

Travel Agencies Use of Internet in North Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the usage of Social-Networking-Sites (SNS) and Internet of North Cyprus travel agencies. For this purpose, the researcher has contacted with KITSAB which is an union organization for travel agencies and every legal travel agency has to be member of this organization.

KITSAB categorizes travel agencies into two groups. This categorization has been made according to business model that is chosen by travel agencies by KITSAB. These business models are; either organizing touristic tours from and/or to North Cyprus and selling flight tickets. Members of this category are called Group A category. The other category is called Group B and the only difference between Group A category agencies is, the travel agencies of this category do not have right to organize touristic tours from and/or to North Cyprus.

The major aim of this study is 124 “group A” travel agencies social media channels investigated. Than as a minor subject visual advertisements of Group A agencies analyzed to find out the representation of North Cyprus into the tourist market.

Content analysis method was used to examine the Internet use of travel agencies. List of travel agencies of Group A category was gathered from KITSAB. Every travel agency has been searched via Google’s search engine and certain SNS.

The findings show the majority of Group A category travel agencies (63.7%) use the Internet tools. However the frequency of usage shows the majority of these agencies are not using in daily basis.

Keywords: Tourism, Social Media, Travel Agencies, Representation

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki turizm acentelerin İnternet ve sosyal medyayı kullanımını incelemektedir.

KITSAB turizm acentelerini iki kategoriye ayırmaktadır. Bu kategorizasyon acentelerin işletme modeli esas alınarak yapılmıştır. Bu modeller Kuzey Kıbrıs'a ya da Kuzey Kıbrıs'tan turistik turlar organize edebilen acentelere ve başka acenteler tarafından hazırlanmış paket programları satan acenteler olarak ikiye ayrılmıştır. Grup A kategorisinde bulunan acenteler tur düzenleme hakkı var iken, Grup B kategorisinde bulunan seyahat acenteleri sadece başka acenteler tarafından organize edilmiş turları satabilmektedirler.

Bu çalışmanın asıl hedefi Grup A kategorisinde bulunan 124 turizm ve seyahat acentesinin İnternet ve sosyal medya kullanımlarını incelemektir. İkincil hedef olarak ise bu grupta bulunan acentelerin görsel basında yer alan reklamlarını inceleyip, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın turist pazarındaki temsilinin analizinden oluşmaktadır.

Bu çalışma içerik analizi yapılarak hazırlanmıştır. KITSAB ile itibarata geçilip Grup A kategorisinde bulunan acentelerin listesi alındıktan sonra Google arama motoru ve açıklanmış sosyal medya kanallarında araştırılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre bu liste bulunan acentelerin çoğunluğu (%63,7) İnternet kullanıyor.

Fakat araştırma sonucunda çıkan, acentelerin çoğunluğu İnternet ve sosyal medya kullanımında bir sürekliliği olmamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Medya, Turizm, Seyahat Acentesi, Kuzey Kıbrıs,
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to explore the Internet and SNS usage of North Cyprus Group A category tourism and travel agencies. For this purpose, availability of websites and SNS channels have been researched.

Due to high competitiveness, every culture and location differences from each other create different types of tourism. Cyprus has a history of modern commercial tourism that dates back to the 1930's (Storrs, 1930). For instance, tourism industry considered as; beach, sea and touristic hotel facilities but lately eco-tourism, gourmet tourism, casino tourism, domestic tourism and so on types have been added the sub-category of North Cyprus tourism. The increase in competitive nature of tourism industry, new marketing plans and strategies are needed by touristic destinations. Mostly destinations compete on detected images relatively to their rivals in the market (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001). However, the chosen way to promote these detected images is important. Lately tourism businesses are chosen to use images on their SNS and other Internet channels.

Intercultural conflict during the 1960's and 1974 intervention of Turkey as one of the guarantor countries of Cyprus caused a creation of political division of the island. These caused major changes in the island, while southern part is politically

recognized and northern part has become a self declared state, under embargo and only acknowledged by Turkey.

Self declaration of North Cyprus and embargo cause non-direct arrivals and departures to the northern part of the island, only direct arrivals and departures can be established through Turkey.

Accessibility to the websites and SNS channels of agencies and previous advertisement campaigns investigated for the content analysis. Furthermore, there will be an online research for finding out the online channels such as websites and social networking sites that are being used by the travel agencies of North Cyprus.

SNS mean that interactions between the people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen, Heinonen, 2008). SNS defined as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010). Web 2.0 refers to World Wide Web sites that do not use the same technology which early static WebPages use in websites (O’Reilly, 2005). In addition to that, SNS depends on web-based and mobile technologies in order to create interactive platforms to communicate with people, firms, corporations, and so on.

SNS became more popular after attracting public’s attention and getting used by businesses for marketing and promotion related actions. Social networking and

traditional media offer differences to the advertisers on; quality, frequency, reach, usability, permanence and cost (Kokemuller, 2014). In North Cyprus case, as a self declared state with no political recognition, social media has a great potential as marketing and promotion tool. In the non-recognition case of North Cyprus, tourism industry, SNS is borderless. Kaplan and Haenlei (2010) mentioned that SNS on democratization of Internet. This can has positive effect on equal opportunity on representation marketing North Cyprus tourism (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010).

SNS has big role on marketing and promotion. For example, Rita Safranak's (2012) "The Emerging Role of Social Media in Political and Regime Change" suggests that; People younger than 25 years old takes the 35-45% of population in the Middle East and North Africa region which is one of the most youthful populations in the world. This young population creates the majority of social networking sites users, and 40,000 active blogs, 25,000 Twitter accounts 17 million Facebook users are included to this group (Safranak, 2012). This popularity can be used as marketing channel by the travel agencies and Ministry of Tourism of North Cyprus for tourism promotion.

SNS is giving people the opportunity of "becoming media" itself by sharing and collaborating information (Li & Wang, 2011; Thevenot, 2007).

The increasing popularity of SNS also influence the social movements such as, Kony 2012 and Gezi Park incidents can be shown as examples. Kony 2012 is a short film and charitable project and the purpose of the project is to stop African cult and militia leader's Joseph Kony from force recruitment of child soldiers in the regions where Joseph Kony is active. Kony known as a indicted war criminal and International

Criminal Court fugitive (Myers, 2012). Kony 2012 spread virally with 21.9 thousand likes on Vimeo and 97 million views and shares on Youtube a great popularity had been gained by the movie (Vimeo, 2012) (Youtube, 2013).

Gezi Park Protest is another important event that proves the importance and effectiveness of SNS. In May 2013, Turkish government planned to replace the park with a reconstruction of the former Taksim Military Barracks which had been deconstructed in 1940 intended to house a shopping mall sparked the nationwide 2013 protests in Turkey (Letsch, 2013). EYCA's interview (European Year of Citizen Alliance) with Zeynep Alemdar, Vice-President of the European Movement in Turkey about the protest in the Gezi Park and influence of SNS during these actions. Alemdar (2013) describes as;

“There have been a lot of reactions from international media when Turkish CNN was airing a documentary about penguins when the protests were taking place and the police was attacking innocent people”

SNS channels were the temporary action reporting news channels during the protests, while the mainstream news television channels broadcasting non-related topics. Hash-tags like “#DirenGezi and #occupyGezi” of Twitter provide global interest to the Gezi Park Protests. Twitter (2014) describes hashtags as; “The # symbol, called a hashtag is used to mark keywords or topic in a tweet. It was created by Twitter users as a way to categorize messages”.

Another example for SNS influence is Facebook and Twitter's prediction on the elections for American presidency. U.S. President Barack Obama was more liked on Facebook than his opponent Mitt Romney and it was found by a study done by Oxford Institute Internet Experiment that more people liked to tweet about comments of President Obama rather than Romney (Fitzgerald, 2013). On each day, more than 3 million photos are uploaded to Flickr, 5 million tweets, and a million new blog entries are posted on Twitter and other blog sites (Bodnar, 2010).

1.1 Background of the Study

Computer technology and communication technology is rapidly developing by gaining the popularity of its users. This explains the quick growth in the use of SNS in the early 2000s. These sites have expanded in popularity and this in turns affects human behaviors as well as their communication life. Using online tools such as, web sites and SNS has become a marketing and promotion strategy. This study aims to understand the usage of these online tools by travel agencies of North Cyprus. The present study focuses on Internet and SNS usage of Group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus.

Internet plays an important role in the professional lives of the travel agencies. Travel agencies who make bookings for flights, hotels, and so on, use portal based web pages. Because Internet has such a vital role on travel business, other web based innovations like SNS channels and e-commerce offers many options for of travel agencies.

1.2 Motivation of the Study

Numbers of motivating factors led the researcher to embark on this research. Firstly, researcher is from tourism business doing family, mother has a travel agency and

father is working in the travel agency and former executive in Cyprus Turkish Airlines. My mother's travel agency (Saunter Travel) is Group B category travel agency, which means Saunter Travel cannot organize any touristic tours from and/or to North Cyprus. However, the business is quite similar with Group A category. When I realize Saunter Travel does not use any online channels except for email messaging to communicate its potential and current customers, I wonder if it was like that in other agencies as well.

The potential of social-networking in the marketing of tourism and desire to explore the usage of SNS by travel agencies and find out if travel agencies are using it effectively. Online channels offer great rate of contact around the world and because of North Cyprus's un-recognition problem, SNS and websites are great potential tools to access the world.

Lastly, another important aspect of motivation for this study is lack of information about the subject and academic research about it.

1.3 Importance of the Study

This study examines whether Internet is used effectively and is used for what purposes by Group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus.

Research method will be investigating the preferences of Internet usage of North Cyprus agencies of Group A category. Previously advertisement campaigns, websites, social-networking-site profiles will be explored and investigated. This dissertation's research will be depending on online data gathering about travel agencies of North Cyprus. The analyzed data is limited with "Group A" category travel agencies which have authority to organize touristic tours from/to North Cyprus.

Among the number of SNS theories, Everett M. Roger's "Diffusion of Innovation" is chosen for the theoretical framework of the study. According to McLuhan's theory, media itself, rather than its actual content, will transform people and society. The actual messages people are communicating won't be any different on the new media; the interactivity and frequency of new communication patterns will change our behavior forever (McLuhan, 1964).

According to Roger (1983), diffusion of innovation theory, every innovation has certain groups of users and these users categorized according to usage frequency. These groups are firstly, Innovators, followed by Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority and lastly, Laggards. For this study, hypothesis is Group A category travel agencies are not using social networking sites efficiently.

Conducting a survey is not chosen for this thesis, because of the trustworthiness of the data would have been gathered from travel agencies. Also the online searching would give the results that are being wanted to get.

1.4 The Aim and Objectives of the Study

Travel agencies in North Cyprus have divided into two groups. The categorization of these travel agencies has been made according to the specification of the organizing tours from and/or to North Cyprus. Travel Agencies which are organizing tours are in the Group A category and the agencies which are not allow to organize tours in the Group B category. Group A category travel agencies are the producing and arranging unit for the tours and because of that this study aim at exploring the Internet use of "Group A" category travel agencies and availability of SNS channels for North Cyprus for promotion purposes.

Objectives of this study are followed like;

- To find out whether “Group A” category travel agencies have their websites.
- To find out how the websites of the companies appeared and what kind of functions provided.
- To find out whether “Group A” category travel agencies in North Cyprus use SNS channels.
- If the travel agencies of Group A category are using SNS, which are primarily chosen on popularity of trend to be used?
- To find out which functions of SNS are used?

1.5 Research Questions

Research questions of this study are;

- What kind of online tools are used by “Group A” travel agencies of North Cyprus?
- Which SNS channels are chosen to be used by “Group A” travel agencies?
- Which functions of each SNS are used by “Group A” travel agencies?

Online tools means that web sites, online booking providing services and SNS.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study examines the preferences of Internet usage of Group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus.

Internet plays a vital role in for the Travel agencies. Internet based booking and reservation programs and portals are used for their businesses. Portals require a unique user name and password for registration. Brian K. Williams and Stacey C. Sawyer (2003) describes portals as “web portals – websites that group together in one convenient location popular features such as search tools, e-mails, electronic

commerce and discussion groups”. For example, higher education providers such as universities have portals for students and tutors in order to informative and communicative purposes. Travel agencies are using web portal pages of airlines and hotel facilities for booking operations. These portal pages are used only by travel agencies during the face-to-face communication with potential customer(s). Other than face to face communication, travel agencies are providing online support and booking availability to their customers. This study aims to discover the level of Internet usage of Group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus and categorize the level according to Everett M. Roger’s (1983) Diffusion of Innovation.

