

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDEPENDENT APPEARANCE OF THE SMALL HOLIDAY HOMES OWNERS ON THE MARKET

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Abstract:

Prices in the tourism market are formed at the levels where supply and demand meet. Given the specifics of the tourism market, in most cases the price formation includes an intermediary (travel agency, travel sales agent, etc.) that raises the price level to very substantial percentages compared to the price offered by bidders. The aim of this paper is to analyse the possibilities of independent advertising of owners of small holiday homes on the market, i.e. to investigate whether there are more cost-effective ways of independent sale of accommodation services compared to conventional business through agencies or agents. The authors assume that the owners of holiday homes can operate more profitably and increase their profitability by promoting themselves independently on the

tourism market. The paper will present and analyse various tools for advertising holiday homes, based on which small renters can develop their own strategy for selling accommodation services at higher prices. By giving a few examples, the authors will also explain the conditions of use and the comparisons of different applications and services that allow independent promotion on the tourism market. In order to obtain relevant data, the authors will use the method of collecting data from numerous Internet sources, which will be statistically processed and presented in the form of conclusions.

Keywords:

Rural tourism, small entrepreneurs, holiday homes, independent advertising

1. Introduction

In order to achieve the most cost-effective renting of their leisure facilities, while using all the advantages of digital information available, small private renters are progressively turning to alternative ways of selling accommodation services in their facilities by looking for options and opportunities that may be more convenient than the classic manner of selling accommodation services through authorised registered agencies. The research in this paper is focused on the analysis of various tools for advertising

holiday homes, based on which small renters can develop their own strategy and goals for achieving more bookings of accommodation and increase their revenues. The paper presents positive examples of the tools mostly used worldwide or in Europe for independent booking, aimed at reaching the target audience at best.

The aim of the research was to investigate how renters of small holiday homes can independently

present their accommodation on the tourism market. Also, the aim of the research was to investigate the impact of holiday homes as part of private accommodation on the development of tourism in general. The purpose of the research is to point out the importance of monitoring the trends in tourism when booking private holiday homes and recognising the wishes and needs of targeted guests in order to achieve the most successful business performance.

The research methods used in the paper are: data collection method, analysis method, synthesis method, description method, statistical method and deduction method. The method of data collection refers to collecting available literature on tourism topics. The method of analysis is used to break down conclusions into simpler parts and elements, while the method of analysis breaks down more complex concepts. The method of synthesis was used to explain simpler assessments into more complex ones. The next method used in the paper is the method of description. The method of description was used to describe facts, confirm relationships and connections, but without scientific explanation and interpretation. Using the statistica541 method, we have learned about the regularity, general specificity and legality of mass phenomena, namely the conclusion about the average value of the feature. The last method used in the paper is the method of deduction, which was used to draw individual conclusions from general assessments. In accordance with the presented issues and by analysing the available literature, a basic research hypothesis has been set, which assumes that owners of small holiday homes can increase the profitability of their business by appearing independently on the tourism market.

2. Tourism Market

The market is divided into the market of goods and the market of services to which the tourism market belongs. In his work, Kostelić (2016) defines the tourism market as “a set of supply and demand relations in the field of services and goods that serve to meet tourist needs in a particular area.” (Kostelić, 2016). The process of buying and selling in tourism begins with the tourists travelling to the place of offer. On the tourism market, the service “awaits” tourists because everything happens “at the site” (Galičić, Laškarin, 2016). The supply and demand relation in tourism occurs in the tourism market, and the regulator of their volume is the price. Arising intermediaries are tied to tourism supply and tourism demand entities. The role of tourist intermediaries is to connect the supply and demand (Galičić, Laškarin, 2016).

Figure 1: Elements of the tourism market



Source: Author’s work according to Galičić, V., Laškarin, M. (2016): Principles and practice of tourism and hospitality, p. 15.

The following two groups of factors determine the tourism supply and demand (Galičić, Laškarin, 2016):

1. External factors (demographic and social changes; economic and financial development; investments

in infrastructure and equipment; technological innovations and improvements; environmental impact; travel security; trade development; political, legislative and legal factors).

