the first page of search engine result and it would be easier for someone to try to find this particular good hotel using a particular keyword.

In the previous figure there are the Ad Words – Pay per click in the first two results which are the paid results and in the next two are the SEO results which are the organic.

Another very crucial marketing strategy is to be advertised on social media. PPC is important as a marketing tool but paid social media advertising for example Facebook advertising is a huge opportunity because people can be reached easily because they tend to search. The biggest advantage of social campaigns is that it's significantly inexpensive in contrast to any other type of

advertising.

**Sea Watch Resort**
Sponsored · 

Like Page

Sign Up & Enter to Win a 4 day stay in an Oceanfront 3 Bedroom Condo at Sea Watch Resort!



ENTER for a chance to
WIN
4 day 3 night VACATION at
Sea Watch Resort!

FREE Oceanfront Vacation!

WWW.SEAWATCHRESORT.COM

Sign Up

Like · Comment · Share ·  46  7  31

This is a Facebook ad that has an impact on many people that want to participate in a competition in order to win vacation at a sea watch resort. It's a very clever way of getting clicks. People love to take place in competitions and to win prizes. The sign up button means that Sea Watch Resort keeps the details of people who have signed up and uses them as a database or in order to send those e-mails with newsletters e.g.

It is also crucial to engage with guests on social media. People want to feel valued, they do not want to be "just" another customer, and if a hotel company takes the time to engage with customers on social media makes the business more responsive, approachable and serious. One hotel marketing strategy that hotels should also take into consideration is the use of remarketing. Statistics have proved that there are many companies that do not use remarketing. Hotel companies do spend all the time money and effort but if they do not use this strategy then the awareness would

not be that. People that have been noticed ads from a website after visiting the website; they have probably been targeted by a remarketing campaign. This leads to better conversion rates but it's a much longer process.



Although people tend to ignore remarketing it's important because it leads to better conversion rates and increases website traffic.

While Facebook is very useful, the main centre of the business should be the website not the social media accounts.

Last but not least, it is essential to be listed in platforms such as tripadvisor.com or booking.com. Trip advisor and Booking are some of the leading websites on the Internet. Every serious hotel company should be promoted and advertised in those two third party websites. There are also available some paid listings. The main group of people that it attracts is the overseas visitors because it's their first step to use these platforms when they are doing travel research.

Proposals for choosing the best Marketing Strategy in Greece

One of the strategies that must be used by the hotels in Greece is the price for seasonality. The main discounts that hotels offer are mainly in the Christmas season because they do not have that enough tourists. During the summer season, hotels have higher prices because the demand is very high. This strategy is making a benchmarking, in other words it checks the prices of the competitors and then one chooses how to do the price policy of one's company.

3.3.1 Clever pricing strategies for Small Hotels

In order to survive from the emerging competition, small hotels need to follow some essential steps. First of all, it's of high priority to match the price with the competitors. Use of the Internet is very important in the very first steps of the industry. It is necessary to do benchmarking, to check what other competitors do, how they price their products and services and what digital marketing strategy they choose to follow. There is also a clever pricing strategy called psychological pricing. Setting the rates at an unrounded price for example putting 99 Euros instead of 100 Euros attracts more and more people. People are also driven by the need of cheaper prices. A small hotel should price the rooms close to the competitors' prices. Furthermore, offering the hotels rooms at a lowest price would be a short term strategy but it would increase raise awareness.

Small hotel owners want their business to thrive and to compete in an already very competitive environment so it is essential for them to use all the clever pricing strategies that are available.

3.3.2 Clever pricing strategies for 5 star Hotels

Regarding the luxury market, the first and the most important step is that the strategy should be extremely close to the client. After carefully examination of the client needs there are three possible strategies, according to Vincent Bastien, that 5 star hotels use, luxury, fashion and premium. While in the eyes of consumers it does not change that much, there is a huge difference between these strategies. The luxury strategy aims to attract clients that have the money and the power to buy luxury services, the fashion strategy is about being fashionable or in more simple words, up to date by spending much money. There are rare successful examples in other markets. Companies such as Apple and Nespresso have demonstrated that and that makes this model very successful

