HOW ICT's CAN PROMOTE TOURISM

Name:

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Course Code:

Date:

Introduction

According to Buhalis and Jun (2011, p56), approximated ten percent of the entire global gross domestic product and eight point seven of it is attributed to tourism. It is also a commonly adopted consensus that a vibrant and aggressive tourism industry is a good indication of a nation or society with a commendable progress when it comes to considerations in evolutionary and social terms. Buhalis and Jun (2011, p.75) also states that information is a cardinal and indispensable tool when it comes to persuading potential tourist customers. That is; information and communication technology is important especially the use of internet for the purpose of global communication.

The importance of information is attributed to the fact it aids advertisements, record keeping and other management measures. Buhalis and Jun (2011, p.43) further states that; apart from marketing, information and communication technology has also been utilized in three other facets. These include; operational functions like internal memos, guest services such as bookings and travel guides then finally for purposes of management. The incorporation of information and communication technology into the tourism industry will not only boost the efficiency of service but will also positively affect the quality, quantity and malleability of services being offered (Buhalis and O'Connor, 2005, p.75). It is worth noting that tourism sector is not only lucrative for investors but also satisfactory to the consumers hence a win-win scenario for both the consumer and the provider. All these have worked to place the various companies on a well-advertised platform technologically. Needless to say, most companies are on a competition spree for the best service which means that consumers get even better offers in the sector.

To be placed at a better position of appreciating the true nature on the impact of information and communication technology on the tourism industry whether positive or negative, it becomes expedient to ask oneself the following questions; what is the overall attitude of employees on the use of this tool? Is it true that the use of this tool has imparted positively or negatively on their work? And if the latter is true, what is the opinion of the employees? What improvements would they recommend? (Middleton, et al., 2009, p.65).

The essence of the asked questions are aroused by the statement by Bethapudi (2013, p.64) who argues that; there has been a substantial reduction in the workload of employees not only on improving their efficiency and giving them the ability to handle more customers that they would have without the tool but also given them a better exposure and motivated them at work resulting to an overall better performance. Despite the positive attributes attached to the information and communication technology in the industry, it has been characterized by various challenges (Middleton, et al., 2009, p.49). Some valid concerns arise when it comes to minimizing man power. This is because it would imply that there is an element of replacing human manpower with technology thus potential of rendering others unemployed. Attention also needs to be given to the tourists themselves since they are the consumers and evaluate their receptiveness or lack thereof.

Bethapudi (2013, p.56) further adds that when traveling, passengers do not have to wait in long queues for flights, trains or buses because travel agencies have automated checking systems. This is just a case in point of the benefits of information and communication technology. However, again it is vital to ask; do the customers find these systems easy to use or are they in need of education or some sort of assistance or sensitization? This is of importance because some customers may not be privileged with the knowledge the technology for example

those from third world countries or the elderly. Apart from the mentioned challenges, the use of ICT in the tourism sector are also characterized by limitation such as; posing of risks due to the rampant cybercrimes and capital incapacity of some of the small upcoming companies, customers not familiar with the use of the tool due to old age or lack of knowledge on how to use such tools.

This study therefore will be aimed at analyzing the effects of information and communication technology in the tourism sector. Considering the fact that there has been some schools of thoughts stating that apart from the ICT being expensive for small upcoming firms; giving them undue disadvantage as far as competition with well-established companies is concerned, cybercrime has been a drawback and some customers tend to shy away from sharing information they feel are too personal. For instance, bank details or information on identity, home address or occupation. Therefore, ICT has a vital role to play in realizing a substantial gain in the tourism industry (Bethapudi, 2013, p.65).

Objectives

Main Objectives

The study mainly aims at assessing the true value of information and communication technology in the tourism industry.

Specific Objectives

   i.   To determine how ICT has impacted the tourism sector; whether positively or negatively

ii.   To highlight the challenges accompanying the incorporation of the ICT tool into the tourism sector.

iii.   To determine the attitude of the employees in the tourism sector and consumers of the tourism services provided by the companies towards the use of ICT in the sector.

