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HOSPITALITY & TOURISM INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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Hospitality and Tourism Information Technology

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Preface

Technology has redefined how we experience hospitality. From the front of the house to the back, technology has allowed hospitality businesses to provide a faster, better, and more personalized service. Such benefits may be achieved by relying on the systems that remember all customer preferences, by bringing guests the speed and convenience of self-check-in, and employing robots that may attend to customer requests around the clock. However, all these wonderful innovations come with challenges, such as justifying a return on investment, establishing system security, building sustainable solutions, ensuring interoperability across different systems, and delivering high touch while using high tech. Therefore, this book is set to serve academic and professional audiences by reviewing the theoretical and practical aspects of the effect of digitalization and information technology on the hospitality industry.

This textbook is open-access, which means that it will be available to readers without any fee. It is published by the University of South Florida M3 Center.

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Chapter 2:

Digital Marketing in Hospitality and Tourism

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OVERVIEW

In the present world, the service providers are in a dire need to address and customize, and gratify customer needs based on their experiences, preferences, interests, and behavior. There comes the rescue, the digital marketing that has evolved tremendously over the past couple of years amidst the pandemic. Though the presence was sensed long back to the start of the decade, its imperativeness has become inevitable after 2015. In India and across the globe the people are finding the ways to stay handy, having all their needs fulfilled at their doorsteps. There comes digital marketing. In the name of civilization, as a trend, as people's choice and as a product of modernization, digital marketing is thriving everywhere. Thanks to social media, it plays a formidable role in proliferation of digital marketing. The platforms are becoming popular and the products are becoming cheaper and moreover, irrespective of the needs, a variety of products and services are blossoming every day.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Understand the evolution and growth of digital marketing.
- Realize the significance of tourism and hospitality in an economy.
- Comprehend the factors influencing the implementation of digital marketing in hospitality and tourism.
- Be aware of problems associated with digital marketing.
- Know about the contribution of digital marketing in the growth of hospitality and tourism around the globe.
- Understand the future scope of digital marketing.

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of information technologies, newer avenues for reaching out to target audiences have evolved. Digital marketing today has become an unavoidable part of every business irrespective of its nature (see Figure 1). The predominating significance of digital marketing has affected the way industries promote their offerings to actual and potential customers. The call for digital marketing has been felt like never before in the hospitality and tourism industry wherein customers have instant access to all kinds of information on the latest offers and best prices. Today digital marketing plays a decisive role in the triumph of each business which exists in the hospitality and tourism industry. The hospitality and tourism sector were one of the very first industries to adopt digital marketing strategies. This early implementation has also allowed the industry to stay on top of the latest digital marketing trends, mainly because of the fact that the industry primarily sells experiences. Earlier, most consumers of the hospitality and tourism sectors browsed destinations and booked their itineraries through online mediums using desktops and personal computers. But now, the industry has gradually but rapidly witnessed a change from PCs to mobile devices. Not just the said industry, but digital utilization as a whole has experienced this conversion. Digital utilization today is startlingly diverse than how it was even just a few years ago.

Figure 1. Digital Marketing



Source. Wright Studio, 2019/Shutterstock.com

The said industry includes all the people, activities, and organizations involved in providing services for people on holiday, for example hotels, restaurants, and tour guides. Before the launch of digital marketing, the role of people who rendered these services was indispensable to the success of the business. The increasing number of mobile users, lowering prices of digital marketing services and rising effectiveness of social media strategies are a few of the multitude of reasons which has led to the widespread adoption of digital marketing strategies by the industry. As such, there are modern-world start-ups coming up in the already highly saturated hospitality and tourism sector which are mobile-only. The entire industry is going mobile, quite literally.

With the launch of the internet, newer modes of marketing the various services to the target audiences have evolved. The tourism industry, in particular, has been disrupted as a whole with the rapid development of the internet. Users purchase services related to tourism online at the click of a button while comparing businesses from all over the world. In order to sustain digitally, the most relevant electronic activities include quality website, strong social media presence, SEO, email marketing, content and mobile friendly.

Today digital marketing has disrupted industries and changed the way businesses reached out to customers. The main difference between traditional and digital marketing is the latter's ability to track data about user behavior and campaign performance in real-time. In the tourism industry, the disruption occurred few years ago and has altered the way services reach out to consumers. Traditional Marketing involves collecting data through the process of market research and then analyzing the same to help understand the audiences better. The digital nature of the Internet technology provides a comprehensive and detailed insight into the characteristics of consumers and their behavior in the electronic environment. This information has transformed the way business decisions are being made.

Prologue – Evolution of and Growth of Digital Marketing

It is common to confuse the terms tourism and hospitality or to define them as the same thing. While tourism is the all-encompassing umbrella term for the activities and industry that create the tourist experience. On the other hand, hospitality can be defined as “the business of helping people to feel welcome and relaxed and to enjoy themselves” (Discover Hospitality, 2015, p. 3).