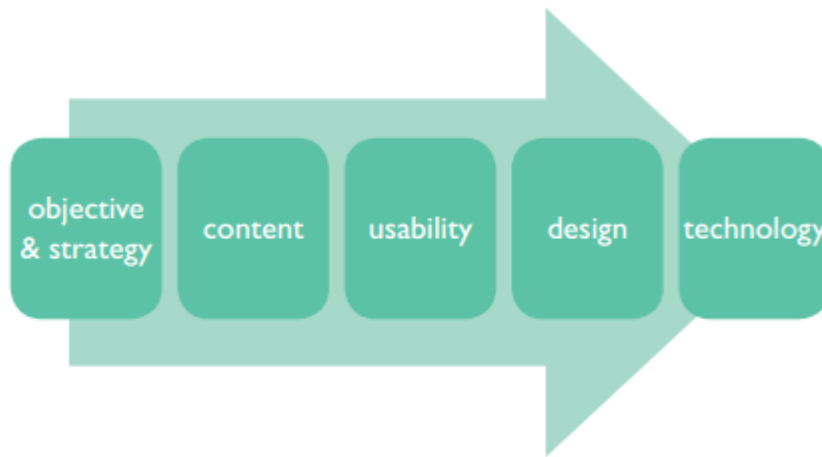
Luxury hotels owners need to understand when promotions are necessary and which strategy they should choose and then to enhance them carefully according to customer requirements. It is believed that customers know what they want and which channels to use to get that so the correct strategy is necessary to be implemented on time to fulfil the consumer's needs.

3.4 Digital Marketing Strategies in Greece

When a hotel understands the online marketing strategies that exist, it has to follow those who are closer to get more results and of course more customers.



The website is one of the most important tools for a hotel industry. Consumers nowadays most often go to the website to see how business and products are like. A poor website (without images, without clear target) can probably force a customer not to visit that again and not to promote the website to others by using the word of mouth. For example, there are many operators in the tourism sector that can promote great things but their websites are poor enough. That happens in Greece very often. It is crucial to re-evaluate the website if the results are different than the expected. Whenever someone builds or maintains the website, it is very important to keep in mind that consumers are the main target. If the website does not deliver what customers need, then the client could find this product somewhere else. It is essential to focus on the end user, the customer.



From this figure what we actually observe is that Greek hotels do not take into consideration the fact that they have to incorporate a viable strategy and to set the objectives. Also, they do not pay that much attention to the content. Content is very important because it can affect the general image of the company. For example, when one visits the website of the hotel and the content is very poor then one can probably leaves the website. In the last few months, videos, images are very important for a website to keep the website simple and to attract an important number of visitors. When we refer to the usability element we mean the ability to use the website in a comfort way. There should not be that many banners, the website should contain images and the colours should be easy for the visitor. Then the visitors can probably buy the services that the website offers. The usability and the content element can increase the awareness of the hotel industry. Last but not least, the design and the technology are also important factors. Buttons should be placed in specific areas and colours should be comfortable for the visitors while the use of the latest technology is more than essential. Hotels all over the world spend enough money of their budget to their website so Greek hotels also have to pay if they want to be worldwide known.

Regarding the search engines there are two of them the SEO and SEM. Both SEO and SEM are driving traffic to the website. SEO are the organic results meaning that have no cost to the hotel and SEM is a low cost method. In Greece, most of the hotel companies do use the search engine. Statistics have proved that when choosing a destination, most of the European Union countries people take a look on those machines and then they choose a place to go.

Everything depends on the keyword someone uses. For example, when we write the word "MET" this hotel is using SEO meaning that it is advertised in the first page of the Google Search Engine. That increases visibility and makes more customers getting closer to that. The SEO method is the best for a hotel that is based on its own website. This makes SEO one of the most effective strategies to drive traffic and meet objectives. The most important elements of good SEO are the keywords and the content. When one creates a website that uses a right process and especially focuses on the right content that meets the customer's needs, then it is highly probable to create a "SEO friendly" website.

The difference between SEO and SEM is that SEM is a paid search engine. Greek companies do use SEM in a high percentage. People pay a specific amount of money to Google. For example, they put 100 Euros for 1000 clicks. That means that the cost of ad is 0,1 Euros. When someone presses the advertisement then one moves to the actual website. The company is charged with this amount of money per click. The product can also be advertised on specific days and even specific hours. In tourism sector this is not very easy to happen. The nicest thing using SEM is that everything is measured and can be analyzed in details. The hotel industry can put specific keywords for example the word "MET". When someone searches the word MET, then the result of the SEM would be on the top page and that makes the product visible and of course with increased awareness. It is crucial to be aware of the keywords that are going to be used and people should spend not a huge amount of money. There are keywords that do not refer to something specific and the objective

of the industry is to make those keywords clear and easy to be searched from the clients.

Social media have changed the way people communicate. Social media have also changed the way businesses act. Customers have taken into their hands things. Businesses should have in every simple social media accounts. Social media accounts make companies known worldwide. People use comments, ratings and that affects in a high way the other's people choices. For example, if everyone is satisfied with the services that one hotel in Santorini offers then more and more people would definitely visit that place. Few years ago, instead of social media it was the e-mail marketing. Right now we live in a social media era where everything is online. Hoteliers should also reply to comments, reply to questions that are made from customers so that to make them feel unique. In Greece, most of the hoteliers have accounts on Facebook. Twitter but they do not listen to the audience and that has an impact on the number of clients that they get. The problem for the Greek hospitality industry is during the winter period where most of the hotels do not have many clients. It is crucial to actively use those accounts and to have a strong online presence. Social media is a process whereby people engage in conversations online. The most known social media in Greece is Facebook. As we all know, Facebook is the network that helps you communicates through people in the whole world. More than 60% of Greek residents have a Facebook account. That means that messages can be easily and rapidly travel through Facebook. Many tourism businesses in Greece have set up a Fan Page in order to attract more users to use their brand.