Quantitative Research Proposal

Quantitative research always expresses its data in numerical for and that is where its name quantitative emanated from. Therefore, in this kind of research it is possible to employ the use of statistical data in the statement about the data. Numerical data analysis is imperative when the study want to drive the facts about trend, groups and the population that is presented in the data.

Hypothesis

Integration of information and communication technology into the tourism industry has had a positive impact on both the employees in the industry and the customers who use these services. The main consumers of the tourism service in the economy are hotel industry, travels and tours among others (Govers, Go and Kumar, 2007, p.54). The advantage on the employees has been a reduction on the workload and improving the efficiency by serving more customers per unit time and effectively improving the overall outcome of the performance of the employee. Customers have benefited from the system due to ease of access to services therefore making it more convenient and more affordable (Govers, Go and Kumar, 2007, p.62). The use of ICT has become convenient as compared to the manual system since they do not have to make a physical appearance during transactions but instead have the latitude of digitally contacting the service providers.

Research Methodology

The study will use random sampling to obtain data from the respondents. The population of the study will comprise respondents from the ICT and tourism sector. The respondents will categorized into two categories. The first category will be the tourists or the product consumers. The second category of responds will be the employees in various tourist hotels and travel agencies.

A mixed questionnaire (in appendix) will be used to obtain information from the responded. One of the factors that will be considered in the questionnaire is the age of the respondents. Respondents below the age of 18 on travel with their parents will not qualify to be included in the study unless they have an internet enabled phone. An exception will be given for high school students on tour irrespective of whether they will be in possession of such mobile devices. Elderly and disabled candidates will be eligible to participate in the study. The questionnaire will be both open and closed ended. In this regards, the questions to be asked will be simply structured and answers will be geared towards obtaining numerical information for statistical purposes. The data obtained will be analyzed using SPSS version 21 to determine quantitative measures of data and results (Buhalis, Leung and Law, 2011, p.43).

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Qualitative Research Proposal

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Qualitative research methods are very significant in doing research that deals with the natural phenomena. The researchers regarding the natural phenomena are always complex and require more and detailed qualitative research to undertake full analysis (Buhalis and Jun, 2011, p.42). The qualitative methods are also important in analyzing phenomena since it gives room to for personal experience regarding the phenomena. Personal experiences enable the

researcher to obtain the fundamental information regarding the phenomena. In addition to that, when there is need to determine and evaluate how and why a certain phenomenon occurred. Qualitative approach is very significant and helps in determining the answers to these questions (Middleton, et al., 2009, p.67). Moreover, a researcher will always find it very easy to determine and generate quantitative and tentative explanatory conceptions and theories regarding the effects of ICT on tourism. The explanatory theories are very crucial and could be used by secondary readers of the information regarding the effects ICT on tourism sector (Buhalis and Law, 2008, p.42). Therefore, the quantitative research methods don not only appeal to the primary readers or rather the researchers but it also helps the secondary users of the information obtained.

The qualitative approach helps in the determination of how best the participants evaluate and examine constructs. Nonetheless, it helps in determining the effects of ICT on tourism sector. The qualitative research thus give a very good result of the research questions as compared to other forms research. The information is much better and much analyzed.

Methodology

The study will undertake interview as a source of collecting data. A personal and phone interview will be used to obtain the information. Information in this category will be based on the postulated effects of information and communication technology (Vicky, 2011, p.28). The respondents will be sampled from the employees of the tourism stakeholders, and the tourists. The respondents will also have a chance to air their opinion hence the qualitative type of data. Interviewing will be independent and without influence from the interviewer. Sampling will be randomly done and on a voluntary basis from both employees and tourists.