There have been studies based on Internet usage and SNS preferences for individuals. However present study is the first that focuses on Group A category travel agencies and compares the usage according to Diffusion of Innovation.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations and boundaries for this dissertation while researching there it. One of the reasons is the limited information about the SNS usage and preferences of North Cyprus. Four SNS channels have been checked for the study. These SNS channels are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Data gathering for this study via online channels had been made with Google search engine and SNS channels’ search engines on February 2014.

Another important limitation for this study is the number of agencies, among the 124 Group A category travel agencies there are 79 of them using any online channels. This means that, this research is limited with 79 travel agencies which use SNS professionally and commercial purposes. Travel agencies have profile(s) on social-

networking-site(s) and share the service of their business through their personal online profiles. When we look at the owners of travel agencies, this situation causes an important lack of information about travel agencies on online and social networks.

The post sharing via personal accounts of agency owners, directors, employees and so on. The checklists have been prepared in the month of May 2014 and show the travel agencies which have SNS accounts and share traffic, but it can also be found that travel agency owners, directors and employees are sharing business related posts on their social pages. This causes an important lack of information about travel agencies on social platforms.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter of the study explains how SNS can be used as a marketing and promotion tool, theoretical bases medium is the message and diffusion of innovation, travel agencies of North Cyprus and categorization of these agencies.

The theoretical base of this study is on Everett M. Roger's (1983) diffusion of innovation theory. Theory will be used to categorize the available group-A travel agencies use of Internet and SNS. Also explores to understand how travel agencies use these social networking sites as marketing tools.

Previous advertisements about North Cyprus such as London Red Buses and London Black Cabs are chosen for example for the North Cyprus representation for the tourism promotion

2.1 Internet

The Internet is a globally connected network system. The Internet is a network of networks that consists of millions of private, public, government and academic networks, of local to global scope, that are linked by a broad array of electronic, wireless, and optical networking technologies.

The Internet contains a large amount of information resources and services, such as the inter-linked hypertext documents and applications of the World Wide

Web (WWW) or Web 2.0, the infrastructure to support email, and peer to peer networks for file sharing.

The Internet allows computer users to access other computers, information resources service providers with ease. The documents on the Internet may also contain any combination of texts, images, audios, video, and interactive content that runs while the user is interacting with the page. This makes Internet a promotion and marketing tool for many businesses including tourism as well.

2.2 Social Network Sites

Social networking is one of the most popular recent research subjects in social sciences. Social Networking Sites individuals are free to find other people, who share similar opinions or interests for being different purposes such as being romantic or religious (Ross et al. 2009).

There are variety social networking sites and every one of them has different specification than others which make them unique and purpose only to use. Social networks have features to create common share groups for interests. Social networking sites are considered as information and communication tools which allow mobile connectivity, blogging and photo/video/audio sharing (Boyd, 2007). Some of these social networking sites are; Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. All of these sites are used by both individuals and organizations.

Many organizations such as Thomas Cook see these social networks as marketing tools and use them as a tool to increase and/or keep the awareness of their audiences or “followers”.

2.2.1 Facebook

Facebook is an online social networking site founded by Mark Zuckerberg and his friends and roommates in 2004. It is named after colloquial expression for the guidance that students receive at some of the universities of the United States (Eldon, 2008). Facebook started as a students' network and needed a school email address for registration, however, now it allows anyone who claims to be at least 13 years old to become a registered user of the website (Facebook, 2011).

Registration must be done by users before using the social channel, after registration process a profile can be created, features like adding others Facebook users to friend-lists, message exchanging, post pictures and/or videos, also users receive auto-notifications about profile updates. Furthermore, common-interest groups and pages can be created by users and workplace can organize groups, university or school, other categories, and users can list their friends into categories such as "People From Work" or "Close Friends". As of 2014, Facebook has more than 1.2 billion users who are active, 945 million mobile users and 757 daily mobile users (Protalinski, 2014). Facebook (as of 2012) has about 180 petabytes of data per year and grows by over half a petabyte every 24 hours (Sharwood, 2012).

Facebook become an innovative corporation as well with offering video callings via Skype and recent acquire that have been announced, "WhatsApp Inc have been acquired for 19 Billion US dollars" (Facebook, 2014). WhatsApp is an application for smart-phones which provides instant messaging, text, image, audio and video transmitting to subscribers. Facebook's acquire of WhatsApp can be used for

communication purposes through mobile devices by travel agencies to their customers.

2.2.2 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking site for people in professional occupation. Founded in December 2002 and launched on May 5, 2003 (LinkedIn, 2013). It is mainly used for professional networking. In 2006 the network increased to 20 million viewers (Von Rossen, 2012), as of June 2013, LinkedIn reports more than 259 million acquired users in more than 200 countries and territories (Hempel, 2013) (Nishar, 2013).

A registered LinkedIn user can create an account about user's level of education, experience on work and capabilities. A network can be created from people within certain profession, school and so on. Several different methods of usage are available to use LinkedIn, e.g.: To connect and reach to the people within users' network and to always have updated information about their current occupation. A business and/or an employer can be introduced to another business and/or employer which are associated with certain profession of choice. Qualified people can be searched by employers, and also get recommendations from other people, companies and so on, which the employer can trust. There is a possibility of finding a contact from corporation that the user prefers to start working, and explore about the work environment.

2.2.3 Instagram

Instagram is a social networking site that provides online photo and video sharing for its users. This social networking service enables digital filters to picture and videos that taken by the users before sharing them to their followers and other social network accounts of users such as Facebook, Twitter (Frommer, 2010).

Instagram was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and launched in October 2010. This social networking service quickly gained popularity, with more than 100 million active users as of April 2012 (Instagram, 2013, DesMarais, 2013).

After two years and six months of launching the Instagram, 100 million active users have been announced by Instagram (Mansell, 2013). As of 9th of September, 2013, 150 Million active users have announced by Instagram (Rusli, 2013). Many celebrities share photos and videos to their followers via their Instagram accounts. Some of the famous profiles are deleted their accounts of Instagram because of the company's Terms of Service, without the permission of the users Instagram would have give allowance to the photo and video sharing application (app) to sell images to institutions (Hernandez, 2012).

2.2.4 Twitter

Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging service that provides its users to send and read text messages, which are called "tweets" and limited to 140 characters. Users of Twitter can access through the website interface, mobile supported website or mobile device app (Twitter 2012). Twitter was created in March 2006 and launched by July 2013 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass. The social networking service quickly attracted global popularity, with 500 million registered users in 2012, who posted 340 million tweets per day (Lunden, 2012) (Twitter, 2011). Twitter is now one of the ten most-visited websites, and has been described as "the Short-Messaging-Service of the Internet" (AlexaNet, 2013) (D'Monte, 2009).

Tweets are publicly visible unless the user changes the default settings to just to seen by the followers. User can tweet via website or smart-phone/tablet application (Twitter, 2010). Users can subscribe to other users' tweets, this is known as *following* and subscribers are known as *followers* (Stone, 2009).

Accounts settings allow the shares of individuals can be seen from other social networking site. For example an Instagram photo can be shared on individuals Twitter and/or able to share on different SNS channels such as Facebook account as well.

2.3 SNS as a Marketing Tool

SNS marketing means the process of gaining website traffic or attention through SNS sites (Trattner, Kappe, 2013). Using SNS as a marketing tool is for attracting attention for the organizations and/or brands, by sharing information, adverts and many other things related to company on followers personal SNS networks. SNS marketing is creating a chance of electronic version of communication for its users via Internet (Kietzmann, Canhoto, 2013).

SNS channels are important channels for the companies' to deliver their messages and attract new audiences and keep their current audiences aware. This “electronic word of mouth” way of communication has an important impact on marketing. Wendy Lange-Faria and Statia Elliot (2012) describe the advantage of SNS as; “With SNS, geography is no longer a communication barrier and anonymity is possible making self-disclosure easier than ever before.” (Lange-Faria, Elliot, 2012).

There is a lack of mechanical industry in North Cyprus and tourism and education are one of the biggest sectors in North Cyprus which triggers each others. In this purpose,

SNS can be used as one of alternative, informative and promotional channel to attract visitors.

Various SNS channels have significant differences from each other and serve for different purposes. Where Twitter and Facebook are the currently most popular SNS channels, there are some others that increasing popularity both among individuals and organizations. Some of the other SNS channels are; LinkedIn, Instagram, Foursquare, MySpace, Google Plus. Where those media channels serve for individual there being used by corporations to in order to keep in touch and/or connecting with their public. All these digital channels can be used by Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to connect with the world to increase attraction to visit North Cyprus. Where people can post files and images through Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter for global sharing, other SNS channels like LinkedIn can provide information to tourism professionals about North Cyprus.

2.4 E-Commerce

Electronic commerce or mostly known as e-commerce is an online industry for buy and/or sell of services or products via Internet or other kinds of computer networks. E-commerce often considered for online sales part of business, but it also provides data exchange for payments of transaction and financial structure.

The Economist writers Maris Goldmanis, Ali Hortaçsu, Chad Syverson and Önsel Emre (2010) show a study about expected outcomes e-commerce in their website.

The new study tests another expected consequence of e-commerce. Intensifying competition should lead not just to price convergence but also to a round of creative destruction. Companies that are unable to cope with the

demands of consumers in the Internet age should be wiped out. Those who can, ought to thrive. Efficient firms should enter the market. Using data on Internet usage from a representative survey of Americans, as well as data on the size of firms in each of the three industries in each county in the continental United States, the Chicago economists are able to tease out the impact of the Internet on firms in the ten years to 2004, when online shopping first gained a foothold in American life. They can also see whether the effects were larger where more people went online, as one might expect if Internet use were the main driver of change (Goldmanis et. al. 2010).

The advantages of e-commerce provide an ease and efficiency to user. The businesses which choose not to use Internet will face the consequences badly, especially when their potential customers are being the part of it and the businesses which are getting away from it.

2.5 Why SNS Should be Used by Tourism Business?

SNS gives the opportunity of control over content to users (Lenoir, 2013). Unlike websites, SNS channels do not need for server to be created and access to change it. SNS pages can be controlled by the user itself and effectiveness of SNS pages can be measured via Google. Google is business that specialized on web-based services and activities such as search, software, online advertising and so on (Google 2012). Google is calculating the SNS activities (such as, likes, shares, re-tweets, so on) to help the user to relevance and determine the authority of the site. Lastly, the content of the business is also more likely to get found by public relations professionals, journalists, conference organizers, business partners, and future employees that way (Lenoir, 2013). This means, travel agencies can be found and reached via “google searching” by professionals from domestic and oversea regions for business purposes.

2.6 Tourism in North Cyprus

Tourism is the one of the vivid sectors in North Cyprus. However, North Cyprus is under embargo and isolated. Therefore, since 1974 tourism development was lopsided

in favor of the south for almost four decades country (Yasarata, et al., 2009). Stephen (1997:32) captures the essence of the problem:

‘Economically isolated, the Turkish Cypriot community has found itself in a backwater as far as trade and industry and employment are concerned, and does not participate in the economic expansion of the country and the development of its resources. Many of the estimated 20,000 refugees and displaced persons in the Turkish Cypriot enclaves are unemployed, and their enforced idleness emphasizes the isolation of the community, whose economy is sustained by financial assistance and relief supplies from Turkey. About one-third of the Turkish Cypriot population is estimated to need some form of welfare relief.’ (Stephen 1997:32)

Tourism has been one of the main industries in North Cyprus for the economy. There are more than 850 businesses and facilities of tourism and hospitality, most of them are small family businesses, restaurants, bars, cafes, and souvenir shops (Yasarata, et al., 2009). On the other hand, there were 119 touristic accommodation facilities (such as; hotels, holiday villages) with approximately capacity of 15.000 (Ministry of Economics and Tourism, 2009). The tourism industry created 8208 jobs in 2007 which is about 7% in the total employment (Ministry of Economics and Tourism, 2009). When Turkish north and Greek south Cyprus compared, South Cyprus has bigger revenue than North Cyprus. This directly related with the embargo problem of North Cyprus. Republic of Cyprus (South Cyprus) with over 2 million tourist arrivals per year, it is the 40th most popular destination in the world. However, per capita of local population it ranks 6th (Economy Statistics, 2010). On the other hand, Northern Cyprus has been visited by 454019 people (Istanbul Gayrimenkul Degerlendirme, 2012). These numbers show that international recognition takes important place in tourism industry.

2.6.1 The Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing

Governmentally, North Cyprus tourism is under control of Deputy Prime Ministry, The Ministry of Economy, Tourism, Culture and Sport. The Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing is sub-unit for control promotion and marketing for North Cyprus tourism. With six offices in Turkey, United Kingdom, Germany and North Cyprus, the office of tourism promotion and marketing trying to work on promotion part of North Cyprus tourism. Turkey has the largest number of tourism promotion offices with three offices in three cities (Istanbul, Antalya and Izmir). London office and Berlin office are other offices of tourism promotion in Europe. The efficiency of these promotion is not measured in this study. The main office is in Lefkosa. However, there are sub-offices in Ercan Airport, Nicosia Lokmacı and Metehan Check-points, Kyrenia Marina, Famagusta, Yeşilyurt and Yenierenköy.