Twitter in Greece is not used that much as Facebook but in the tourism industry is having an increase the last few years. Another social media that enterprises in Greece started to take into consideration is the Youtube. In Greece, Youtube is almost as popular as Facebook. Tourism industries until now do not take into serious consideration that Youtube thrives in the tourism sector because videos are the near future of this industry. When one produces a video for one's business, this allows to gather a lot of information very easily and in a very quickly. Something that is very crucial and has not been mentioned previously is the blogging. Blogs in the Greek tourism sector are crucial because consumers can easily find ones company when

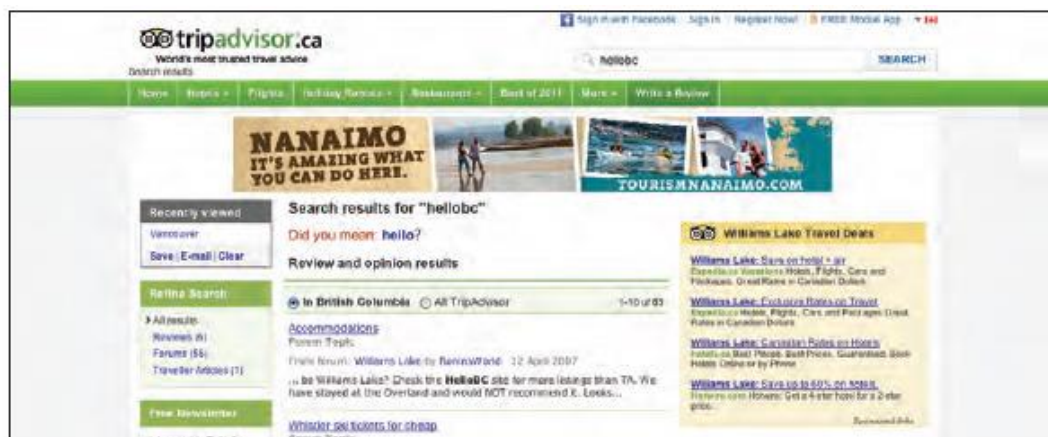
they search for information online. Blogs can do something that other pre mentioned things cannot do that. They can force the company to have closer relationship with the clients because when the hoteliers respond to the clients and other customers discuss about the company this could make the hotel unique.



This figure shows the webpage of 604 pulse. This is an example of a blog. This blog works perfect because it encourages people to visit that place and it uses a simple and nice content. The content is because of the colours. There is an image in the centre of the website and just two colours black and white. That means that it is user friendly for people and it can attract a huge percentage of them. In the right place of the website are the events and the latest news and it is designed in a way that people would be interested to find out things.

Last but not least, another social media is the TripAdvisor. It stands for reviews, advices, flights, vacation packages, travel guides, things to do and much more things. Many hotels in Greece have partnerships with TripAdvisor mainly the 4 and 5 stars hotels. Because of the fact that people are in the centre of a hotel industry, reviews are of high importance.. To sum up, social media in Greece are rapidly changing because of the fact that more and more hotel industries use them There is a need to change direction of what are Greek industries are doing until now.

Another strategy that can be used by Greek hotels is the display advertising. For example, as we can see in the figure below there are the advertisements that this image has. These advertisements are in order to reach an audience. For example, as you can see there is a site which is called tourismnanaimo.com which pays Trip advisor in order to be advertised. A big number of people are going to watch this ad and to press into the image in order to get more details. This is called display advertising. What the website gains is the visibility. When one is advertised in a website such as Trip Advisor which is well known, many people will feel the need to check this out.



In the previous figure, what we actually observe is that Nanaimo chose to be advertised in tripadvisor.ca in a position that almost all people are going to see it. This is very important because it will increase traffic and it can probably attract more and more customers. Not that many Greek hotels use this strategy. Small hotels that are not that known should use this strategy because it's important in the very first steps of a company to attract more consumers. Everything is up to the target audience that the hotel industry chooses to be expanded. Apart from Trip Advisor, the most known company that uses this strategy is Google.

Companies do pay a specific amount of money in order to be advertised in such a huge company as Google. It is very attractive for other people to see something that is presented on Google.

