Chapter 17
A New Frontier in the Satisfaction of the Cultural Tourist: The QR Code*

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ABSTRACT

The world of cultural heritage is experiencing a fervent phase of promotion and enhancement of its assets, thanks to the innovative use of knowledge and information communication tools. Tourists do not need new products and new services for their satisfaction but demand new experiences. Thanks to ICT in the cultural sites and the diffusion of social media, mobile life, and Internet devices, the tourist can visit the same area feeling a new emotion and new experience. Given the increasing importance of the technologic innovation in cultural sector for a timely communication with the tourist, this chapter aims at measuring the tourist satisfaction towards the quality of the QR Code, while also providing important development strategies. The analysis is carried out through the administration of the SERVPERF questionnaire to 191 users aged between 18 and 40 years, asking them to express their level of satisfaction towards this service on the basis of a 7-points Likert scale. The tourism satisfaction for QR Codes is good but not uniform among the five dimensions.

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INTRODUCTION

In European Union countries, tourism generates significant revenues. The strong relationship between innovation and tourism sector causes positive impact on GDP and the health of national economies (Jimenez-Zarco et al., 2011).

In the tourism industry, most of economic value is represented by experiences (Tsaur et al., 2007). The growth of competitiveness, the increase of information thanks to technological innovations, and more sophisticated and demanding tourists have determined a shift away from a focus on facilities and services to a focus on providing customized experiences (Knutson et al., 2006; Buonincontri et al., 2012). New types of innovations are changing the competitive landscape through new technology, such as high-speed internet, powerful and cheap memory capacities, and mobile devices.

So, in an economic environment where everything changes quickly, where the moment of consumption becomes an enjoyable time for leisure activities, where to appear is best than to be and where the value of buying is more interested than its real usefulness (Baccarani & Golinelli, 2012), for enterprises is becoming more strategic to find new ways and new technology to try to reach the consumer and satisfy him. Customers do not seek products; they seek satisfaction (Michel et al., 2008).

Given the increasing importance of technological innovation in order to timely communication with the customer, the present work aims to analyze and measure the level of tourist satisfaction towards the quality of the QR Code, while providing important development strategies.

The field of analysis is cultural and leisure tourism, which includes a range of services and products such as artistic, archaeological, bathing, agritourism, wine and food, mountain products and services (Della Corte et al., 2003).

The chapter is divided in three parts. In the first part there is a short presentation of changes in the tourism system due to introduction of technological and information innovation.

The second part proposes a survey of the most recent contributions on:

- The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the relationship between tourism sector and cultural tourist;
- The use of the QR Code as an innovative communication tool in the culture and tourism fields, able to permit at tourist whether and when to know the cultural message;
- The different models of measuring the quality of service and customer satisfaction.

In the third part, the results of an empirical study conducted on a sample of 191 tourists are presented and commented on, highlighting the average level of tourist satisfaction in relation to the communication service offered by key players in the tourism sector. The model used for the empirical analysis is the SERVPERF one (Cronin et al., 1992).

1. THE CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE INTERNET AGE

The world of cultural heritage is experiencing a fervent phase of promotion and enhancement of its assets, thanks to the innovative use of knowledge and information communication tools.

Technology innovation has and will have a strong impact on cultural heritage. In a society characterized by important and quick behavioral changes, where the information spread tends to obtain an important role compared to other traditional communication tool, the virtual tools (Web) becomes a challenge to the knowledge and to disclosure of cultural and tourism heritage.

In the tourism industry, most of economic value is represented by experiences (Tsaur et al., 2007). Therefore, the growth of competitiveness, the increase of information thanks to technological innovations, and more sophisticated and demanding tourists have determined a shift away from...