Critical Evaluation

Philosophy

Among the 7.5 billion people in the whole world, it is approximated that up to 3.7 billion are active internet users. In Europe alone, it is approximated that 40% of all tours and travel transactions are done online (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013, p.42). In Australia however, 20% of travel agencies are reported to be lacking online services and almost 90% do not have online booking services. In Europe, studies argue that of all the online bookings, 30% are done using smart phones or tablets. This rate tends to grow by 1% every three months (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013, p.50). The increment can be attributed to the ever increasing availability of hand gargets and wireless internet access. From these statistics, it is therefore safe to say that a substantial amount of the world population have access to the internet and a good population is using information and communication technology for among other things, tourism.

Statistics from Australia would appear to be inconsistent and contradicting with that of Europe. However, it is interesting to note that 48% of the companies that have a website more often than not experience "system explosion" due high number of visits by prospective customers in Australia (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013, p.67). This would imply that there is more preference of consumers to agencies with a website hence the crowding on the websites. Otherwise, the competition between tour companies would be fair irrespective of whether they have a website or not.

An interesting observation has also been made that 40% of Europeans population look to the internet for travel related information (Soteriades, 2012, p.17). The applications mostly used are tweeter, Facebook, instagram and company website. This compared to the independent

observation made by Trevor culminates to the positivism nature of these findings (Soteriades, 2012, p.23).

Approach

The approach employed in the assignment is deductive reasoning basing its arguments on the theory that the rise of information and communication technology has made management easier in the tourism sector. A lot of research has been done on the impact of information and communication technology on tourism. In this regard, this assignment intends to add onto the available information (Vicky, 2011, p.13).

Strategy

For purposes of obtaining the data, a survey will be conducted where the respondents will be interviewed based on what will be indicated on the questionnaire. Groups of interest are the service providers specifically employees of various tour and travel agencies and tourist hotel staff (Soteriades, 2012, p.42). The other category of respondents include the product consumers, and the tourists. Formulation of the questionnaires will be tailored towards gathering information that will lead to the conclusion on the nature of attitude both employees and customers have on the use of information and communication technology in the industry. The study will use both the qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data.

Choices

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be used during the survey. On qualitative data, the respondents will have a chance to comment and recommend an improvement on the subject of study. The quantitative aspect will be geared towards information that will lead to numerical

data mathematically analyzable by SPSS version 21. Information will thereafter be presented in charts, graphically, and other central tendencies (Hjalager, 2010, p.85).

Time horizon

The time framework is expected to be a 6 months targeting the holiday seasons when travels and tours are high and then compare with the low travel seasons. This means a longitudinal time zone as opposed to cross sectional time zone where data is to be obtained at a point and not continuously. The convenience and practicality of the proposed data collection technique with regards to time cannot be underrated because in this way, new and first-hand information will be obtained.

Techniques and procedures

For adequate analysis, both primary and secondary data will be used. Primary data will be obtained directly from respondents for the proposed time line while the secondary data will be obtained from existing sources and used for comparison purposes (Soteriades, 2012, p.55). Such secondary data will be obtained from tour and travel companies, published articles and statistic firms such as Eurostat. Comparison with the existing data and literature further supports the deductive nature of the study.

Questionnaire for quantitative survey filled by hotel and tour employees

Question 1	How many bookings do you have in a day on average? (please indicate a number)
Question 2	Of all the bookings in a day, how many are done online? (please indicate a number)
Question 3	For every booking, what is the price difference between online and manual bookings? (please indicate a number)
Question 4	How many complains do you get in a day from unsatisfied customers? (please indicate a number)
Question 5	How many of the total complains are related to the information and communication technology services? (please indicate a number)
Question 6	What is the cost incurred per month on maintaining the information and communication technology department? (please indicate a number)
Question 7	On a weekly basis, how often do you experience system failure? (please indicate a number)