One more strategy that most Greek hotels use is the E-mail marketing. E-mail marketing is when the company sends e-mails to the clients to inform them about offers, to ask them be back or to ask for their opinions. While SEO, SEM, banners are not able to remind people come and visit again the hotel, using e-mail marketing not only you forces people to visit you again, but you don't even have to wait for customers to think of you. It's a strategy that makes business contact clients in order to get information on how was their last visit or information about if they are going to visit that place again etc. Greek companies use e-mail marketing in a strong and daily basis. It is said that 99% of the Greek hotel industries use that technique. The rest are small hotels that do not know how to use the Internet or do not have online presence. E-mail is a difficult way to approach clients because every simple person do not spend enough time reading the e-mails and most of the people think that this e-mail can be spam or inappropriate so they are not using that technique that much. The company is importing its email database and then creates e-mail marketing campaigns through an online interface. The web developer is the responsible person to find the best solution. It is important to segment the mailing list, so to send specific emails to specific audiences. To sum up, e-mail marketing on its own is not the most effective technique. A combination of those techniques is crucial.

4. Research Model

4.1 Model of the research

Customers are important in understanding the digital marketing strategy that a hotel follows. The hotel's website should have (SEO) and paid search (Ad words/Pay per click), connected to the social media i.e. It stands for reviews, advices, flights, vacation packages, travel guides, things to do and much more things. Many hotels in Greece have partnerships with TripAdvisor mainly the 4 and 5 stars hotels. Because of the fact that people are in the centre of a hotel industry, reviews are of high importance.

4.2 Objectives for this research

Given the fact that the online reviews of tourists consist of a major feature of the digital marketing strategy of hotel industry, the present research aims to study the extent to which consumers are influenced by online reviews in order to book accommodation online and what factors are the ones that ultimately affect them for reading the online reviews. In that way, after conducting the research, conclusions and suggestions can be provided to hotel industry so as to engulf the online reviews sources to its digital marketing practices.

According to the literature review that is developed below, there have been set 4 research questions that serve the research aim and its verification. The literature reviews show us crucial information for the tourism industry and its digital strategies that can be developed. Also, the researcher found that those questions will lead him to achieve the objectives that are set.

4.3 Questions for the research

1. Are there any demographic characteristics that influence the final reservation “click” because of the comments and which are they?
2. Are there any benchmarks that make online consumers ignore the online reviews?
3. The completion of the reservation is booked on the hotel website or on a booking platform (such as booking.com etc)?
4. Are there any elements of a hotel that are posted on opinion websites are the most important in attracting online users to book a hotel room?

4.4 Theoretical framework

The research questions that are raised above have been emerged from the literature review of previous researches that have been conducted for digital marketing strategies.

According to the literature and setting the first research question, gender is a demographic factor is influenced by the comments and the information gets from the internet. Specifically, the gender differences in the use of Internet related to previous research findings on how men and women process the information (Kempf & Palan 2006). Women process every simple detail they have with each other and every different source of information (Meyers-Levy 1989, Putrevu 2001). In addition, women pay enough attention (Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran 1991). On the other hand, men are taking care of the sources that are necessary. (Meyers-Levy 1989, Putrevu 2001). Moreover, they are concentrated in a small number of instructions and do not try to manage all the information that may be available, unless something deliberately has extensively analyzed (Meyers -Levy & Maheswaran 1991). A comparison of the two sexes in previous studies showed that women may be more affected by information which was spread by word of mouth (Garbariono & Strahilevitz 2004).

In hospitality sector and the general business that are developed around it, a particular increase in the popularity of online reviews is noticed (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008, Gretzel et.al., 2007). Readers of the online reviews seem to trust the most well-known websites that provide this capability.

The online reviews offer a variety of comments and can easily be compare between each other aiming to be evaluated or even to be ignored as is mentioned in the second research question. Platforms such TripAdvisor, LonelyPlanet, IgoUgo and other similar are the best known among travelers looking for objective, unbiased advice. Millions of consumers in the tourism sector benefit from the digital forums where travelers share their personal experiences and make comments around them (Leeetal., 2011) giving information to serve other travelers (Xiang & Gretzel, 2009).Trip Advisor is having a huge popularity of millions of people both visitors and members. With such popularity among the consumers these platforms can be regarded as reliable information sources, but despite their growing acceptance by the public, (Xiang & Gretzel, 2009) the online reviews are often criticized for their reliability, given that the information which is published is not verified or rejected through any process (Johnson & Kaye, 2002). Certainly, it has been observed that the travelers use among them some other "safeguards" to assess the validity of the source and the message (Metzgeretal, 2003).

Regarding the third research question, the present research aims to compare whether bookings through the online platforms are advantageous or not comparing the websites of the same hotel. The Internet sovereignty, in the tourism sector is undeniable. This has an impact on tourism marketing (Li, Pan, andSmith 2009). Werthner and Ricci (2005) reported that hospitality was the leading industry regarding in terms of volume of online transactions. The statistics derived from TravelCLICK (2009) seem very important, since they claim that for about thirty international hotels of large chains in 2008, the allocation of sales made by individual consumers and not by groups was most from the Internet, 2 out of 10 from OTAs and almost 1 out of 4 by going in person and in the last 20s the hotel's website reservations were higher than the OTAs. It is argued that 61% of Internet users are advised when they do research before a trip. Given the statistics, it recognized the

need for further research on the internet and the influence of both the site of the hotel and the online reviews, moreover currently that the shift of the public to the usage of Internet is intense, not only for the accommodation reservation, but also for the need of consumers to gain information through personal travel experiences such as those of online reviews (Ramsey, 2007).