2. Market strengths (trends in marketing; trends in travel structure, consumer knowledge of tourism requirements and tourism potentials; supply of skilled and experienced workers, destination products development; development in the private sector in the field of products and services).

2.1.Features of the tourist offer

In the tourism industry, the customer is the one who voyages towards the offer. “The tourist offer is defined as the quantity of goods and services consumed by tourists at a certain time, at a certain price and in a certain market.” (Jelović, 2017). It includes all social and economic participants in a particular country that indirectly or directly contributes to the enrichment and expansion of the overall offer and thus affect the possible increase in spending of foreign and domestic tourists (Jelović, 2017).

The tourist offer of one country consists of (Galičić, Laškarin, 2016):

- Cultural and historical heritage,
- Ecologically preserved nature,
- Infrastructure,
- Security of the political and socio-economic system.

Any party that wants to sell its service or product makes the tourist offer. It occurs when a supplier of goods and services offers them to consumers. To make a profit, it is necessary to understand the requirements of tourism demand, invest funds, educate employees and offer an

appropriate range of services and products (Galičić, Laškarin, 2016).

Factors shaping the tourist offer are (Zečević, 2016): society, environment, economy, company-entrepreneur, demand and the country. The following illustration shows an example of the tourist offer formed by food, accommodation, mediation, transport, guidance, other services and products and the factors affecting the tourist offer.

Figure 2: Factors affecting the forming of the tourist offer

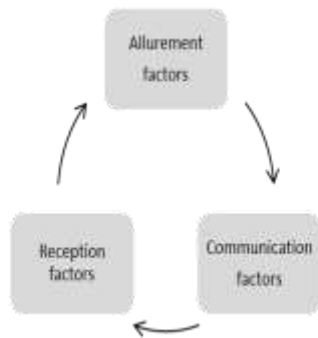


Source: Author’s work according to Zečević, T. (2016): Festival tourism as form of tourist offer, p.8

To be able to discuss the tourist offer, it is necessary to meet some prerequisites that are divided into three groups of factors (Galičić, Laškarin, 2016):

- Allurement factors,
- Communication factors,
- Reception factors.

Figure 3: Factors of the tourist offer



Source: Author's work according to Galičić, V., Laškarić, M. (2016): Principles and practice of tourism and hospitality, p. 45.

The task of allurements factors is to attract tourists based on the positive and desirable features of a particular area (Galičić, Laškarić, 2016). Communication factors serve to channel demand and achieve tourist consumption. This type of factor includes different categories of transportation that enable the connection between the tourism demand and the tourist destination (Galičić, Laškarić, 2016). Reception factors are also called acceptance or response factors and they include services and facilities that enable the stay and reception of tourists in a certain area. The reception capacities can include accommodation capacities, agencies, tourist boards, banks and entertainment, i.e. everything from newsstands to luxury hotels (Galičić, Laškarić, 2016).

The tourist offer consists of a very complex system of different participants. It works best only if the connections between each element in the system chain are not broken and if each element performs its function (Verteš, 2017).

2.2. Features of the tourism demand

There are many definitions of the tourism demand. One of them is that the tourism demand is the ability of a consumer to use a certain amount of services and products at certain prices and time. Consumers are

persons who want to participate or are involved in tourist movements to consume tourist services and products in areas outside their place of residence (Galičić, Laškarić, 2016). From the economic point of view, the tourism demand is defined as the quantity of goods and services offered on the tourism market at a price and under the conditions defined, and for which potential users express their strong interest (Verteš, 2017).

The tourism demand can be domestic and foreign. There are two basic assumptions for the formation of the tourism demand (Galičić, Laškarić, 2016).

1. Leisure

It is assumed that a person at that time has no business obligations and is not tied to its place of work. The behaviour of tourists on a tourist trip can be described as "leisure" and they indulge in relaxation and entertainment, because they are released from social, family and professional obligations.

