

ICT PAVING WAYS TO INNOVATIVE TOURISM IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Technological advancements have urged tourism companies all over the world to make innovations that cater to the needs of tourists. In recent times, ICT tools have become an integral part of the travel and tourism sector. Injecting ICT tools in the Indian tourism sector has not only contributed to the national economy but also has attracted both domestic as well as foreign tourists. Amid this awakening, the present study aims to evaluate the impact of ICT-based tourism operations on the Indian economy. An exploratory research method, along with data collected from various secondary sources, was used to conduct the research. The results suggest that ICT has the potential to help the Indian tourism sector grow while reaching potential customers. Since ICT is considered the beginning of a new digitalized era, it can help in coordinating and establishing uniformity across all components of the tourism industry such as tourist operators, guides, hotels, and MSMEs. With all the tourism products being digitalized, there can be better transparency, trust, openness, and experience in the digital value chain. ICT-based tourism can help in achieving sustainability in the ecosystem along with employment and revenue generation. Having said this, ICT can offer all these advantages at relatively lower costs, as well as increased reliability and compatibility. This study brings fresh insight for government and policymakers to chalk out ways to embed suitable ICT-based tools effectively in the tourism sector to contribute highly to Indian economic growth.

KEYWORDS: *ICT, Innovative Tourism, MSMEs, Economic Growth, Ecosystem.*

Introduction

The Indian tourist industry has the potential to rival other countries, especially those in the developed world. An optimal combination of inputs in tourism operations can drive the industry's sustained growth and advancement. Information Computer Technology (ICT), as a modern technological tool, can improve the tourism industry by increasing its appeal, interactivity, convenience, and economic viability. It is imperative to prioritize ICT as a means to expedite the growth and development of India's tourist industry. Ganguly (2018) states that ICT has resulted in notable progress in the generation, assessment, retention, retrieval, distribution, and manipulation of data. ICT provides efficient data processing, communication, and management assistance, empowering clients with enhanced control. It has had a profound impact on the advancement of contemporary tourism. By incorporating innovative technology and distribution methods, it has established a unique regional economy. Collaborations with potential business partners, product services, and ICT-based customer information have streamlined commercial manufacturing in the industry (Hosseini, 2013). On the other hand, consumers depend on online services to obtain information and make bookings, highlighting the essential role of ICT in the tourism industry. ICT plays a crucial role in the tourism industry, fueling economic development in

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developing nations (Kumar et al., 2018). Marketing and management of tourism products through ICT applications enable tourists to remotely make hotel reservations, secure transportation arrangements, and complete trip payments without the need to physically visit any location.

The objectives of this study are:

- To analyze the impact of ICT on tourism in India.
- To examine the relevance of ICT in tourism operations.

Literature Review

Generally, Global Distribution Systems (GDSs) oversee all the channels through which information is distributed in the tourism industry (Aamir & Atsan, 2020). Cost, audience, and information are all factors that should be taken into account. Consequently, numerous providers in the tourism industry tend to refrain from utilizing the GDS and instead opt to sell their services directly to customers through electronic distribution channels (Farkhondehzadeh et al., 2013). Due to the rapid expansion of Internet and World Wide Web usage in both residential and professional settings, coupled with the decreasing costs of technology and connectivity, tourist providers now can directly disseminate information to clients and manage bookings. ICT can facilitate or authorize such strategies.

Tourism is considered an industry of moderate intensity. Tourists need information before or during their journey to assist them in planning and choosing among alternatives, as well as throughout the trip itself, as there is an increasing trend towards innovative tourism (Pierdicca et al., 2019). Time has become an invaluable asset in contemporary societies. Consequently, the annual costs of many individuals are determined by their investment amount. The trip entails significant psychological speculation that is difficult to surpass if any deviations from the original plan occur. If any unforeseen circumstances arise during the trip, tourists may encounter deviations from their planned schedule. If the event fails to meet its aims, individuals can easily obtain a refund. Access to trustworthy and timely information, including significant statistics, is crucial for individuals to meet their expectations and make educated decisions. It is crucial to acknowledge that as the perceived risk in a pre-purchase condition increases, buyers are prone to actively search for product information (Sigalat- Signes et al., 2019).

The travel and tourism industry is one of the most influential and rapidly expanding industries globally. Visitor arrivals worldwide had a substantial 4.3 per cent annual growth rate, making a significant contribution to the overall increase in GDP (APEC Policy Support Unit, 2016). According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), it is estimated that there were one billion international tourists in 2010. Furthermore, it was projected that international tourist arrivals in the Asia-Pacific region will increase by over 400 per cent by 2020. The increase from 105 million in 2002 to 438 million in 2020 is a substantial improvement (Gupta & Das Gupta, 2008).

Since tourism does not include the production of tangible goods, it is predominantly classified as a service business. and provides amenities to a diverse range of individuals. Tourism is a unique industry that generates foreign cash without causing a transfer of national wealth.

ICT is a highly valuable and efficient tool for managing the external environment of the tourism sector. Engaging with consumers can be achieved using a range of social networking platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, there are various other video calling programs such as Box Mul, Hotmail, Gtalk, video chat, and numerous others that can be utilized for public interaction (Islam, 2021). Consumers should receive information regarding different resources and amenities that can aid in managing customer relationships. Thus, ICT is a highly efficient means of achieving an organization's aims and objectives and can be applied to travel firms as well (DiPietro & Wang, 2010).