Tourism/travel for leisure purposes has evolved from an experience reserved for very few people into something enjoyed by many. Historically, the ability to travel was exclusive and reserved for royalty and the upper classes. From ancient Roman times to the 17th century, young men of high standing were encouraged to travel through Europe on a *grand tour* (Chaney, 2000). Through the Middle Ages, many societies encouraged the practice of religious pilgrimage (see Figure 2), as reflected in Chaucer's.

Figure 2. Muslim Pilgrimage, Kaaba

Source. Alauddin, 2020

Canterbury Tales and other literature. Prescribed even earlier, the Hajj or the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, has made travel for religious purposes become a default for every believer of Islam. The word hospitality predates the use of the word tourism, and first appeared in the 14th century. It is derived from the Latin *hospes*, which encompasses the words *guest*, *host*, and *foreigner* (Latin Dictionary, n.d.). The word *tourist* appeared in print much later, in 1772 (Griffiths & Griffiths, 1772). William Theobald suggests that the word *tour* comes from Greek and Latin words for *circle* and *turn*, and that *tourism* and *tourist* represent the activities of circling away from home, and then returning (Theobald, 1998). The continued popularity of rail travel and the emergence of the automobile presented additional milestones in the development of tourism. Fast forward to 1952, the dawn of the jet age saw the first commercial air flights from London, England to Johannesburg, South Africa and Colombo, Sri Lanka (Flight Global, 2002) that many also heralded as the start of the modern tourism industry.

In a world where over 3.9 billion people use social media on a regular basis, every working professional is expected to be familiar with at least the core tenets of digital marketing. People are consuming digital content on a daily basis. Very soon, traditional marketing platforms will disappear, and the digital market will completely take over. There are a number of advantages in digital marketing. Unlike traditional marketing, digital marketing is more affordable. You can reach a larger audience in a shorter time period. Technological advances have resulted in considerable attrition of the customer-base of traditional marketing agencies & departments. People have moved on to tablets, phones, and computers, which are the areas where digital marketers have gained the most ground.

While it's easy to remember a time before digital marketing, it's hard to picture a world without it now. But we can trace the beginnings of this groundbreaking form of consumer engagement all

the way back to the late 1800s with Guglielmo Marconi who invented the radio in 1896, was the world's first digital marketer. Over the past three decades, marketing has had to keep up and contend with leaps in technology and our relation to it ever since. While the sales era witnessed the invention of the telephone, it was then swiftly followed by the rise of television and the marketing era. The industry evolution of the marketing era saw arguably the biggest change in the history of marketing: the first commercially available personal computers. But what do these developments mean for the future of marketing? The answer has been what we are actually witnessing now. Without a crystal ball, it's impossible to see what the future holds, but to look forward, we need to look back. Here, we look at the three major technological developments that have changed the way we look at marketing: the internet, big data and smart phones.

The Advent of the Internet

The mass adoption of the internet into everyday life is the single biggest event that has affected marketing over the last three decades. The people using the internet raised with the introduction of browsers namely World Wide Web and Netscape Navigator. As users increased, the landscape evolved, from email to search engines like Yahoo! (1994) and Google (1997) and e-commerce sites like Amazon (1994) and eBay (1995). For marketing, this was a goldmine. Email became a new outbound marketing tool, joining the traditional arsenal of TV, radio and print advertisements and telephone sales. While search engines cataloged the new websites that were being created and allowed users to find the information, products and services they desired from the comfort of their own home.

Big Data

All this online activity was –and still is– stored as digital information. It was found that digital information was the most rapidly growing type of unique information produced, with most text-based information *born digital* known as big data. Big data has made it possible to track patterns and trends of human behavior, and its role in marketing is only set to increase. Data-driven marketing has gathered enough momentum that a number of companies have emerged that specializes in harnessing this technology.

Smartphones

Where would we be without smartphones and tablets? These new devices have exploded in the last decade and marketing departments are still catching up. Today, smartphones have overtaken personal computers as the primary digital device for going online (see Figure 3). It was not until 2007 that smartphones entered the mass market following the groundbreaking release of the iPhone. Look to today and smartphone ownership in the UK alone is being more than 80%, with rapid increases in the proportion of 4G users and a quarter of smartphone owners making no traditional voice calls. The world has moved online and into our pockets. So, where do we go from here? A future of transparency, personalization and agile marketing.

Figure 3. Smartphone Usage



Source. Sitthiphong, 2019/Shutterstock.com

Transparency

Information is everywhere. Customers are now smarter and able to research products in seconds, easily comparing competitors and reviews and unearthing any myths along the way. For sales professionals, this shift is proving a challenge as three out of four consumers' journey is complete before he even reaches out to sales. The need for transparency is obvious when you look into customer perception of brands. In an era where customers are in the driving seat, marketers need to engage consumers in an ongoing conversation, creating real relationships and brand loyalty.

Personalization

Sharing is everything. It is a huge part of the new internet landscape and the upcoming generation of digital natives is changing the way information is viewed and shared. Personalization can be achieved through using big data or user-generated content. While big data can be used to create a unique experience for individuals, user-generated content empowers customers. This form of content marketing gives marketers an infinite supply of creative input while creating a bond between brand and consumer.

