

Foreword

Information communication technologies (ICTs) have been transforming tourism globally. The ICT driven re-engineering has gradually generated a new paradigm-shift, altering the industry structure and developing a whole range of opportunities and threats. ICTs empowers consumers to identify, customise, and purchase tourism products and supports the globalisation of the industry by providing tools for developing, managing and distributing offerings worldwide. Increasingly ICTs play a critical role for the competitiveness of tourism organisations and destinations. ICTs are becoming a key determinant of organisational competitiveness and a wide range of technological developments propel this evolution. Successful ICT deployment requires innovative management to constantly review developments and adopt the suitable technological solutions in order to maximise organisational competitiveness.

Increasingly, it is evident that ICTs evolve constantly, providing new tools for tourism marketing and management. They support the interactivity between tourism enterprises and consumers and as a result they reengineer the entire process of developing, managing and marketing tourism products and destinations. This book has identified a number of key changes in hardware, software and networking that will impact on the tourism industry in the future. Although the exact impacts are far from clear, the future of eTourism will be focused on *consumer centric* technologies that will enable organisations to focus on their profitability through a network of partnerships. Consumers will be more sophisticated and experienced and therefore

more difficult to please. The availability of powerful ICTs empowers both suppliers and destinations to enhance their efficiency and re-engineer their communication strategies.

This book deals with a number of key aspects of ICTs for tourism. It explores generic technical issues such as online delivery of tourism services; the use of computers and the internet for making travel decisions by older adults as well as cutting edge technological innovations such as ontology-based tourism application generation and visual tourism recommender systems. It then investigates the transformation of the tourist industry with cases from the airline, tour operating, and hospitality industries and also through the emerging location-based services and virtual reality.

It is evident that increasingly ICTs will provide the “info-structure” for the entire industry and will take over all mechanistic aspects of tourism transactions. Innovative tourism enterprises will have the ability to divert resources and expertise to servicing consumers and provide higher value-added transactions. Agile strategies are required at both strategic and tactical management levels to ensure that the ICT raised opportunities and challenges are turned to the advantage of tourism organisations to enhance their innovation and competitiveness.

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Dimitrios Buhalis is a reader in business information management, a course leader MSc in tourism marketing and leader of e-tourism research at the School of Management University of Surrey (UK). Dr. Dimitrios is also adjunct professor of the MBA in Hospitality Management at the Institut de Management Hotelier International (Cornell University-Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Economiques et Commerciales ESSEC) in Paris. He also teaches regularly on postgraduate courses around the world. Dimitrios has been an active researcher in the areas of ICTs and tourism and he was the UniS-based principle investigator for a number of projects including the European projects FP5 SMART-UP (e-commerce and e-learning for hospitality SMEs), Harmonise (harmonisation of standards in tourism), FP6 NoE EPOCH (ICTs for cultural heritage) as well as for the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) project eLearning for Hospitality Professionals and the World Travel Tourism Council project eTourism Stakeholders. He is a registered European Commission IST evaluator and reviewer and he was the cluster rapporteur for the IST tourism projects for the period 2000-2004. He is also a specialist reviewer in Hospitality, Leisure, Recreation, Sport, and Tourism for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the UK and external examiner at the Swansea Institute, University of Wales and at the University of Greenwich.

He serves as vice chairman on the International Federation of Information Technology and Tourism (IFITT) Board and he is the chair of events and meetings and a member of the executive council of the Tourism Society. Dimitrios was the immediate past chairman of the Association of Tourism Teachers and Trainers (ATTT). He has editorial roles in a number of academic journals and he has written, edited, or co-edited 8 books on e-tourism, tourism strategic issues, and distribution channels of tourism.