North Cyprus's The Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing uses online channels and traditional channels to promote tourism of North Cyprus. United Kingdom and Turkey always have been top of the list for tourist sources of North Cyprus because of the island's historical background. North Cyprus's Ministry of Tourism tries to increase visibility and attract attention by opening information centers in these countries. They are three tourist information offices in Turkey in different cities (Istanbul, Antalya, Izmir), one in London, United Kingdom and one in Berlin, Germany.



Figure 1: North Cyprus Tourism Logo

Logo in above has chosen by the office of tourism promotion and marketing office for marketing purposed operations. Turtle shape represents the Caretta Carettas which prefers North Cyprus beaches for ovulating activities and it is popular activity to watch baby turtles run to the sea after cracking their egg shells. Also color is fading to orange from yellow, and blue North Cyprus writing is used in every promotional work. Representation of Mediterranean Sea comes with the blue color and fading colored turtle sun combination shape represents beach and summer time. The sea of North Cyprus and the turtles have been mentioned in the booklet of 50 reasons to visit North Cyprus, which has been prepared by the office of tourism promotion and marketing.

North Cyprus Ministry of Tourism's The Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing uses a website, two Facebook pages and two Twitter accounts for potential English and German visitors. These groups are facebook.com/NorthCyprusTourismCenter and facebok.com/Nord-Zypren for Facebook. For twitter.com/NCyprusToursim and twitter.com/Nord_Zypren.

English Facebook page has 516 "likes", also page is daily post sharing to its followers. Unlike English Facebook page, German Facebook page has less "likes" with the number of 151. The contents of both Facebook groups are quite similar. They are pointing the historical and cultural parts of North Cyprus.

Another SNS channel that has been chosen to be used by the office of tourism promotion and marketing is Twitter. Like the Facebook, there are two Twitter profiles, one for English and one for German "followers". While the English Twitter

profile has 396 followers and frequently “tweeting”, the German profile only has 23 followers and last tweet is from May 2013.

Renting spaces for advertisement in various places in London is one of the strategies of the tourism promotion and marketing office. For the summer of 2013, space from 125 of double cabin red busses and 120 black cabs of London had been rent by the Tourism Ministry of North Cyprus (TAK, 2013). London is a good choice for this kind of advert placements because the city is one of the top visited cities of the world by international visitors (Kyte, 2012).



Figure 2: North Cyprus advert visual on the side advert area of a classic two story London red bus.



Figure 3: A traditional black cab fully covered with North Cyprus advert visual.

Turkey is another tourist source for North Cyprus because of the role that took place in historical background of the island. North Cyprus became a choice for a gambling industry right after the closure of casinos in Turkey in the 1990s (Alipour, Vughaingmeh, 2009). Officials of Northern Cypriot tourism try to change the concept of “North Cyprus Gambling Place” with the brochures they have printed.

According to the latest brochure which was prepared by the Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing there are 50 reasons to visit North Cyprus. These reasons are in order; Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque (St. Nicholas Cathedral), Büyük Han, Kyrenia Harbour, Old Nicosia Houses, Kantara Castle, Kyrenia Gate, Kyrenia Castle and Shipwreck Museum, ancient city of Salamis, flag on mountain, ancient city of Soli, Selimiye Mosque (St. Sophia Cathedral), St. Hilarion Castle, St. Mamas Church and Monastery, Hz. Ömer Lodge, St. Barnabas Monastery, Dervish Pasha Mansion, Dungeon of Namık Kemal, Mevlevi Tekke Museum, Bellapais Monastery and Lawrence Durell, Golden Beach, Besparmak Hill, Yavuz Beach and Karaoglanoglu Martyrdom, Caretta Carettas and green turtles, endemic plants, wild Cyprus Donkeys,

Karpaz Peninsula, Olive Trees, traditional cuisine and alcoholic beverages, Barbary Museum, yachting, trekking, paragliding, scuba diving and casinos.

This list shows the Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing's attempt of change the concept of Cyprus is gambling island in the eyes of Turkish potential visitors by giving historical places higher ranks in the list and casinos take bottom level rank.

2.6.2 Published Materials and Image of North Cyprus

This section will be covered in two parts. Works of the Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing and travel agencies of "Group A" category will be explored separately. Travel agencies of North Cyprus and the office of tourism promotion and marketing do not use the same aspects of North Cyprus while promoting tourism. While travel agencies consider locals as their primary target market for promoting to travel abroad, the office of tourism promotion and marketing consider Turkish, English people as primary target market.

North Cyprus often advertised by Turkish travel agencies from Turkey. Turkish agencies add "casino" element on their advertisements when North Cyprus Hotels promoted with their gambling facilities.

The office of Tourism promotion and marketing has published many informative brochures and booklets about attraction points of North Cyprus. These booklets can be found in hotels, airports, border check-points and tourist information offices. Among these printed materials "50 Reasons to visit North Cyprus" is made especially for Turkish potential tourists.

North Cyprus became a choice for a gambling industry right after the closure of casinos in Turkey in the 1990s (Alipour, Vughaingmeh, 2009). However, the booklet of “50 reasons for visiting North Cyprus” gives 49th place to casinos in the ranking. Ranking starts with the historical places, followed by natural beauties, traditional cuisine and ends with adventurer activities.

2.6.3 Categorizations of Visual Advertisements

The printed advertisements about North Cyprus can be categorized according to the purpose of visit as; historical “must visit” ruins. Visuals can be categorized according to the contents and sub-branches of tourism. These branches are; Post-war tourism, eco-tourism, ancient (historical place) tourism domestic tourism, natural resources tourism, sports tourism and domestic tourism.



Figure 4: Kyrenia Castle



Figure 5: Ancient Salamis City

Another purpose of visit to North Cyprus can be categorized as religious tourism. St. Barnabas Monastery and Hz. Omer Lodge can be seen as tourist attraction points for Christianity and Islamic beliefs.



Daha fazla bilgi için:
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Turizm Ofisleri

İstanbul Tel: +90 212 296 37 44 Faks: +90 212 296 37 87	İzmir Tel: +90 232 446 85 28 Faks: +90 232 446 85 32
Antalya Tel: +90 242 243 39 56/57 Faks: +90 242 243 39 58	London Tel: +44 207 631 19 30 Faks: +44 207 462 97 89
Ankara Tel: +90 312 447 55 69-70 Faks: +90 312 447 55 83	Frankfurt Tel: +49 69 24 00 79 46 Faks: +49 69 24 00 79 48



www.simplynortherncyprus.com
www.2011kibrye311.com
Turizm Tanıtma Pazarlama Dairesi
İstanbul'da faaliyettedir.

Metin: Tuncer Bağcıkan





Hz. Ömer Tekkesi



Figure 6: Hz. Omer Lodge



Figure7: St. Barnabas Monastery

Barbary Museum, Tank on the mount and Yavuz Çıkartma Beach and Karoğlanoğlu Martydom can be categorized as post-war tourism for Turkish tourism market.

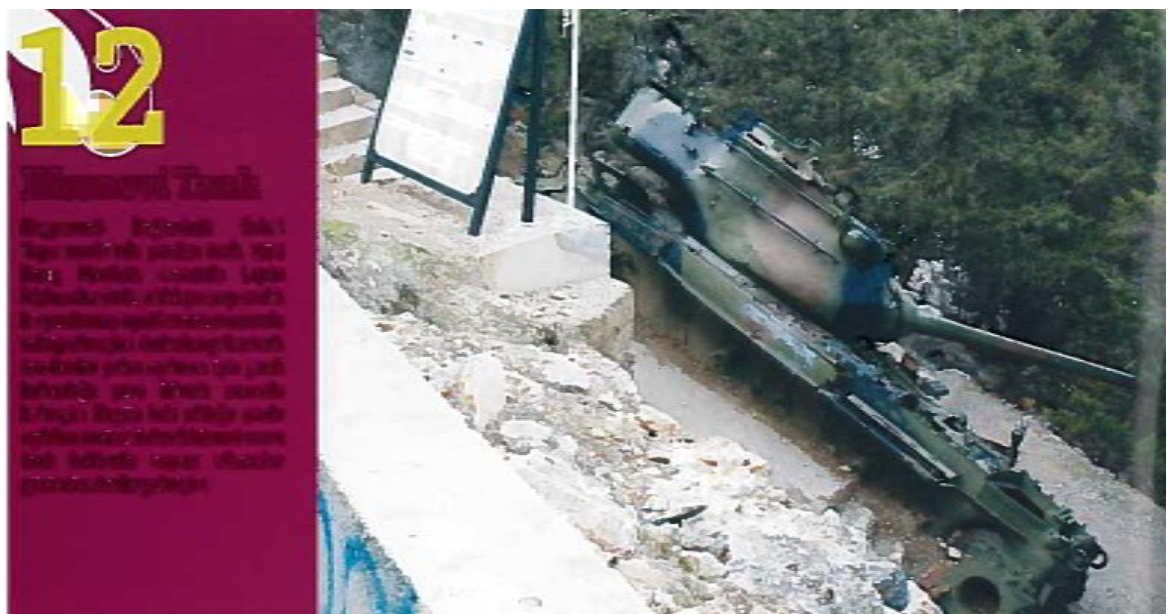


Figure 8: Tank at the mount.



Figure9: Yavuz ıkarma Beach and Karaođlanođlu Martyrdom

Natural resources can be categorized as another type of tourism category. Endemic plants, natural site parks, and Caretta Caretta's reproduction areas can be considered in the category of Natural resources tourism. For the eco-tourism, cuisine and beverages of North Cyprus is considered.

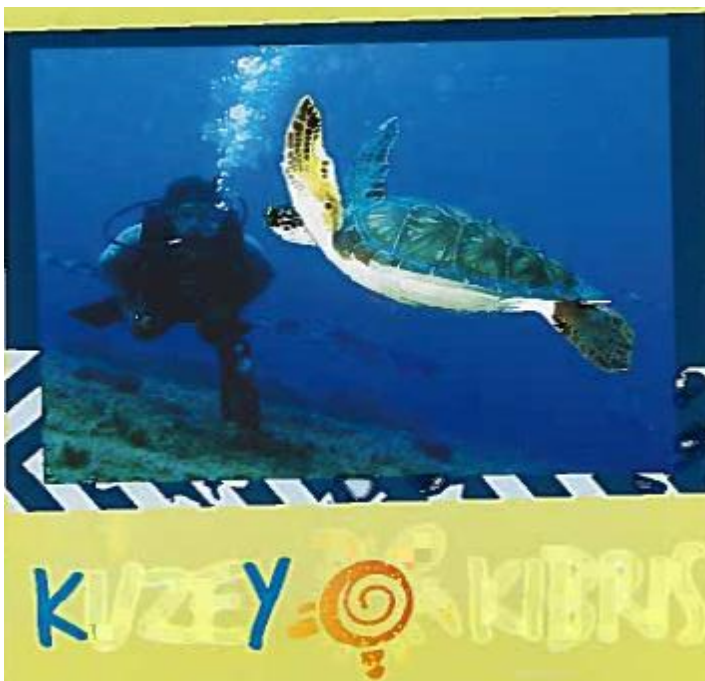


Figure 10: Caretta Caretta Turtles and scuba diving

2.6.4 Travel Agency Approach Towards Locals

Northern Cyprus travel agencies' use adverts to promote vacations to abroad instead of domestic tourism. According to printed materials, agencies primarily advertising Turkish five star holiday facilities and touristic tours to foreign countries.

As an example for television advertisements, Yar Travel's advert available for Television advertisements, this advert was aired in May 2013. The advert contains information about services of Yar Travel, such as; flight, hotel booking, touristic tours, cruise tours and contact information about Yar Travel (Available: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Q11T_ZSmLc&feature=youtu.be).

2.6.5 Details of Online Channel Usage of Travel Agencies

For this study, "online channels" researcher means websites and SNS usage by North Cyprus Group A category travel agencies.

Majority of the North Cyprus travel agencies are not using their social networking channels in daily basis to share posts for promotion of North Cyprus tourism. Furthermore, neither domestic tourism nor international tourism is promoted effectively by traditional media channels such as TV, billboard and published for the "local" potential customers by travel agents.

Websites are mostly being used by travel agencies. However, some of the agencies offer online booking system, while others offer only contact information.