Agile Marketing

A marketing team that is agile provides a lot of strategy and theoretical results to their stakeholders with a view to executing it quickly. One of the reasons for agile marketing being on the rise is social media, where brands have spent the last few years figuring out how to communicate on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. These channels have provided insight into what can work and the type of content that resonates. The speed of social media has also shown organizations that a quick response –if done correctly–can be very effective across a range of mediums. This type of marketing is on the up and with consumers having an expectation of immediacy; it could go a long way to cultivating conversations and creating a user-brand relationship. Marketers can run real-

time dialogues with their customers and are able to listen and connect in ways that feel relevant to their audience.

Significance of Tourism and Hospitality in an Economy

Industry growth has been interrupted at several key points in history, including World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. At the start of this century, global events thrust international travel into decline including the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York City (known as 9/11), the war in Iraq, perceived threat of future terrorist attacks, and health scares including SARS, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, and the West Nile virus (Government of Canada, 2006). But perhaps one of the most debilitating crises that have severely impacted tourism is the more recent COVID-19 pandemic. At the turn of the twentieth century, industry experienced a significant technological shift as increased internet use revolutionized the promotions and distributions of travel products and services.

Why is Tourism Important in an Economy?

Tourism can generate positive or negative impacts under three main categories: economic, social, and environmental. These impacts are analyzed using data gathered by businesses, governments, and industry organizations.

Economic Impacts

As a global scenario, international tourist arrivals reached 1.4 billion, a 5% increase in 2018. The sheer growth of the industry was driven by a strong global economy, surge of the travel- ready middle class from emerging economies, technological advances, and more affordable travel costs among others (UNWTO, 2019). At the same time, the UNWTO (2019) reported export earnings from tourism, or the sum of international tourism receipts and passenger transport, reached a staggering \$1.7 trillion. This demonstrates that the industry is a major economic engine of growth and development. Europe has traditionally been the region with the highest tourism dollar spending with \$570 billion, followed by Asia and the Pacific (\$435 billion), the Americas (\$334 billion), Middle East (\$73 billion), and Africa (\$38 billion). Asia has shown to have the strongest growths in both arrivals (+7%) and spending (+7%). Africa equally shared a +7% growth in arrivals, suggesting a new interest in travelling to the continent. The six consumer travel trends, according to the UNWTO (2019) include:

- Travel *to change* or focusing on more authentic travel, transformation, and living like a local.
- Travel *to show* or capturing *instagramable* moments, experiences, and visiting selfie-worthy destinations.
- Pursuit of a healthy life or engaging into active travel that involves walking, wellness, and sports tourism.
- Rise of the *access* economy.

- Solo travel and multigenerational travel as a result of single households and an aging population.
- Rising awareness on travel with sustainable advocacies, thoughtful consideration about climate change impacts, and plastic-free travel.

Social Impacts

Because tourism experiences also involve human interaction, certain impacts may occur. Generally, social impacts in tourism are related to guest-to-host or host-to-guest influences and changes. Studies of these encounters often relate to the Social Exchange Theory, which describe how tourists and hosts' behaviors change as a result of the perceived benefits and threats they create during interaction (Nunkoo, 2016). Positive social impacts in tourism include learning about different cultures (see Figure 4), increasing tolerance and inclusion through LGBTQ+ travel, increasing amenities (e.g., parks, recreation facilities), investment in arts and culture, celebration of Indigenous peoples, and community pride. Then developed conscientiously, tourism can, and does, contribute to a positive quality of life for residents and a deeper learning and appreciation for tourists. Unfortunately, tourism also has its shortcomings and is culpable for some detrimental impacts. However, as identified by the United Nations Environment Program (United Nations Environment Program, 2003a), negative social impacts of tourism can include:

- Change or loss of indigenous identity and values,
- Culture clashes,
- Physical causes of social stress (increased demand for resources), and
- Ethical issues (such as an increase in sex tourism or the exploitation of child workers).

Figure 4. Religious Tourism Destination



Source. Sadagopalan, 2014/Flickr.com

Environmental Impacts

Tourism relies on, and greatly impacts, the natural environment in which it operates. In many cases, the environment is an essential resource that outdoor recreation and ecotourism cannot exist without. Even though many areas of the world are conserved in the form of parks and protected areas, tourism development can still have severe negative impacts from misuse, overuse, and neglect. According to United Nations Environment Program (2003b), these can include:

- Depletion of natural resources (water, forests, etc.),
- Pollution (air pollution, noise, sewage, waste and littering), and
- Physical impacts (construction activities, marina development, trampling, loss of biodiversity).

The environmental impacts of tourism know no boundaries and can reach outside local areas and have detrimental effects on the global ecosystem. One example is increased emissions from necessary tourism elements such as transportation. Air travel for instance, is a major contributor to climate change. Whether positive or negative, tourism is a force for change around the world that is capable of transforming the environment from micro- to macro-scales at a staggering rate.

Why is the Hospitality Industry Important?

