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The Development of E-Commerce in Tourism Sector: A Case Study in Antalya Province Resort Hotels

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the visible development of the trend and emerging e-commerce field in the tourism sector. The population of the study is made up of all the managers who are interested in the online sales channel at the 5-star Resort Hotels located in Antalya province in Türkiye. As a result of the research, the opinions of the managers are that hotels can increase their sales volumes by providing the opportunity to reach many audiences by using the e-commerce platforms they have created, reduce costs, and provide long-term opportunities by establishing closer relationships with guests.

KEYWORDS: E-Commerce, Tourism, Hotels, Antalya

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid developments in information technologies have not only provided new opportunities to society but also created new opportunities for the service sector. The use of information technologies in the tourism sector has come out as three stages of technological development. The use of computerized reservation systems (CRS) in the 1970s was followed by the emergence of global distribution systems (GDS) in the 1980s, and finally in the 1990s.

The tourism sector is an industry that closely follows technological developments and at the same time can implement them immediately.

Accommodation enterprises discovered the Internet in the late 1990s. All accommodation enterprises in the world, especially in developed countries, created their web pages and started to benefit from the Internet in areas such as promotion, sales, market targeting, market segmentation, marketing research, pricing, and product development. After the 2000s, these developments showed an increase (Kozak, 2006: 273).

The concept of electronic commerce in accommodation establishments has been realized simultaneously with the use of e-commerce in tourism agencies. Central reservation systems, which were used intensively even in the early days of the Internet, became an essential tool in promoting hotels to more users with the spread of the Internet. In a short period, the product ordering or purchasing function has become safe and more widespread rather than the promotional feature and hotel businesses have started to use this feature of the Internet. In this context, hotel businesses can work individually in reservation and sales processes, as well as making promotions within the frame on the pages of the agencies, thus their sales potential increases (Bayekeyeva, 2009: 44).

It would be appropriate to examine e-commerce in the tourism sector by considering the studies carried out in this field. (Tutar et al.,2007: 205) Searched the level of utilization of e-tourism by accommodation establishments within the tourism sector. They stated that costs decreased and efficiency increased with the use of information and technology in accommodation establishments. Karataş & Babür (2013: 23) stated that there are always changes in the demands and expectations of consumers compared to the past, and with the widespread use of information and technology, consumers started to take flight, transfer, and hotel reservations over the Internet without the need for intermediaries. Pırnar (2005: 51), on the other hand, revealed that e-commerce, one of the technological developments, will be used more and more widely in the marketing of tourism businesses and that it is an inevitable fact that this rapidly changing and developing technology will closely concern the travel industry. She also mentioned that e-commerce will save costs and time for both tourism businesses and customers.

Çavuşoğlu (2010: 137) indicated in his research that tourism businesses used to do their promotion and marketing through tour operators and travel agencies, which are intermediary organizations, but with the support of e-commerce and information technologies, businesses have changed to doing their promotion and marketing themselves. In this context, he pointed out that the information and prices on businesses' websites should be kept up to date and payment facilities should be

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provided. According to Karacan & Çiftçioğlu (2018:251), it is expected that the volume of electronic commerce will increase rapidly in the coming years as a consequence of the rapid development of technology and the increasing penetration of mobile devices such as tablet phones into our lives, and it is thought that the effect of traditional methods will decrease and all activities carried out in tourism sector, as in all sectors, will continue to be effective in the electronic environment. For this reason, they argue that transportation companies, travel agencies, tour operators, and accommodation businesses, which are the components of the tourism sector, need to keep up with the new order by following technological developments to survive in the intensely competitive environment. In addition, they think that websites created to reach more people in the globalizing world, comprehensive sites with multi-language options, a simple interface, and fast transactions will increase the transaction volume. Chang et al., (2015: 61) and Salwani et al. (2009:181) argue that the use of e-commerce has positive effects on the performance of businesses, their competitive position, and the increase in the number of customers. Lu et al., (2007:20) emphasized that comprehensible and well-designed websites by tourism businesses make it easier for customers to access information and products.