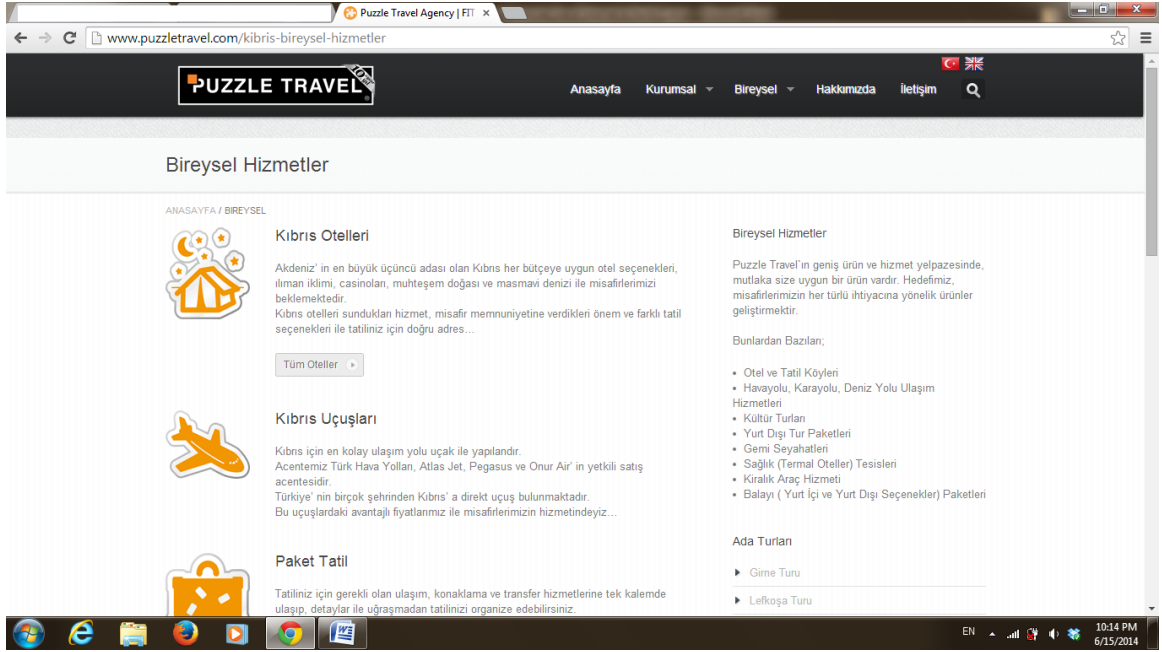


Figure 11: Puzzle Travel's website

Puzzle Travel is one of the Group A category travel agencies which has a website. Puzzle Travel's website has chosen to be example for websites which do not allow online bookings. This website only contains information about North Cyprus and contact details.



Figure 12: Birinci Turizm's Website

Birinci Turizm's website is one of the Group A category travel agency websites which allow online booking to the visitors as well as contact information.

Online channels other than websites are SNS channels. SNS are chosen to communicate with potential customers and promotion. However, promotion in SNS media frequent update such as information, constant sharing and promotion is vital in order to stay in minds of potential customers.

Fidansoy Turizm is one of the few Group A Category travel agencies that uses Facebook as SNS channel in daily basis.



Figure 13: Facebook page of Fidansoy Turizm

Puzzle Travel Agency is one of the Group A category travel agencies that uses Facebook very poorly. Also with 361 likes of the page, rate of contact is very limited. Lastly as in the figure above, the date of the last post share can be seen, which is

November 2013. Limited use effect the efficiency of SNS channels as promotional tools.

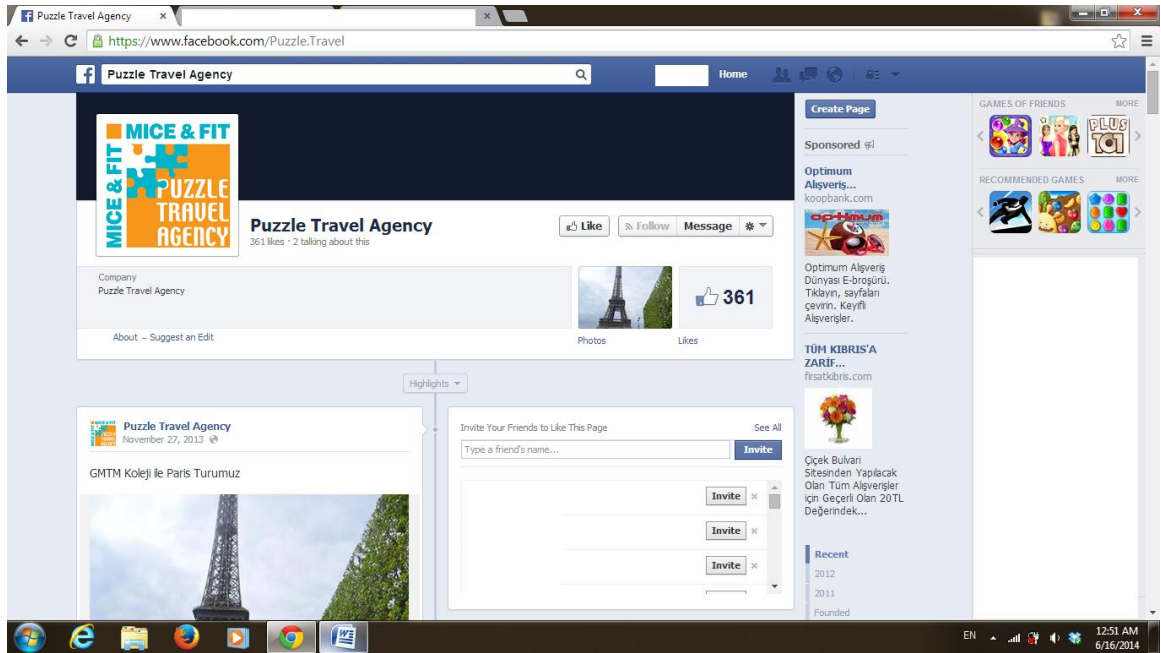


Figure 14: Facebook page of Puzzle Travel

On the other hand, British travel company Thomas Cook has been chosen for comparison. Thomas Cook is British travel agency which offers hotel, flight booking and car rental services to their customers from the United Kingdom to abroad. Thomas Cook is using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn as SNS channels. Also the company offers its services via their website.

Thomas Cook's website offers, flight tickets, accommodation bookings and car rentals. Simple options menu, and back ground with lots of images provide use of ease to visitors.

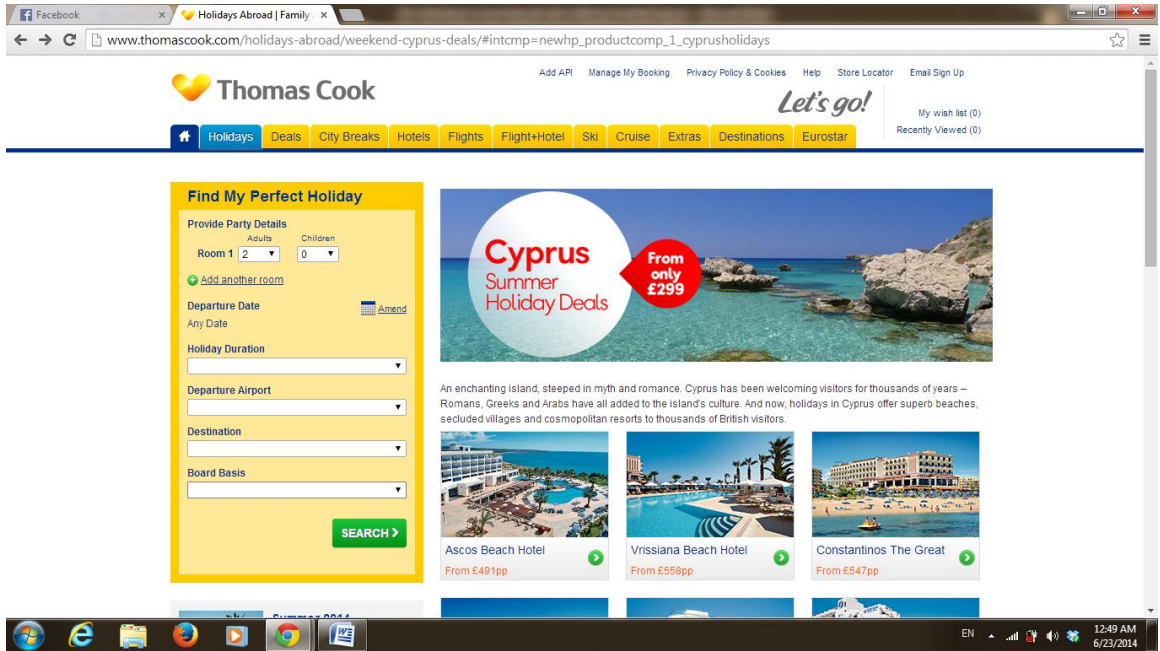


Figure 15: Thomas Cook Website

Facebook page of the company uses Thomas Cook logo as profile picture and uses campaign and promotion offers to the followers. The usage is up to date and followers are constantly receiving recent promotional information about company services.

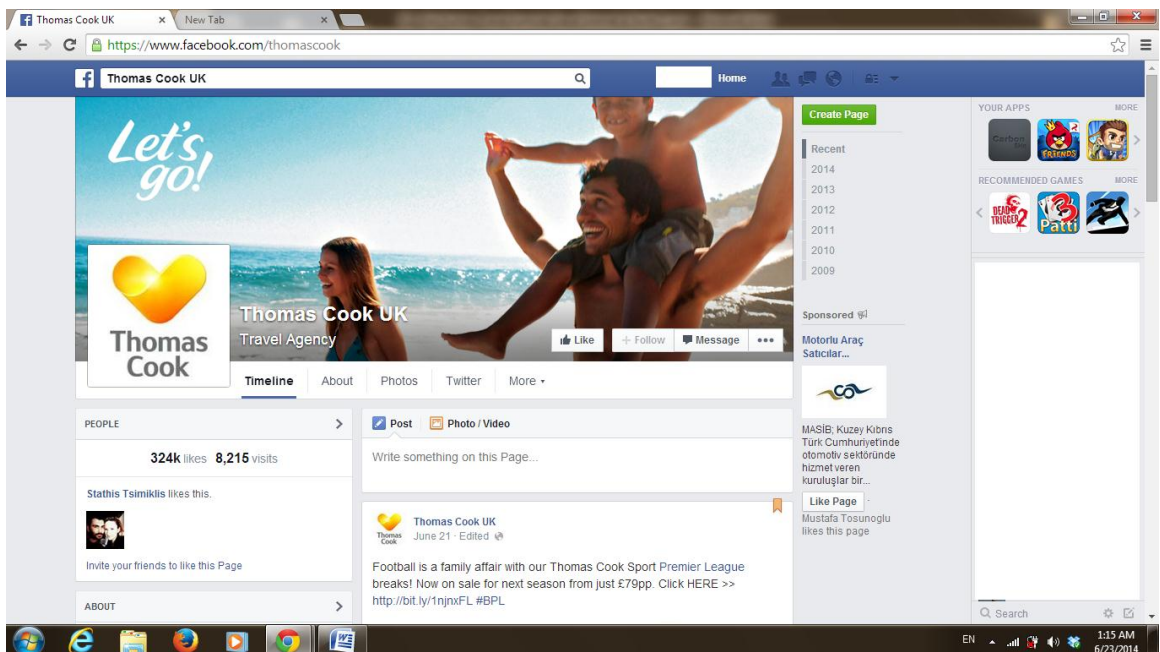


Figure 16: Thomas Cook Facebook page.

2.7 KITSAB

Kıbrıs Türk Seyehat Acenteleri Birliği (KITSAB) is the union organization of the travel agencies of North Cyprus which is established in 1974 and headquartered in Nicosia, North Cyprus. This organization's duties and responsibilities are listed in below

- Researching the opportunities of introducing and marketing for the profession of travel and tourism agencies of North Cyprus. Protecting the profession's ethics and morals is the main duty of the KITSAB by the Law of North Cyprus Travel and Tourism Agencies, (KITSAB, 2013).

KITSAB categorizes travel agencies into two groups, which are Group A and Group B agencies. The solid and only difference between those groups of agencies is that group A agencies do have the right to organize and sell international and domestic touristic tours, while group B agencies can only sell the tour programs that have been made by other touristic organizations and are not allowed to organize a touristic tour program. According to KITSAB there are 144 travel and tourism agencies in North Cyprus and 124 of those agencies are in the category of group A and the rest of the agencies are in the category of Group B.

2.8 Travel Agency Traditional Media Adverts

Likewise online media channels, but unlike informative charts this section cannot be described with charts due to lack of advertised commercial spaced on these media channels. Traditional media are poorly used by the travel agencies of North Cyprus. Among all the travel agencies, there is only Yar Travel's advert available for television advertisements. Also, content of Yar travel's TV commercial (Available:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Q11T_ZSmLc&feature=youtu.be) is produced in order to provide content and quality visuals about North Cyprus. The

preparation of the advertisement is amateur and the content is poor and lack of visual elements for the attention attraction can be sensed by the audiences.