Historically, the concept of hospitality is about receiving guests in a spirit of goodwill— especially strangers from other lands. Hospitality implies warmth, respect and even protection; it builds understanding and appreciation among cultures. The Latin root *Hospes* is formed from *host* is, which means *stranger* or *enemy*. Related words are *host*, *hospital*, *hostel* and *hotel*. Today, hospitality also refers to a segment of the service industry that includes hotels, restaurants, entertainment, sporting events, cruises and other tourism-related services. As such, the hospitality industry is important not only to societies—but to economies, customers and employees.

Importance to Economies

The travel and tourism sector currently accounts for 10.4% of global GDP. Projections say that 72 million jobs will be added to the tourism and hospitality sector over the next 10 years, and the industry itself will grow 10%. Hospitality generates revenue for local economies directly when tourists spend money in hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues. It also helps economies indirectly because tourists purchase retail goods, pharmacy items and locally made souvenirs and crafts. In addition, tourism can stimulate the building of infrastructure such as roads and public transportation. Also, important economically are the jobs created by the industry. In 2017, the hospitality industry accounted for 313 million jobs worldwide, which translates to 9.9% of total employment and 20% of all global net jobs created in the past decade. Hospitality also supports jobs in arts and culture industries, keeping theaters and arts festivals thriving. Students in Kendall's Bachelor of Hospitality Management degree program learn about the local and global economic impacts of the hospitality industry.

Importance to Customers

Hospitality provides essential services (i.e., lodging and food) for travelers, whether they are on the move for reasons of necessity, leisure or luxury. Hospitality is a major factor in every vacation and business trip, and is thus important to individual customers and to businesses. Of course, some hospitality companies, such as entertainment venues and restaurants, serve locals as well as tourists. The restaurant industry has seen a tremendous boom in recent years; American Millennials spend 44% of their food budgets eating out instead of cooking in. Serving customers well is the primary aim of hospitality businesses, which should focus on creating high-quality environments and services and on hiring excellent employees who treat customers with warmth, empathy and professionalism.

Importance to Employees

Besides being a huge job creator, this sector provides a rewarding career track for professionals. It offers a huge range of job opportunities, from event planner to hotel general manager to facilities asset manager and beyond. Entrepreneurs start their own restaurants and boutique hotels. Professionals have the chance to work in glamorous settings around the world.

Factors Influencing the Implementation of Digital Marketing in Hospitality and Tourism

Facilities

Marketing strategies in the tourism sector tend to focus on infrastructure and facilities because the two affect the satisfaction and comfort of the tourist (Soemarno et al., 2015). There are three types of tourism facilities as conceptualized by Soemarno et al. (2015); main tourism superstructures, complementary means of tourism, and supporting tourism superstructures. Main tourism superstructures include travel agents, tourist transport companies, tour operators, restaurants, hotels (see Figure 5), and attractions. Supplementary tourism superstructures are the complementary means of tourism and include places or companies that offer recreational facilities to complement tourism. Others include sport facilities, recreation and destination facilities and public infrastructure including airports, electricity, bridges, road sports, and water and telecommunication facilities. These facilities facilitate the staying of tourists while at their destinations. Supporting tourism superstructures include souvenir shop, mailing service, entertainment, nightlife and others. These supporting facilities also facilitate tourists to stay at the destination comfortably. Accordingly, service quality can be measured based on five dimensions: empathy, assurance, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility.

Figure 5. Guest Checking-in at a Front Desk

Source. Tadevosian, 2019/Shutterstock.com

Service Quality

Service quality has been defined by different marketing researchers as the overall impression by consumers regarding the relative superiority and inferiority (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994); customers' expectations (Kasper et al., 1999; McKerchera & Prideauxb, 2011); quality control (Jraisat & Sawalha, 2013); and intangible activities (Gronroos, 1990). It is also used to refer to meeting customer's expectations, fulfilling customers' requirements; and creating value for customers (Gallarza et al., 2013; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Yang et al., 2014). When defined in isolation, the concept of quality refers to delighting or satisfying customers by exceeding their expectations; providing service features that meet the implied or stated needs; providing a service that confirms to the clearly specified customer requirements and fitness of a product or service for use by customers (Chelladurai & Chang, 2000; Petzer et al., 2009). Service quality as approached from the gaps theory's perspective refers to the difference between actual service delivered to customers and the expected service (Parasuraman et al., 1988). According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), service quality consists of five dimensions: responsiveness, empathy, tangibility, reliability, and assurance. With the increasing competition in the tourism industry and the important role of tourism within the global economy, determining the role of service quality is vital for service companies and tour operators. It has been acknowledged that the provision of high-quality services depends on accurate identification of customers' expectations and delivering the expected quality of service. Within the context of the present study, service quality is conceptualized as a construct encompassing the performance of quality in activities undertaken by employees and management of five-star hotels in Jordan. Accordingly, the image of a tourist destination is influenced by the

quality of services offered by the hotels and other facilities, including beaches, historical sites, architecture, local infrastructure, sports facilities, tourist sites, climate, price levels, natural attractions, nightlife, natural attractions, accommodation, festivals, exhibits cleanliness, information and tours, political stability, personal safety, friendliness, hospitality, accessibility, safety, receptiveness, different cultures/customs, adventure, atmosphere, relaxing, food/cuisine, new knowledge, adventure, security, reputation and adult or family oriented.