Question 8	On a monthly basis, how often does your system on lockdown due to security reasons? (please indicate a number)
Question 9	How many employees are stationed in the information and communication technology department? (please indicate a number)
Question10	What is the total number of employees? (please indicate a number)
Question 11	Has the incorporation of the information and communication technology affected your salary? Yes__ No__
Question 12	How many computers does your company have? (please indicate a number)
Question 13	How many personnel would have taken the place of the system without affecting the positive output of your work? (please indicate a number)
Question 14	How often does your employer upgrade the system? (please indicate a number on a monthly basis)
Question 15	What is the salary range of the personnel in the Information and communication technology department? (please indicate a number)

Questionnaire for qualitative survey filled by hotel and tour employees

Question 1	How does your company store information? Manually__ digitally __
Question 2	Does your company have a website? Yes__ No __
Question 3	Do your customers have access to the website? Yes __ No __
Question 4	Do all staff members have access code to the ICT system? Yes __ No __
Question 5	Do customers prefer the online or manual system for transaction? O __ M __
Question 6	How has the information and communication technology affected your work? Positively __ Negatively __
Question 7	What recommendation would you have?
Question 8	On a scale of one to ten how easy do you find it to use the system?
Question 9	Do you offer hotel internet to customers? Yes __ No __

Question 10	How do customers respond to your internet services? Positively __ Negatively __
Question 11	Does your employer regularly upgrade the security system? Yes __ No __
Question 12	Do you feel motivated by the use of the information and communication technology in your place of work? Yes __ No __
Question 13	Is it easier to handle dissatisfied customer via the internet or physically?
Question 14	Has the use of technology affected how customers talk to you? Yes __ No __
Question 15	Do you still get tips from customers despite the use of electronics for transactions? Yes __ No __
Question 16	Does your employer offer courses on information and communication technology? Yes __ No __

Questionnaire for quantitative survey filled by tourists

Question 1	In a year, how many times do you tour travel? (please indicate a number)
Question 2	Whenever looking for a service provider, how many times do you go to the internet? (please indicate a number)
Question 3	What is the difference in terms of the amount of money you use for manual and online services? (please indicate a number)
Question 4	How many times do you experience system failure when using the online services? (please indicate a number)
Question 5	How many times do you get a positive response from you service providers during system failure? (please indicate a number)
Question 6	How many tours and travel companies have you encountered to have information and communication technology services? (please indicate a number)
Question 7	How often do you encounter difficulties in using the system due to them being unfamiliar to you? (please indicate a number)

Question 8	How many times have you encountered security threats after using the online services? (please indicate a number)
Question 9	How often do you tip the waiters after or before a transaction? (please indicate a number)
Question 10	How long have you been a tourist? (please indicate a number in years)
Question 11	How old are you? (please indicate a number)
Question 12	How often do you use the internet specifically for tour? (please indicate a number)
Question 13	Have you noted an increase or a decrease in the number of staff in the companies that offer services?
Question 14	Do you feel safer on the manual system than the electronic system?

Question 15	How often does your service provider update their website? (please indicate a number)

Questionnaire for qualitative survey filled by tourist

Question 1	Between manual and online services, which one do you prefer? Manual__ online__
Question 2	Do you fear any cyber threat while using online services? Yes__ No__
Question 3	Do your service providers recommend you to their website? Yes __ No__
Question 4	Do you have access to internet while on a hotel accommodation? Yes__ No__
Question 5	What do you use to access their website?

Question 6	Is there any improvement you would recommend?
Question 7	What is you general comment on the use of information and communication technology by tour providers?
Question 8	Do you still tip after services? Yes__ No __
Question 9	Do you share your tour experience on social media? Yes__ No __
Question 10	Do your service providers offer you chances to give comments on their services? Yes__ No__
Question 11	How do you convey the information above? Manually __ Electronically__
Question 12	Has the use of information and communication technology made your tour experience any better? Yes __ No __
Question 13	How would you compare companies offering online services with those that don not?
Question 14	On a scale of one to ten, how hard do you find it to use the systems of communications offered by the service providers?

Question 15	Do you get assistance from staff members whenever you incure any difficulties I using their systems? Yes __ No __

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