









Research case study: Travel agency DAEN

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Abstract: The research case study deals with travel agency DAEN. It presents the company, the main competitors and also tries to answer the question "What is the position of travel agencies in today's world". The response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the company's business is also an integral part.

Keywords: travel agency, COVID-19, competition, personas

Company presentation

DAEN s.r.o. is a company whose main activity is the operation of a travel agency, personal road motor transport - domestic occasional non-public, international occasional and production, trade and services not listed in Appendices 1 to 3 of the Trade Act.

DAEN s.r.o. is a member of PROSPERITA investiční společnost, a.s., the Association of Czech Travel Agencies and Agencies and the Association of Travel Agencies of the Czech Republic.

The main activity of DAEN s.r.o. is an organization of wellness stays. These also include spa and medical stays, ski stays, stays for schools, stays for seniors, cultural stays, and stays with elements of an active vacation. The main destinations of the travel agency include the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. DAEN s.r.o. on the basis of long-term experience, he can also prepare a tailor-made holiday to other tourism destinations. Additional activities include providing additional travel insurance, car rental, transfers, air tickets, tickets, visas or booking tickets for sports and cultural events.

DAEN s.r.o. offers employers the opportunity to provide tax-advantaged employee benefits through it, in the form of recreation contributions. In addition to benefits, the company can also offer the provision of company meetings, weekend meetings, seminars, press conferences, social events, sports tournaments, outdoor activities or motivational programs. DAEN s.r.o. thanks to the connection with CA Prosperita travel (operated by a company with a protected workshop), it is the only one in the Czech Republic that provides companies with substitute fulfilment for tourism services. Many companies use this option every year, e.g. for recreation or business trips of employees and corporate training.

From an administrative point of view, the operation of a travel agency is significantly different from that of a travel agency. In general terms, it is the fact that, unlike a travel agency, a travel agency is not authorized to sell tours and cannot mediate the sale of a tour for another entity that is not a travel agency. The travel agency only mediates tours. The travel contract is concluded by a travel agency, so the travel agency acts as an intermediary.

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A travel agency (according to international terminology tour operator) is a legal entity that, based on the concession and Act 159/1999 Coll. entitled to:

- organize, offer and sell tours and offer and sell individual tourism services,
- organize combinations of tourism services and sell them to other travel agencies for the purpose of further business,
- mediate the sale of individual tourism services for another travel agency, travel agency or other entity,
- mediate the sale of a tour for another travel agency,
- sell things related to tourism (e.g. tickets, printed guides, souvenirs, etc.).

A travel agency (according to international terminology travel agent) is an entrepreneur who, according to the trade, is entitled to:

- offer and sell individual tourism services,
- complete tourism services, offer them and sell them to travel agencies for the purpose of further business,
- mediate the sale of a tour for a travel agency,
- mediate the sale of individual tourism services for a travel agency, another travel agency or other entities,
- sell things related to tourism (e.g. tickets, printed guides, souvenirs, etc.).

When establishing a travel agency, the entrepreneur must have professional qualifications. The entrepreneur also needs to obtain a trade license with the business object of "operating a travel agency". The travel agency must also meet professional qualifications according to Act No. 455/1991 Coll. for a licensed trade and a license must be issued by the trade office.

When setting up a travel agency, it is necessary to obtain a business license with the subject of business "production, trade and services" and the entrepreneur must meet the general conditions for running a business.

Unlike a travel agency, a travel agency is obliged to have bankruptcy insurance for the entire period of its activity. The travel agency, on the other hand, only has the obligation to provide the customer with information that the travel agency is organizing the trip.

DAEN s.r.o. was founded on May 6, 1994 and is registered in the commercial register. The company has 5 employees and several external collaborators, which makes it a small company. The company has 2 female managers, one of whom is also the owner. The detailed organizational structure of the company

is shown below (see Diagram 1). DAEN s.r.o. is insured against bankruptcy with insurance company Slavia, a.s.

The headquarters of the company and its place of business are located in Prague 10 - Hostivař, Daliborova Street 161/26, approximately 30 minutes by tram from the center of Prague. The business is easily accessible by car and public transport.