Print media is poorly used by the travel agencies as well. According to booklets and brochures have been gathered by The Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing, there are only two travel agencies have published promoter printings for potential local tourists. Sayar Travel and Roots Holiday (name have changed to Cyprus XP) are the only travel agencies with the booklets. The content of these promotional printings are hotels and tours of Turkey and foreigner countries instead of domestic tourism.

Newspaper is considered as effective medium for advertising. Turkish national newspapers have weekly “holiday extras” such as Hürriyer Seyahat On the other hand, North Cyprus advertisements can be seen frequently in these published medium channels. But all these advertisements are from travel agencies from Turkey.

2.8.1 Published Materials of Travel Agencies

There are only two travel agencies that produced published material for their potential customers. Sayar Turizm and Roots Holiday have published booklets for the potential local customers. These booklets contain information about Turkey hotels, North Cyprus hotels and European touristic tours.

Both Sayar Turizm and Roots Holiday have seen the Northern Cypriot families as their target market. The booklets of these agencies have primarily give space to the five star hotel facilities with all included offers and touristic tours in Turkey and Europe. After hotels in Turkey, hotels in North Cyprus take place in the last pages of booklets. Northern Cypriot families are seen as locals and wanted to visit these

facilities as “family place and leisure time”. All Northern Cypriot hotels which have advertised in these booklets are known with their casinos, but for the local target market, these facilities are seen as casino-free touristic facilities in the booklets of these two travel agencies.

Yurtdışı Turları

<p>AMSTERDAM</p> <p>3 Gece</p> <p>KLM ve THY ile 10-24 Temmuz 7-21 Ağustos</p> 	<p>BUDAPEŞTE</p> <p>3 Gece - 4 Gün</p> <p>Türk Hava Yolları ile Her Gün Hareketli</p> 
<p>PRAG</p> <p>3 Gece - 4 Gün</p> <p>Türk Hava Yolları ile Her Gün Hareketli</p> 	<p>VİYANA</p> <p>3 Gece - 4 Gün</p> <p>Avusturya Hava Yolları İle Her Gün Hareketli</p> 

KIBRIS OTELLERİ

<p>KAYA ARTEMİS RESORT & CASINO</p> 	<p>SALAMİS BAY CONTI</p> 	<p>PALM BEACH</p> 
<p>CLUB ACAPULCO RESORT OTEL</p> 	<p>MALPAS OTEL</p> 	<p>MERCURE ACCOR OTEL</p> 
<p>CLUB LAPETHOS RESORT&AQUAPARK</p> 	<p>OSCAR RESORT</p> 	<p>OSCAR RESORT</p> 

APR

Figure 17: Roots Holiday's Locals oriented booklet for North Cyprus Hotels and abroad tours.

In North Cyprus, 151st substance of constitution bans Northern Cypriots except for visitors and double citizenship holders to gamble in and work for casinos. This law prevents an unnecessary attempt to promote casinos for Northern Cyprus market.

2.9 The Medium is the Message

Medium is the message is an argue that created by Marshal McLuhan (1964) which is meaning, the medium itself should be focused instead of the content.

“In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium - that is, of any extension of our selves - result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.” (McLuhan, 1964, p.7)

New technology provides different ways of approach in communication and promotion. And these ways of approach offer different contents. A culture and society which accustomed to control every bit, single change is a shock. Especially this change is in communication channel(s).

According to Mark Federman., Marshall McLuhan was concerned with the observation that we tend to focus on the obvious. In doing so, we largely miss the structural changes in our affairs that are introduced subtly, or over long period of time (Federman, 2004). McLuhan tells us that a "message" is, "the change of scale or pace or pattern" that a new invention or innovation "introduces into human affairs" (McLuhan, 1964).

The conventional meaning for "medium" that refers to the mass-media of communications such as; radio, television, the newspaper/magazine, the Internet and

most apply our conventional understanding of "message" as content or information (Federman, 2004). Putting the two together allows people to jump to the mistaken conclusion that, somehow, the channel supersedes the content in importance, or that McLuhan was saying that the information content should be ignored as inconsequential. Often people will triumphantly greet that the medium is "no longer the message," or flip it around to proclaim that the "message is the medium," or some other such nonsense (Federman, 2004).

Federman (2004) describes the importance of the "Medium is the message" like this;

Why is this understanding of "the medium is the message" particularly useful? We tend to notice changes - even slight changes (that unfortunately we often tend to discount in significance.) "The medium is the message" tells us that noticing change in our societal or cultural ground conditions indicates the presence of a new message, that is, the effects of a new medium. With this early warning, we can set out to characterize and identify the new medium before it becomes obvious to everyone - a process that often takes years or even decades. And if we discover that the new medium brings along effects that might be detrimental to our society or culture, we have the opportunity to influence the development and evolution of the new innovation before the effects becomes pervasive. As McLuhan reminds us, "Control over change would seem to consist in moving not with it but ahead of it. Anticipation gives the power to deflect and control force." (p.199)

Choosing right medium for the message is important subject, especially by businesses when the purpose is connecting with potential customers. Different SNS channels provide different ways of approach. SNS usage and preferences of North Cyprus Group A category travel agencies take important place in this research.

2.10 Diffusion of Innovation

According to Everett M. Rogers (2003) diffusion "is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" while innovation "is an idea, practice or object that is perceived as

new by an individual or other unit of adoption”. The theory of Diffusion of innovations seeks to find out and explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures (Rogers, 2003). Work of Everett M. Roger's asserts that four main elements influence the spread of a new idea: the innovation, communication channels, time, and a social system.

Innovation is defined by Rogers as “an idea, practice, or object is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption” (Rogers, 1983, p. 11). Roger explains these elements as; A communication channel is “the means by which messages get from one individual to another. The innovation-decision period is the length of time required to pass through the innovation-decision process. Rate of adoptions the relative speed with which an Innovation is adopted by members of a social system. A social system is defined as a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal” (Rogers, 1983, pp. 17, 21, 23, 24). Diffusion of innovation consists of five step process and the process is like decision making. Table in below shows the process of diffusion of innovation.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

PRIOR CONDITIONS:

- Previous Conditions
- Felt needs/ Problems
- Innovativeness
- Norms of the social system

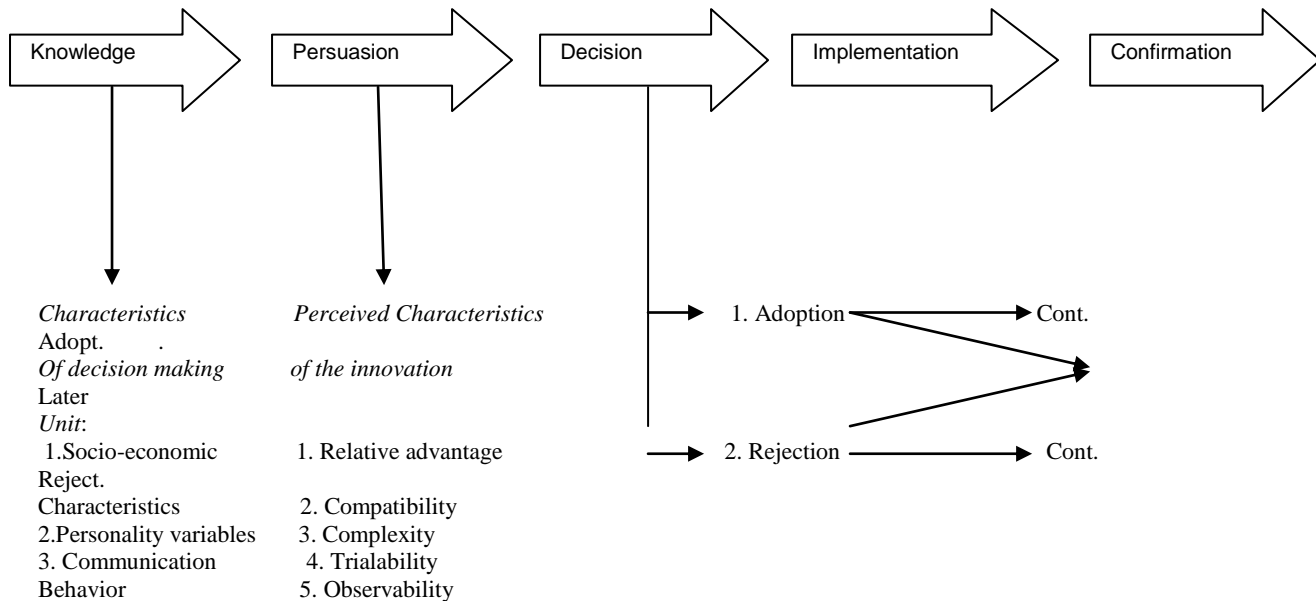


Figure 18: Process of diffusion innovation.

(Darrow, 2007 from: <http://docjourney.wordpress.com/2007/10/30/diffusion-of-innovations-research/>)

Process of diffusion of innovation is similar with the term AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire and Action) which is used by advertisers to determine the steps to produce adverts. In the very first stage of diffusion of innovation, the individual is exposed to innovation but due to lack of information there is no inspiration for the innovation. In the second stage which is persuasion, the innovation is interested by the individual and information about is searched by the individual. Second step is persuasion, in this step individual has interest on innovation and search information about it. On third step, which is decision, individual decides whether it is advantageous or disadvantageous to accept the innovation to use it. In the implementation stage if the individual uses the innovation, determination of the usefulness of innovation is made

in this stage. Finally, the innovation user makes his/her mind to continue to use the innovation.

Roger defines adopters by the categories they belong. Roger's book suggests five categories in total in order to standardize the adopter categories. The categories of adopters are: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 1962, p. 150).

Innovators are the first people to adapt to an innovation; usually innovators are the individuals that take the risks to try the innovation in first hand. Also individuals that are in this category have highest social class and do not have financial problems to affect them to buy the innovation.

Innovators are followed by early adopters. The individuals that belong to this category are second fastest. These individuals have higher degree of opinion leadership, financial funds, degree of education and socially forward than other adopters (Rogers, 1962, p. 283).

Early majority is the third category in adopters. People of this group accept the "new" after some amount passed time and this time of acceptance has significant time difference rather than first category innovators and second category early adopters. Early majority is not fast as first two categories in the acceptance process. Also early majority have financial satisfactory, status of social level and opportunity of reach to early developers (Rogers. 1962, p. 283).

Late majority is the fourth category in adopters group. Innovation will be adopted in this by individuals of this category after the medial members of society. Singulars of this category approach the innovation skeptically and apply the innovation after majority of the society.

Finally laggards are the last category in the adopters of diffusion of innovation. Individuals are last to have and apply the innovation. Laggards usually focus on traditional ways and low level of social status, low financial sufficiency and oldest among the all adopters.

Among the many other communication theories, diffusion of innovation is chosen to categorize the Internet usage of Group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus. Because, the usage ratio is more important than the content. Efficiency of SNS is related with the frequency usage. Categorizing the travel agencies according to diffusion of innovation is the key factor for measuring the efficiency of SNS, especially when the potential of SNS are considered as marketing and promotion tools.

As a conclusion, chapter two explains, internet, SNS channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, why SNS should be used in tourism businesses, North Cyprus Tourism, KITSAB, comparison of internet usage between a European travel agency and some travel agencies of North Cyprus, medium is the message and Diffusion of Innovation. In order to drawn a conclusion for the study, these subjects should be investigated and explained in next chapters.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used to gather and analyze the data in this study. Chapter three has six titles which explain the method of the research, research design, context of the research, data collection procedures, population of the research and ethics statements.

3.1 Research Method

This study designed to examine the Internet and SNS usage of group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus. This study addresses the travel agency decision making on the usage of Internet and SNS. Chosen method for this study is quantitative research method. Effective usage of internet has been measured for this study, because of that reason quantitative research method has chosen instead of quantitative research method.

3.2 Research Design

In relation to the statement above, this study investigates Internet usage of Group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus. The main purpose of the study is to analyze and discuss the level of Internet usage among the certain travel agency group in North Cyprus. The Internet usage differs in channels by the effects of using it. For example, using websites and having SNS are important for commercial purposes which provide reaching more people, control over networks and ease to target for communicating agency.

This research has designed as case study, diffusion of innovation is used as theory to analyze and categorize the Group A travel agencies according to Internet and SNS usage.

Companies need to attract attention of consumers by communicating and building new channels of communication. Success of a company is based on perceived image of company and how customers and consumers position that company based on its decision of production and marketing (Schultz et. Al 1995:27).

