


Chapter 3

How and How Much Can Smart Applications Enhance the Tourism Experience?

Serhat Aydın

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6646-7656>

Bilecik Seyh Edebali University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Technological developments have proven effective in all areas of life, including the tourism sector. Smart technologies has precipitated transformation in the tourism industry. This study aims to elucidate the manner in which smart applications can enhance the tourist experience. This study was addressed from both an individual and managerial perspective and the prominent concepts are smart tourist and smart destination. The relationship between smart applications and tourists, tourism businesses, and tourism destinations is discussed. As a result, smart tourism experience application that covers the tourism experience from beginning to end is proposed. This model reveals how smart applications can transform the experience and contribute to the sector. Research findings underscore the viability of the proposed model, emphasizing its sustainability and the tangible benefits it brings to stakeholders. The research presents a set of recommendations targeting tourism stakeholders, aiming to increase the adoption and impact of the smart tourism experience model on a wider scale.

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INTRODUCTION

This study aims to reveal the extent to which smart applications can enhance the tourism experience for potential visitors. A secondary focal point of the study is the sustainability of the tourism experience developed with smart applications and the benefits that stakeholders derive from this phenomenon. It has been observed that tourism destinations have begun to extensively utilize smart tourism technologies with the aim of enriching the tourist experience, enhancing the traveler's comfort, and thereby rendering the destination more appealing. To achieve the status of a smart destination, it is imperative for tourism destinations to integrate technological infrastructure into their products and services, thereby enhancing the tourist experience through technological opportunities. In addition, the creation of smart destinations gives destinations a competitive advantage. It is evident that individuals seek to ensure their tourism experiences are memorable, devoid of uncertainty (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), risk (Williams & Baložic, 2015), and hassle (Minnaert, 2014). Contemporary advancements in technological infrastructure and digitalized environments (Cuomo et al., 2021) have rendered these experiences attainable. The tourism industry, as with any other field, has undergone significant advancements in terms of its sophistication and digital transformation (Shafiee et al., 2021). This transformation is evidenced by the emergence of novel concepts such as “tourism 4.0” (Zupan Korže, 2019; Kumar et al., 2024), “smart destinations” (Sorokina et al., 2022), and “smart applications in tourism” (Wang et al., 2022).

It would not be wrong to say that the tourism experience is possible with a technological infrastructure from the beginning to the end. Smart applications are needed more than in the past for different tourism experience processes such as information search, information collection, decision making, selection of activities during the trip, and evaluation after the trip. To give a brief example, pre-trip destination selection, accommodation, food and beverage facilities of the preferred destination, online booking, search for different activities during the visit, and post-trip experience evaluation processes can be done through smart applications. Not only those who provide tourism supply, but also people now have more smart technology. From this point of view, it can be stated that there is a two-way benefit for both businesses operating in the tourism sector and people making touristic purchases. As can be seen, tourism and technology are intertwined in every field and stage. Therefore, technological infrastructure is vital for enhancing a tourist's experience. Thanks to technology, the tourism business and the tourist are in communication at every stage of the experience. Today, this communication process can be smooth and sustainable by adapting smart technologies to the tourism sector.

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