2. RESEARCH DETAILS

2.1. The Scope and Methodology of the Research

The research method was determined as a qualitative research method in line with the course of the study. In the research, questions were prepared to investigate the effects of e-commerce on the tourism sector, and face-to-face interviews were held with the managers of the tourism sector to conduct qualitative research.

2.2. Data Collection Tool

Data were gathered by interview method. In research, the interviews were prepared with the semi-structured in-depth interview technique to cover the research more consistently and comprehensively.

2.3. Research Sample

Since the development of e-commerce in the tourism sector is discussed in the research, the sample of the research consists of sales managers working in resort hotels in Antalya. Purposeful sampling method was used in the study because it was thought that the appropriate answer to the determined research problem would be found. In this context, a total of 9 sales managers from resort hotels in Antalya were interviewed.

All participants in the interviews participated in this research voluntarily. In this process, 9 participants were included in the sample of the research because the answers received during the interviews had a certain uniformity and repetition.

2.4. Preparation of The Question Form Used in The Research

A draft interview form was first prepared to carry out the interviews. While creating these draft interview forms, a total of three expert opinions who were experienced in the tourism sector and worked as faculty members at the university were consulted. When preparing the interview form, attention has been paid to making the questions simple and understandable. Necessary corrections were made to the interview form in line with the expert opinions received because, in structured and semi-structured interviews, questions are prepared before the interview(Yükselen,2013). The last three questions in the interview questions taken from (Atay et al., 2019) study. Pilot interviews were held for test purposes to understand the adequacy of the draft form and to make the necessary arrangements. Pilot applications should be made through the draft of the interview form before proceeding to the actual application. Because pre-test or pilot applications will provide a great advantage in eliminating the defects in the interview form questions (Willis, 2015). After the pilot interviews, the interview form has been finalized.

The nine main questions in the interview form were prepared in an open-ended structure and asked the interview participants to make the interview freer and flexible.

The interview form questions used in the research are divided into two main groups. The first group consists of information about the demographic information of the participants and the second group contains the main questions.

The data of the research was obtained between 30.11.2023 and 10.12.2023. Before the interviews were held, an appointment was requested from the business managers, and meetings were held with the managers between the specified dates. Each participant was interviewed for approximately 30 to 40 minutes, and the data was obtained between 1.5 and 2 pages.

2.5. Method of Analysis

In the study, the data gained through the interview technique, one of the qualitative research techniques, was analyzed with the descriptive analysis method, which is also used in the analysis of qualitative research techniques.

This analysis aims to present the findings in an organized and analyzed manner. For this purpose, data obtained are at first explained systematically and obviously. These depicted data are then explained and interpreted, cause-effect relationships are examined, and some conclusions are obtained.

After a long-term interaction with the participants and after reaching enough participants in the research area, it was checked whether the data obtained was credible or not. Since the findings obtained as a result of the interviews began to repeat, in other words, the data reached the saturation point, it was decided to evaluate the data and the analysis of the data began. After the data obtained from the interviews were compiled, the data analysis process began.

2.6. Findings of The Research

Since the interview was conducted with a total of 9 participants, the participants were numbered from 1 to 9 as "1st Participant, 2nd Participant, 3rd Participant..." and they were listed in a way that only the researchers had information about.

2.6.1. Demographic Information About Participants

According to this information, 7 of the participants were men, 2 of them were women and their ages ranged from 29 to 42

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years. In educational situations, it is determined that 5 participants have a bachelor's degree level, while 4 of them have a master's degree. In this context, it turns out that the majority of managers have a bachelor's degree and a middle-aged participant profile (Yavuz &Mesci, 2020:1388). In addition, Quaddus &Achjari (2005:132) related the intensity of the use of e-commerce to the number of levels of expertise, level of risk, and availability. They also stated that the intensity of e-commerce usage is higher in companies where the number of employees with higher education or university degrees is higher.

