

# Web Site Quality Evaluation in Tourism

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## WEB SITE QUALITY EVALUATION IN TOURISM

### VREDNOVANJE KVALITETE WEB STRANICA U TURIZMU

GRGONA, Jadranko; ANDRLIC, Berislav & DEL VECHIO, Manuel

**Abstract:** *The recent development of tourism industry suggests an important role that marketing concept has due to contemporary business trends. Information technology has changed fundamentally the very nature of marketing. Most tourism firms have started developing e-marketing strategies for the web. As a result, e-marketing is growing at a dramatic pace and is significantly impacting tourist market behaviour. This paper uses the extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption to evaluate the level of tourism web site development in Brodsko Posavska County. Authors also offers some proposals on future development in this sector of e-marketing.*

**Key words:** *tourism, web site, e MICA model*

**Sažetak:** *Razvoj turističke industrije današnjice nemoguće je zamisliti bez upotrebe suvremenih marketinških koncepata u poslovanju. Informacijske tehnologije u potpunosti su promijenile prirodu marketinga. Slijedom toga, mnoga turistička poduzeća su počela razvijati e-marketing strategije. Kao rezultat tog procesa, e-marketing u značajnoj mjeri dovodi i do promijenjenog potrošačkog ponašanja turista. U radu se koristi prošireni e-MICA model u cilju vrednovanja stupnja kvalitete turističkih web stranica u Brodsko posavskoj županiji. Autori također nude i određene prijedloge u cilju unapređenja postojećih e-marketing strategija.*

**Ključne riječi:** *turizam, web stranica, e MICA model*



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## **1. Introduction**

The modern marketing in tourism means a business activity which connects production and consumption in such a way that fully and with maximum profit meets the needs of tourists that are usually referred to as tourism market demand. Companies nowadays cope with greater difficulties arising from challenges of growing e-markets and rapidly changing factor of customers' behaviour. Based on empirical research, this paper aims to provide analysis on the utilization of Internet marketing potentials on the tourism companies in eastern Croatia, Brodsko Posavska County. The eastern Croatia considers tourism as one of its main strategic segments for economy development. Also, paper presents further directions and suggestions which could develop e-marketing strategies of tourism companies in this region.

## **2. Conceptual considerations of e-marketing in tourism**

Tourism bidding, its development and quality is characterized with external factors in the macroenvironment of tourism company. These factors represent "noncontrollables" that the tourism company must monitor and respond to. They can be classified into several groups (Senecic & Grgona, 2006):

- characteristics of social and economic country system
- accumulated economy ability of the country
- foreign-exchange policy
- investment policy
- credit policy and terms for foreign capital investment in tourism sector
- government standpoint against tourism as a part of national economy
- intensity of tourism services demand
- structure of tourism country services according to social and economical characteristics of tourism services demand carriers
- educational structure of employees in tourism sector
- input prices in tourism
- development and implementation of new technologies.

Every mentioned group of factors, directly or indirectly, has influence on creating tourism bidding on specific market segment. In extension, the focus will be on informatic technology factor, and its influence on marketing implementation in tourism. Special attention is dedicated to Internet, which is in the tourism sector, as in other business sectors changed classic business activities, and is used as communication, transaction and distribution channel. These technological trends are changing market demand in tourism and shape opportunities and pose threats. It is possible to talk about appearance of completely new strategy, called e-Business. E-Business, or Electronic Business, is the strategy of implementing business via the Internet. This strategy consists of the buying and selling of goods and services, along with providing technical or customer support through the Internet. e-Business is a term often used in connection with e-commerce, but includes services in addition to the sale of goods. According to the existing considerations, the main focus of this

paper is on the one part of e- business, called e- marketing. There are several definitions of electronic marketing. One of possible definitions is suggested by Panian: "Electronic marketing (e-marketing, telemarketing) is a means of realizing company's marketing activities through intensive application of information and telecommunication (internet) technology. (Panian, 2000). Besides the most widespread term of e-marketing, the term online marketing is also often used to collectively denote all types of marketing on the net: e-marketing, cyber marketing, Internet marketing and Web marketing (Reedy, J., Schullo, S. & Zimmerman, K., 2000). E- marketing activities in tourism can be considered in this context as a means of approaching products or services from producers to tourists, and using Internet as a means for promotion and sales channel. For every tourism destination and supplier, large and small, electronic business on the platform of the Internet offers the opportunity to undertake their business in new and more cost effective ways. For consumers, when they are planning a trip to a new destination, they face the problem of making a costly purchase without being able to see the product. The Internet provides them with the means to gain immediate access to relevant information of greater variety and depth than has been available previously, about destinations throughout the world; and to book quickly and easily. For tourism companies, it offers the potential to make information and booking facilities available to large numbers of consumers at relatively low cost; it enables them to make large-scale savings on the production and distribution of print and on other traditional activities (e.g. call centres and information centres); and it provide a tool for communication and relationship development with tourism suppliers and market intermediaries, as well as end-consumers. (WTO Business council, 2001). During the last decade, many tourism companies have developed some form of Internet presence, which is the key point of further empirical research.

