

Chapter 15

The Impact of Digital Technologies on Marketing and Communication in the Tourism Industry

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ABSTRACT

The growing openness between regions accompanied by the rising of the tourism industry enhances its importance and the ensuing search for competitive advantages in terms of communication, marketing, and technology. It, therefore, gave rise to the concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC) that together with information and communication technology (ICT) could highlight tourist experiences. This literature review (LR) attempts to unveil how digital technologies determine marketing and communication in the tourism industry and, conversely, what industry areas should be targeted by those digital technologies. The study employs a scoping review approach based on a search of literature through the SCOPUS database. Ten articles were selected. On the one hand, this LR concludes that digital technologies are filling the gap concerning the needs of tourists through, for instance, mobile marketing. On the other hand, it discloses that digital technologies are essential for the tourism industry as it improves marketing communication by diverse means.

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INTRODUCTION

The advent and expansion of globalisation combined with incremental diplomatic relationships among countries have cumulatively resulted in a substantial increase in the economic and socio-cultural importance of the global tourism industry. For instance, the decline in the size of the global population requiring visas to travel to foreign destinations, from 75% to 53% between 1980 and 2018, is correlated with the observed increment in the frequency of leisure travel in the said duration from 50% to 56% according to data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (Loss, 2019). More importantly, these dynamics have resulted in the tourism industry emerging as one of the most important engines of economic growth and development for all countries. The latest statistics prior to the 2019-2020 global economic decline indicate that the international tourism industry contributed approximately 10% towards the global gross domestic product (GDP), and was a source of more than 315 million jobs- representing 20% of the aggregate world employment since 2013 (Loss, 2019). In 2018 alone, the global tourism grew by 5%, with the implication that the said growth had added \$ 1.7 trillion to the global GDP and had amounted 7% of worldwide goods and services exports (Loss, 2019). The import of the tourism industry for revenue generation, micro- and macro-economic well-being as well as cultural wealth is, therefore, an incontrovertible fact of the contemporary social and economic contexts.

In recognition of this vital significance of the tourism industry, leading economies with robust tourism sectors such as France, Spain, and the United States have been engaged in an intense fight over global leadership in the industry to position themselves as the world leaders in tourism. The resultant, intense industry rivalry has, over time, generated evidence-based insights on specific sources of competitive advantages for industry players. Two notable and intersecting sources of competitive advantage continue to dominate business practices in the tourism industry in this regard, namely communications and technology (Rosendahl & Gottschalk, 2015). The increasing number of communications options and mechanisms underpinned by technological advancements has accorded critical importance to organisations' need to integrate and optimise their marketing and communication approaches (Rosendahl & Gottschalk, 2015). The widespread recognition of this need across the tourism industry culminated in the introduction and subsequent adoption of the concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC) into scholarly and practitioner tourism literature. The earlier phases of IMC's implementation in tourism and travel featured incremental innovations with information communication technology ICT. However, the new frontier in IMC adoption today involves the incorporation of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence-powered technologies and robotics into contemporary approaches to tourism marketing and communications (Kaur, 2017). Seminal research along these lines demonstrates that digital technologies have the potential to disrupt the ways in which businesses promote their offerings to customers and can radically bolster tourists' experiences through interactivity, communication, and innovation (Liberato et al., 2018). However, the rapidly evolving nature of novelty of the digital business implies that the significant potential of digital technologies to impact marketing and communication in the tourism industry is a research area still in its infancy. Much about the envisaged impact remains unknown presently and, a review of the postulations of extant research on this subject is, therefore, timely.

It is against the backdrop detailed above that this paper undertakes a scoping review of the current and relevant literature. The two fundamental questions underpinning the review are how digital technologies are presently shaping marketing and communication in the tourism industry, and the areas of marketing and communication in the tourism industry that are the most feasible and promising for the application of digital technologies presently. The subsequent parts of this paper elaborate upon the methodology of the scoping review before presenting a narrative analysis of the main findings and drawing thematic conclusions.

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