Chapter 3
Advent of Information Technology in the world of Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Information Technology is one of the key factors of competitiveness. Internet is especially relevant to tourism since it enables knowledge about a consumer or a tourist to be gathered and vice versa. Tourism is dominated by the need to provide fast and accurate information to a consumer. The implications of IT revolution for tourism competitiveness and promotions are identified in different sectors of tourism and its closely associated industries. Globally IT is widely used in industries such as airlines and travel, hospitality, tour operators, travel agencies, reservation systems for tourism and destinations. This chapter looks at the different uses of information and communication technologies in tourism sector. It examines the impact of ICT on tourism industry and the new and innovative technologies which are used in tourism industry. It also indicates the problems and issues concerning information technology applications in tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Having been ranked as one of the top contenders in international trade and called an international instrument in world peace and tolerance by UNESCO, tourism is undoubtedly one of the main sources of revenue for a specific region having a significant impact in terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and employment. Promoting it in such a way so as to reach the new generation of computer literate masses is
of paramount importance for the social, economic and cultural development of any region. The traditional approach practised by the tourism industry for the promotion of a particular region thus needed to be improvised. The adoption of IT (Information Technology) in reconfiguring the traditional advertising strategies in tourism (Zelenka 2009) to reflect modern social media and revamp the conventional approach has gained tremendous success in improving the business of the tourism (Valcic, 2012) industry. The reliance of tourism on Information technology has increased drastically over the years. As technology is evolving faster than ever before, it has made most travelers around the world much more technology-savvy than in the past and access of the majority of the population to new information technologies has resulted in a significant rise in the number of travels in the past decade. The advancement of the Internet has deeply affected the way tourism and travel intermediaries perform their business. Many top Tourism suppliers like British Airways have started applying e commerce applications thereby allowing their customers to directly access the reservation systems (CRS). The Internet has revolutionized the tourism industry more than any other factor in the last few decades. In 2012 alone the number of international travelers reached 1 billion and has almost doubled over the past 20 years, one of the most significant reasons being the inclusion of Information Technology especially, the World Wide Web. The advent and application of mobile technologies have further impacted the tourism and travel industry. It is now possible for customers to view and choose various travel and tourism options by surfing the internet through their mobile phones. Short messaging services also provide a lot of information as the booking confirmation can simply be presented to the airline or the hotel and one is allowed to enjoy the service. Thus, it is seen that the travel and tourism industry have revolutionized their strategies with the help of improved information technology to run their operations smoothly and efficiently.

Tourism in its simplest form means ‘travel and stay of a non resident’. Unlike long lasting goods, impalpable tourism services cannot be displayed or examined during sale at the time of purchasing since they are bought before their time of use and away from the place of consumption. There are several reasons why people tend to travel, the most common being, business, leisure, education and medical purpose. Before the advent of Information and Communications Technology in the tourism sector people had to physically go to the local travel agency as an inbound or outbound tourist, perform the time consuming task of browsing through the brochures with no guarantee of success. But for the new millennial for whom valuing time is pivotal, this tedious task of going over brochures, hiring a travel agent and then waiting for the travel package to be purchased by the agent before having access to it is most likely not feasible. This is where IT comes into play, attraction towards a particular region, suitable accommodation, reasonable transportation, advertisement and all the relating components have reached their apex in the present world in satisfying every customer need aided by the modern technology. Thus, Information Technology has a dramatic impact on the tourism and travel industry and the promotion of its business with regards to advertising, easier access and the way in which it organises its business.

**COMPONENTS OF TOURISM**

The Tourism industry does not involve a single entity but is the combination of several different industries. The primary suppliers being attraction of a destination, suitable accommodation and accessibility (Transportation) or which are known as the 3 A’s of tourism.
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