
THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

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Abstract

This article discusses the positive aspects of the introduction of the digital economy in the field of tourism. Digital economy is based on electronic goods and services produced by an electronic business and traded through electronic commerce, a business with electronic production and management processes and that interacts with its partners and customers and conducts transactions through Internet and Web technologies. With growing population and resource mobilization, digital economy is not limited to business trading and services effecting on every aspect of life from health to education and from business to banking.

Keywords: digital economy, tourism, tourism services, digital tourism, coronavirus pandemic, sanitary-epidemiological security

Introduction

The definitions of tourism innovation (such as product, service and technological innovations) remains unclear, with the exception maybe of the Internet. New technologies can produce an essential contribution to tourism development. For tourism businesses, the Internet offers the potential to make information and booking facilities available to large numbers of tourists at relatively low costs. It also provides a tool for communication between tourism suppliers, intermediaries, as well as end-consumers. According to WTO, the Internet is revolutionizing the distribution of tourism information and sales [1-12].

When the Internet first commercialized it was relatively mature in some applications, such as commercial infrastructure and software applications for business use. This was due to the fact that complementary Internet technology markets developed among technically sophisticated users before migrating to a broad commercial user base. The invention of the web in the early 1990s further stretched the possibilities for potential applications, exacerbating the gap between the technical frontier and the potential needs of the commercial user. The technical frontier changes frequently, both in terms of maximum achievable engineering goals and in terms of viable commercial activities that generate revenue in excess of resources. When the technology migrated away from these users and into wider use, some capabilities were obviously valuable, such as e-mail.

A digital economy is an economy that is based on electronic goods and services produced by an electronic business and traded through electronic commerce. That is, a business with electronic production and management processes and that interacts with its partners and customers and conducts transactions through Internet and Web technologies [13-25]. The concept of a digital economy emerged in the last decade of the 20th century. Nicholas Negroponte (1995) used a metaphor of shifting from processing atoms to processing bits. E-Government is already playing its part in this digital economy by providing e-services through various ministry/department to its e-Citizen. Electronic commerce has contributed to changes in transportation and distribution services, by relying on the increased availability of air and courier services and local trucking to get its product to consumers. The growth of

the digital economy¹ is unprecedented and has been a major contributor to recent economic growth, the booming stock market, and the revival of productivity.

In the age of the digital economy, business opportunities for small and medium size enterprises as well as local industries will increase dramatically through the effective application of information technology, and in this way it will enable the economic frontier to expand. For this reason, an environment should be created in which all businesses and individuals will be able to have equal access to the digital economy [26-34].

The tourism sector is challenged by a growing demand for customer orientation, increasing international competition, volatile markets in an insecure environment, changing customer demands towards individualization and significant potential in various market segments. Furthermore, it is vitally important for the sector to be able to attract the labor force trained specifically for work in tourism. The problem was noted that some employers deliberately look for unqualified labor for the sake of paying less. The question, however, remains whether such a policy would lead to higher profits and longer-term competitiveness. Another important question remains: how can the skill gaps in the tourism sector be overcome under the condition of insecure and often seasonal employment and relatively low pay? Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Over time, more and more destinations have opened up and invested in tourism development, turning modern tourism into a key driver for socioeconomic progress. Today export incomes generated by international tourism ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and automotive products. For many developing countries, it is one of the main income sources and the number one export category, creating much needed employment and opportunities for development.

Global network

In order to meet a number of challenges that the sector faces, global network was identified as one of the technologies that could help the tourism sector to meet a number of challenges, including direct booking, marketing as an important tourist destination, etc.

Multimedia

This is seen as a crucial technology that could help promote tourism both locally and internationally. Several key technologies that would underpin multimedia were identified, including large, wall-hung, high-definition screens, digital sound and voice recording, and artificial worlds to mention a few.

Alternative transport systems

If tourism is to survive, several modes of transport to meet the diverse needs of tourists will have to be considered. These modes of transportation could be divided into two types, the faster mode from one location to the other and the second mode, which is mainly for scenic viewing. For the faster mode, magnetic levitation, fast trains and lighter, faster airplanes have been identified while for the second mode, airships and hot-air balloons have been identified.

Infrastructure

This is identified as the key to expanding tourism to underdeveloped sites. The infrastructure is also divided into two parts, physical and IT infrastructure. Physical infrastructure includes water purification, renewable energy and light rail, while IT infrastructure includes smart-card readers, satellite links, etc.

International and Local Trends and Driving Forces

Global forces of competitiveness, information technology and socio-cultural dynamics are impacting and shaping tourism destinations significantly. Places, culture and identities seem to converge in the world of international travel. The global economy is being transformed by forces of regional trading blocs, global alliances, deregulation, new technologies, the Internet and electronic commerce. It will be necessary to understand the powerful driving forces that will create the future if we are to realign and reframe the agenda for research and technology, and that will be the focus of attention in this chapter. Economic impact of tourism Tourism is the leading economic driver for the millennium. The World Tourism Organization is calling on governments around the world to unleash tourism's job creation potential by improving information networks and capitalizing on its human resource capital by incorporating innovation and investment know-how. Travel and tourism are now the largest generators of jobs, accounting for about 11% of the global workforce. The economic impact of tourism is aptly demonstrated by its relative contribution to GDP, foreign exchange earnings and employment opportunities. Where tourism is well integrated into the tourism economy, the job creation prospects are good. Good transport infrastructure is critical for the development of tourism .Globally, the airline transport market has continued to expand and this trend is expected to continue. Air traffic control and safety at many regional airports are poor by international standards and require upgrading in terms of both equipment and staff. The problem areas require improved telecommunications infrastructure and satellite-based navigation. The rapid application of technological developments will improve the current navigation and safety position.

Technology impact The global convergence of technology is penetrating and supporting the tourism industry through an array of major technologies. The global increase in consumer demand for tourist products has provided one of the main driving forces in the development of a wide range of technologies. Information is the backbone supporting tourism. Therefore, timely and accurate information relevant to consumers' needs is often the key to satisfying tourist demand. Within the fiercely competitive global tourism environment, prospective travelers are continuously faced with more information and options. The combination of these forces and the need for professionalism in handling the information supplied to the consumer necessitates the use of technology to gather, manage, distribute and communicate information. Over recent years, information technology has experienced an unprecedented degree of change. The Internet and ecommerce are increasing at a rapid pace and are fulfilling a vital support role in such activities as global connectivity and foreign business activity.

The emerging digital economy is forcing the statistical agencies to rethink how they measure the basic building blocks of our national accounts: outputs, inputs and prices. Some progress has been and is being made on refining the measurement of individual components. Clearly, policy and research needs should direct further efforts by statistical agencies to improve data collection and measurement of the emerging digital economy. In this paper, we have outlined many of the issues involved in improving our

measurement of the digital economy. However, while policymakers and researchers have an insatiable appetite for data, concerns about respondent burden and the resource costs of collecting data cannot be ignored.

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