2.6.2. Findings On What Technology Means for The Tourism Industry and Its Sub-Sectors

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "What does technology mean for the tourism industry and its sub-sectors? Can you evaluate?". When the interviews of the participants are examined, it is concluded that technology is of great importance for the tourism industry to expand the market share, and provide great opportunities in competition and globalization. Technology determines the competitiveness and strategies of tourism businesses. In addition, as technological changes are accepted very quickly around the world, tourism businesses have made revisions in strategic management, marketing, operations, and other areas. Technological developments affect all channels in terms of competition in the tourism sector and strengthen its formation and existence(Buhalis,2019:267). The Internet, which provides significant advantages for businesses and customers, has become widespread rapidly and has been adopted by businesses. This situation has made technology the main source of sustainable competitive advantage and strategic leverage in tourism and travel industry (Buhalis & Main, 1998:198).

They also emphasized that businesses should always adapt to technology, as people can make and compare their reservations with a click, even from long distances, whenever they want. With the inclusion of technology in our lives, the change in the tourism sector and the increase in supply and demand situations have also come to the fore. Tourists in the demand dimension show some differences in terms of their needs and approaches compared to pre-technology tourist types. Tourists in our age have adopted the comfort, flexibility, and opportunities brought by technology (Şeyhanlıoğlu & Kıngır, 2021: 235).

2.6.3. Findings On the Advantages of E-Commerce for The Tourism Sector

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "What are the advantages of e-commerce for the tourism sector?". The information about participants' opinions is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Opinions on the Advantages of E-Commerce for the Tourism Sector

Participants	Opinions of Participants
1st Participant	It is possible to reach the guests directly and be able to reflect the real situation of the business to the guests.
2nd Participant	Reaching to all parts of the world, direct sales, marketing and promotion, high profitability, customer relationship management, flexible pricing policies are the main advantages provided by e-commerce.
3rd Participant	We can consider more effective marketing areas and direct Access to the consumers as the biggest advantage.
4th Participant	Thanks to e-commerce, guests have started to make their shopping easier, which will allow them to travel and transport without an intermediary institution.
5th Participant	E-commerce provides easy and fast Access to the target audience, cost and time saving, direct communication, and ease of data collection in market research in a digitalized world,
6th Participant	It enables to reach the consumer directly. In further, since there is no intermediary institution involved in the sales, the commission paid to the intermediary companies remains within the company, so it results in an increase in the profit margin.
7th Participant	E-commerce offers less labor and less marketing costs.
8th Participant	It has been possible to reach more guests in a shorter time and benefit from time and labor with the prevalence of e-commerce.
9th Participant	Electronic commerce is becoming increasingly widespread and very effective in tourism sector, as in almost all sectors. It changes traditional marketing and sales methods and provides different ease of use for sellers and customers. Especially in hotel industry, the role of e-commerce in reaching direct consumer channels through connections such as intranet is undeniable. It is one of the biggest supporters of sales and marketing in reaching effective buyers in a shorter time.

When the opinions of the participants are examined in Table 1, answers were received from 9 participants as "directly reaching guests, marketing, and promotion of the hotel, saving labor and time, and reducing marketing costs" in the tourism sector. Globalization has had a significant impact on e-commerce usage. With the adoption and use of e-commerce by global companies, they can expand their presence in the market across borders by making it easier and cheaper (Chang et al., 2015: 54). E-commerce has been largely accepted as a new market medium, and businesses around the world aim to implement e-commerce to success their business targets in terms of effectiveness and efficiency (Dewan & Kraemer, 2020: 550). The adoption and use of e-commerce by businesses is due to its ability to reduce operating costs and increase productivity (Elly & Boter, 2016). With the desire of business managers in the tourism sector to promote the products and services that they provide to many tourists, they communicate with them faster and at a lower cost (El-Ebiary et al., 2020: 197).