Political, Social and Economic Stability

Government is the key actor when it comes to matters involving tourism development and its political social and economic stability can be used as a strategy to marketing a tourist destination (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Ruhanen, 2013). Worth noting is that the government controls the tourism industry plays a significant role in tourism development, including regulation and legislation, planning, coordination, social tourism, public interest protection roles, entrepreneurship and stimulation. The ability of the government to deal with political and economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment impinges on the trust of potential tourist. It has also been suggested that the perception created using marketing strategies regarding the economic, political and social stability of a country positively influences potential tourist towards the country as a tourism destination (Mishler & Rose, 2007; Wang & Wall, 2005; Wong et al., 2011). Political relations and political stability between and within states determines the image of tourism destinations in tourist-generating regions (Hall, 1996). Warfare, political strikes, political protests, or coups impact on the social and economic development of a tourism destination and ultimately impact the development of tourism and the attraction of visitors by a destination. These factors affect the perceived and real safety of tourist, and factors influence strategies adopted by the destination to market tourism to potential tourists (Gupta, 1990; Hall, 2001). According to Gupta (1990) one of the key factors considered by potential tourists when deciding to visit a particular destination is its prevailing political, economic and social stability.

Systematic Promotion of Cultural Events

The 1985's declaration by the General Assembly of the WTO introduced the concept and need to preserve and promote cultural, historical and natural heritage and how this should be implemented in the tourism field. This Declaration define people's cultural heritage as encompassing works of their composers, artists, writers, architects, philosophers, and others authors who constitute an integral part of the people's cultural heritage. These includes material and non-material historical heritage, including language, historical monuments, sites, beliefs, customs handicrafts, folklore, technical occupations, church ceremonies, folk festivals, events, performances, rites, as well as various sport events (Zeppel & Hall, 1991). In the previous convention held in 1972 by WTO titled cultural and natural world heritage, it was recommended that member states should embrace the convention alongside its principles, particular on the cultural tourism. Accordingly, many countries have used the insight of this convention to achieve a breakthrough in preserving cultural

and natural heritage, which is being used for tourism. Notably examples include conducting archaeological excavations, creating catalogue, protecting works, adopting laws and regulations to protect heritage, training professionals in heritage protection, establishing preservation laboratories, and education the public on artistic values of cultural heritage and events (Zeppel & Hall, 1991). Tourism, which involves scientific use and promotion of cultural heritage has been identified as the best marketing approach/strategy to cultural heritage (Richards, 2006). It is a system defined by organized and well-define strategies of attracting people to the destination of their choice. In recognition of this reality, Richards (2006) proposed that destination sites should take into account systematic promotion of cultural events in their marketing strategies. Richards (2006) suggested that this should start with creating interest in the potential tourists using various forms of promotions, including publications, virtual information networks, visual media, and exhibitions.

Other Factors

Target Market

Before you decide to use digital marketing to attract customers and increase sales, determine if and how your customers use digital marketing to get information about products, services or topics related to your business. Your digital marketing efforts must include language and images that reflect your target market and resonate with them.

Budget

Cost is a factor no matter what type of marketing campaign you're planning. Businesses with limited budgets might skip digital marketing efforts altogether, for fear that it's out of their budgets. Low-cost digital marketing options include creating a social media presence, blogging or creating marketing videos using your computer and web camera. Options such as setting up microsites, pay-per-click ad campaigns and short message services often require a larger marketing budget.

Talent

The knowledge and experience you and your team have in digital marketing influences whether or not you incorporate it into your overall marketing strategy. Before delving into digital marketing, it's important to know your options, how to implement digital marketing ideas and measure their success. If no one has previous experience, consider using a marketing consultant who specializes in digital media services.

Technology

From servers being down to browser and software issues causing banner advertisements and websites not to load, common technology issues can play a major role in the success of a digital

marketing strategy. If a business experiences frequent issues with its digital marketing campaigns, they may be less likely to use digital strategies to promote their brands. Beyond technical difficulties, companies often have to invest in equipment and services to implement their digital marketing campaigns. For example, a company that wants to do video marketing needs a digital camera, lights and audio recording equipment and the expertise to use it, or must pay a studio to handle the video editing and recording.

Time

Planning, implementing and monitoring digital marketing strategies requires a time commitment, which might be problematic for small business owners who aren't well-versed in marketing. Digital marketing strategies require constant monitoring, to measure what's working and what needs to be altered.

Problems of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing poses special challenges for its purveyors. Digital channels are proliferating rapidly, and digital marketers have to keep up with how these channels work, how they're used by receivers, and how to use these channels to effectively market their products or services. In addition, it's becoming more difficult to capture receivers' attention, because receivers are increasingly inundated with competing ads. Digital marketers also find it challenging to analyze the vast troves of data they capture and then exploit this information in new marketing efforts (see Figure 6). The challenge of capturing and using data effectively highlights that digital marketing requires an approach to marketing based on a deep understanding of consumer behavior.

