Passenger Perception towards E-ticketing Services, Airline Industry

Nail Reshidi, Saranda Kajtazi,
Lorik Abdullahu

Dr.sc. N. RESHIDI, MSc. S. KAJTAZI, MSc. L. ABDULLAHU

Abstract

This paper aims to identify the critical dominant incidents and key instigators that influence on usage or lack of usage of e-ticketing by Kosovo Air Passengers.

The research at hand utilizes the Grounded Theory of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, and the Critical Incident Technique in order to identify the factors that influence on the (diss) satisfaction of the travellers in using e-ticketing. For the purpose of this paper, the empirical data were gathered through interviews by using open ended questions. Among 93 interviews with the random selected passengers, 13 interviews were deemed as invalid.

The empirical results highlighted the need for raising the consciousness regarding the efficacy and the advantages of e-ticketing. On the other hand, many other passengers cannot conceive the possibility of travelling without use of e-ticketing, given that in the past they spent much time in finding the right agent, desired destination, purchase difficulties in making reservation, confirmation, changes, or they had to carry large amounts of cash money to buy tickets which raised insecurity concerns.

Research is limited only to the description of critical incidents that occurred in Prishtina International Airport. Majority of the respondents were highly-educated with high income status. These characteristics create a bias and constrain

our ability to extrapolate from the findings. Nevertheless, the study serves as a point for more in-depth analysis and discussion on e-ticketing behaviour in Airline industry.

Key Words: E-Ticketing, Grounded Theory, Critical Incidents Technique, Adaptability, Practicality, Cost Saving, Time Saving, IT-Education.

1. Introduction

E-ticketing represents a new functional approach which enables air travel passengers to purchase tickets through a secure website, which is operated by the airline or travel agency online. E-ticketing offers new advantages and possibilities for all its clients. Since the physical presence is not required in order to perform the payment this enables cost reductions, fast access to seat availability, reservations (at all time and from any location), the possibility of comparing the data among the offerings from agencies and airlines, etc.

In Europe and in USA one observes an ever increasing trend of the volume of transactions performed through e-ticketing, whereas in Kosovo we still do not have the exact statistical data on the usage and implementation of e-ticketing services. A survey of e-ticketing trends in UK out of eight options given, online purchasing was the overwhelming first choice with 83% of travellers selecting it, instead of methods such as in-person at the venue or over the phone (Research Crowdology Survey, 2014). The pace of e-ticketing adoption is considered remarkable, as it is widely available in most parts of the world. Airlines and travel agencies are offering e-ticketing also as a new form of service, in some cases together with ground transportation service at the destination and hotel arrangements.

The tremendous growth of e-ticketing has driven the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to replace the paper tickets with electronic tickets totally. Since 1st of June 2008, the airline industry moved to 100% electronic ticketing and the paper ticket became a thing of the past. Apart from substantial cost savings for the industry of up to US$3 billion per year, electronic ticketing is also more convenient for passengers who no longer have to worry about losing tickets and can make changes to itineraries more easily (Iata.org, 2014).

Despite the slow pace, this practice has started to get implemented in Kosovo, too. Currently, e-ticketing is used by various operating airlines in Prishtina and agencies acting in behalf of airlines.

Therefore, the aim of this research is that through interviews based on questionnaire, to identify main stimulants and critical dominant incidents (like efficacy, security, profit, low cost or the issues that might be alarming for a given airline or travel agency) that influence the usage or lack of usage of e-ticketing services by the passengers; to analyze factors that represent hurdles towards utilization of e-ticketing and to create a background of prerequisite information regarding the behaviour of passengers toward e-ticketing.

Research methodology is based on the grounded theory of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser and Strauss, 1980) and on the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) through which, one observed the main positive and negative factors which influence the e-ticketing in Kosovo.

The analysis of the main data which were collected in the process was split in the part of presentation of the data, coding process (open coding, axial coding and selective coding) (Open Coding - University of Calgary, 2014) and eventually one performed the interpretation on findings and the conclusions.