In addition to these opinions, the 4th and 6th participants stated that the profit margin of the businesses is affected

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positively since there is no intermediary institution. It can be understood from here that in reservations made via e-commerce, guests can make their own accommodation and flight reservations without an intermediary institution. Moreover, it is possible to say that it provides the opportunity to make profits within the company by eliminating the need to pay commission fees paid to intermediaries.

2.6.4. Findings On in Which Areas E-Commerce Had the Most Impact On the Tourism Sector

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "In which areas have e-commerce had the most impact on the tourism sector?". Considering the opinions of the participants, e-commerce is mostly used in direct room sales, accommodation and travel, transportation, tour purchases, entertainment/activity organization, and the ability of guests to purchase in-hotel extra services (such as massages, à la carte, personal trainer, etc.) in advance before arriving at the hotel. As has been seen before, travel and tourism draw attention as one of the fastest-growing industries in electronic commerce. Shortly, e-commerce in the tourism sector is related to advertising on web pages related to transportation ticket sales, hotel reservations and sales, car rental, and travel. The internet is already changing the way tourists buy and Access holiday products. At the same time, the number of customers who use the internet to obtain information about prices, hotels, and destination features and to make comparisons is increasing quickly (Klancnik&Peressolova, 2003).

The 3rd participant stated that in the past, agencies dominated the processes, but today, thanks to e-commerce, hotels are also involved and active in this process by using social media, digital marketing, and direct sales. It is possible to produce, advertise, purchase, pay, and deliver travel services used in tourism only via the Internet. Other features that make the internet more effective than other tools in terms of the tourism sector are that the internet can transmit voice, image, and written text simultaneously and faster (Pırnar, 2005: 41). The 4th participant stated that people's shopping habits changed after the pandemic and that tourism was also affected by these changes in terms of making accommodation and travel reservations through websites. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, social restrictions have been imposed worldwide. In the context of these restrictions, businesses temporarily stopped their activities (Aktaş et al., 2021: 43). The bans and restrictions implemented due to COVID-19 have caused a rapid change and transformation in consumer habits. E-commerce, which has become increasingly important in consumers' lives in recent years, has caused changes not only in consumers' purchasing habits but also in their purchasing motivations (TÜSİAD, 2022; Pantelimon et al., 2020: 30).

The 7th participant pointed out that e-commerce makes business-to-consumer trade in tourism more effective and that businesses tend to purchase software related to channel and reservation management. Business-to-consumer electronic commerce, also known as electronic retailing, is the most common electronic commerce application in the tourism sector. To enable potential customers to make purchases, B2C websites should be as simple and uncomplicated as possible since complex transactions scare away the customer (Taşer, 2002: 64).

2.6.5. Findings On How Business in The Tourism Sector Benefit from The Opportunities Offered by E-Commerce and How These Opportunities Affect the Growth Potential of Businesses

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "How do businesses in the tourism sector benefit from the opportunities offered by e-commerce and how do these opportunities affect the growth potential of businesses?". When the opinions of the participants are examined, with the development of technology and increasing use of e-commerce, tourism establishments can reach their guests directly in overseas countries, determine the target market, and expand their marketing areas. The use of the Internet for commercial purposes and e-commerce applications is extremely common in the tourism sector, and e-commerce is developing rapidly in this sector. In e-commerce, tourism product sellers can learn the needs of their customers in detail and swiftly. Thus, they offer them special services at affordable prices.

Websites furnished with accurate information about the promoted tourist activities enable great opportunities for businesses in tourism marketing. Tourism establishments can promote and sell through regionally active reservation systems as well as internationally operating systems (Çavuşoğlu,2010:114). In other words, tourism establishments that want to achieve the goal of increasing their sales through e-commerce should first present the correct information to the target audience in the online environment (on their websites) where they market their goods and services.

The 3rd participant emphasized that digital marketing allows people with different interests to see the products and support them with visual content. Virtual reality programs can show consumers and tourists what they can do, what they can eat, drink, and buy in the holiday center they choose, where they stay. These programs, produced with three-dimensional, visual, audio, and touch technology, are extremely effective (Kıroğlu, 2012: 66).

