Chapter 2
LoTour:
Using Technology to Provide Competitive Advantage in Local Tourism Industries

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ABSTRACT

The Internet has brought a radical change in the way tourism services are conceived. In this new scenario, not only has attracting tourists been modified over the Internet, but the provision of tourism services have been altered. Thus, the different factors of tourist services are in a new environment and they should operate in a coordinated manner to increase the value of tourism, to keep current tourists and attract new ones. With this aim, LoTour, the architecture presented in this chapter provides a platform for the integration of different services, provides comprehensive information on the tourist destination from the context (location, time of day, season, weather, etc) and the profile of the tourist.

INTRODUCTION

The convergence of IT and communications technologies and the rapid evolution of the Internet has been one of the most influential tourism factors that have changed travelers' behavior (Kenteris, Gavalas & Economou, 2009). Moreover, as discussed in Hui, Wanand & Alvin(2007), the suitable finding of tourism services is one of the main challenges when people travel. In this context, "Mobile tourism" represents a relatively new trend in the field of tourism and involves the use of mobile devices as electronic tourist guides (Kenteris, Gavalas & Economou, 2009). This new way of tourism has been facilitated by the rapid

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growth of mobile devices (mobile phones, palmtops, PDAs…). The evolution of these devices in recent years has meant that these mobile devices have advanced computing capabilities and connectivity that enable them as valid solutions for mobile work.

Additionally, the tourism industry is demanding an ever-increasing level of value- added services in technologically complete environments, which are integrated and highly dynamic. As a consequence of this circumstance, administrative and corporate bodies in the tourism industry now have to focus on the development of new infrastructures, providing citizens with access to cultural content and tourism services. This focus on the development of new services is the primary objective of Tour. LoTour is a system that prosecutesthe concern with major or minor radicalizations to the relevant agents involved in the tourist activity in a certain geographical area. LoTour has to stimulate the economic relations of these business entities, since the tourist is going to contribute to this by literally handing in detailed, exhaustive information that will permanently update his or her tourist offer in the area, eliminating all the impediments that the ignorance of the language, the void familiarity with the environment or other reasons that impose to a desirable dynamics of expense. LoTour is a platform which more significant prop constitutes the integration between technologies of location and those of communications. The combination of both technologies will allow adequate the positioning of the tourist and will be able to have access to descriptive contents of the environment that the tourist makes a detour.

STATE OF THE ART

Because tourism is an information intensive business, there are opportunities to apply information technology to support tourism and tourists (Watson et al., 2004). The integration of tourism with the technology is an indisputable fact in the twenty-first century. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) crucially impact travelers' knowledge, attitudes and behavior. Thus, the interaction of technology in tourism is reflected in different phases: before, during, and after the visit. LoTour is conceived as a solution capable of providing added value to the tourist experience through the combination of three distinct technologies or philosophies: Customer Relationship Management, Mobile Computation and Context Aware Systems. In this section we deal with each in relation to integration with tourism. The goal is to place LoTour from previous efforts and define this new platform from the analysis of the opportunities that research has not yet covered satisfactorily.

Customer Relationship Management

Tourism destinations are probably one of the most difficult products to market (Palmer, 2005). This has allowed the integration of tourism with the Customer Relationship Management has been very extensive, and, according to (Coltman, 2007), one of the traditional markets for these solutions. Customer relationship management (CRM) has become a research focus in the academic field since Ives and Learmonth (1984) put forward customer relationship life cycle concept. CRM refers to a customer-focused business strategy. There are several definitions of CRM in the literature, for example the one provided by Dyché (2002) who defines the concept as "The infrastructure that enables the delineation of and increase in customer value, and the correct means by which to motivate customers to remain loyal, indeed to buy again". CRM is an active, participatory and interactive relationship between business and customer (Özgenera & İrazb, 2006). The objective is to achieve a comprehensive view of customers, and be able to consistently anticipate and react to their needs with targeted and effective activities at every customer touch point (Piccoli et al., 2003).