On one hand the findings from this research have highlighted the need to increase the consciousness on the efficacy and the advantages that e-ticketing offers to travellers and on the other hand it highlighted the fact that many other travellers and travel agencies cannot conceive running their business without e-ticketing, given the fact that in the past they spent so much time in the traffic, or they had to wait for hours and days till the agent was searching for the airline and seat availability, make the reservations, pay extra costs, or they had to revert to carrying large amounts of cash money and they were concerned regarding their safety until they handed that money over. In addition, passengers stress the importance of security of transactions and protection tools, which have to be taken into account by agencies and airlines, if they wish to extend their network of clients.

2. Methodology of Qualitative Research

Regarding the topic on how much is the e-ticketing utilized in Kosovo, as a basis for data gathering, one utilized the Grounded Theory, whereas in order to perform the identification of the factors one utilized the critical incidents technique.

The method of Grounded Theory (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007) is known as a systematic methodology in the social sciences which was initially invented by two sociologists Glaser and Strauss and it aims to reach theory revelation through data synthesizing. This was achieved through a common research by these sociologists in a study they performed which involved observation of the patients who were dying in a hospital. As a result of these observations, sociologists wrote the book Awareness of Dying (Glaser and Strauss, 1965). In this study, the authors developed a comparative method which we today refer to as Grounded Theory. In most cases this method is utilized in qualitative research (Strauss, 1987) however at the same time it is also largely used in quantitative research (Glaser, 1992).

The basic theory method represents a systematic research approach towards gathering and analyzing the qualitative data, the aim of which is to generate a descriptive theory based on the analyzed data, rather than raising hypotheses. Therefore, the collected data are labelled in a series of codes which are obtained from the text; the codes are classified in a group of concepts in order to implement the issues to the highest degree; out of these concepts one forms the categories.

In order to analyze the relationship airline-passenger, during e-ticketing, one utilized the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) which is a series of procedures that determine the collection of data by observing the human behaviour which has a critical impact and it tackles the determined methodological criterions. These observations are conserved as traces of incidents, which eventually are utilized to solve the critical problems and to develop wide-ranging psychological principles.

Critical Incident Technique (CIT) aims to 1) offer empirical basis to solve practical problems and 2) develop wide-ranging psychological principles for drafting concepts based on which we are able to understand important phenomena which influence the area that is being studied (Rexha, 2013).

CIT is used as a research technique to identify the problems in various organizations in cases where there is a lack of theory to describe the given

phenomena. This technique is used as an interview tool instead of direct questions, in order to reveal the unusual critical incidents that take place in an organization. The critical incidents are collected in various ways, however the interviewees are usually asked to describe one experience of their own related to a service or institution, in our case their experience with e-ticketing. Critical Incident is defined as an incident that plays a visible negative or positive contribution for a given activity. Through this technique one obtains the general information on the management or the working procedures by concentrating on the particular critical incidents.

2.1 Collection of Data

The data for this study were collected through interviews performed with 80 passengers travelling via Prishtina international Airport, all of which utilize e-ticketing in their travelling arrangements. The selection of the interviewees is done through a random method.

In cases where one did not utilize e-ticketing, the interviews lasted 2 minutes, whereas in the cases where one utilized e-ticketing, the interviews lasted for up to 30 minutes maximum.

Out of 93 interviews performed on site, 13 of the interviewees declared that they do not utilize e-ticketing, therefore the latter cases were not dealt with in this study. The valid empirical data were processed through the statistical analysis software – SPSS.

3. Interpretation and Analysis of Data

From overall number of 93 interviewees, 33.3% of passengers that fly through Prishtina International Airport and use e-ticketing, fly with Easy Jet; 30.1% Austrian Airlines; 12.9% Turkish Airlines; 7.5% Adria Airlines and 2.2% Croatia Airlines (see Table 1).

Table 1: Utilization of e-ticketing services of various airlines operating in Prishtina

Airlines

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Easy Jet	31	33.3	38.8	38.8
	Austrian Airlines	28	30.1	35.0	73.8
	Turkish Airlines	12	12.9	15.0	88.8
	Adria Airlines	7	7.5	8.8	97.5
	Croatia Airlines	2	2.2	2.5	100.0
	Total	80	86.0	100.0	
Missing	System	13	14.0		
Total		93	100.0		

Source: Authors' own work.