2. Available funds

Once a person has satisfied personal primary financial needs, it begins to explore how to satisfy the secondary needs, which include tourist travels. Factors affecting tourism demand are country, person, environment, society, suppliers and economy (Verteš, 2017).

Figure 4: Factors affecting tourism demand



Source: Author's work according to Verteš, B. (2017): Economic impacts of tourism, p. 7

3. Small holiday homes renters

The capacities of small private renters have a significant share in the total accommodation in the Republic of Croatia. By raising the quality of accommodation and business, many small renters have increased their level of income, so renting holiday homes is no longer just an extra income. Small holiday home renters raise the quality of the offer and recognisability of buildings through affiliation and joint appearance on the market and increase the occupancy rate of facilities using new technologies, mostly in the pre-season and post-season (Čizmić Kraljević, 2017).

3.1. Holiday houses in the function of providing tourist services

Holiday homes pertain to commercial or non-commercial accommodation. Non-commercial accommodation is a part of accommodation where an individual or a family live, that is a part of the accommodation not rented to guests. There are three types of non-commercial accommodation of a holiday home (Dale, 2018):

1. Owner of a holiday home resident of a city or municipality,

2. Owner of an inherited holiday home not resident of a city or municipality,
3. Owner of a holiday home not resident of a city or municipality.

Private accommodation is an accommodation facility owned by a natural person. To rent private accommodation, a natural person must meet the required conditions, obtain approval from the competent ministry and categorise the accommodation (Šimundić, 2017). The definition of holiday home in a household used as commercial accommodation is “A holiday home is a facility in which the renter provides the service of accommodation and use of croft, equipped in a way that the guests can prepare and consume food on their own. In a holiday home, the renter can also provide the services of food, beverages and drinks.” (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).

Depending on the capacity, the holiday home has a minimum single or double bedroom. It can also have up to two extra beds in the living room. In addition to the equipment of the house, one of the conditions for the categorisation of a holiday home in a household is the size of the facility. The existing holiday home is categorised into four categories (SeeCroatia, 2014):

- Two stars
- Three stars
- Four stars
- Five stars

By inspecting the facility, the condition for the categorisation is determined by the State Administration Office County Commission in which territory the specified facility is located. Each categorised holiday home should have a sign at the entrance containing the name of the type of facility, the number of stars and the symbol of the holiday home (SeeCroatia, 2014).

3.2. Small renters as holiday home managers

The owner of the accommodation facility or accommodation unit is called a renter (Barać, 2019). Small renters are individuals who provide hospitality services of accommodation in a household. Hospitality services in the household, in this case holiday homes are considered accommodation services up to a maximum of 10 rooms, up to 20 beds, not including extra beds (Croatian Chamber of Commerce, 2019).

Citizens who have a permission for providing hospitality services in the household can rent holiday homes to tourists. After categorisation of the facility and obtaining a permission for providing services in the household, the small renter is obliged to (Čizmić Kraljević, 2020): keep records on guests, register guests via eVisitor, issue a bill to guests if necessary, display the price list of services in the facility, display the evacuation plan in the facility, pay a tourist tax, pay annual flat income tax, pay a membership fee to the Tourist Board, request VAT ID number if necessary, pay VAT on commission of foreign intermediaries if such services are used, print GDPR form, highlight the alcohol ban sign for minors, specify the e-mail address to which guests can send a remark and highlight the house rules.

4. Personal Advertising and Booking Strategy

The goal of each renter is to increase the number of bookings paying a lower commission. The increasing availability of Internet marketing tools and techniques to small renters of holiday homes significantly contributes to the efficiency

and profitability of business (Valičević et al., 2016). When planning to advertise own accommodation, the most important thing is to choose the target audience. It is necessary to understand and describe what the “ideal guests” looks like for the accommodation capacity and recognise their desires and motivations (Čizmić Kraljević, 2019), and choose the advertising tools and techniques accordingly.