Figure 6. How Digital Marketing Works



Source. HowLettery, n.d./iStockPhoto.com

There are various digital marketing challenges for hotels in this era of expanding digital connectivity. Hoteliers need to successfully deal with them, to stand out from the competition and drive more bookings. Travelers' choices and travel habits are evolving. With increasing choices available to them, their shopping journey has become complex. Statistics show that social media influences 52% of travelers to change their travel plans. 44% travelers use mobile phones to plan their travel, while 25% make bookings through their smart phone. 75% luxury travelers and 87%

business travelers use various devices to conduct the same travel-related searches or to make a booking. These alone dictate the need for consistency in digital presence across all channels and devices. Here are some of the common challenges faced by the hospitality industry, and the ways in which you can handle your hotel's digital marketing challenges:

Target

At the digital age, do you still accept to pay for a large share of audience that is not only formed of potential customers? Your customer's journey is a long path, from at-home inspiration to in-destination information gathering. Throughout this path, you'll find many digital *touch points*, and for each of them, a solution to target and retarget your future customer.

Reach

Once you've got a 20 on the target, you must concentrate your efforts on reaching it in the most effective way. Among all the issues that have to be solved at this stage, two of them stand out. First of all, ensure your message is in the right format.

Engage

It's all about delivering the right content at the right time. The future customer's expectations vary according to the stage of the journey. The challenge is to produce the right contents to be sent at the right place.

Creating Effective Content

Remember that your website first needs to attract travel shoppers, and then engage them. If you want your hotel to stand apart from the rest, then you need to invest in visual storytelling. People love stories, so share your hotel's unique story with your audiences, and help them connect with your brand. Good quality images capture peoples' attention, and a great story keeps it! Make sure relevant information is also prominently displayed on your website. Your customer will not choose to lose time searching for it.

What to Showcase?

As a hotelier, you are not just selling rooms, you are selling an experience. This begins with the pictures that travel shoppers see on your website. In fact, this is their first contact with your hotel. So, draw them in using attractive, high-resolution images where they can imagine themselves as part of it and want to visit. You could use a professional photographer for good quality pictures for your website. For a more, steady stream of visuals, you could use user-generated content, especially for your social media. A responsive website, coupled with clear and easy navigation can direct them to special offers, reviews, contact details, social media links and most important –your booking engine. Make sure it's fronted and centered, so travel shoppers cannot miss it.

How to Increase Direct Bookings?

As a hotelier, you cannot be passive and leave the decision of booking to shoppers. The general trend shows that people look at your hotel website, and then book with an OTA. You need to be able to engage with them on your website and convince them that you can give them the best deals. Many hotels are now leveraging technology and opting for chatbots and artificial intelligence in this pursuit, rather successfully. A chatbot will engage your customers and answer all their queries immediately, 24/7, increasing the chances of direct bookings. If at all your customer leaves your website without making a booking, the chatbot would still have obtained customer details like name and email, which your marketing team could use to follow-up. Quick text is a comprehensive solution in this regard if you are considering AI and chatbots for increasing direct sales in your hotel.

Embracing Mobile

Embrace mobile if you want to handle your hotel's digital marketing challenges effectively. Mobile has long since overtaken the desktop. In fact, research shows that 6 out of every 10 travel shoppers are likely to leave your website if it is not mobile optimized. Since a majority of your customers use the mobile for everything –from research to booking to communication, it's a given that your website be mobile-friendly, and that you communicate with them the way they are most comfortable with. You may lack the time or resources to take your digital marketing to mobile, or you may not be sure where to start. Just remember, customers want a one-click point of contact with you. It's easy to give them that through mobile.

Managing Your Presence on Various Travel Websites

Maintaining your presence on multiple travel websites can get tedious, especially if you need to update separately on each one. Use a central system to manage your media, so that when you update on one website, the changes are syndicated in all the others as well. This way, your content is consistent across channels. Make sure you target your key demographic groups through your content.

Standing Out on Social Media

If you don't exist on social media, you don't exist. Social media gives you an excellent opportunity to reach a vast audience, and engage with them directly. However, the question arises:

- Which social media channels should you be on?
- How do you reach a wider audience through social media?
- How do you measure its success?

First, you don't need to be on every social media channel. Find one or two that work well for you, and spend your energies on those. Share your authentic story to capture the attention of your

audiences, and always interact with your guests and visitors. Use pictures and videos to support your brand story and showcase special offers. But always, make it easy to book.

Second, you don't have to create new media each time. You can repurpose content to suit the needs of the channel. Also, if you look within the working of your own hotel, you'll find a lot of stories coming from your own employees. It could be something interesting that happened in the kitchens, or the reception, or the spa. Authentic stories are well received by audiences. Visual consistency is exceedingly important. You can also use one channel to drive traffic to another. Social media is important as it allows your customers to engage with your brand, and amplify your story to other potential customers by sharing your content.