Among the overall number of interviewees that utilize e-ticketing (see table 2), 36.6% of them state that their critical incidents refer to Practicality (reservation, confirmation, changes) of utilization e-ticketing service which at the same time represents the first label in selective coding; 25.8% of the interviewees state that their critical incidents refer to Time Saving (second label of selective coding); 12.9% of the interviewees relate their incidents to the Cost Savings of Utilization (third label of selective coding) of e-ticketing, and 10.8% of interviewees state that their critical incidents refer to the Need for information technology training (fourth label of selective coding).

Table 2: Categorization of label

Categorization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Time Saving	24	25.8	30.0	30.0
	Practicality in using e-ticketing	34	36.6	42.5	72.5
	IT education	10	10.8	12.5	85.0
	Cost Saving	12	12.9	15.0	100.0
	Total	80	86.0	100.0	
Missing	System	13	14.0		
Total		93	100.0		

Source: Authors' own work.

As a result of our interviews, one observes that 29% of passengers that purchase e-ticketing online have started to fly just recently, in a time period stretching from 1-3 years, 28% of passengers are using air travel in a period stretching from 4-6 years, 25.8% from 7-10 years whereas only 3.8% of passengers fly for a period longer than 10 years (see Table 3).

Table 3: Years of flying as a mean of transport

Years of flying with the airline

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 till 3 years	27	29.0	33.8	33.8
	4 till 6 years	26	28.0	32.5	66.3
	7 till 10 years	24	25.8	30.0	96.3
	more than 10 years	3	3.2	3.8	100.0
	Total	80	86.0	100.0	
Missing	System	13	14.0		
Total		93	100.0		

Source: Authors' own work.

In Table 4 we present the attitude of passengers on respective airlines, based on five statements where the interviewees had the opportunity to choose one choice among the answers. From the data gathered, it derives

that first statement "I would recommend this airline to my friends" represents the major part of the answers, 53.8%, which proves that passengers are satisfied with the services provided by the airlines. 17.2 % of the interviewees stated that "Next time I will continue to travel with the same airline". The statement "This airline is no worse than the others" is supported by 6.5% of the passengers who are not that satisfied with their airlines and the same percentage of unsatisfied passengers supports the statement "Next time surely I will not travel with this airline", whereas 2.2% of the interviewees state that "All airlines are the same".

Table 4: Attitude towards airlines

Attitude towards airlines

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I would recommend this airline to my friends	50	53.8	62.5	62.5
	I will continue to travel next time with the same airline	16	17.2	20.0	82.5
	This airline is no worse than other airlines	6	6.5	7.5	90.0
	All airlines are the same	2	2.2	2.5	92.5
	Next time surely I will not travel with this airline	6	6.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	80	86.0	100.0	
Missing	System	13	14.0		
Total		93	100.0		

Source: Authors' own work.

The age of the interviewees form an important part of the interview and from the data it derives that 45.2% of the interviewees that use the e-ticketing are from 18 to 35 years old, whereas 36.6% are from 36 to 45 years old, only 4.3% of interviewees are over 46 years of age (see table 5).

Table 5: The age of interviewees

Age of interviewees

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Age from 18 yers old till 35 years old	42	45.2	52.5	52.5
	Age from 36 years old till 45 years old	34	36.6	42.5	95.0
	Age more than 46 years old	4	4.3	5.0	100.0
	Total	80	86.0	100.0	
Missing	System	13	14.0		
Total		93	100.0		

Source: Authors' own work.

Major part of the interviewees that use e-ticketing (see table 6) have higher education, 44.1% of them are economists, 20.4% are accountants, 8.6% of interviewees are doctors, 4.3 % of them are paid consultants or teachers, whereas 2.2% of the interviewees are engineers. Based on this we can conclude that the e-ticketing services are mostly used by responsible people who in personal life are professionals.

Table 6: Profession of interviewees

Profession of interviewees using e-ticketing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Economist	41	44.1	51.3	51.3
	Accountant	19	20.4	23.8	75.0
	Doctor	8	8.6	10.0	85.0
	Agronomist	2	2.2	2.5	87.5
	Teacher	4	4.3	5.0	92.5
	Consultant	4	4.3	5.0	97.5
	Engineer	2	2.2	2.5	100.0
	Total	80	86.0	100.0	
Missing	System	13	14.0		
Total		93	100.0		

Source: Authors' own work.