2.6.6. Findings On the Impact of E-Commerce On the Income of Tourism Businesses and How It Contributed to Increasing Sales

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "What is the impact of e-commerce on the income of tourism businesses and how did it contribute to increasing its sales?". The majority of participants indicated that they can reach target consumers directly without any intermediaries, and thus their business revenues increase significantly. Technology has revolutionized the entire distribution channel by strengthening direct communication and transactions between managers and consumers (deconstructing intermediation) and at the same time enabling the emergence of a large number of new intermediaries (re-intermediation) (Buhalis&Licata, 2002: 212).

The 1st participant pointed out that hotels that tend to use Google ads and social media promotions to reach guests

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directly are successful. He also stated that hotel businesses that create social media teams and employ this team will be much ahead of others. Social media emerges as an extremely important tool, especially for tourism businesses, in using information efficiently. In other words, in the competitive environment created by globalization, the use of the internet and interactive tools called social media in terms of marketing is becoming widespread all over the world (Eröz &Doğdubay, 2012: 140). While tourism businesses strive to survive in an environment open to world competition, they need to find markets and customers through new-generation, Internet-based, participation, and interaction-based social media tools, as well as traditional media. Day by day, both tourism activities and tourism customers are becoming more global. This situation seems to have caused cost pressure on businesses. For this reason, it is inevitable for tourism establishments to try to reach more individuals through faster, less costly, participatory, interactive social media tools that allow interaction (Yavuz & Haseki, 2012: 123).

The 3rd participant underlines that businesses can make last-minute sales of empty rooms on the same day without an agent through e-commerce. While accommodation and transportation businesses take advantage of the opportunities offered by the internet to overcome the free capacity problem (last-minute pricing applications), customers who use the internet for their reservations also benefit from the advantage of low prices (Buhalis, 1997: 73).

2.6.7. Findings On Businesses in The Tourism Sector Improve Guest Experience by Using E-Commerce Platforms

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "How do you think businesses in the tourism sector improve guest experience by using e-commerce platforms?". The information about participants' opinions is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Opinions on Businesses in the tourism Sector Improve Guest Experience by Using E-Commerce Platforms

Participants	Opinions of Participants
1st Participant	When a guest makes a reservation on any e-commerce platform or website, information such as the guest's mobile phone and e-mail address is accessed. At this point, communication with the guest actually begins. A number of questions may be asked to the guest, depending on the room type chosen by the guest. For example; hard pillow or soft pillow, is it close or far from the elevator, is it smoking or non-smoking (in many hotels, all rooms are non-smoking now), lower floors or upper floors, whether the guest needs a transfer, whether there will be a birthday or anniversary during his/her stay at the hotel. With many questions like these, communication and relationships with guests are streng the need and the hotel can sell more products and services to its guests coming from e-commerce.
2nd Participant	E-commerce allows tourism businesses to use strategies such as easy booking processes, customized incentives, personalized services, mobile notifications, online support and up-to-date content to enhance the guest experience. These methods increase customer satisfaction, encouraging loyalty and repeat bookings.
3rd Participant	We can also say that guests improve businesses. Nowadays, a positive or negative event within the facility can suddenly spread all over the world, so the importance of communication with the guest increases every day.
4th Participant	Especially during and after the pandemic, e-commerce grew in many sectors and some people's habits changed. Instead of visiting travel agencies, people now start to decide to buy after examining hotel websites and comparing prices on many sites. We enable guests to make reservations comfortably and securely by creating appropriate infra structures in our facilities,
5th Participant	Online channels (Booking.com, Expedia, etc.) serving millions of guests worldwide quickly obtain information about guests' experiences. The guest relations and crm departments of the businesses check these notifications and take quicker action, whether positive or negative.
6th Participant	Since one-on-one communication is established with the guest in reservations made via e-commerce, it has a positive contribution in making the guest feel more special.
7th Participant	Guest reviews can be viewed and responded to on every platform such as Trustyou, Review Pro etc. Most importantly, by turning this into a report, strengths and short comings can be identified.
8th Participant	E-commerce is of great importance at every stage of the reservation cycle. E-commerce provides benefits in every area, from pre-reservation, reservation process, check-in process and guest departure.
9th Participant	The consumer determines the road map of every company. It is very important that you analyze the guest's experiences. For this reason, research and development projects have emerged. On these platforms, consumers' first-hand experiences can now be obtained, as well as information on the price-service quality ratio.

