

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management



Diploma Thesis

**Analysis of online sales channels for short term
apartment rentals in Prague - case study of Ruterra
Apartment s.r.o.**

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Analýza online prodejních kanálů pro krátkodobý pronájem apartmánů v Praze - případová studie Ruterra Apartment s.r.o.

Souhrn

Diplomová práce se zabývá analýzou a zhodnocením online prodejních sítí zabývajících se prodejem krátkodobého pronájmu apartmánů v Praze. Na základě analýzy, která bere v potaz jak zákaznický názor, tak i názor majitelů apartmánů, je cílem určit nejspolehlivější a nejefektivnější nabízející na tomto trhu. Cíle této práce je zhodnotit efektivnost online marketingových nástrojů užívaných k nabídce pronájmu ubytovacích zařízení zejména pro dovolené či krátkodobé pobyty.

Práce je rozdělena na část teoretickou a praktickou, které jsou založeny na analýze portálů v rámci vybraných kritérií a také na základě řízeného výzkumu. Hlavním cílem literární rešere je vysvětlit terminologii online prodejních sítí a portálů, jejich fungování a demonstrovat jejich možnosti. Dalším cílem práce je ukázat jak může aplikace marketingových nástrojů ovlivnit zájem jak ze strany pronajímatelů tak i zájemců o krátkodobý pronájem ubytování.

Vlastní práce popisuje analýzu vybrané obchodní sítě na základě následujících faktorů jakými jsou: pohodlí rezervačního procesu, systému hodnocení, způsob jednání a privilegia pro uživatele sociálních sítí. Výsledky získané na základě dotazníkového šetření byly zhodnoceny a nadále porovnány. Následně byly identifikovány nejefektivnější a nejspolehlivější webové portály společně s efektivními marketingovými nástroji, jenž mají podstatný vliv na rozhodování zákazníka.

Klíčová slova

Online prodejní síť, prodejní kanály, krátkodobý pronájem apartmánů, marketingové nástroje, rezervace, portál.

Abstract

Online sales channels have become the latest trend of the Internet. The performance, usability and brand perception for online content owners are very important and can significantly influence the customer's choice – in negative or positive ways, especially it is noticeable within vacation rental websites, where the competition is not about price for services, but about values and benefits provided. To attract new customers, to influence their needs and wants, to help both – hosts and guests – make a right choice, companies use online marketing. The main goal of online marketing is to influence customer behaviour and to make the process of the customer browsing the website and making a booking as fast and as convenient as possible.

The research question of this diploma thesis is the following:

How do efficiency and reliability of the vacation rental websites for short term apartment rental depend on the chosen marketing strategy and marketing tools used by sales channels to attract customers?

The main objective of this thesis is to analyse and evaluate sales channels for short term apartment rentals from the customers' and owners' points of view and determine the most efficient and reliable ones.

The second aim is to set proper marketing tools and ways of attracting customers and advertising apartments online using online marketing tools within vacation rental websites.

To achieve the stated goals, the next objectives must be reached:

- To make a careful study of online sales channels
- To analyse and test online sales channels according to the selected criteria
- To define and evaluate marketing tools within sales channels for attracting customers online
- To conduct a research among Ruterra Apartment s.r.o. employees
- To verify the results of the questionnaire (the same survey was conducted among the employees of the Abrupt Agency s.r.o. company)
- To analyse the outcome of the research and to study current trends within sales channels development

Chosen methodology:

Theoretical knowledge of the scientific literature authors is the foundation for the necessary information search within the field of online marketing tools for short term apartment rental. In the first chapter, the descriptive method was used to conduct detailed study of the literature and relevant Internet resources.

The second part of the diploma thesis begins from the characteristics of the organisation. The Ruterra Apartment s.r.o. company was described in the way, which allows to understand the importance of the marketing tools within vacation rental websites. All online sales channels were analysed according to their share in the selected company and on the base of the mentioned quantitative research six top portals used for booking apartments in central Prague were selected.

The next tool used in this diploma thesis was the quantitative method presented as a research in a form of a questionnaire with scaled answers. The questionnaire consisted of 29 questions with scale answers, twelve of them aiming to identify evaluation of the general website characteristics. The second part of the questionnaire includes questions about particular marketing tools used by vacation rental websites, such as evaluation of the loyal programme attractiveness, social media activity and handiness of the communication.

The next methodological tool is the data source triangulation. Research was repeated with the employees of the Abrupt Agency s.r.o. company. The study was conducted to obtain and verify data received during the study in the Ruterra Apartment company, what made the process of analysing and drawing the conclusion and outcomes easier.

The qualitative method was the last one used in the thesis. The author carried out a media content analysis by analyzing blogs, internet communities, social networking pages and review, to determine which sales channels built the best multi-channel digital relationship through the web, mobile and other social channels.

Conclusions and results:

Based on the analysis of the sales channels was determined that Airbnb, Booking.com and Holiday lettings are the most efficient and reliable portals among the vacation rental websites. It was concluded that the most efficient channels are in the moment the most realible ones, because of througful policies and used marketing tools.

According to the conducted research, it was determined that there is a strong correlation between marketing tools used by vacation rental websites and their performance. Portals with a thought interface, high usability as well as with different online marketing tools are more successful. It could be concluded that there is no competition in terms of service prices, but competition in terms of offered values and guarantees. Based on the numbers provided by the Ruterra Apartment company, the questionnaire's results were held in Ruterra Apartment along with the Abrupt Agency company, and it was estimated that the folowing dependence is direct. The more effecient online marketing tools are offered to users, the higher performace is showed by certain sales channels.

In regard to certain marketing tools, the questionnaire results showed, that ones are more effective than others. The most efficient tools, such as mobile applications, last minute offers, instant bookings and suggestions on improvement, provided by leaders of short term apartments rental market create the perfect conditions for fast and convenient reservations. Everything matters, from the small signs „Hot deal“, last-minute offers, 30% off or Superhost status, to the guarantees and cancellation policies applied to guests and hosts.

Summering it up, the most effective tools influencing on efficiency and reability of the vacation rental websites are: convinience of the booking process – to reserve an apartment within couple of clicks, including the instant reservation and instant messaging possibility; ratings system - solid rating system and the verified reviews help guest to make a right choice; deals and priveleges for users and thoughtful applications which make their lives easier.

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