Based on table 7, one can clearly see that 24 interviewees (30%) consider that e-ticketing service saves time, 8 of which have over 4 years of flying experience and they also state to have very good experience with these airlines, as a result of which they would recommend the airline in the future to their friends. In this particular case, the years of flying with an airline indicates the satisfaction of passenger with the e-ticketing service and at the same time it indicates that early adopters of e-ticketing service usually are the passengers of Easy Jet and Austrian Airlines.

In addition, 34 of the interviewees or 42.5% confirm that e-ticketing services offer practicality, value of various nature and character (such is e.g. support in decision making, speedy verification of the transfer executions, elimination of the possibility of errors, easy reservation, confirmation, changes etc). Therefore, the suitability of utilization of e-ticketing service is not linked so much with the years of flying but rather with the offered values and with the service and satisfaction of the passengers with such services.

Table 7: Interconnection among categorization, airlines and years of flying

Airlines * Years of flying with the airline * Categorization Crosstabulation

Count

Categorization			Years of flying with the airline				Total
			1 till 3 years	4 till 6 years	7 till 10 years	more than 10 years	
Time Saving	Airlines	Easy Jet	2	2	6	2	12
		Austrian Airlines	2	4	2	0	8
		Turkish Airlines	0	2	0	0	2
		Adria Airlines	2	0	0	0	2
	Total		6	8	8	2	24
Practicality in using e-ticketing	Airlines	Easy Jet	2	6	4	1	13
		Austrian Airlines	2	2	6	0	10
		Turkish Airlines	2	2	2	0	6
		Adria Airlines	5	0	0	0	5
	Total		11	10	12	1	34
IT education	Airlines	Austrian Airlines	2	4			6
		Turkish Airlines	2	2			4
	Total		4	6			10
Cost Saving	Airlines	Easy Jet	0	2	4		6
		Austrian Airlines	4	0	0		4
		Croatia Airlines	2	0	0		2
	Total		6	2	4		12

Source: Authors' own work.

In general the new services in market, including e-ticketing services, are not easily adopted due to the hesitation and the education of passengers. The data from our research indicate the same, 12.5% of the interviewees or 10 people, confirm the fact that IT Education in our country continues to be a problem and the reason for not utilizing this kind of new services. These cases were present in the first years of flying with the airlines, from 1-3 years and 4-6 years, which indicate that with continuing exercise of the service, this problem is thus eliminated.

Therefore, the airlines should pay attention to the promotion of e-ticketing service and at the same time they should design user-friendly platforms in order to eliminate the problems that derive as a result of the lack of IT education, which would in return increase the number of users.

Cost of services, 15% (12) of the total of analyzed interviews represent an important indicator for passengers that are in the first years of flying, we have noted 6 occurrences in the first three years and 4 cases in long term users from 7-10 years of flying. Hence, this argument proves the importance of cost of service in building the cooperation airline-passenger and gaining new passengers.

Whereas regarding the attitude of passengers (see table 8) towards airlines, one deduces that due to the factor of time saving, 12 passengers state that they would recommend the airline to their friends, 4 state that they would continue to fly next time with the same airline, 2 state that this airline is no worse than others, and 6 cases regarding the service stated that they will not travel with the same precisely due to the time constrains. Based on these results the "saving of time" represents the core critical incident of e-ticketing services which has a positive effect and a negative effect (related with IT education) on relationship between the passengers and the airline.

Table 8: Interlink between categorization, airlines and statements

Airlines * Attitude towards airlines * Categorization Crosstabulation

Count

Categorization			Attitude towards airlines					Total
			I would recommend this airline to my friends	I will continue to travel next time with the same airline	This airline is no worse than other airlines	All airlines are the same	Next time surely I will not travel with this airline	
Time Saving	Airlines	Easy Jet	6	4	2		0	12
		Austrian Airlines	6	0	0		2	8
		Turkish Airlines	0	0	0		2	2
		Adria Airlines	0	0	0		2	2
	Total		12	4	2		6	24
Practicality in using e-ticketing	Airlines	Easy Jet	9	4	0			13
		Austrian Airlines	6	2	2			10
		Turkish Airlines	4	2	0			6
		Adria Airlines	3	2	0			5
	Total		22	10	2			34
IT education	Airlines	Austrian Airlines	2	2	2			6
		Turkish Airlines	4	0	0			4
	Total		6	2	2			10
Cost Saving	Airlines	Easy Jet	6			0		6
		Austrian Airlines	4			0		4
		Croatia Airlines	0			2		2
	Total		10			2		12

Source: Authors' own work.