In today's era, the majority of hotels employ ICT to input clients' paperwork throughout the check-in process. Due to the popularity of smartphones, they are now being used to locate hotels and other places. Additionally, they offer clients convenient access to the information they need. Consumers can utilize the device for making payments and reserving accommodations as well (Kang et al., 2019).

Methodology

The study employed the exploratory research approach to gain a deeper understanding of the tourism industry in India and the specific contributions of ICT to it. Data collection in this study involved the use of secondary sources. Comprehensive assessments of current research, namely textbooks, relevant papers, articles, journals, and internet resources, were carried out, and consistent patterns were identified in predicting potential future scenarios for the business.

Role of ICT in the Indian Tourism Industry

Employing ICT in the travel sector has the potential to revolutionise and augment the Indian tourism industry. It has the ability to initiate a new era of digital information. Given the evident progress of ICT, the ICT-based tourism sector in India can expand its reach to international platforms and attract potential rivals. It enables enterprises to establish connections with consumers worldwide, gather real-time market data, and conduct online payments in e-commerce (Rallan & Nair, 2020).

ICT-based tourism serves as a means of generating financial resources for the country's significant tourism initiatives. It facilitates the establishment of new economic prospects, enhances commercial activities, and attracts fresh investments. The data demonstrates a positive correlation between ICT-based tourism and economic growth, which can contribute to the prosperity of India's job market (Singh & Dhankhar, 2020).

Tourism is emerging as a highly significant subject of interest on the internet. The tourist business is responsible for around 33% of all online transactions, according to estimates (Gonzalez, 2022). The tourism industry is expected to shift from mass tourism to a more personalised and customised experience for individual travellers in the future (Roy & Ahmed, 2019). The Internet has fundamentally transformed the process by which organisations make decisions and make travel arrangements. Furthermore, it has impacted how tourism companies strategize, mould, promote, and disseminate their products and services.

The tourism business is highly dependent on information. Since the inception of the Internet, searching for travel information and making bookings has consistently ranked among the top five most popular online activities in India. Companies should extensively leverage the internet and strategically utilise information technology to thrive in the global economy (Rallan & Nair, 2020). However, there is a lack of initiative in India and other poor countries to research e-tourism advancements. India's leading tourism organisations have developed e-commerce applications and established worldwide arrangements and distribution networks. These networks connect distributors of tourism sector providers, enabling them to provide their services and products. Unfortunately, the majority of small and medium-sized tourism businesses have traditionally refrained from utilising costly digital distribution networks, instead opting to build an online presence for promoting and advertising.

The objective of ICT as a tourism initiative is to facilitate the connection between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large market partners through extensive distribution networks, at affordable costs, enabling their participation in the digital value chain (Ashari et al., 2014). Due to India's high population density, there is a significant potential for growth and advancement in this industry through ICT. Nevertheless, India's tourism and hospitality sector is still in the process of being developed, and it deserves particular focus as it is the largest service industry in the country.

Prospects of ICT-based Tourism Industry in India

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have had a worldwide impact on tourists. The adoption of ICT-driven re-engineering has acquired significant momentum and undergone a transformative shift, leading to changes in industrial assembly processes. This transition brings forth a range of new opportunities and threats (Prince & Joseph, 2018). ICTs enable researchers to discover, tailor, and acquire tourism items, while also facilitating the industry's global expansion through the provision of tools for creating, managing, and distributing extensive offerings.

ICTs have become highly significant in enhancing the competitiveness of tourist companies and destinations (Ramos et al., 2019). They are rapidly becoming a crucial element of an organization's ability to compete. The progress in ICT capabilities, together with smaller equipment sizes and reduced expenses, has enhanced the dependability, interoperability, and interconnection of various terminals and applications.

ICTs possess the capacity to serve as a potent instrument for augmenting the strategy and operations of the tourist industry in India. It can significantly impact the tourism industry, enabling India's core principles of authenticity to progress more rapidly. Policymakers should prioritise the implementation of advanced ICT information to enhance the tourism industry. However, these developments must align with the sustainable development goals (Gössling & Michael Hall, 2019). This is particularly important in India, where the tourism sector plays a significant role in generating employment and income.

Conclusion

Information systems are revolutionising the delivery and sale of travel and tourist information. Additionally, it offers immediate accessibility to end consumers and serves as a platform for business-to-business communication. The Internet is increasingly becoming the preferred instrument for analysing and organising excursions. It surpasses other travel organisations and offers a wide selection of guidebooks and newspapers/magazines.

The impact of the ICT-driven tourism revolution on economic and social development in India is substantial. The tourist sector has become more information-intensive due to ICT and its significance in the tourism business can flourish independently from the industry itself. Thus, ICT tools can be utilised for marketing purposes in the tourism business. The administration and customer organisation have a pervasive presence throughout the entire company. In order to expedite and maintain the growth of the Indian tourist industry, it is essential to optimise and integrate ICT tools and modules to fully leverage their advantages and benefits for the overall progress of the Indian economy.

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