4.1. Web page

When creating a website, one should remember that this is a tool whose main function is the sale of accommodation. The application of some rules contributes to competition in the market. It is important to make online booking easier for the customer. The reservation calendar should be highlighted on the first page to facilitate the check of the date availability, confirm and pay for the reservation. When everything is available and immediately clear to the guest in one place it also saves time (Valičević et al., 2016). The guest buys the destination experience. In addition to pictures of the holiday home, family accommodation, the guest should be sold all the information about the destination. In this way, you get a strong experience of the potential of the destination which can significantly affect reservations.

Knowing what can be seen and done in the destination is one of the reasons for staying longer. In order for the website to be as close to the guest as possible, it should be translated into as many target languages as possible. Most guests prefer the search in their own language. The opportunity lies in the fact that most other accommodation facilities do not have a translation in, for example, French, Hungarian or Spanish. The contact to the potential guest should be made easier by indicating a phone, WhatsApp or Viber reference number (Valičević et al., 2016).

The first impression is mostly influenced by photos that need to be professional if you want to get a serious impression from

the guest. In order for the guest to be able to visualize himself/herself in the selected place, it is recommended to have a “blank image” approach that consists only of the facilities or destination, without involving human models in the photo. The “photo with impression” approach provides the guest with a cognitive image obtained by noticing people in the photo, so the best combination is to use these two approaches (Valičević et al., 2016).

When creating a website, the main job is to attract potential guests to the site. The most effective ways are to use (Valičević et al., 2016):

- Google Adds
- SEO
- Fundamental ways of promotion

The advantages and disadvantages of creating a holiday home advertising website are shown in the following table.

Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of the website

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Complete content control	Fixed maintenance costs
Broader visitor profile	Long-term process of achieving desired results
Reflects professionalism and seriousness	Reliability
Easy access to business information	Site design costs
Facilitated accommodation booking	

Source: Author's work

The website has become an important marketing tool. Building an image and communication through a website enables connection and communication with remote destinations regardless of time, reduces costs and enables communication, survey and browsing through media content such as videos, photos and text (Rajko, Krajnović, Zdrilić, 2016).

4.2. Social networks

The application of social networks in tourism has become an indispensable "must have" for this economic activity. The connection between technology and travel is closer than ever, and users are ready to change the original intention to choose accommodation under the influence of social networks (Brajković, Boban, 2013). Holiday home owners can earn a lot for their business by being present on social media. They are necessary for the promotion of personal accommodation. In this way, the business affairs will gain more viewability, in the sense that advertising on social networks can reach more people. Social networks are expanding business operations by increasing the number of bookings and

recognising accommodation as a brand (Uprety, 2020).

The main goals in using social networks as a tool for advertising accommodation are (Uprety, 2020):

- Viewability increase,
- Content distribution,
- Awareness of potential guests about accommodation,
- Advertising,
- Turnover increase.

The advantages and disadvantages of using social networks when advertising holiday homes are shown in the following table.

Table 2. Advantages and disadvantages of social networks

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Building new skills	Great competition
Displaying news and accommodation services on a daily basis	Maintenance requires a lot of time and effort
The sharing economy	Paying for ads
Greater guest trust	Reaching out to a specific group of guests
Real-time two-way communication	A long-term process of gathering a large number of followers
Free registration	

Source: Author's table creation

4.2.1. Facebook

Facebook is a social network founded in 2004 by the owner Mark Zuckerberg. It is designed with the aim of discovering news from the environment, to share information, videos and photos, to connect with family and friend (Glavić, 2018).

Figure 5. Facebook logo



Source: Logolynx, (n.d.), Facebook logo

Facebook is the world's largest social networking site with nearly two billion active users per month. The most popular topic on the web is travel, so Facebook is increasingly being used as part of the marketing strategy of every accommodation owner, in order to achieve as many followings as possible that lead to higher sales. Vacation home owners need to be present on Facebook to record more successful bookings. As on the website, Facebook is a direct channel through which one can get direct bookings, bypass travel agencies and high commissions. Facebook is relevant to the business of small holiday home owners, especially if they learn to use many available opportunities. It is fantastic for building and maintaining relationships with guests and for placing the holiday homes offer to a wide audience.

