ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have established a growing and deeper interconnection alliance with the tourism sector. Few solutions have contributed to the dissemination of cultural and religious heritage of the regions, as a means of promoting it, making known and enriching the culture of its visitors and residents. The development of an intelligent application that allows the dissemination of cultural and religious heritage can bring new experiences and sensations for tourists and for residents in general, and for those with accessibility problems in particular. The present chapter proposes a methodological framework for the development of a recommendation system associated with the Religious Tourism Experience Model (RTEM), with the objective of identifying and selecting consumer preferences for the dissemination of cultural heritage in general, and religious heritage in particular.
INTRODUCTION

At present, cultural consumption has become increasingly important, constituting a way of experiencing tourist experiences that are different from the daily routine of individuals (Urry, 2002). Richards (1996) and Russo and Borg (2002), have shown that cultural tourism is the main source of income for tourism (Urry, 2002).

Al Subhi, Bell and Lashmar (2015) point out that technologies are needed to enhance / increase the experiences of visitors so as to increase revenues and increase audiences (new visitors). They further note that the cultural heritage sector recognizes the value of presenting different content and different styles of personalization for different types of people (Falk, 2009), and that services can be customized to the different needs and preferences of children, parents and teachers.

In addition, Al Subhi et al. (2015) note that the existing literature on heritage and mobile technology is virtually focused on museums, and that there is a large gap in the use of devices, furniture and technology in large heritage sites such as monuments. Most studies have been carried out on tourist towns, and little attention has been given to integrated solutions for heritage sites and technology that enhance the socio-economic benefits of regions and cities. Lastly, it is beneficial to consider user-centered solutions that allow for a substantial collection of information by non-professional users, in order to create experiences and different values for visitors seeking a cultural aspect.

The structuring of cultural (religious) products for tourist purposes should be based on knowledge of trends in consumer behavior and major tourist market niches. At the same time, it should be “to facilitate knowledge and assist in co-designing sustainable tourism development” (Center for Tourism, Innovation and Culture [TIC], 2015).

The acquisition of knowledge of religious heritage by tourists, residents, and in particular those who have access difficulties (i.e., physical and mental disabilities) is enhanced when it is associated with technological innovations, especially once it is possible to offer new experiences and sensations to all visitors, including ones who have accessibility problems. One of the most important features is the possibility for a tourist to have access to the same information, regardless of their physical limitations. Another relevant potentiality is to reduce the negative impacts of tourism by reducing overcrowding of visitors attempting to access threatened or protected places.

ICT is excellent for contributing to the communication and acquisition of the cultural heritage of a region (Inversini & Cantoni, 2011) and for allowing the development of innovative solutions that meet the interests of economic and touristic partners. In parallel (Falk, 2009), the cultural heritage sector recognizes the value of presenting different content and different styles for different types of people where services can be tailored to the different needs and preferences of children, parents and teachers.

An innovative solution to meet this need is the development of a pioneering mobile smart application to disseminate tourism, cultural and religious heritage content in order to improve the tourist experience, as well as residents’ learning.

The development of applications for mobile devices applied to the tourism sector is not new, since there are several prototypes developed in the academic world that combine tourism with Artificial Intelligence (AI) in a recommendation system to the tourist.

In this chapter the authors proposes a framework for the development of a recommendation system in order to identify and select consumer preferences, which can be classified according to the target market, forms of recommendation, use of knowledge or algorithms implementation, with the aim of