3.3 Research Context

Context analysis and online data gathering method were chosen for the research design of this study. Also this study is based on quantitative research.

Firstly, the researcher has made a contact with KITSAB in order to gather information about the travel agencies of North Cyprus. KITSAB is the travel agency union of North Cyprus and have the data archive about travel agencies of North Cyprus. KITSAB categorizes travel agencies into two groups; Group A and Group B. The solid and only difference between these groups is the Group A category agencies have right to organize and sell touristic tours to/from North Cyprus, while Group B category only allowed to sell these tours which are organized by Group A travel agencies.

After receiving list of entire Group A category travel agencies, online researching process had begun. Name of every agency has been search via Google and SNS channels in order to find out their web sites, SNS and so on. Offline data gathering method like conducting a survey was not chosen for this study, because the researcher

would not wanted to be depended on gathered information about travel agencies by travel agencies.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Online data gathering techniques have been used for the study. First of all, KITSAB's website visited and every Group A category travel agency added to list. After gathering the whole list of agencies, firstly these agencies have been searched in four SNS channels' (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter) search engines. These search engines of SNS channels show the profiles and/or company pages when the name is searched. Secondly, Google search engine was used to receive information about the travel agencies and if they use any other online networks such as websites. Lastly, the researcher has checked and created two lists for every Group A category travel agencies websites contents and their SNS channels.

After receiving the online data about the Group A category travel agencies, data were entered to Microsoft Excel program and analyzed. Microsoft Excel was used for creating tables about travel agencies of Group A category.

Offline data gathering techniques like survey conducting is not used for this study. Because, the answers which would have been gathered from agency owners could tell the wrong answers to make them like they have online channels, which the gathered data would not be 100% trustworthy.

Table 1: Research Checklist

Checklist	Yes	No
Online Channels	YES	
Websites	YES	
Websites that allow bookings	YES	
Agencies with SNS	YES	
Twitter	YES	
Facebook	YES	
LinkedIn	YES	
Instagram	YES	

The table at above shows the data gathering process of the internet use of the agencies. Researcher of the study checked for online channels of travel agencies. First column shows which online channels has been checked, second column shows availability and third column shows of the absences.

3.5 Population

There are 144 travel agencies in North Cyprus. All travel agencies are obligated by law to be the member of KITSAB, which is a union organization for travel agencies of North Cyprus. KITSAB divides these travel agencies into two groups according to organizing touristic tours from and/or to North Cyprus and selling pre-organized tours. Agencies which can organize tours are in the Group A category and agencies which can only sell pre-organized tours are in Group B category.

For this study, Group A category travel agencies are chosen. The reason for this choice is the right to organize and promote touristic tours from and/or to North Cyprus. There are 124 travel agencies in the Group A category. On the other hand, among these 124 travel agencies, there are only 79 of travel agencies which use any online channels. For this study, population of this study is 79.

3.6 Ethics Statement

All personal details (e.g. names; addresses) of respondents will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Only company names will be used for this study and personal information will not be recorded within the database of the findings. To preserve their confidentiality, all personal details will be stored separately from the findings and will not be disclosed within the dissertation. As the research will be conducted independently of any retailer, no specific organizational information will be disclosed, thus preventing confidentiality issues.

In conclusion to this chapter, research design which is case study and research context which is content analysis had been explained. For this study online data gathering methods had been used. Travel agencies names gathered from North Cyprus travel agency union KITSAB and checked by Google search engine and SNS search engines. Population of the study is 79 because among the chosen travel agencies there are only 79 of them using any online channels.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings of the research. Research was done online by using SNS and Google search engine. As it mentioned in earlier chapters, for the present study, quantitative methodology is used. In order to explore every travel agency in North Cyprus, the researcher went to KITSAB's headquarter and receive the data about travel agencies. KITSAB categorizes travel agencies into two groups. For this study, group A category travel agencies are chosen. Because travel agencies of Group A category have the right organize and sell tours from/to Cyprus, while other category (Group B) have no right to organize a tour and only sell packages which organized by group A travel agencies.

In the list of category a travel agencies, there are 124 travel agencies. These, Group A travel agencies are located in four cities of North Cyprus. Kyrenia has the largest population of Group A category of travel agencies with 53, Nicosia follows Kyrenia with 43 travel agencies. Thirdly, Famagusta has 21 travel agencies of Group A category. Last of all, Morphou has seven travel agencies of Group A category.

4.1 Agencies of North Cyprus

For this study, research has been made according to KITSAB's list of Group A category travel agencies. There are 124 travel agencies in group A category.

Table below shows the online channel owning percentage of Northern Cypriot travel agencies. Among the 124 "Group A" agencies, 79 of Group A travel agencies which

is equal to 63.7% have online channels to communicate with their potential customers. Rest of the agencies 36.3% do not have any online channels to communicate and reach for their potential customers. In this table, social networking sites, websites which are able and unable to make bookings are considered as online channel for “Group A” category travel agencies of North Cyprus.

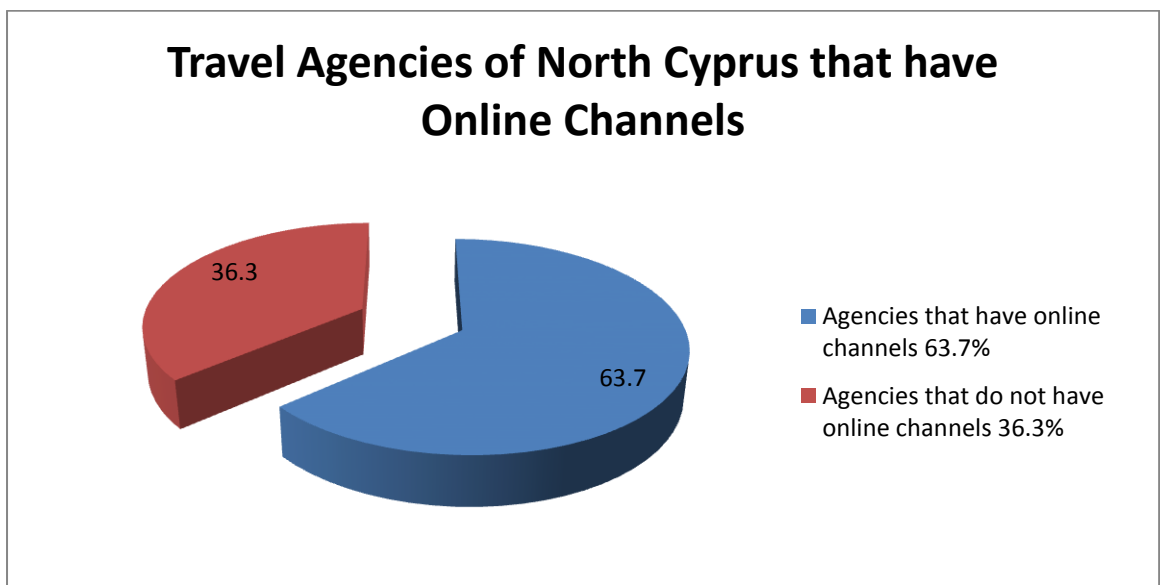


Figure 19: Agencies of North Cyprus which have online channels.

4.2 Agencies with Websites

Table 2 shows the ratio of Group A category agencies with private agencies. Like the other tables contents' the ratio of website owning is low. Only 28.4% of Group A travel agencies have website. All of the websites have the contact information and some of them allow bookings for hotels and flights to and from Cyprus.

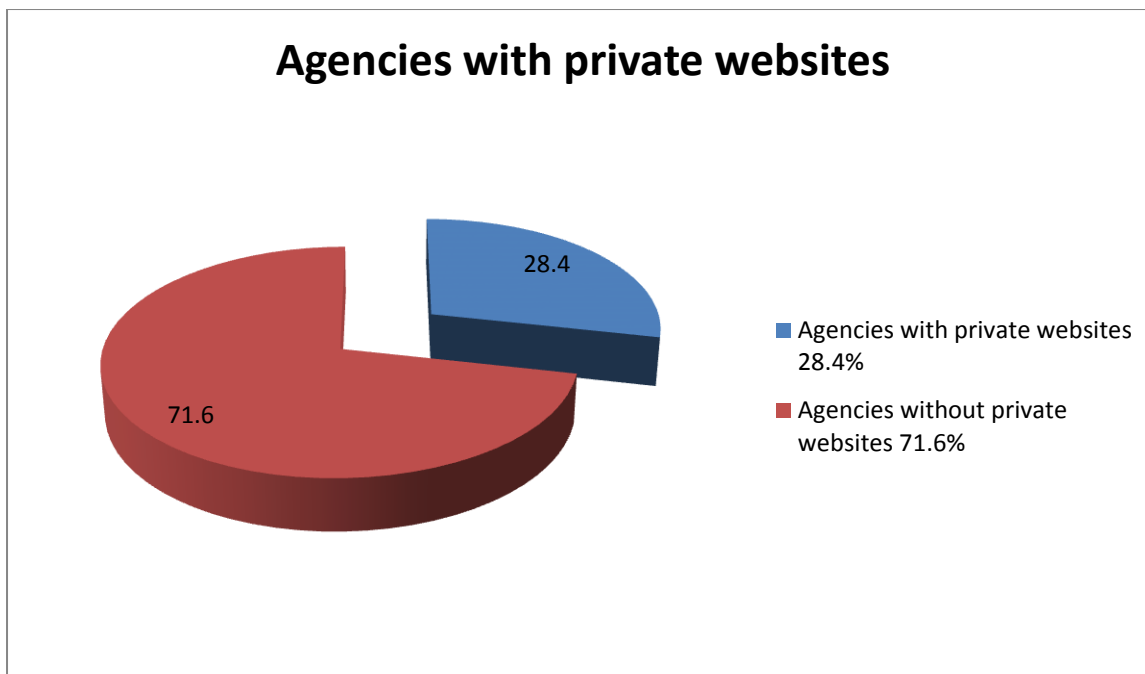


Figure 20: Group A agencies which own private websites.

4.2.1 Websites that Allow Bookings

Percentage figures of table 4 shows the rate of websites which allow bookings for flights and/or hotels among the websites of Northern Cyprus travel agencies. Among those websites, only 29.1% of them allow for bookings and 70.9% websites only have contact information of the travel agency itself.

In this section with the phrase “online booking” it means, providing bookings and reservation for hotels and flights for visitors and potential customers of the agencies. Online booking providing agency websites’ offers quick check for multiple flights for commercial airlines and touristic facilities.

Differences between online booking provider agency websites and commercial airline websites are agency websites offer more airline companies to check, furthermore while airline companies offering only limited and contracted hotels to accommodate

for their potential customer while travel agencies provides larger number hotels.online booking availabilit for travel agency websites provide time savings for their potential customers.

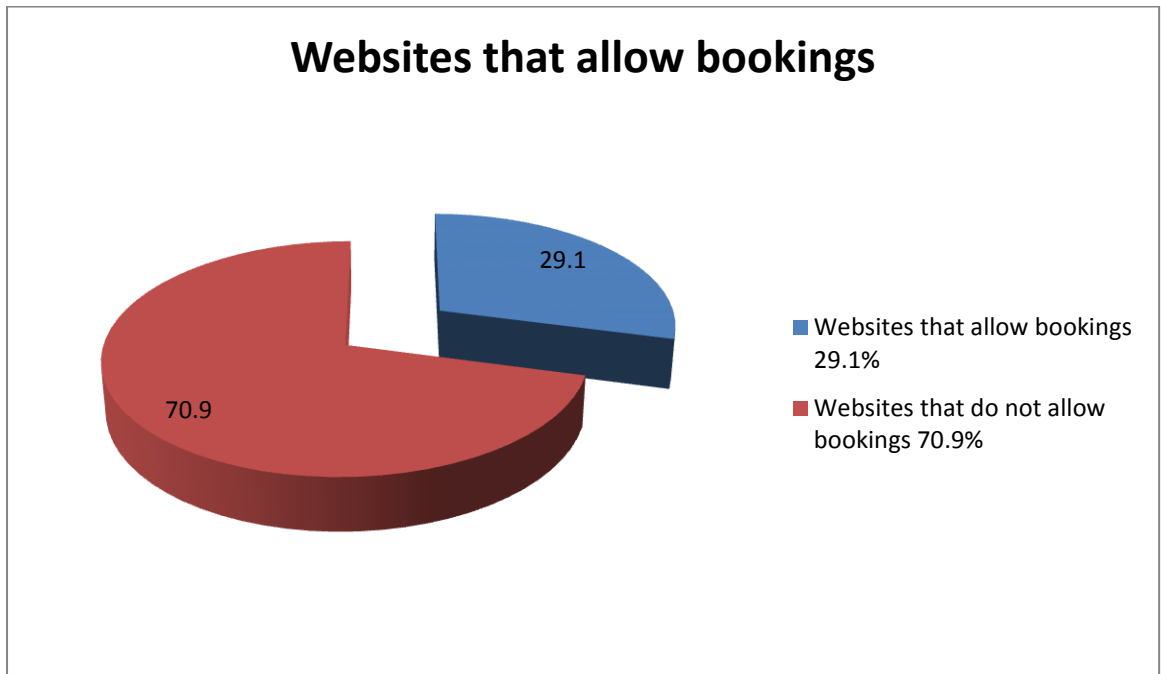


Figure 21: Websites that allow bookings

4.3 Agencies with SNS Networks

Table 4 shows the ratio of the travel agencies of North Cyprus which have accounts of social networking sites. There are variety social networking sites and every one of them has different specification than others which make them unique and purpose only to use. But the usage rate of these social networking sites is only 33% among the “Group A” travel agencies with online channels. The rest of these agencies (67%) do not have any profiles and /or accounts on social networking sites.