Scheme 1 Organizational structure of DAEN s.r.o.



The company DAEN s.r.o. is presented primarily via the Internet and websites. It currently has 2 domains registered: www.daen.cz (see Figure 1), letemsvetem.daen.cz (see Figure 2). The company is also active on social networks, especially on the Facebook page (CK Daen - Beyond the limits of your dreams) and Instagram (ckdaen), where 2-3 posts appear per week.

DAEN s.r.o. has printed catalogues for 2020 Year-round holiday with a smile. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the catalogues for 2021 were not printed. All communication was concentrated in the online environment.

Figure 1 Preview of the presentation on the website www.daen.cz

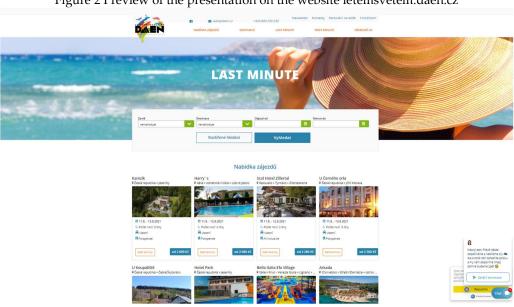


Figure 2 Preview of the presentation on the website letemsvetem.daen.cz

Competitive analysis

In a highly competitive environment, the priority is to offer customers/clients a competitive advantage. The advantage is not a lower price, the advantage is innovation, something new and more interesting. It is also important to keep an eye on developments in the travel agency market, as we can learn a lot from the competition.

The defining elements of travel agencies are size and specialization. DAEN s.r.o. belongs to the smaller travel agencies with a narrower specialization on the Czech market. Compared to large and less specialized travel agencies, they have to limit their marketing and communication budgets and cannot afford to cut prices and provide discounts.

But what a small travel agency can influence, and sometimes even much better than a large one, is the organization of the tour/stay, the care of the client at the place of stay or the way of communication. A specialized and small travel agency does not just want to sell, it is an advisor, a guide when buying. It devotes more time to client care and offers a wider offer in a given destination than a large travel agency. A well-organized tour/stay is the best marketing. And the business and activities of DAEN s.r.o. are built on this.

As the director of the company, Mrs. Jana Kurková, states:

"The travel agency DAEN offers a wide selection of recreational, sports, wellness and spa stay in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. We focus a lot on an individual approach to each of our clients, we offer advice, compare individual offers and try to make our clients as satisfied as possible. So that they get that the stay really fulfils their needs, because we know that they save for the vacation and it's a reward for them, so we want them to enjoy it."

The main competitive advantage of DAEN s.r.o. are human resources.

Table 1 DAEN, s.r.o.

	,
Target market	Families with children, seniors, disabled, corporate
	clients, groups and individuals
Pricing policy	We always sell at prices that the client could buy directly,
	so that we are not more expensive
Competitive strengths	Client care, personal approach, special offers
Weaknesses in the competition	Low budget for marketing and also for human resources
What they do better	They have a more sophisticated website, better
	technology, a bigger budget for marketing, a better
	financial background and also larger travel agencies have
	a better negotiating position with suppliers
Distribution	3 branches, more than 220 commission sellers
Promotion	Web, online marketing, catalogues, printed catalogues
	and leaflets, competitions, participation in trade fairs and
	sales exhibitions
Future development returning	Focusing on personal advice and maximum service to our
clientele	clients, building a loyal and returning clientele

Real competitors of DAEN s.r.o. are identified below. Based on an interview with the director of the company Ing. Jana Kurkova.

The main competitor is Cestovní kancelář Čedok, the oldest travel agency in the Czech Republic. The germ of Čedok was the Information Office founded on November 1, 1919 by a group of patriots. As early as 1920, it was possible to create a full-fledged Czechoslovak travel and transport agency, s.r.o. with a share capital of 2.5 million CZK.