Track and Measure

You create amazing content for your website and social media, but how do you know if it is engaging your audience? How do you ascertain which offers they are availing, or how much booking is happening through your website? The best thing about digital marketing is that everything can be mapped and measured. This then allows you to analyze data and measure performance of your digital marketing strategies, so you can make intelligent decisions in the future.

There are various tools that enable you to measure performance and engagement. These will offer an insight into what encourages more direct bookings – like a picture that engages your audience, or a specific offer or even your brand story. In all your digital marketing efforts, remember that consistency is key. Keep your brand story the same on all your channels and websites that you have a presence on in order to build credibility and trust. Eventually, this is what makes your customer confident to choose you.

And finally, keep looking to see what's working, and what isn't. The biggest advantage of digital marketing is that you can measure everything and quickly ascertain if a strategy is working or isn't. Then adjust accordingly. A good digital marketing strategy has the potential to help you maximize your time, enhance your reach, engage more customers directly, sell directly, and increase your upsell chances.

Contribution of Digital Marketing in the Growth of Hospitality and Tourism Around the Globe

This is something that could easily be answered just by looking in the person beside you in the bus, by looking up in the middle of the streets or by simply looking around you. If you do, you will see the person beside you holding a gadget, as you look up you see LED billboards and as you look around, you see people getting more engaged with the digital world each and every day. Real results from various statistics have shown that a majority of businesses in the travel and tourism industry are doing much better than those that don't. A recent report shown that there are currently

3.2 billion smartphone users all over the world that is around 50% of the world population. Just imagine getting the attention of these people and letting them see your travel deals. Isn't this a great number to kick-start everything? here are five top reasons why the travel and tourism industry should make use of digital marketing.

More Customer Engagement

Engaging with customers have never been easier. You can get in touch with them no matter where they are in the world. You can learn about what your customers expect even before they utilize your services, you can engage with them during the service duration and after the service as well. Happy and well taken care of customers will later become returning customers and will tell others about you.

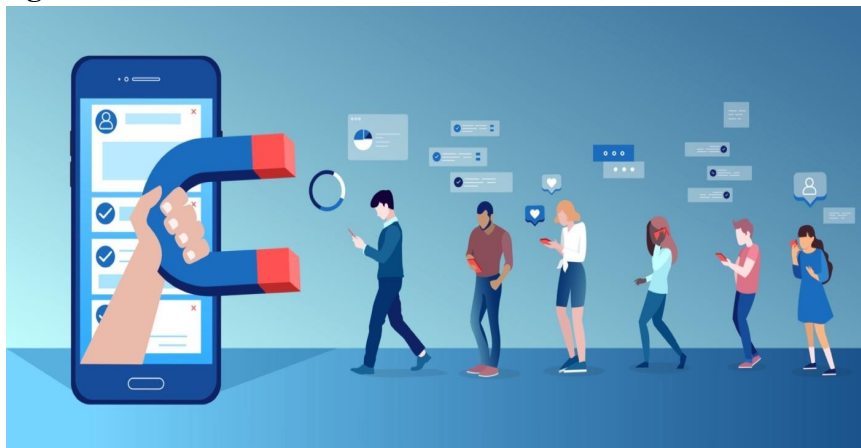
Exposure on Search Engine Results

Let's admit it, Google, Bing, Yahoo and other search engines have recorded us so many times asking *where is the best place to travel?* This being said, it is only right for people in the travel industry to ensure that they invest in SEO and SEM techniques to get their website up on the first results page. Once you do, you can gain boost the number of visitors who see your products and services and may later become real customers. For many businesses, Search Engines' search ranking has become the most important success factor

Usage of Social Media to Communicate

Unlike before, you can now handle customer queries faster and more personal through the use of social media. This does not only include answering queries, but you can supply information even before them asking. Through the use of social media, you can upload ads of different good places to visit and show potential customers your exclusive travel deals. When you do, you are actually helping your customers gain more travel ideas (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Attraction of Social Media



Source. Chiosea, 2020/iStockPhoto.com

Posts in social media contain reviews and comments from travelers who have already visited the featured place. Through their comments and reviews, you can also gain a lot from the exchange of information. The good feedback are testimonials for your services and the constructive critics can help you to further improve your service quality and serve future customers much better.

Growing Number of Experience-Hungry Consumers

Traveling has never been easier and cheaper in human history. Distant lands that could be seen only movies can now be reached within hours of flight. More and more people are traveling to discover other cultures and to see things that they have never seen before, and to have the experience of the life time. Have you heard of vlogs and live-streaming? The advancement in technology has made it possible to record and show the real experience of real travelers in real time. People can now stay in their bedrooms and watch a guy eating Pho in Vietnam or doing Bungee jumping in Canada and that inspire them to go and immerse themselves in the experience.

Use Data to Create Personalized Travel Experience

Digital Marketing and Digital tools in general allow you to better collect and analyze your data. With a streamlined channel, you can collect all the customers interact with you through the sales pipeline and the service duration. The collected data can be analyzed to allow you to offer a personalized experience for your customers on a larger scale as well as identify patterns that could negatively affect your services. You will then be able to understand your customers better and give them what they are truly seeking for their next travel getaway.