There is a difference between table 1 and table 2, which is, table 2 only shows the agencies with social networking sites and table 1 considers both social networking sites and agency websites’ together.

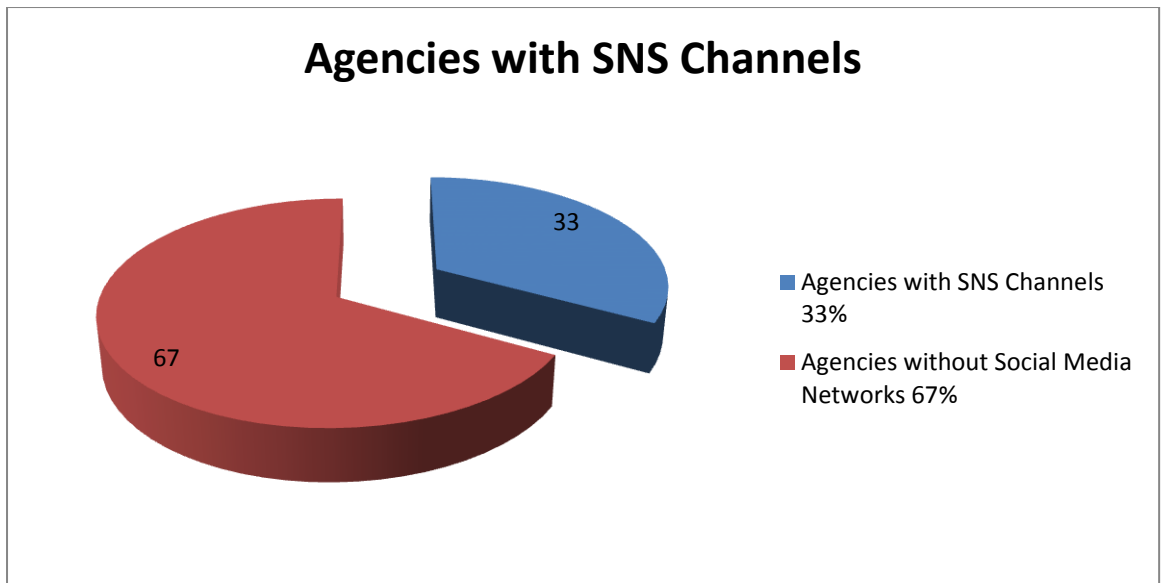


Figure 22: Agencies with SNS Networks.

4.3.1 Agencies with Twitter Accounts

Table 5 shows the ratio of agencies with and without twitter accounts. Twitter is the least favorite social networking site among the travel agencies. Only Hetim Turizm and Yar Travel has Twitter accounts, and rest of the agencies do not have Twitter account. These travel agencies are equal to 2.5% of the study's population and the rest of 97.5% do not use Twitter as promotional tool. Hetim tourism has 92 followers on their profiles but their last twit is from 11 Jun 2011. Yar Travel is the second tourism agency in "Group A" category that has a twitter account. With only 2 followers and just 25 tweets Yar Travel is poor user of Twitter.

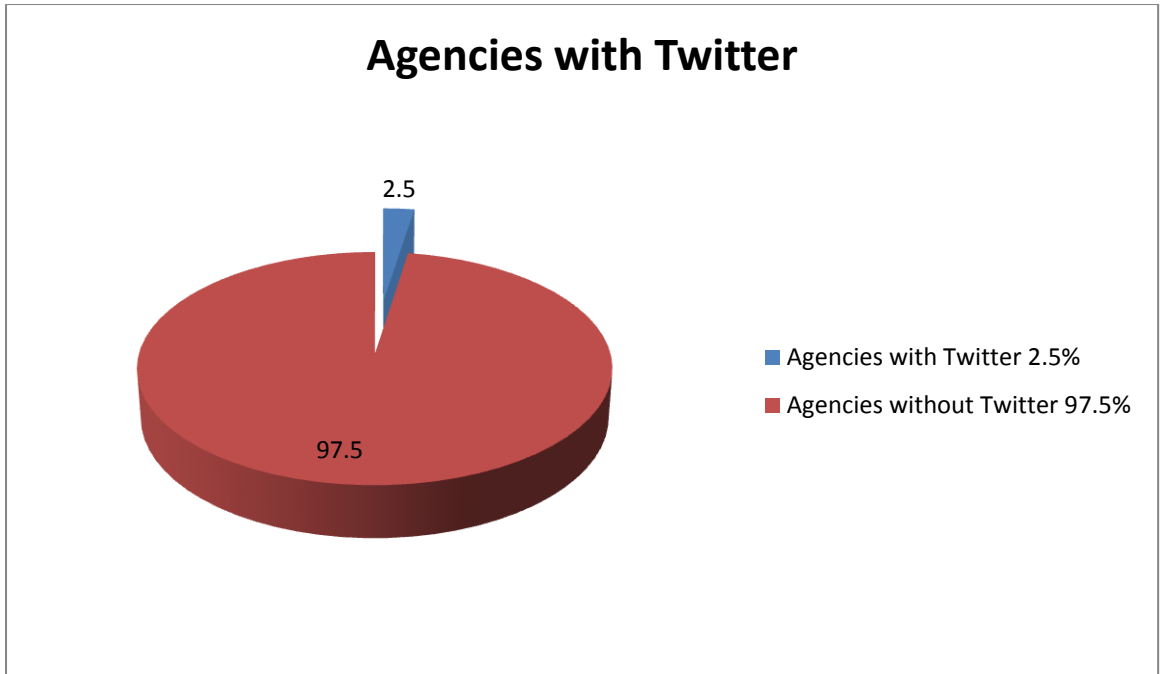


Figure 23: Agencies with Twitter Accounts.

4.3.2 Agencies with LinkedIn Profiles

Table 6 shows the percentage of the agencies which own profiles on business professionals' social networking site LinkedIn. Linked is second least favorite social networking channel of travel agencies of North Cyprus, only 4% of the agencies of Group A category own LinkedIn profiles and the rest of the agencies (96%) do not have account and or profile of LinkedIn. Only five of the agencies have LinkedIn profiles and others do not.

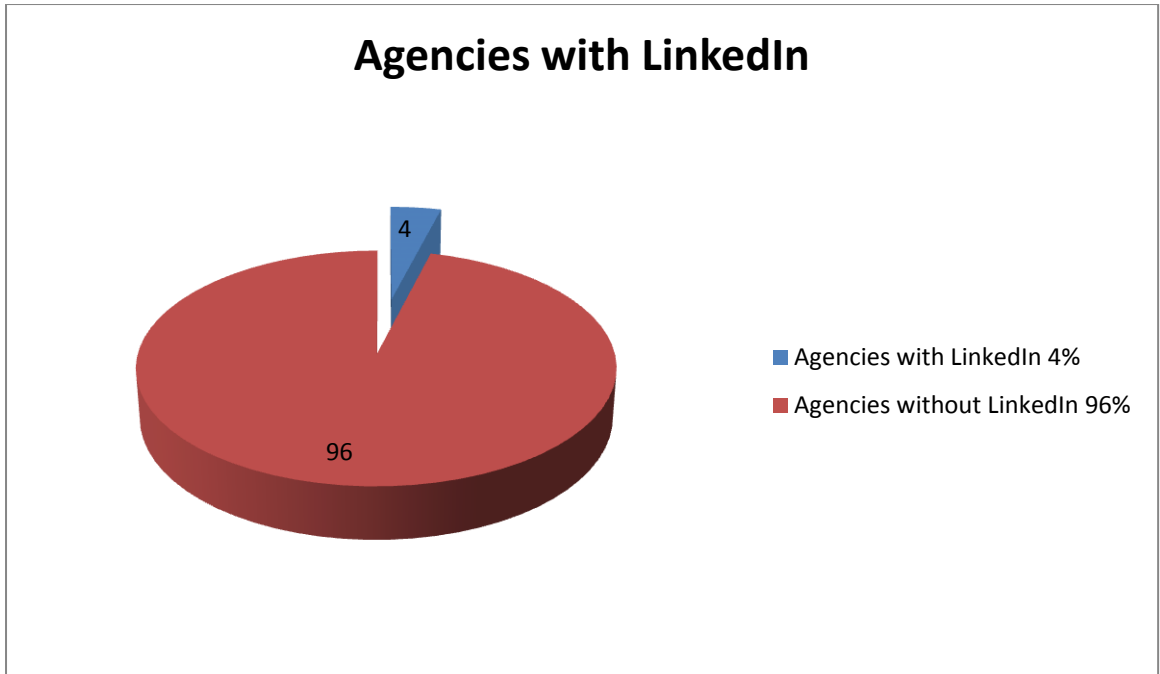


Figure 24: Agencies with LinkedIn profiles.

4.3.3 Agencies with Facebook Pages

Ratio of group A category agencies with facebook pages can be seen at table 7. Facebook has the biggest ratio of usage among the travel agencies of North Cyprus with 32%. However, even the biggest ratio belongs the Facebook, majority (68%) of the Group A agencies do not have any profiles or pages on Facebook.

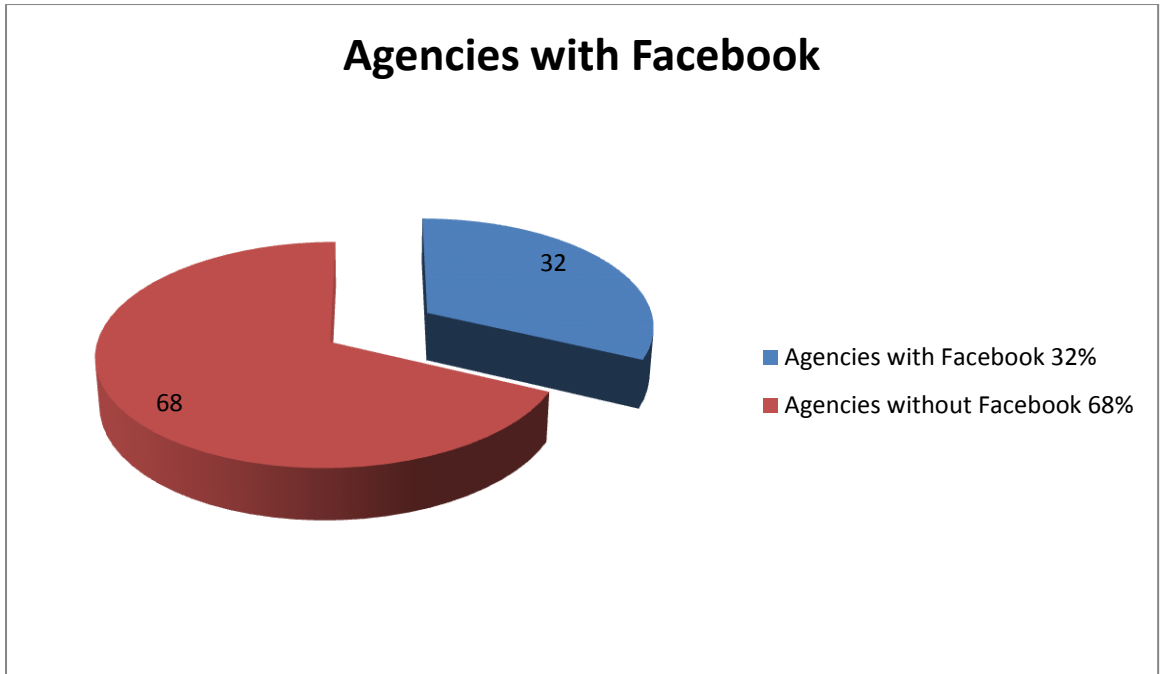


Figure 25: Agencies with Facebook Pages

4.3.4 Agencies with Instagram Profiles

Among all the 124 travel agencies of “Group A” category agencies, none of them have chosen Instagram as a social networking site to reach their potential customers by sharing photographic images and videos.

