Electronic Marketing As A Tool To Achieve A Competitive Advantage For The Egyptian Travel Agencies

(Analytical Study Applied To Travel Agencies "A")

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2015

Introduction

Tourism industry represents a powerful and an active force among service industries in local and global economy, and it plays a vital role in the social, cultural and economic development of most peoples and nations (**Abdelhamid, 2010**). As a result tourism industry has become one of the most important sectors that represent great importance in all countries, both developed and developing, which has led to the need for attention and action to develop it and to increase its revenues (**Elias, 2002**).

Despite Egypt possessing many natural, environmental, archaeological and therapeutic characteristics …etc, which allow it to be one of the most important and biggest tourist destinations in the world, the current situation of tourism industry in Egypt is still below the required level because Egypt gets a small percentage estimated 1% of the total international tourism, according to statistics of the World Tourism Organization (**UNWTO, 2014**). In addition to this, Egypt occupies position number 83 among 141 countries according to the global scale of competitive travel and tourism 2009 (**blanke & chiesa, 2015**).

As a result, the Egyptian tourism sector needs to search for several means which can enhance its competitiveness ability in the global tourist market, attract many markets exporting tourism to Egypt, allow it to resist the international competition and face the global challenges in particular technological developments, so that information technology has changed the tourism business performance substantially. Communications and information technology has occupied the forefront of the various business sectors and services. Tourism industry is considered one of the first industries that has been closely associated with using technology Information, particularly the internet and telecommunications technology that is because tourism industry is an intangible service and the tourist electronic dealings have become a global trend and an important condition to offer a competitive tourist service that has a global quality in a new marketing environment where distance and time were canceled between the offeror of the service and the demander (**Ahmed, 2009**).

So tourist establishments should adopt the strategy and the culture of tourist e-marketing to be able to compete in this new marketing environment. E-marketing has become one of the most important elements of any modern organizations ' success. It has become necessary to include this pattern in the organization's activities and operations to take advantage of the multiple possibilities and advantages offered by clients and organizations on the one hand and to face the challenges that come from other firms in this field on the other hand.

The subject of the study:

The subject of the study represented on how to take advantage of information and communication technology applications within the marketing activity and how to use modern technological tools in the marketing of tourism products and services in the way that enables travel agencies to achieve a competitive advantage in the tourist market.

objectives of the study:

The study tries to achieve the following objectives:

- Knowing the electronic tools used by travel agencies in marketing for their tourist programs.
- Analyze the advantages and the benefits of using e-marketing for travel agencies in Egypt.
- Examine the relationship between using all electronic marketing tools and competitive advantages that travel agencies possess.
- Analyze the problems facing travel agencies in marketing their websites.
- Identify the reasons which prevent the application of e-marketing if it is not applied.

hypotheses of the study

In order to achieve the previous objectives; the study aims to test of the following hypotheses:

- Tourist operators (class a) don't use all e-marketing tools in the marketing for their tourist programs.

- using all electronic tools help the travel agencies to achieve their competitive advantages
- All advantages expected by travel agencies from using e-marketing match the actual benefits that they obtained.

The importance of the study

The importance of research appears from the increasing interest by various travel agencies globally in using modern electronic means of communication in their work, such as the internet and mobile phones....etc. to contract deals and commercial transactions, marketing their goods and services, and to complete reservations, sales and purchasing to achieve fast performance and shorten the time and distances between countries.

The study methodology

In order to test the hypothesis and to achieve its objectives, the study will depend on the descriptive analytical methodology to assess the current situation of using the e-marketing within the Egyptian travel agencies (class a) in order to improve their performance and add a competitive advantage. The study sample was represented in travel agencies (class a) located in Cairo and Giza governorates, which were (1767) travel agencies according to the Chamber of travel agencies (2015). The sample size was (285) travel agencies. The simple random sample was used in sample selection.

Sources of data collection:

Data used in the study were gathered from two sources:

Secondary Data:

The secondary data were collected from Arabic and English books, periodicals, scientific articles, and web sites that were related to e-marketing and competitive advantage.