A good idea to supplement your Facebook page update may be a paid ad, which can be completely controlled. When activating, the main goal is selected you want to achieve with the ad. The budget is also controlled, and the ability to measure outcomes reveals the success or failure of this type of strategy (Uprety, 2019). By using Facebook as a holiday home advertising tool, preference should be given to quality, not quantity. Better postings contribute to better positioning in the algorithm (Glavić, 2018).

4.2.2. Instagram

Instagram appeared on the market about ten years ago. The creators of this social app, Kevin Systrome and Mike Krieger, have put the focus on photos. Then Facebook bought Instagram in 2012 and since then it has only achieved success (Barbarić, 2018).

Figure 6. Instagram logo



Source: Ian, (2016), Designing a New Look for Instagram, Inspired by the Community

Since its founding in 2010, this application has numbered over 700 million monthly users. Of these, 15 million are active business profiles. For owners who want to make money and attract guests through this social network, it is important to think visually. For small holiday home renters this way of advertising is still relatively new. The main goal is to gain followers and turn them into accommodation reservations (Ashworth, 2019).

To start the engagement and increase the number of reservations, the application should be set up as a business account, which is publicly available to everyone. The profile should include a picture of the accommodation as a picture of the profile, information about the accommodation containing keywords, e-mail address, and a link to the website if any. It also makes sense to link a Facebook account to an Instagram account to boost marketing efforts. This also allows you to share photos from one platform to another, making it easier for guests to search for accommodation (Ashworth, 2019).

Hashtags play a big role on Instagram. Users often search for hashtags, especially when choosing a destination (Ashworth, 2019). Hashtags convert a group of words or a word into a searchable link. It enables the organisation of content and facilitates the tracking of topics based on keywords (Klarin, 2017).

4.3. Tourist portals

The current rental time is the time of tourist portals. Online travel agencies (OTAs) have taken the lead in the tourism market. This way of advertising should not be neglected for a successful business (Cicarelli, 2017). The golden era of "online booking" began in the mid-90s,

and to this day it has recorded only significant growth (Gaspert, 2015). Travel portals or online travel agencies for renting tourist accommodation are OTA types specialised in selling and advertising tourist accommodation in various destinations. They act as intermediaries between potential guests and renters or accommodation owners exclusively online (Suton, 2016).

Potential guests use tourist portals in all phases of travel. They are useful for comparing prices, reviewing the availability of calendars and reviews (Vuković, 2019). Gaining user trust and a good reputation are based on continuous improvement of services and viewability of content on the site (Gaspert, 2015).

Before placing ads on tourist portals, it is desirable to have (Sanpietro, 2019):

- Quality photos,
- Attractive, informative and relevant description of the facility,
- Defined lodging prices and calendar,
- Own website (if not immediately, after some time).

Tourist portals are the best way to reach people from all over the world. The use of many channels leads to greater viewability and capacity utilisation (Sanpietro, 2019). Each travel portal has its own rules for ad viewability. It is crucial to appear on the first few pages, which is achieved by contributing a larger commission to the portal (Čizmić Kraljević, 2019). As an element of doing business with online travel agencies to advertise accommodation, holiday home owners or renters are offered (Cicarelli, 2017):

- Instant booking and
- Query work.

Instant booking or entering booked appointments increases business success, compared to working through inquiries (Cicarelli, 2017). Every holiday home owner should take advantage of the mutual relationship with tourist portals. We should strive to be included in the

partnership program, through which tourist portals “push” facilities that are doing well and on which they earn a significant commission, and in return the owners achieve greater viewability and the possibility of reservations (Čizmić Kraljević, 2019). When choosing the right tourist portal for renting accommodation we should take into account (Webrezpro, 2018):

- Expenses,
- Target market,
- Experience,
- Functionality.