As can be understood from the opinions stated, most participants indicated that it is possible to directly access guest information (phone, e-mail) for reservations made through the hotels' e-commerce platform. In this way, relationships with guests can be developed and they can feel special by asking them if they have any special requests (room equipment features, birthday/anniversary celebrations, etc.) to ensure their satisfaction before arriving at the hotel. Knowing customer segments and characteristics and meeting special requests are closely related to e-commerce success in the tourism sector (Pırnar,2005:68). The 3rd participant emphasized the importance of communication with the guest and supported the views made by underlining the possibility that any event occurring within the facility could suddenly spread to the whole world. 5th, 7th, and 9th participants mentioned that the feedback of guests' positive or negative experiences can be detected through e-commerce platforms and action can be taken immediately by related departments such as guest relations or customer relationship management as. In

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addition, easily determining consumer profiles and demographic characteristics and providing instant feedback from the consumer are among the reasons why destination promoters, hotel managers, and travel agencies prefer the Internet in their marketing and research activities (Tekeli, 2001: 155).

2.6.8. Findings On the Current Status of E-Commerce in The Business

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "Can you evaluate the current status of e-commerce in your business?". When the participants were asked about the current position of e-commerce in their businesses, while the 1st participant stated that there are existing departments (call center, Google specialist, social media specialist, e-commerce manager and assistant, graphic designer) within the business that will support e-commerce, the 3rd participant indicated that they reached the volume they planned by getting a return on their investments in e-commerce every year. According to the opinions of the remaining participants, it is mentioned that the current e-commerce position of their businesses can be directly related to the investments made, strategies developed and trends followed. In this case, businesses must create a dynamic structure that can adapt to rapid changes so that their chances of survival can increase by becoming leaders in their markets (Kaya, 2009: 26).

2.6.9. Findings On How Guests Use E-Commerce Platforms to Purchase Touristic Products or Services

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "Do you analyze how guests use e-commerce platforms to purchase touristic products or services? How do you evaluate the results of your analyses?". According to the opinions of most participants, they stated that tourism establishments analyze some parameters (age, gender, nationality, etc.) that affect tourists' purchase of tourist products or services. One of the important issues for tourism businesses is to provide a competitive advantage. Businesses now have a wide data collection network thanks to artificial intelligence. In this way, businesses that have information about individuals' consumer behavior and travel preferences increase their profit shares by providing greater advantages compared to businesses that use traditional data collection methods (Kazak et al., 2020: 3).

3rd, 6th, and 7th participants mentioned that tourists' purchases of products or services are shaped by the opinions of other tourists on online channels. Review sites, such as TripAdvisor and Yelp as provided an opportunity consumer to express online word-of-mouth (e-wom) affecting the dignity, branding, and business performance of tourism establishments (Inversini & Buhalis, 2009: 385).

2.6.10. Findings On Any Predictions About the Future Role of E-Commerce in The Tourism Sector

Under this heading, the participants were asked, "Do you have any predictions role of e-commerce in the tourism sector?". Participants stated that sales via e-commerce will gradually increase and e-commerce will become more important in the future. They pointed out that this will occur with the increasing use of digital marketing and artificial intelligence in technology. In recent years, the increase in use of technological systems and artificial intelligence in the tourism sector has been seen in all areas of the sector. It is increasing its power day by day, mainly in the fields of accommodation, travel, food, and beverage (Fusté-Forné, 2021: 2).