From nationalization in 1948 until 1989, Čedok was built as a state tourism monopoly. The year 1995 marked a fundamental change in the company, when Unimex Group became the majority owner of Čedok. The new era of Čedok is characterized by the transformation into a modern, completely customer-oriented travel agency. At the end of 2007, the majority shareholder changed to ODIEN Group, an investor from the United States of America with a 98% stake. In 2016, Čedok came under the ownership of Itaka, the largest travel agency in Poland and at the same time one of the largest in Central and Eastern Europe. Today, Čedok tries to continue all the good traditions of the brand, which belongs to the family silver of the Czech economy.

It deals with inbound and outbound tourism and offers customers a very wide range of products through several catalogues a year. Čedok is a specialist in domestic tours, both residential and sightseeing, but exotic tours are also a matter of course for him.

Table 2 Competitor Travel agency Čedok

Target market	Families with children, seniors, disabled, corporate
	clients, groups and individuals
Pricing Policy	A strategy focused on perceived value by customers who
	are willing to pay extra for security. CK adheres to a
	pricing strategy that says that too low a price creates
	mistrust and too high will drive away potential clients to
	the competition. System of discounts
Competitive strengths	Widest range of travel services in the Czech Republic,
	long-standing tradition and stable position on the market,
	creation of very affordable tours (e.g. to Paris), dense
	network of branches, own coaches, prestigious award for
	the "Rhodes" image in the category CK, CK regularly
	ranks high in the prestigious TTG Travel Awards survey
Weaknesses in the competition	Reviews on the Internet speak in favour of the Central
	Committee, only the delegates are negatively evaluated
	and that in many cases. Frequent change of majority
	owner
What they do better	Several types of sightseeing tours - Nr. 1 on the market,
	Čedok mobile application, Čedog Children's Club
Distribution	More than 30 branches, more than 500 commission sellers
Promotion	Printed catalogues, prospectuses and leaflets, newsletters,
	websites, social networks, media advertising, charitable
	and sponsorship donations, organization of competitions,
	product placement
Future development	Čedok tries to follow all the good traditions of the brand,
	which belong to the family silver of the Czech economy.

Another important competitor is ATIS, a.s. - A travel agency that has been operating on the market since 1990, originally as a travel agency. In 1992, it was transformed into a limited liability company and in 1996 into a joint-stock company and travel agency. The original business idea was very simple, to do something for yourself and realize it after the fall of the communist system. Through hard work, the founders managed to build a specialized travel agency that has built a stable position on the tourism market.

Stays with own transport in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary constitute the dominant product for the final consumer. The catalogue and internet product is targeted and distributed in seasonal versions for each country separately. The group arrival product for EU countries (i.e. Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia) is another activity of the ATIS travel agency.

Table 3 Competitor ATIS, a.s. - Travel agency

Target market	Families with children, seniors, groups and individuals
Pricing policy	Strategy aimed at maximizing market share, discount
	system, acceptable prices
Competitive strengths	Long-standing tradition on the market, themed stays,
	stays with own transport, traditional awards such as
	"Best travel agency for stays in the Czech Republic" -
	TTG Travel Awards, Certificate of the Czech Service
	Quality System 2nd level 2019, Turist Propad Award
	2016, 2016 Grand Prix Awards
Weaknesses in competition	Occasional client dissatisfaction associated with the
	COVID-19 pandemic
What they do better	A wide range of individualized products for a wide
	range of interest groups
Distribution	Cooperation with 1500 CK and CA
Promotion	Printed catalogue, clear website, social networks,
	participation in trade fairs and sales exhibitions
Future development	Continue to strengthen the relationship with our
	customers and annually bring to the market new
	products that are price-oriented and economically
	accessible to all social strata

DCK Rekrea Ostrava, which is the second oldest brand among Czech travel agencies, can also be considered an important competitor. Rekrea was originally established as a purpose-built enterprise of the then national Central Union of Consumer Cooperatives in Prague on January 1, 1963. After initially specializing in domestic tourism, Rekrea gradually focused on - at that time very specific - inbound tourism and thus competed with the then number one, Čedok. This family company focuses mainly on stays in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Table 4 Competitor DCK Rekrea Ostrava