### **3. E-MICA model**

In spite of the rapid development of many other means in the evolution of e-communications, the Web sites are still the first and foremost effective means in the tourism company's promotion. Precisely because of this the web pages have to be designed with careful researching of their target tourists and the way they will appear to potential tourists. It is also important to find the right balance between the volume of information offered to visitors and the size and appearance of the web page. The World Tourism Organisation identified the following key features of web site functionality for tourism companies (WTO Business council, 2001):

- accessibility and readability – does the site reach all potential users.
- identity and trust – trust on the Internet is fragile, especially if e-commerce is involved through online booking. Strong branding, use of logos and a clear statement of purpose all help here.
- degree of customization and interactivity.
- ease of navigation.
- findability and search engine optimization.
- technical performance – lack of functionality is frustrating for users.

- the quality of the services offered via the web site: promotion, information and transactions.

Accepting these factors, it is possible to integrate them into model for evaluating quality of web sites in tourism. The fact is that web sites have evolved, their levels of flexibility and interactivity have improved and grown. This has been captured in Extended Model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA). The eMICA model demonstrates a staged approach to the evolution of destination web sites and provides a destination with a road map of its web site development. The model shows how web sites add layers of complexity and functionality as they develop. Phases of these model are (Doolin, B.; Burgess, L. & Cooper, J., 2002):

Stage 1: Promotion

- a) Layer 1: Basic information Company name, address and contact details
- b) Layer 2: Rich information Annual report, and email contact

Stage 2: Provision

- a) Layer 1: Low interactivity Basic product catalogue, hyperlinks, and online enquiry form
- b) Layer 2: Medium interactivity Higher-level product catalogues, customer support
- c) Layer 3: High interactivity Chat room, newsletters and email updates

Stage 3: Processing: Secure online transactions, order status and tracking

This model will be implemented as a starting point for researching standard of web site quality content in tourism firms.

#### 4. Research results

Primary research consisted of data collected via Internet in sample of tourism subjects in Brodsko Posavska county. Subjects were divided into four main groups: travel agencies, hotels and motels, doss houses, pensions and restaurants. Number of registred subjects in these groups is 87. The results are shown in tables.

Type of subject	Number of subjects	Number of subjects with web site
Travel agencies	17	9
Hotels and motels	7	6
Doss houses and pensions	31	15
Restaurants	25	8

Table 1. Summary statistics

Travel agencies			Hotels and motels		
Stage of eMICA	Number of sites	% of total sites	Stage of eMICA	Number of sites	% of total sites
Stage 1			Stage 1		
Layer 1	0	0	Layer 1	0	0
Layer 2	3	33,33	Layer 2	2	33,4
Stage 2			Stage 2		
Layer 1	2	22,22	Layer 1	0	0
Layer 2	2	22,22	Layer 2	1	16,6
Layer 3	1	11,11	Layer 3	3	50
Stage 3			Stage 3		
Total	9	100	Total	6	100

Table 2. e MICA model on sample of travel agencies, hotels and motels

Doss houses and pensions			Restaurants		
Stage of eMICA	Number of sites	% of total sites	Stage of eMICA	Number of sites	% of total sites
Stage 1			Stage 1		
Layer 1	4	26,66	Layer 1	2	25
Layer 2	5	33,33	Layer 2	3	37,5
Stage 2			Stage 2		
Layer 1	2	13,33	Layer 1	2	25
Layer 2	1	6,66	Layer 2	1	12,5
Layer 3	3	20	Layer 3	0	0
Stage 3	0	0	Stage 3	0	0
Total	15	100	Total	8	100

Table 3. e MICA model on sample of doss houses, pensions and restaurants

From collected data, it is obvious that managers in tourism in Brodsko Posavska county do not use modern Internet technologies in in adequate volume and way. Although good web site design encourages the building of relationships between the destination and the tourist, that is not recognized. Effectively, web portals become the digital version of the destination, unifying web access to the destination, integrating all aspects of the value chain and allowing communication amongst tourists and firms. The most developed web sites are in sample of hotels and motels, while restaurants have undermost level of web quality. Because of the small number of developed web sites in tourism Brodsko Posavska county, firms should expand e-marketing strategies to improve their marketplace.

## 5. Conclusion

The development of modern Internet technology, provides a number of new possibilities in marketing in tourism of eastern Craotia. However, it is difficult to imagine that there exist today companies that are not present on the network if only thorough their web sites and this alone can form a basis for the beginnings of e-marketing usage. Internet has been seen as an opportunity for small and medium-sized tourism enterprises to improve their competitive position ant to give tourists higher level of service.

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