Finally, the present investigation, as mentioned above, is designed in searching the influence of reviews in Greece. Nevertheless interest in the conduct of the study was mobilized by the fact that in foreign language literature of the online feedback sector has begun and researched extensively. According to this, the online reviews begun to gain ground in the field of tourism industry marketing and they consist a factor in the formulation of digital marketing strategy of hotel companies. The increasing use of the Internet in the tourism sector is undeniable when one chooses resources as the online reviews (Ye, Q., et.al., 2009, Sparks, BA, & Browning , V., 2011).

Moreover, the commentary of products directly from consumers themselves (Consumer Generated Content) increased significantly, especially in the tourism sector. Specifically, the online travel reviews that are written by consumers, are increasingly available and are used for information and decisions of other consumers on a journey. Conducted a survey of users of the most famous, perhaps, site associated with the assessment and critical writing, the TripAdvisor, to investigate whether the comments containing affect planning a trip from his readers. The results showed that the comments are used, it is mostly to inform someone to stay and not particularly for the design of the travel path (Gretzel, U., & Yoo, K. H., 2008). Keeping the final conclusion of this paper, the present research takes the opportunity to deal extensively with how online reviews influence on the consumer's choice to book accommodation.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research tool

The research is quantitative and will be conducted through a questionnaire. The objective of quantitative research is to answer our research questions that will be compared with those of the literature review. So the researcher will reach to more consistent results with respect to the effect on the final choice of accommodation, so as to allocate the new practices of digital marketing strategy of hotel companies.

For the above reason, there we be developed a structured questionnaire whose questions will come from the theoretical framework. The questionnaire will consist of related questions, which relate to demographics and general questions that reflect the general attitude of respondents. The questionnaire will contain questions that will useful answers to the research questions and will be sufficient to express how close consumers where to each question (Panneerselvam R., 2014). Moreover, the answers will be closed type, some of which will be placed on a 5-point Likert scale (Likert-typescale).

5.2 Suggested analysis

The respondents' answers will be processed through SPSS program. After collecting the data, our variable will be associated with each other to extract the results of the investigation. There will be tested the correlation between specific variables, so as to serve the research objective and give answers to the research questions.

5.3 Sample

The survey sample will consist of a group of people living in Greece, and the selection will be made by random sampling. Specifically, the researcher chose to

survey a sample of 100 people. The age of the participants will be from 20 to 45 years old. More specifically, the sample regards people who use the computer and traveling more than once a year.

In addition and at the beginning of the questionnaire, every person had to reply to the question of booking. In other words we mean if one has booked a hotel room in the last year (12 months). That's how purchasers and just "users" are separated.

5.4 Contact method

The researcher will proceed to the collection of quantitative data through questionnaires self-completed by respondents. The distribution of the questionnaires will be made either via Facebook, or sent by email and will be answered electronically (Taylor et al., 2015).

5.4.1 Questionnaire questions

The questionnaire had to follow specific rules. The questionnaire contained eleven questions and the actual questionnaire can be found in Appendices. The questions were either multiple choices or scaling and close type.

5.4.2 Pilot survey

According to Sarantakos, there might be misunderstandings so there is a need to check them out before we send the questionnaire. The questions were sent via e-mail and respondents also replied to the question about if they have any specific things to recommend and how much time it took them to answer that. Twenty five pilot-questionnaires were returned. The average time to complete the questionnaire

was 10-15 minutes and all questions were comprehensive. Sixty five people responded to the questionnaire and it took them less than 20 minutes to complete them.

5.4.3 Data sample

As we know it is not feasible to gather data from all the hotels in Greece so for this study we had to choose a sample of 65 people. The nice thing is that the respondent's answers could not be random because the questionnaire was like "forcing" them to think before they answer the questions. The actual questionnaire was send to 80 people and 55 out of 65 of them were willing to reply in a month time even though they had many things to do because all of them come from the hospitality sector.

5.4.4 Survey conduction

As I mentioned previously the questions were in a way that people were required to study them before they answer. One disadvantage could be that people may not care about the actual answers and results of the questionnaire so they could probably put some random answers. The actual results are going to help future researches with online hotel reviews.

This survey was conducted from 20th of September until 20th of November in the geographical area of Greece mainly in Thessaloniki, Athens and Mykonos. The questionnaire was send via e-mail and 65 out of 80 questionnaires distributed, were collected.