Target market	Families with children, seniors, corporate clients, groups and individuals
Pricing policy	Strategy aimed at maximizing market share, discount
	system, acceptable prices
Strengths in the competition	Long-standing tradition on the market, family-owned
	CK, wide range of offers, Certificate of the Czech Service
	Quality System 1st degree 2020, Invia Premium Partner
	2019, TTG Travel Awards 2015 (3rd place), Vodafone
	Company of the Year 2016 (3rd place)
Weaknesses in the competition	None are apparent
What they do better	An offer of proven products with good marketability
Distribution	Partner for 800 CK and CA
Promotion	Printed catalogues, clear websites, participation in trade
	fairs and tourism sales exhibitions
Future development	The philosophy of the company is to know the needs of

the customer and to constantly improve the quality of
the services provided.

Since DAEN s.r.o. also offers individual tourism services, it is possible to consider spa.cz, lazne.net, booking.com or Travelking as competitors. Slevomat, which offers wellness, weekend and weekly stays in spa centres within the Czech Republic, or information technology, which enables individual hotels or other tourism entities to use the online reservation system, has a great impact on business (not only travel agencies).

Target group, segments and personas – questionnaire survey

Market segmentation is a planning process that divides a large market into smaller homogeneous units (target groups) that differ from each other in their needs, characteristics and purchasing behaviour. In the second step, the company chooses the market segment that best corresponds to its mission and set goals.

Personas are used in more detailed analysis in marketing segmentation. This is a technique of describing a specific customer/client, his routines, interests, personal data (age, place of residence, family, personality, etc.), which are intended to help put yourself in his situation and better address him with a marketing campaign. Personas are useful when creating advertising texts and other marketing materials.

Conclusions from the questionnaire survey

- 87 respondents took part in the survey in the period June August 2021.
- 60% of respondents look for vacation information on Internet search engines; 23.1% on social networks; 13.1% are inspired by their acquaintances and only 3.8% of respondents use a printed catalogue;
- 46.2% of respondents spend their holidays with their family; 35.3% with a partner and 16% with friends;
 - 44.8% of respondents go on vacation twice a year; 40.2% of respondents once a year and 10.3% of respondents 3 times a year;
 - 63.2% of respondents prefer vacations in the Czech Republic and abroad; 27.6% only in the Czech Republic and 9.2% abroad;
- 55.2% of respondents prefer to organize their vacation during the summer season; 40, 2% year-round and 4.6% within the winter season;
- \bullet 66.7% of respondents planned a vacation in 2021 and most of them (70%) within the Czech Republic;
- in the event that the respondents decided to vacation abroad most of them chose Southern Europe and the Mediterranean;
- \bullet 62% of respondents choose a car as their mode of transport; 18.3% aircraft; 11.3% train and 8.5% bus;
 - 49.4% of respondents belong to families with children and 27.6% are single.

It follows from the above that the main segment of Daen, s.r.o. there are families with children. It will therefore be appropriate to establish a specific persona for this segment (see the template below).

Cílová skupina, segmenty a persony Jak definujete vaši cílovou skupinu? Johlaví: děti ženy muži věkové rozmezí:

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rodinný stav: povolání: příjem:	
	lliště:
Co dělá ve volném čase?	
lak vypadá její/jeho běžný den?	
Kdy a kde přichází do kontaktu s vaší značkou?	
Jaké problémy mu/jí vaše značka pomáhá řešit?	
Proč si vaši značku kupuje?	foto
Jakými argumenty ho/ji přesvědčujete,	foto

Working with opportunities and partnerships

DAEN, s.r.o. in her business, she analyses long-term opportunities and selects those she believes will bring the greatest profits, is careful not to spend more resources than she can afford to lose and is careful not to risk more money than she is willing to lose in connection with her original intention and at the same time not to get into financial difficulties. Entrepreneurial activity is adapted to the resources (finances, contacts, knowledge, etc.) available to the company. Thanks to its contacts, it partly obtains resources at low costs, and through close cooperation with people and organizations from the outside, the company is able to increase its capabilities. Partnering and developing alliances with other people

and organizations plays an important role in the ability to provide a tourism service. Unfortunately, it does not have a developed strategy regarding the best use of its resources and capabilities, and it also does not research and select target markets and does not do a meaningful competitive analysis. The company needs to think more about its vision, it has not yet been formulated too clearly. As the director of the company states:

"Unfortunately, I have to admit that there is no corporate strategy. As I mentioned at the beginning, we are a micro-enterprise and a small family business, which of course is not an excuse, but I really do "Ferda the Ant" here and unfortunately there is no space or finance to hire additional human power to process these things. That's why I welcome the partnership with the Business School, that we could focus on the company's strategy and improve it a little within the project."

The company tries to organize and implement control processes so that the company achieves the set goals and to design and plan production and marketing activities. Experiments with different products/business models are rather rare, and the company at least tries new ideas. He does not intensively try different approaches to find a working business model, rather he lets the business develop as opportunities arise. It is therefore a company that is flexible and takes advantage of opportunities that arise. Rather, it avoids procedures that would limit its flexibility and adaptability and tries to make use of a significant number of prior commitments and agreements with customers, suppliers, and other organizations and people. The management of the company is looking for innovative ideas and with its team it is also looking for new ways of finding things. The service that the company provides now is basically the same as 10 years ago. Unfortunately, a company is often not the first to market with a new service. On average, the quality of new products and services can be considered higher than that of competitors, of which the company has many. Compared to the competition, however, the company is not very successful.

As the director of the company states, many things are changing:

"...I must also mention the hotels themselves, which in the past did not have websites or online reservation systems, and today, with the advent of technology, they are creating new websites with an online form, an online reservation system, and thus much more targeting direct clientele. I would say that the technologies were not so accessible before, and today, on the contrary, it is a trend that opens up to a wider number of entities. For me, the competitive advantage is human resources, which are our colleagues who are there for clients and some of them have been working for us for decades and really know the given product. He can give advice and can tell the client specifically if he will feel good in the hotel and if it will satisfy his needs for vacation. In addition, we offer a wonderful service, nothing is a problem for us, and we try to please everyone as much as possible. Especially in today's coronavirus era, colleagues really do the first thing to make the clients happy, and I think that the clients appreciate that, and that's why they come back to us."

On the other hand, the company has also very intensively perceived the impact of the risks of this type of business in recent months. As the director of the company states:

"Of course, there are many risks. If I were to specifically aim at our product, then luckily, we have stays basically in the immediate vicinity. We do not offer air or coach transport, clients travel by their own car, so at this point the risks are reduced. Of course, the risk is associated with the very use of services at the hotel. There may be a problem with the accommodation and catering services, with the hotel itself, etc. We are of course fully responsible for our suppliers, which is why we monitor, test and carefully select all of them. We even personally visit our suppliers to test the quality and we were sure that the clients will get a quality that they will be satisfied with. We have also seen the risks during the last year, that some risk can come from anywhere from the external environment

and it is such a risk that cannot be predicted in advance and the company must deal with it. In any case, I see the greatest risk in suppliers for whom we are responsible to clients."

Impact of covid-19

Since the beginning of the crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic, more than a hundred travel agencies have ceased operations. The Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic has created the "Covid CK Guarantee" program, the purpose of which is to mitigate the effects of the covid crisis on tourism. As part of this program, travel agencies are offered a bank guarantee of 75% of the travel agency's required co-payment up to 30% of the limit of insurance coverage, but a maximum of CZK 4 million.

According to its study "on the skills of tomorrow's travel agents", Amadeus concluded that with the return to world travel, a trend in the form of more complex travel planning can be expected. A key role will be played by travel agencies, whose main goal will be to restore people's confidence in travel. To win back customers in the travel industry, it will be necessary to rely on several skills, which are:

- empathy
- quality team,
- technological literacy,
- presence on social networks,
- reactivity.

Nothing is more important than considering human contact and understanding as essential. A strong factor of success is precisely the team of workers because colleagues can give advice, help or support each other.