1st participant also pointed out that tourism establishments can gain revenue with virtual reality by eliminating agencies. As museum, hotel, and restaurant visits made with three-dimensional or virtual reality on the web reach a level of promotion that can be experienced, digital advertising agencies will be able to replace the travel agencies and the marketing expenses of tourism businesses will increase further in their income statements (Mil &Dirican, 2018: 4). According to NiMade et al. (2020: 1000), the development of technological systems has increased rapidly, especially after industry 4.0, and people have adapted to this situation because the dominance of products such as augmented reality and virtual reality in tourism sector highlights the view that technology will be more effective in the coming years.

2.7. Theoretical Implications of the Research

This study provides an idea that e-commerce is a global phenomenon with an inevitable and unstoppable character, both technological and social. This study has been tried to reveal the development of e-commerce in hotel establishments and the market share it has, which is increasingly preferred with the increasing use of information and technology in the globalizing world. As a result of the interviews, it has been revealed that with the adoption of e-commerce by hotels, profitability rates will increase by reaching consumers directly, regardless of region or country, costs such as marketing and promotion will decrease, intermediaries will disappear, and the use of artificial intelligence will increase within the sector shortly. In this context, theorists and academics may find it useful to focus on exploring the effects of e-commerce on the online purchase of tourist products or services.

2.8. Practical Implications of the Research

Thanks to e-commerce platforms, booking and purchasing tourist services online can increase the income potential of businesses. E-commerce has practical effects on providing Access to international markets for tourism businesses and selling tourist products to different geographies. Hoteliers can evaluate the practical effects of e-commerce on customer satisfaction and loyalty for tourism businesses in terms of digital customer relationship management. Analysis and improvement opportunities on customer behavior of data obtained through e-commerce platforms can help tourism businesses gain a competitive advantage.

In this context, it should be clear that hoteliers need to learn how to take advantage of the full functionality of online platforms. Controlling and managing this process is an extremely important goal for hoteliers who want to expand their market share.

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3. CONCLUSION

As a result of the answers obtained from the participants, technology allows tourism businesses to globalize, compete, and expand market share. Technology, which is used effectively in many sectors today, has reshaped the communication styles of businesses. As in every sector, e-commerce is of great importance in the tourism sector. Due to the important role played by information in bringing together, organizing, and presenting tourist products to consumers, e-commerce has become the main source and a strategic weapon in providing sustainable competitive advantage.

To benefit from the growing potential of e-commerce, many hotel businesses have created their websites and use the Internet for a variety of purposes. Tourism businesses have the opportunity to represent themselves and market their products and services from their web pages and reach their consumers directly without being limited to their physical location. In this way, a wider audience can be reached and the attention of potential visitors can be attracted.

Direct bookings can reduce hotel businesses' advertising and marketing costs. It may be difficult for hotels to control their costs due to agency commissions but sales without intermediaries can occur without high commission payments. This view is also supported by Çavuşoğlu's (2010) study. In his research, he indicated that tourism businesses used to do their promotion and marketing through tour operators and travel agencies, which are intermediary organizations, but the businesses can do their promotion and marketing themselves with the support of e-commerce. In addition, it can reduce hotels' operational costs such as labor and time. This result obtained from participant opinions are similar to the studies of the results by Pırnar (2005) and Tutar et al (2007). In addition, the opportunity for interactive interaction, personalization, ease of measurement of results and possibility of feedback, effective use of human resources, suitability and flexibility to needs, convenience in the market or marketing research and data collection, increase in the service quality of tourism enterprises and increase in the sales of tourism products are among the benefits of e-commerce. With these advantages, it is possible to say that the use of e-commerce positively affects the performance of hotel businesses. This result is consistent with the result made by Chang et al. (2015).