5.5 Methods of Data Analysis

The questions were treated with care before they sent to the respondents. As we can see from the actual questionnaire on the appendices there are 3 out of 10 questions using the Likert scale while others are using the strongly disagree to strongly agree method. There are also some questions that are using multiple choice while in one question, respondents can answer up the percentage. The questions were gathered from academic journals that are referred to the bibliography and are up to date regarding online reviews.

6. Results

According to the results of the research, most of the participants are males at a percent of 50, 8% (33 out of 65 participants) and the 49, 2% of the participants are females (32 out of 65 participants). The most of participants are 31-45 years old at a percent of 36, 9 % (24 out of 65 participants) and the least are 20-25 years old at a percent of 27, 7 % (18 out of 65 participants). In addition, the 35, 4% of the participants are 26-30 years old (23 out of 65 participants).

Also, they have monthly income 0-500 Euros at a percent of 46, 2 % (30 out of 65 participants) and the least have monthly income over 1000 Euros at a percent of 4, 6 % (3 out of 65 participants). In addition, the 33, 8% of the participants have monthly income 501-700 Euros (22 out of 65 participants) and the 15, 4% have monthly income 701-1000 Euros (10 out of 65 participants).

They travel twice in a year so as to book a hotel room at a percent of 60 % (39 out of 65 participants) and the least of the participants travel twice in a month at a percent of 1, 5 % (1 out of 65 participants). In addition, the 20% of the participants travel rarely (13 out of 65 participants) and the 18, 5% travel 2-3 times every six months (12 out of 65 participants).

Referring to the frequency that they book a hotel room(s) in the last year, a percent of 75,4%(49 out of 65 participants) seem to have done so, and the least of the participants have not even book any room(s) in the last year at a percent of 24,6%(16 out of 65 participants).

The participants make the reservation via platform such as booking.com etc at a percent of 53,8%(35 out of 65 participants) and the least of the participants make the reservation through the hotels' website at a percent of 46,2%(30 out of 65 participants).

Most of the participants bookings are completed via hotel websites at a percentage of 70%, answered the 34,5% of the participants(10 out of 65 participants) , while some of them supported that their bookings are completed via hotel website at

percentage of 90%, answered the 13,8% of the participants(4 out of 65 participants).

Also, most of the participants support that their bookings are completed via online platforms at percentage of 100%, answered the 63,9% of the participants(23 out of 65 participants) and a few of them supported that their bookings are completed via online platforms at percentage of 80%, answered the 5,6% of the participants(2 out of 65 participants).

At this point of the analysis statistical significant relationships among the variables will be represented for further research about consumer's choices to book a hotel. Our variables are categorical. In order to investigate if there is difference in the relationships between variables which have more than two levels the proper test is the Pearson's r about the distribution or not of the data. It is worth mentioning that the data are not normally distributed so the non parametric test of Spearman's ρ will be used.

According to table 1, there is an optimistic correlation among the variables Reading online reviews-Fast information, Reading online reviews- Saving time as null Hypothesis which supports that these variables are not correlated is not accepted ($p < 0,05$). As a result, reading information about hotels from other consumers' online is correlated statistically significant with the speed of getting information and with saving time during hotel room booking.

Table 1-Spearman's rho for Reading online views-Fast information, Reading online views-Saving time

Correlations			Do you find hotels data from other online customer's reviews?	because it's one of the fastest ways to find data	because it's one of the ways to save time
Spearman's rho	Do you read information about hotels from other consumers' online reviews?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,314*	,274*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,011	,027
		N	65	65	65
	because it's the fastest way to get information	Correlation Coefficient	,314*	1,000	,073
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,011	.	,564
		N	65	65	65
	because I save time during hotel room booking	Correlation Coefficient	,274*	,073	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,027	,564	.
		N	65	65	65

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to table 2, there is statistically significant positive correlation between the group of variables Reading online reviews-Convenience, Reading online reviews-Easy way of getting information as null Hypothesis which supports that these variables are not correlated is not accepted ($p < 0,05$). As a result, reading information about hotels from other consumers' online is correlated statistically significant with the facility of getting information and with the convenience of searching from home or work during hotel room booking.