Nowadays, technological development and digital skills are proving to be necessary, as this topic obviously also applies to the tourism industry. This is related to social networks, which are necessary for the smooth running of companies in the tourism industry. There is a need to build customer loyalty and reach out to potential new customers by regularly sharing content on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and others.

In the position of a travel agency, it will be important to be able to adapt to constantly changing facts, to be able to react in the shortest possible time, to be always available and to provide reliable information to potential customers.

In general, the director of this company is concerned about the situation surrounding the pandemic.

"The impact was truly incredible. When we closed a year and a month ago, we all switched to a home office, which was new for everyone. We had to adapt all activities to work remotely, which was a complication, for example, when signing contracts that work in a different way than in person. Some clients do not have the possibility to print or scan at home, so together with the lawyers we had to come up with changes in the system and in the work activities so that we could still meet the needs of the clients. At the beginning, people were very afraid and massively contacted us to change the date, cancel, what they could or couldn't do, etc. I was in daily contact with lawyers, with colleagues who take care of the products, and I also constantly watched ČT24 to absorb all the information, which I subsequently passed on to my colleagues, who in turn passed them on to clients. This is

basically how it works to this day, and for us it really was a year about education and drawing information for our clients. In the beginning it was very difficult because nobody knew anything specific. Currently, I think that we have already established a certain system, some things have already moved. Overall, I consider this to be an influence, although neither positive nor negative from my point of view. I see a positive impact in the fact that we worked on modifying the reservation system on our website and began to place more emphasis on the fact that most clients come to us via the Internet. At the same time, we also invested in virtual communication itself, because this is primarily how clients contact us now, and I think that we will be ready for this in the future as well."

The period associated with the COVID-19 pandemic was mainly about education and obtaining information for clients of DAEN, s.r.o. A new system of communication with clients was introduced, the reservation system on the company's website was adjusted, and more emphasis was placed on the fact that most clients come via the Internet. During the pandemic, so-called internet marketing (social networks, chat on the web) was strengthened.

However, innovation was not just a matter of responding to the pandemic. As the director of the company states, the company continuously deals with innovations, albeit of a lower order:

"We were already coming up with innovations before the crisis surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. We made a tender for a company that provides us with email services and a regular newsletter. In the past, I approached a company that provides us with internet marketing, we have a colleague who takes care of our social networks, and we have a chat on the website that ensures communication with clients. These are things we already had before the pandemic. During the pandemic, the usefulness of these facts was reinforced even more and it found even more application as people began to use it even more, which was very useful for us. Since last year, we have had to freeze all unimportant expenses to survive with only the bare minimum. Therefore, for us, investments during the period when Covid-19 reigns were and are basically unthinkable. Unlike large travel agencies such as Čedok, as a family business we had to choose survival over investment. In any case, we managed to keep all employees employed, which I consider a great success and I believe that this situation will give us something in the end and we will come back in full force."

A new face in the top bodies of the Association of Travel Agencies of the Czech Republic is Petr Novotný of the travel agency Adventura, who says in an interview for TTG Czech: "I think that now it is important to persevere and keep a positive mind, not to give up. Secondly, to maintain a functional team at all costs, a company capable of returning to its original activity from day to day and communicating the whole situation well with clients. Withstand this crisis economically. In the coming years, be ready to respond very flexibly to all changes and, I hope, opportunities that this crisis will bring."

The Chairman of the Association of Travel Agencies of the Czech Republic, Ladislav Havel, also says in an interview for TTG Czech: "We envision a magical wave of a magic wand and a restart of the sale of tourism services. That's just our wishful thinking for now. The reality can be a very gradual start of sales, we can expect big changes in the structure of our customers' wishes. We will think about this when we have real certainty of legislative support, but also certainty of good interdepartmental relations. There will definitely be travel, the Czechs are a nation of enthusiastic, but also very experienced travellers, and they will (I hope) not let this theme take away from them. But if the Czech travel companies go bankrupt, they will simply go with a hundred foreign ones. But is that what we really want?'

Notes and sources used

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