The field survey (Primary sources):

The study was performed through a questionnaire in travel agencies (class a) to realize the current status of using e-marketing within these operators.

study results

Through literature and the results of the field study the researcher reached several outcomes that can be summarized in the following points:

1) Most travel agencies use e-marketing in marketing their products and services

2) There are some travel agencies do not use e-marketing, due to lack of confidence in electronic trading and transactions methods, lack of financial resources, lack of consumer confidence in purchasing transactions electronically, lack of awareness about the importance of e-marketing, the operator is stuck with traditional tools just in marketing, lack of trained personnel to use the internet in the marketing, non-proliferation of online culture and modern technology within tourism sector or community of service beneficiaries and insufficient efficiency of the infrastructure that is necessary for the application of e- marketing techniques.

3) All travel agencies use some e-marketing tools for marketing, as websites, e-mails, electronic advertising, social networking sites, search engines in marketing programs, while other electronic means such as mobile phone, blogs, forums, and CDs are un used.

4) Some operators face barriers in marketing their tourist websites. These barriers include the inability to advertise on the famous sites due to high costs, lack of trained personnel to use the internet techniques in marketing, a lack of knowledge about how to customize search engines (to access the operators responsible for it), the lack of knowledge about how to market the site and the lack of using e-marketing experts, the lack of knowledge of electronic tools that may be used in the marketing of the site.

5) All travel agencies that use e-marketing have achieved many competitive advantages such as increase sales and market share, decrease costs for traditional marketing tools of printing, publishing and distribution…..etc., saving customer contact costs, entering new markets, selling tourism programs worldwide, guaranteeing the permanent presence 24-hour in the tourist market all the year, providing reservation services quickly and

easily, collecting and analyzing information about customers, competitors, suppliers and all other relevant parties, realizing clients' reactions and opinions towards the different products and services offered by tour operator, the immediate response for the instant response to customer's requests, completing the transaction in record time, adding adjustments to programs and marketing presentations easily at any time, creating a good image for the company's clients, achieving the principle of equality/equal opportunities in marketing with major operators, flexibility in realization of the principle of equality/equal opportunities in marketing with major operators, engaging in partnerships and alliances with major operators, the rapid spread of the ad campaign for the operator, and reduce the amount of time spent on marketing.

6) There is a strong relation between using e-marketing tools and the benefits achieved by the tourist operators after using e-marketing. So that the tour operator that uses all e-marketing tools can achieve its marketing goals more that those operators that rely on one or some of these tools.

7) Travel agencies' expectations for goals that they seek to achieve from using e-marketing do not match the actual results after using e-marketing.

The study's recommendations

From the literature and the results of the study, the researcher found a set of suggestions and recommendations which are:

I: recommendations for travel agencies that use e-marketing

- Travel agencies should using all electronic tools to achieve their competitive advantages.

- The presence of information technology department within the tour operator that is skillfully managed and operated, understand how to turn plans into action, and ready to provide advice on possible technological procedures.

- Managers should give more attention to research and development to keep pace with technological changes in product market and should provide

products that meet changes in consumer's requests and preferences and achieve excellence over competitors.

- Travel agencies should market their websites by using all electronic and traditional means together which it has been covered during this study.

II: recommendations for travel agencies that do not use e-marketing

- The need to take advantage of the internet as a means of communication, marketing and selling tourism programs to serve the various tourist activities in tourism operators.

- Paying more attention to increase awareness and understanding of officials and directors working within travel agencies about the importance of using e-marketing to be their business philosophy in order to face the future transition towards the digital economy.

- Reorganization of travel agencies' structures and developing their procedures to comply with the requirements of the e-marketing and integrating their traditional strategy with these electronic mechanisms.

- Provision of trained human resources who are able to use e- marketing techniques and able to apply e-marketing within their travel agencies.

- Enlisting the help of e-marketing experts to create a website for the travel agencies as a preliminary step towards using e-marketing.

III: recommendations for The Ministry of Tourism:

Encouraging travel agencies and small and medium-sized tourism projects to use e-commerce by giving them tax and customs exemptions for transactions conducted via their own websites, and the claim for the presence of a website on the internet for any project tries to apply for a license from the concerned authorities even if the design of this site for the purpose of information only to be a first step to interact with the applications of such trade.