Table 2-Spearman's rho for Reading online views- Convenience, Reading online reviews- Easy way of getting information

Correlations

			Do you find hotels data from other online customer's reviews?	because it's convenient to search from home or work	because reading reviews is the easiest way to get information
Spearman's rho	Do you read information about hotels from other consumers' online reviews?	Correlation	1,000	,306*	,312*
		Coefficient	.	,013	,011
		Sig. (2-tailed)			
	because it's convenient to search from home or work	N	65	65	65
		Correlation	,306*	1,000	,448**
		Coefficient	,013	.	,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)			
	because reading reviews is the easiest way to get information	N	65	65	65
		Correlation	,312*	,448**	1,000
		Coefficient	,011	,000	.
		Sig. (2-tailed)			
		N	65	65	65

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to table 3, there is statistically significant correlation between the variable Distance from airports and Position as null Hypothesis which supports that these variables are not correlated is not accepted ($r=0,396$, $p<0.01$). As a result, on opinion websites finding important the realistic position in town so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated positively with the feature of the hotel's distance from airports/train station in order to proceed booking without looking at the comments

Table 3-Spearman's rho between Distance from airports and Position

Correlations			Realistic position in town	Distance from airports/train stations
Spearman's rho	Realistic position in town	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,396**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,001
		N	65	65
	Distance from airports/train stations	Correlation Coefficient	,396**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	.
		N	65	65

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to table 4, there is statistically significant correlation between the variable Value for money and Member of group hotels as null Hypothesis which supports that these variables are not correlated is not accepted ($r=0,317$, $p=0,010$). As a result, on opinion websites finding important the value for money so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated positively with the feature of the hotel being member of group hotels in order to proceed booking without looking at the comments.

Table 4-Spearman's rho between Value for money and Member of group hotels

Correlations			Value for money	Member of a group of hotels
Spearman's rho	Value for money	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,317*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,010
		N	65	65
	Member of a group of hotels	Correlation Coefficient	,317*	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,010	.
		N	65	65

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to table 5, statistically those variables are going together; Position and Member of group hotels as null Hypothesis which supports that these variables are not correlated is not accepted ($r=0,328$, $p=0,008$). As a result, on opinion websites finding important the hotel's realistic position in town so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated positively with the feature of the hotel being member of group hotels in order to proceed booking without looking at the comments.

Table 5-Spearman's rho between Position and Member of group hotels

Correlations			Member of a group of hotels	Realistic position in town
Spearman's rho	Member of a group of hotels	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,328**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,008
		N	65	65
	Realistic position in town	Correlation Coefficient	,328**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,008	.
		N	65	65

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to table 6, there is statistically positive correlation among the variables Commuting and Age of building as null Hypothesis which supports that these variables are not correlated is not accepted ($r=-0,257$, $p=0,038$). As a result, on opinion websites finding important the hotel's distance from commuting so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated negatively with the feature of hotel's age of building in order to precede booking without looking at the comments.

Table 6-Spearman's rho between Commuting and Age of building

Correlations			Distance from Commuting	Age of the building
Spearman's rho	Distance from Commuting	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	-,257*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,038
		N	65	65
	Age of the building	Correlation Coefficient	-,257*	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,038	.
		N	65	65

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to table 7, there is statistically positive correlation among the variables Price and Personnel behavior as null Hypothesis which supports that these variables are not correlated is not accepted ($r=-0,278$, $p=0,025$). As a result, on opinion websites finding important the hotel's prices of the rooms so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated positively with the feature of hotel's Personnel behavior in order to precede booking without looking at the comments.

Table 7-Spearman's rho between Price and Personnel behavior

Correlations		Personnel behaviour	Price
Personnel behaviour	Pearson Correlation	1	,278*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,025
	N	65	65
Price	Pearson Correlation	,278*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,025	
	N	65	65

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to table 8, there is statistically positive correlation among the groups of variables Breakfast -Commuting , Breakfast-Availability, Breakfast-Distance from airports, Commuting-Availability and Commuting-Distance from airports, as null Hypothesis which supports that these variables are not correlated is not accepted($p < 0,05$). As a result, on opinion websites finding important the hotel's offer for Breakfast so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated with the feature of hotel's Distance from commuting, availability and distance from airports/train stations in order to precede booking without looking at the comments. In addition, on opinion websites finding important the hotel's Distance from commuting so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated with the feature of hotel's Distance from airports/train stations and availability in order to precede booking without looking at the comments.

Table 8-Spearman's rho between Breakfast, Commuting, Availability and Distance from airports

		Correlations			
		Breakfast	Distance from Commuting	Availability	Distance from airports/train stations
Breakfast	Pearson Correlation	1	-,536**	-,287*	-,392**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,021	,001
	N	65	65	65	65
Distance from Commuting	Pearson Correlation	-,536**	1	,328**	,751**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,008	,000
	N	65	65	65	65
Availability	Pearson Correlation	-,287*	,328**	1	,110
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,021	,008		,383
	N	65	65	65	65
Distance from airports/train stations	Pearson Correlation	-,392**	,751**	,110	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	,000	,383	
	N	65	65	65	65

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

7. Conclusions

This research has demonstrated that marketing works together with the hotel industry. To sum up and regarding the research, marketing plays a crucial part in any hotel industry and hotel owners and managers who want to be successful in that industry should pay great attention to that.