4.4 List of Agencies with Social Networking Sites.

This study investigates the Internet usage of the agencies of Group A category in general. The following part shows the collected data about the travel agencies. The collected data is about Internet usage, SNS preferences and frequency of using these tools.

4.4.1 List of Online Preferences

Among the online channel user travel agencies, following list shows the social networking site preferences.

Table 2: List of online preferences.

Agencies	Location	Website	Booking allowance	Social Networking Channels
Akfinans Turizm	Nicosia	Non	Non	Facebook
Akgünler	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Facebook
Akmina Travel	Nicosia	Yes	Non	Facebook
Artur LTD.	Nicosia	Yes	Yes	Non
Bir Renk Tour.	Nicosia	Non	Non	Facebook
Birinci Tour.	Nicosia	Yes	Yes	Facebook
Blue Line Tour.	Nicosia	Yes	Non	Non
Brote Turizm	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Facebook, LinkedIn
Ceremi Turizm	Nicosia	Yes	Non	Facebook
CyprusXP Travel	Nicosia	Yes	Non	Non
Deniz Kızı Tur.	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Non
Detur Travel	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	LinkedIn
Direct Travel	Nicosia	Non	Non	Facebook
Doğay Turizm	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Facebook
Efem Holiday	Famagusta	Non	Non	Facebook
Erin Tilki Tour.	Nicosia	Non	Non	Facebook
Fidansoy Turizm	Nicosia	Yes	Non	Facebook
Further Travel	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Non
Gennus Travel	Morphou	Non	Non	Facebook
Hakverdi Turizm	Nicosia	Non	Non	Facebook
Hawaii Turizm	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Non

HCT Cyprus Tour.	Nicosia	Yes	Non	Facebook
Hetim Turizm	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Twitter
İşlek Turizm	Nicosia	Yes	Non	Non
İlkoş Turizm	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Facebook
Kaleideskop Turizm	Kyrenia	Non	Non	Facebook
Kösezade Turizm	Nicosia	Yes	Yes	Facebook
Kre-Com Turizm	Famagusta	Non	Non	LinkedIn
Maestro DMC	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Non
MTS	Kyrenia	Yes	Yes	Non
New Dimension Travel	Kyrenia	Non	Non	Facebook
Northern Travel	Kyrenia	Non	Non	Facebook /LinkedIn
Örnek Turizm	Kyrenia	Yes	Yes	Non
Polatkan Turizm	Nicosia	Yes	Yes	Facebook
Puzzle Turizm	Famagusta	Yes	Non	Facebook
RESTUR	Famagusta	Non	Non	Facebook
Saro Travel	Famagusta	Yes	Non	Non
Sayar Turizm	Nicosia	Yes	Non	Facebook

Tursan Turizm	Nicosia	Yes	Non	LinkedIn, Facebook
Tursem Turizm	Kyrenia	Yes	Yes	Facebook
Wintersun Golf Travel	Kyrenia	Yes	Non	Non
Yar Travel	Nicosia	Yes	Yes	Twitter

The list at the above shows the agencies with online networks. First column shows the location of the agency. Among the five districts of North Cyprus, Iskele is the only one that has no Group A category travel agencies. Second column shows if the agencies use private website of their own to communicate their potential customers. Third column shows if agencies' website offers online booking to visitors. Lastly, fourth column shows the agencies' choice of SNS channels.

4.4.2 List of Social Networking Sites Usage Frequency

Following list shows the activity of these travel agencies on their social networking sites.

Table 3: List of social networking sites usage frequency.

Travel Agency	SNS	Like	Last Share
Akfinansman Turizm	Facebook	12	February 2013
Akgunler Turizm	Facebook	406	December 2012
Akmina Travel	Facebook	461	December 2013

Artur LTD	Facebook	2	Non
Bir Renk Turizm	Facebook	131	September 2012
Birinci Turizm	Facebook	287	April 21
Blue Line Tourism	-	-	-
Brote Turizm	Facebook	101	December 2013
Ceremi Tourism	Facebook	201	January 2014
Cyprus XP Travel	-	-	-
Denizkizi Turizm	-	-	-
Detur Travel	LinkedIn	-	-
Direct Travel Club	Facebook	35	June 2012
Dogay Turizm	Facebook	4	August 2013
Efem Holiday	Facebook	150	February 2014
Etur	-	-	-
Erin Tilki Turizm	Facebook	306	May 2012
Fidansoy Turizm	Facebook	4105	Daily Share
Further Travel	-	-	-
Gennus Turizm	Facebook	35	January 2013
Hakverdi Turizm	Facebook	155	December 2013
Hawaii Turizm	-	-	-
HCT Cyprus	Facebook	59	2011
Hetim Turizm	Twitter	2	2011
İşlek Turizm	-	-	-
İlkoş Turizm	Facebook	66	June 2012
Kaleideskop Turizm	Facebook	98	January 2014

Kösezade Turizm	Facebook	4000	February 2014
Kre-Com Turizm	LinkedIn	-	-
Maestro DMC	-	-	-
MTS	-	-	-
Northern Travel	Facebook/LinkedIn	604	December 2013
Örnek Turizm	-	-	-
Polatkan Turizm	Facebook	183	December 2013
Puzzle Turizm	Facebook	17	-
RESTUR	Facebook	150	December 2013
Saro Turizm	-	-	-
Sayar Turizm	Facebook	600	February 2014
Tursan Turizm	LinkedIn/Facebook	21000	January 2014
Turseem Turizm	Facebook	161	May 2013
Wintersun Gold T.	-	-	-
Yar Travel	Twitter	2	January 2014

The list above shows the agencies preferences of SNS channels and usage frequency of these channels. First column shows the SNS channels that have been chosen by Group A category Travel agencies. Second column shows the followers and/or likes of these agencies in numbers. Lastly, third column shows the last sharing date of a promotion related post. The date checking for the list has been made during the late April 2014.

In the second list, majority of the Group A category travel agencies do not use SNS channels daily basis. Furthermore, their followers in these SNS channel(s) are very low except for three of these agencies in the list, which are more than 4000 likes/followers.

In conclusion, chapter for presents the gathered data about Group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus. The charts in this chapter show the online channels usage by travel agencies, SNS usage, among the SNS channels which are used and if those SNS channels are used daily basis can be seen in this chapter.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This study explains the outcomes and analysis of the research according to data has been gathered. Also an evaluation of usage of traditional media channels has been summarized in this chapter

5.1 Summary

Chapter 5 explains the research findings and gives suggestions about the subject. This research has been conducted to explore the outcomes of the research about Internet usage of Group A category travel agencies and explains the data that has been gathered by online research. In the destination selection process, tour operators and travel agents serve as both distribution channels and image creators (Reimer, 1990). Suppliers and distributors play a very important role as sales agents for the products of tourism industry (Baloglu, Mangalolu, 2001).

Hypothesizes for this study are; Group A category travel agencies are not using Internet effectively, the currently used Internet channels and SNS are not frequently used. In order to explore these hypothesizes, following research questions have been asked.

- What kind of online tools are used by “Group A” travel agencies of North Cyprus?

Travel agencies in the Group A category are using both SNS and websites as online tools weakly. Majority of the agencies are using either websites and/or Facebook as SNS channels. However, the ratio of using SNS is rather lower than websites.

- Which SNS are chosen to be used by “Group A” travel agencies?

Among the many SNS, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are chosen to communicate with the potential targets of Group A category travel agencies. Instagram is not chosen by any of the agencies in the Group A category.

- Which functions of each social-networking-site are used by “Group A” travel agencies?

Every social-networking-site offers different functions to its users. While Facebook offers photo/video sharing, Twitter is micro-blogging site and LinkedIn is a social-networking-site for professional individuals and companies. It is observed that, the usage frequency and content share are too low to be effective in SNS.

According to the research has been made, social networking sites are not constantly used by majority of the “Group A” category travel agencies of North Cyprus. Only 18.5% of the “Group A” category travel and tourism agencies use the SNS channels. Findings show that, promotion of North Cyprus tourism through social networking sites being ineffective to the potential tourists. Furthermore, neither domestic tourism nor international tourism is promoted effectively by traditional media channels such as TV, billboard and published for the “local” potential customers. Travel agencies of North Cyprus and the office of tourism promotion and marketing do not use the same aspects of North Cyprus while promoting tourism. While travel agencies consider locals as their primary target market for promoting to travel abroad, the office of

tourism promotion and marketing consider Turkish people from Turkey and English people from London as primary target market.

5.2 Conclusions Drawn from the Study

According to the diffusion of innovation theory, North Cyprus travel agencies of “Group A” category are “laggards”. To consider of social-networking sites is the potential of global reach for price of zero cost the Internet and SNS usage is weak. The important aspect of Internet and social-networking sites is the constant usage in order to establish a strong position in online networks. During the online research, among all the Internet users of Group A category travel agencies, the usage frequency has been checked one by one and listed in appendices part of the study. All of the travel agencies among the Internet users are not using their channels in a constant frequency, and some of the travel agencies last share goes until the year 2011. Laggards are the last category in the adopters of diffusion of innovation. Individuals are last to have and apply the innovation. Laggards usually focus on traditional ways to communicate. The level of travel agencies in the classification can be seen by the ratio of online networks usage and the frequency of using these networks.

Travel agencies of North Cyprus are not using Internet effectively is one of the hypothesis of this study. For this hypothesis, “What kind of online tools are used by “Group A” travel agencies of North Cyprus?” has been asked. In order to answer this question, online channels are investigated via Google search engine and previously explained SNS. Exploring the online tools and channels which are being used by travel agencies helped the researcher to categorize the agencies’ level in the diffusion of innovation. When it is compared to a British Travel company Thomas Cook, Majority of travel agencies of North Cyprus Internet and SNS usage founded very

poorly compared usage between the Group A category travel agencies of North Cyprus and Thomas Cook has common objective is to send their customers abroad.

SNS or social-networking sites are important tools of Internet and being widely used by both individuals and companies. In order to explore the social-networking channels which have chosen by travel agencies, question of “Which SNS channels are chosen to be used by ‘Group A’ travel agencies?” have been asked.

When the “Medium is the message” is considered, the medium channel is as important as the content of the message and the channel is the message itself. Although, it is visible that travel agencies use social networking sites as promotional tool to reach their potential customers. Another important issue is, social networking sites are not frequently using as message to delivering tool.

The functions and specialties that offered by the channels are as important as the channel itself. “Which functions of each social-networking-site are used by “Group A” travel agencies?” has been asked to explore and understand the usage of social networks by travel agencies. Effective use of a channel has a great potential to be a marketing and/or promotion strategy for potential customers.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

The thought of others is becoming the vehicle of first option by which the consumer judges the product of travel (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; O’Connor, 2008). Given that travelers and tourists engage in social networks to satisfy some number of needs, from psychological, leisure, to social – it stands to reason that Destination Marketing

Organizations have to be available to engage travelers (Ling, 2010; Parra-Lopez et al., 2011).

Google search engine is considered as most accessed way of online searching, frequent use of SNS channels by sharing tourism related posts and images to the followers of agencies will increase the ranking of the agencies in the results list. Furthermore, the content of travel agencies is more likely to find public relations professionals, conference organizers, and so on (Lenoir, 2013). Furthermore, these travel agencies are in the laggard category for using traditional media as well.

Using only online channels for promoting the tourism business is not fulfilling attempt. Traditional media channels should be effectively used for promoting the North Cyprus Tourism by both the agencies and the Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing.

There is a policy difference between travel agencies and State of North Cyprus's The Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing. While the state's tourism promotion office tries to increase the number of North Cyprus visitors, Travel agencies main policy is sending locals away. Firstly, there should be common understanding between agencies and the state's office and agencies should reach an agreement about tourism policy of North Cyprus.

The Office of Tourism Promotion and Marketing should organize informative courses and seminars about social networking sites and effective usage of the media channels

for the agencies. The social networking and integrated marketing communication professionals should be invited to be the guest speakers.

Furthermore, the personal details such as age, location, relation with the technology should be researched about the employers and/or employees of travel agencies of North Cyprus. Because the gathered data about internet usage of certain travel agencies does not show relation with the demographics of employers and or employees of these travel agencies. Majority of Group A category travel agencies are small scaled businesses, when they are compared to travel company like Thomas Cook. Another research can be made about growth of travel agencies of North Cyprus.

Finally, mobile applications or “apps” are mobile software systems that created for smart-phones operations and/or tablet devices. The popularity of mobile apps has increased, as their usage has become increasingly common across smart phone users (Ludwig 2012). Mobile application offers quick responds to its users’. Tourism related mobile applications may offer another channel to some of the agencies of North Cyprus for tourism promotion purposes.

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