

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN TOURISM

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Annotation: Information technologies (ITs) prevail in all functions of strategic and operational management. As information is the lifeblood of tourism, ITs provide both opportunities and challenges for the industry. Despite the uncertainty experienced in the development of ITs in tourism, the ‘only constant will be change’. Increasingly, organizations and destinations, which need to compete will be forced to compete. Unless the current tourism industry improves its competitiveness, by utilizing the emerging ITs and innovative management methods, there is a danger for exogenous players to enter the marketplace, jeopardizing the position of the existing ones.

Key words: tourism, tourism infrastructure, Tourism, players involved in tourism, Information technology, Transport sector, Accommodation sector Attraction sector

Travel is a basic human nature. Technological revolutions in the last few decades and the resulting changes in the social systems go faster its intensity in the current century. Thus, tourism is presently a mass phenomenon involving every human being in the world. They need detailed information about each place they intend to visit. The specific elements of such information needs are:

- ✓ Geographical information on location, landscape and climate, etc.
- ✓ Information Needs in Tourism
- ✓ Accommodation, restaurant and shopping facilities
- ✓ Accessibility through air, railway, water and road and availability of scheduled means of transport
- ✓ Social customs, culture and other special features of the place
- ✓ Activities and entertainment facilities
- ✓ Seasons of visit and other unique features
- ✓ Quality of facilities and their standard prices including exchange rates.

Though the ultimate users of this information are the tourists, the actual benefits in money terms accrue to the tourism industry consisting of the destination managers and service providers. The travel intermediaries like travel agents, tour operators, and reservation system store such information in respect of each destination to service their clients and improve their business. They need the information in the easiest retrieval format so that the information needs of the clients are met as quickly as possible. Tourists generally need both static and dynamic information. It includes details information about location, climate, attraction features, history, facilities available, etc. Information about airline, train and bus schedules, tariffs of transport and accommodation units and current availability of such facilities is considered as dynamic as they can change very frequently. These items of information have to be gathered, stored and disseminated on a real time basis. All types of reservation systems including air, railway and accommodation sectors contain such information.[3] The tourism industry is made up of three major components: namely,

- Transport sector
- Accommodation sector
- Attraction sector

Internet is an interconnected system of networks that connects computers around the world via the TCP/IP protocol. Today, the internet is a global “people’s network” for communicating and sharing information. It consists of two powerful tools- email and the World Wide Web. The WWW is the part of the internet where a vast global information resource, or library, has emerged in recent years. The use of the Internet for communicating and transacting with customers has been growing rapidly in the worldwide tourism & hotel industry. There has been rapid increase in the online booking in the hospitality & tourism industry e.g., e-booking of hotel/motel rooms, airline tickets, travel packages etc. due to the fact that the industry is one of several services – which can be checked, inquired, and ordered online easily, and conveniently communicated and delivered electronically via the Internet. Following are different area where internet is used in tourism industry.

Marketing Technology tap almost every aspect of marketing, including:

- online advertising
- editorial and newsletters
- Special website to provide information of specific region e. g. <http://www.maharashratourism.gov.in>
- search engine marketing
- email promotion
- word-of-mouth via social networks like blogs with customer reviews, communities such as the free Flickr photo sharing website and YouTube video sharing site, discussion groups and facebook

Booking systems Latest research suggests that more than half those who travel book online when they have the option so it pays to have a real-time system for sales and reservations.

Delivery of visitor experiences Tourism operators are using technology to:

- provide an initial experience on-line, for example, experience-driven web content or tasters delivered pre-trip by online audio podcast or video clips
- deliver audio tours for use on-site via MP3 players
- provide interpretation via mobile phones or handheld devices
- link customers to other experiences in your region, such as recommending other things to see or do on your website or as part of your tour or experience. In this way, you can help your customers understand how they can be part of a bigger visitor experience.

Customer relationships and follow-up Technology is a great way to continue customer contact using:

- a contact database
- an electronic newsletter to help keep your brand and the visitor experiences you provide in people's minds
- group email lists for regular updates
- incentives or encouragement for customers to place reviews on travel sharing websites such as TripAdvisor.
- customer email feedback that you can use to improve your product email-based customer satisfaction surveys.

Digital Coach Program Operators interested in learning how to get online can participate in Tourism Tasmania's Digital Coach Program. The Digital Coach Program is free and gives participants access to six experts in online marketing and distribution. The program's coaches make getting online easy by sharing advice on the e-connect forum, phone assistance, small group and one on one support.

Information and communications technology or information and communication technology, usually abbreviated as ICT, is often used as an extended synonym for information technology (IT), but is usually a more general term that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals), computers, middleware as well as necessary software, storage- and audio-visual systems, which enable users to create, access, store, transmit, and manipulate information. In other words, ICT consists of IT as well as telecommunication, broadcast media, all types of audio and video processing and transmission and network based control and monitoring functions. The expression was first used in 1997 in a report by Dennis Stevenson to the UK government and promoted by the new National Curriculum documents for the UK in 2000. Following are some examples where uses of ICT in Tourism is possible.

- Managing destination resources
- Inventory of tourism resources
- Managing sites and attraction
- Identifying suitable locations for tourist
- Manage tourist statistics

Conclusion. This paper discusses field related to tourism and various information technologies available to enhance the existing infrastructure of tourism industry. The technologies mentioned is mostly applicable in Transport sector, Accommodation sector Attraction sector. Using this, the present situation of tourism can be improved tremendously.

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