The research that has been conducted shows that reading information about hotels from other consumers' online is important for the facility of getting information and with the convenience of searching from home or work during hotel room booking. Also the value for money, the hotel's realistic position in town characteristic may lead a consumer to book a hotel room if the hotel is a member of group hotels without the consumer looking at the comments. Also, on opinion websites finding important the hotel's distance from commuting so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated negatively with the feature of hotel's age of building in order to precede booking without looking at the comments. The hotel's prices of the rooms seem to be an important factor to book a hotel if the hotel's Personnel behavior is positive, without looking the comments.

Moreover, on opinion websites finding important the hotel's offer for Breakfast so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated with the feature of hotel's Distance from commuting, availability and distance from airports/train stations in order to precede booking without looking at the comments. In addition, on opinion websites finding important the hotel's Distance from commuting so as to be attracted and book a hotel room is correlated with the feature of hotel's Distance from airports/train stations and availability in order to precede booking without looking at the comments.

Consequently, digital marketing strategies have changed the way people behave. Clients from all over the world can now communicate themselves and think openly about what they are planning to do.

There are much more marketing strategies nowadays. Hoteliers need to know how to use a combination of them by taking into serious consideration the time they have, cogitative to follow strategies that are not going to harm the hotel in any way(s).

To more extend, in the recent years Greek tourism has undergone some rapid changes which were consequences of the financial crisis. Although tourism sector was affected by the crisis, it quickly recovered. Because of the fact that tourism sector is extremely important for the Greek economy, activities and actions should be done in order to give that much attention in this area. Also, companies should take into consideration more seriously the digital marketing strategies such as SEO/SEM, social media, online travel agencies in order to improve those factors which will lead to increased customer attraction and this will increase sales which is going to lead to increased income meaning that there will be a raise in profitability.

Furthermore, the research model proves that it is crucial to be online on social media and on OTAs such as booking.com because they are going to lead to raised awareness and to make the hotel most known worldwide. As much people see you and know many things about you then there is a higher possibility of increasing sales volume and that is going to have a rise in sales which will lead to the profitability.

Also, it demonstrates that although subjective rather than objective measures of business performance have been used, companies that apply e-marketing achieved also business performance. Taking the consumers into serious consideration, changing the website content when it's not usable, using OTAs, blogs, forums and reviews means that the main core of the company are the clients. That will impact on the business performance of the company meaning that consumers will buy from that company thus the sales, the revenue and the profitability will rise.

Finally, the most significant for the buyers in the hospitality sector are the customer reviews and the ratings in order to proceed with the final "click", in other words to book the hotel. Surveys show that the online rating system and the comments on social media, images are extremely important for the final decision. There must be a

person responsible for commenting on reviews and trying to fix the negative ones so that to build a trust relationship with all the potential buyers and also with the guest or the online purchasers.

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Appendices

Questionnaire

Demographic characteristics

1. **Male** **Female**

2. **Age:**
 20-25 26-30 31-45

3. **Monthly income:**
 0-500 501-700 701-1000 >1000

1. How often do you travel so as to book a hotel room?

- a) once/week
- b) 2 /month
- c) 2-3 times / 6month
- d) twice/year
- e) rarely

2. Have you ever make a booking on any room(s) in the past year?

Yes No

3. Do you make the reservation through the hotels' website or via platform such as booking.com etc?

- a) Hotel website
- b) Online platforms
- c) Both

4. What percentages of your bookings are completed via the one or the other mean of booking? (Put a X in the box below the percentage)

a) Hotel website	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
b) Online platforms	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%

5. Do you find data from online consumers reviews?

Yes No

6. Why do you do so? Please check the following scale, depending on your agreement or not to the retrospective answers:

	1	2	3	4	5
because it's the fastest way to get information					
because I save time during hotel room booking					
because it's convenient to search from home or work					
because reading reviews is the easiest way to get information					
because I am able to compare different hotels easily in order to find the lowest prices in order to get the best value for my money					
because I can see if others feel the same way about a hotel as I do					
because I like to compare my own evaluation with that of others					
because I feel much better when I read that I am not the only one who has certain problem					
because I like being part of a community					
because I enjoy participating in the experiences of other community members					
because I am interested in what is new					
because I get to know which topics are in to find solutions for my problems					
because customer reviews help me to make the right buying decisions to benefit from others' experiences before I book a hotel room					

7. What attributes of a post on opinion websites are the most important in attracting you to book a hotel room?

	1	2	3	4	5
Realistic photos					
Value for money					
Realistic position in town					
Distance from Commuting					
Any secret debits/cost					
Distance from airports/trains stations					
Personnel behavior					
Services					
Breakfast					
Quiet neighborhood					
Housekeeping services					

8. Are there any features of a hotel room that makes you directly precede the booking, before looking at the comments?

	1	2	3	4	5
Price					
Availability					
Distance from Commuting					
Distance from airports/train stations					
Distance from downtown					
Facilities (such as laundry, double housekeeping per day, gym etc)					
Age of the building					
Member of a group of hotels					