Direct bookings allow hoteliers to collect and analyze better customer data. This enables personalization of marketing strategies and services. These applications provide data-driven approaches to understanding customer preferences and provide them with customized offers. In this context, online booking and marketing strategies allow hotels to target a global customer base. Electronic commerce provides hotel businesses with advantages in dynamic pricing and revenue management. These applications analyze demand and supply data by allowing hotels to optimize occupancy rates and increase revenue.

In direct reservations, costs will remain low and profitability will increase. If hotels increase direct sales, it will be possible to increase profitability. It is a distinct advantage that the hotel can manage its interaction with the guest and make reservations by contacting the guest without an intermediary. In this way, hotel businesses can create a more sustainable business model by reducing their dependence on intermediaries such as travel agencies. It was also stated by the participants that no physical travel agency or airline company will provide service as advanced technology supports online reservations. This finding is similar to El-Ebiary's(2020) study. He also stated in his study that online reservations will be replaced by these units in the future and will become more dominant.

Direct sales not only increase the profitability; it also provides control of the communication with the guests the hotel. Hotel businesses can provide easy access to customers and offer them personalized experiences through interactive websites. Thanks to online booking processes and personalized communication, hotel businesses can increase customer satisfaction and it helps businesses establish a direct relationship with guests. It also allows hotel businesses to provide customer experience-oriented services. E-commerce platforms offer hotel businesses the opportunity to collect customer feedback. This feedback permits businesses to evaluate service quality and make necessary improvements. In this way, hotel businesses can use CRM systems for customer relationship management. These apps can encourage repeat bookings and strengthen customer loyalty by communicating more effectively with customers. These results are supported by Sobihah et al. (2014) study. Customers' direct relationship with the hotel business can also increase brand awareness.

Because e-commerce is the gateway to the global market, businesses have the opportunity to market their products and services anywhere in the world. This will contribute to increasing the customer base of the company by gaining a share of the global market and increasing the profitability of the businesses. The use of e-commerce tools in tourism contributes to increasing the profitability and efficiency of the enterprise by reducing the promotional and intermediary costs of the enterprise. Businesses get the opportunity to market their services and products 24/7 through their websites at a more affordable price directly to their customers without using an intermediary. In addition, since the customer follows the tourism enterprise website online for sales made via e-commerce, it allows them to make purchases, reservations, and refunds by being informed instantly of updates, discounts, and campaigns made by the enterprise or by contacting the enterprise online.

Today, potential tourists can obtain detailed information about the tourist products they will purchase through electronic tourism sites operating in a virtual environment. Thanks to this feature, tourism activities carried out based on electronic commerce have become one of the most important sources of information that potential tourists refer to. By accessing detailed information about tourist products, consumers can find the opportunity to compare many services and products and have access to customer reviews about the business. In this way, consumers can obtain information about campaigns, destination

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promotions, places they intend to visit, and their culture through e-commerce. Those who adapt to the regulations brought by these technological developments and changes find themselves ahead of others. The fact that customers can directly Access information about the product or service to be purchased with a short tour in the virtual world draws attention to the fact that the importance of e-commerce will gradually increase in the future. Considering the low cost of e-tourism and the high potential of the internet, it can be predicted that travel agencies will not remain as we know it today and the system will be fully integrated with the internet within a few years.

When the attitudes and thoughts of the participants in the study about e-commerce are examined, it is observed that the e-commerce model of the era and the future is e-commerce. Today, when technology has become a part of our lives and its use has become almost inevitable, businesses need to follow the developments closely and adapt to technological developments faster. It is an inevitable fact that e-commerce, one of the technological developments, will be used more and more widely in the marketing of tourism businesses and that this rapidly changing and developing technology will closely concern the accommodation sector. Hotels have to use this new form of marketing to survive and resist competition. Therefore, hotel businesses need to develop electronic commerce strategies and invest in this area. It would be appropriate to say that hotel businesses that cannot turn using e-commerce, which is a new economic product, into an opportunity, will find it very difficult to get a place in the future. For this reason, they should provide a competitive advantage against their competitors by following the developments in information Technologies and internet Technologies by using these technologies in their business.

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