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Title	Travel intermediaries going online – an analysis of the driving forces		
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Abstract

Tourism is fundamental to world economy, particularly because of the poorer nations' dependence on it. Travel and tourism annually make 10 % of the worldwide GDP. Internet is revolutionizing travel as we know it. The phenomenon is worth many studies, and this is one of them.

Why is e-commerce becoming such an influence among travel agents and tour operators? What are the driving factors? The purpose of this research is to find the driving forces behind the travel intermediaries, and specifically Finnish tour operators, moving online. The research sub-questions were:

1. What is meant by e-commerce, particularly in travel business?
2. What kind of forces in the contemporary business environment may drive travel intermediaries online?
3. How are the other travel industry players possibly driving travel intermediaries online?
4. How are the competing travel intermediaries, by any chance, driving each other and themselves online?

The theoretical part of the study consists of a literature review regarding e-commerce and the contemporary travel business environment, the travel business players, and e-commerce among travel intermediaries. The primary data of the empirical part of the study was based on a qualitative case study. Two managers of Finnish tour operators were interviewed on their views of the travel intermediaries moving online.

The main driver behind travel intermediaries going online is the business-to-consumer (B2C) customer. The power of the customer has increased because it is so easy to compare different alternatives online. Other drivers are the contemporary business environment, the increase in internet use and familiarization of e-commerce, other travel intermediaries going online, and the change of travel distribution as a whole. Small drivers were the travel suppliers, which are also known as principals, and big business-to-business (B2B) customers.

The greatest managerial implication of this thesis is that without online visibility, the modern travel customer does not find a travel company. The company is not more an option, because so much of the information seeking is done in the internet. Also the fact that trust is such a major issue in Finnish e-commerce should be respected. Companies must make more effort in getting people trust online buying. Many people that use internet regularly, have never bought anything online. This thesis provides the reasons for travel companies to go online, if they still are only doing traditional sales. E-commerce in travel business is here to stay.

Key words	Travel, travel intermediary, internet, e-commerce, tour operator, travel agency.
Further information	