Similarly with the topic of practicality, 22 occurrences indicate that it is this exact practical reason and suitability in utilization of e-ticketing service the reason why they would recommend these airlines and why they would continue to fly with the same. There is no registered occurrence which indicates that they would not continue flying with the airline or that they consider the service the same due to suitability reasons.

As a result of IT education there are six instances where they indicate that they would recommend the airlines, two instances which indicate that they would continue flying with that airline and other two who state that the latter does not differ much from other airlines. There is no recorded occurrence which indicates that it is the education the reason why they would not recommend the airline, or that this airline is the same as the others. Nevertheless, the very fact that one registered as a topic the issue of "IT education" indicates that both airlines and passengers need to work in this area (through the promotion of the services and education at the same time) and that there is a space within which one can manoeuvre, the latter could be used by airlines as a comparative advantage.

Regarding the cost savings, there are 10 instances that the respondents declare that it is due to the cost that they would recommend the airline to their friends. Only two cases indicate that all the airlines are the same. There is no case that is interlinked with three other statements. This indicates that in the end of the day, the cost of service is the single most critical issue that bears most of the weight in shaping the convictions and impressions regarding the values and gains from a certain service. Therefore, the airlines need to pay additional attention to the cost of services they provide, in order to meet the expectations of their clients.

4. Conclusions

This qualitative research represents a strong basis for quantitative and more thorough research; the latter could be performed involving all airlines in order to quantify and verify the actual findings for each airline and to come up with the respective recommendations for each of them individually. As a result of the paper, we come to the conclusion that:

"Practicality" the suitability of the e-ticketing services is highly valued by all passengers due to the fact that it helps the fast decision-making, it reduces the occurrence of errors, it enables speedy verifications of the reservations, it offers elimination of the possibility for errors and it offers the possibility of performing the reservations, changes and transfers at any given time from any place. On the other hand, the clients that value practicality, they request that e-ticketing service platforms are rendered more user-friendly, offer higher level of security and to obtain instant confirmation regarding the performed activities.

"Saving of time" represents another important factor for passengers who use e-ticketing services, given that it helps them to operate in a more efficient manner, without having to lose time, to avoid possible errors which can occur during the procedures of reservation. On the other hand, due to weak internet link, the online transfers that take place through e-ticketing might be an issue, which attest the fact that e-ticketing services need to be suitable for passengers, clients.

"Cost of Services" plays a role in utilization or lack of utilization of the e-ticketing services, especially for the novice clients. This factor can offer a competitive advantage for new clients, by having their service fees reduced.

"IT education" of the airline (and agency) operator plays an important role in utilization of e-ticketing service. If the airline or agent officials do not have appropriate knowledge to maintain the e-ticketing service platforms, if they do not promote or advice their clients on how to utilize the e-ticketing services, then these services for clients who have attained lower education will be rendered difficult to be used. In the end, all the findings evolve around the suitability of utilization of e-ticketing services, time and cost saving for the clients and savings on airline (agency) resources.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions that derive from this qualitative research, we recommend that in order to increase the number of passengers, airlines and agencies on their behalf should develop more user-friendly platforms to be used by all passengers from all walks of educational levels, at the same time these platforms should be safe and they should offer the possibility of instant verification of performed transfers or reservations.

With the development of suitable platforms, the airlines could increase the number of their clients that use the e-ticketing services, at the same time they would increase their incomes and reduce their expenses. In order for them to increase the number of clients, the airlines need to promote the services by using all means of promotion, including advertisements, events and experiences of other clients, audio-visual materials, 24/7 assistance services, social media, etc. At the same time, they should pay attention to the training of their employees through specific education programs that enable them to train their clients by using brochures and by audio-visual demonstrations.

Only in this manner, the airlines and agencies can render themselves competitive in the market and in the service of their clients.

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