When analysing the costs of partnering with tourism portals, one should take into account the refunds they offer in terms of income, guest returns and what benefits they offer to renters and guests. Each tourist portal has its own demographic points and geographical regions, with the exception of certain portals that are prominent around the world. The choice of portal should be coordinated with the desired target market. Preference should be given to reputable channels that are successful and have many years of experience. Such portals increase the probability of booking. In terms of functionality, it is important that the portal has the ability to connect with the owner or renter of the accommodation, and automatically update any changes by the owner or portal. Failure to do so may result in overbooking and loss of time (Webrezpro, 2018).

Due to the user-friendly interface, the trend of using tourist portals can hardly be changed. They are first contacts of the guest with the destination and occupy the largest share of reservations. This does not suit small renters due to the increasing commissions of the portal, which they cannot influence. It is their choice to adapt or devise new ways of attracting potential guests (Galičić, Laškarin, 2016). The following table shows the advantages and disadvantages and benefits of the most attractive tourist portals.

Table 3. Advantages and disadvantages of tourist portals

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Reduced advertising costs	Costs of commissions, subscriptions
Comparison of accommodation costs	Restrictive terms and conditions
Unbiased reviews	Internet transactions are sometimes unreliable
Easy payment	The cost of investing in a multi-channel marketing strategy
Adaptability to all users	

Source: Author's work

Table 4. Fees of tourist portals

Internet site	Guest Fee	Renters Fee	Ads Posting Fee
Booking.com	Free	Renters pay 15% and more depending on the choice of renter and the portal criteria	Free
Airbnb	Variable, it can be up to 16%	3% or more depending on the choice of renter	Free
FeWo-direkt	Guest fee is 6-12% of the total amount of the reservation	PAYMENT PER RESERVATION The renter pays a commission of 8% for each	Registration is free of charge, and the fee for posting ads is charged

		booking made ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION The renter pays \$ 349 per year for instant booking or \$ 499 for bookings through renters	by payment per reservation or annual subscription
Google My Bussines	Free	Free	Free
Atraveo	20% for the deposit of the total reservation	15% commission on confirmed reservations	Free

Source: Booking.com (2020), How much commission do I pay?, Airbnb, (2020), About Us, Gigaworker, (2019), A Complete Guide to HomeAway Fees for Renters and Guests, Atraveo, (2020), Terms and Conditions

Based on the previous analysis, each holiday home owner should devise its own strategy for advertising its offer, taking into account the target guests, the attractiveness of the portal and the amount of fees they charge.

5. Conclusion

Tourism in the Republic of Croatia is one of the most important economic branches and one of the main sources of income nowadays. The coastal area and islands are more developed part compared to the hinterland. Today's tourists are increasingly looking for freedom, peace, nature and privacy during their stay in the facility and destination. The answer to their tourist preferences, motives and

trends are holiday homes. These opportunities have been recognised by many small renters. The advantages of this accommodation on the tourist market is that there is still not much competition among renters of small holiday homes, there is an opportunity for progress, new ideas and attracting guests for this type of accommodation. It also supports the tourist offer, which attracts tourists aged 35 and over, and families with children, whose preferences are peace and independent food preparation. Trends in tourism are such that guests choose a destination and facility via the Internet. It is important to identify the target group of tourists, invest in the best possible presentation of the object, photos, website and choose the appropriate site to advertise accommodation or a multiple combination. Today, small holiday home renters have many opportunities to present their property to tourists. They can choose the type of advertising tools or combine several of them at the same time. They can also choose the amount of commission, subscription or advertising according to their budget. Although it takes time and effort, the use of tourist portals and social networks today is inevitable for advertising and promoting your own facility. Better results are achieved by creating your own website, and connecting different networks that give tourists the impression of professionalism. The wishes and needs of tourists should be monitored, reviews should be answered, new contents and offers should be actively published, and trends in tourism should be monitored in order to reach as many potential guests as possible. All this requires time and effort, sometimes for a longer period of time. The analysis of available materials in the paper proves the set hypothesis that small renters using social networks, tourist portals and websites can book cheaper accommodation capacity of holiday homes and increase their own profitability.

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