Future Scope

Artificial Intelligence

If the company hasn't already realized it, 2020 may be the year that a lot of people wake up to the dominance of AI. It's sure to be at the heart of global business and industry in the future—and it's already taking over many simple jobs.

Programmatic Advertising

Programmatic advertising means using AI to automate ad buying so the company can target more specific audiences. Real-time bidding, for example, is a type of programmatic ad buying. This automation is much more efficient and faster, which means higher conversions and lower customer acquisition costs.

Chatbots

Chatbots will continue to be an important part of digital marketing in 2020. This AI-based technology uses instant messaging to chat in real-time, day or night, with your customers or site

visitors.

Conversational Marketing

With all that talk about chatbots, the reality of modern marketing becomes clear: it's more conversational. People want it that way, and so brands are reacting. When consumers have a question, 82% want an *immediate* response. Conversational marketing facilitates a one-to-one, real-time connection between marketers and customers:

Personalization

If the company wants to stand out in modern era, it has to personalize the marketing – and that means personalized content, products, emails and more. Consider these personalization stats:

- 63% of consumers are highly annoyed with generic advertising blasts.
- 80% say they are more likely to do business with a company if it offers personalized experiences.
- 90% claim they find personalization appealing.
- Video marketing is one of, if not *the*, most important marketing trend today and likely for the next 5-10 years.

These numbers show the importance of incorporating video into your digital marketing strategy in 2020:

- 70% of consumers say that they have shared a brand's video.
- 72% of businesses say that video has improved their conversion rate.
- 52% of consumers say that watching product videos makes them more confident in online purchase decisions.
- 65% of executives visit the marketer's website and 39% call a vendor after viewing a video.

Micro-Moments

A micro-moment is “An intent-rich moment when a person turns to a device to act on a need – to know, go, do or buy” (Sweet Rose Studios, 2020, para. 1).

Voice Search & Smart Speakers

The increasing use of voice search has made it important for companies to rethink their digital marketing strategies in future:

- 60% of all searches will be via voice by 2022.
- 55% of all American homes will own a smart speaker by 2022.
- 72% of people who own voice-activated speakers say that their devices are used as part of their daily routines.
- Voice shopping is set to jump to \$40 billion in 2022, up from \$2 billion today.

Browser Push Notifications

Push notifications are on the rise, with 85% of online stores using them in 2019. Consider these other stats:

- At least twice as many people sign up for web push notifications compared to a newsletter.
- Only 10% of the best email marketers can achieve a newsletter sign-up rate that matches the performance of web push.
- 6.4 hours is the average time that passes before the recipient opens a newsletter. In the case of web push, the recipient will see the message immediately.

SEO A/B Split Testing

Modern marketing is all about testing and analysis. By using A/B split-testing, the company can isolate the variables in your campaign and easily identify which versions are driving the results the company need. This form of testing offers marketers a methodical approach to making effective changes to their content.

Social Commerce & Shoppable Posts

With e-commerce and social media both growing at alarming rates, it's no wonder brands are using the two together to maximize opportunities for sales.

Artificial Reality & Immersive Technologies

E-commerce brands hope this will reduce the risk that customers will abandon their purchase because they have to switch apps or sign in to an unknown store. While virtual reality makes a lot of noise and gets everyone excited with grand sci-fi ideas, artificial reality is much more implementable from a marketing standpoint. Experts predict that artificial reality will continue to outpace virtual reality in terms of market share.

Progressive Web Apps (PWAs)

Progressive Web Apps are essentially websites that work like mobile apps. They offer the functionality of a native mobile app –fast load times, push notifications, working offline, utilizing device hardware, etc., without being limited to one platform (which in reality means Android or iOS). This allows development teams to create web apps for any device that works just like a mobile app. By 2020, the number of smartphone users is expected to reach 2.87 billion. With total page views on mobile increasing year-over-year by almost 50% worldwide, mobile is more crucial than ever to your digital strategy:

5G Technology

In a world gone mad for mobile, arguably one of the most significant digital marketing trends of 2020 is the dawn of 5G technology, or fifth generation of mobile technology. This update heralds a new era of digital communications and its impact will be felt across virtually every industry.

Structured Data SEO

Among all the digital marketing trends you'll hear about soon (if not already), there will no doubt be the now obligatory annual claims that *SEO is dead*. Ignore these claims. Once again, SEO is not dead—it's a shape shifter. Structured data is any data that is organized in such a way that makes it easier for search engines to crawl and categorize. Content creators can do this in their back-end code or by neatly organizing information in tables with labeled columns and rows. When it's done right, structured data delivers a big SEO boost, as you may rank in that coveted Position Zero in one form or another, such as a Knowledge Graph Box, which displays important information about your business:

Neuromarketing

Last, but certainly not least, we'll dip our toes into one of the most wow-inspiring digital marketing trends of 2020: neuro marketing. While this may sound like we're quoting from a sci-fi movie, the reality is that this technology is advancing quickly and may become a viable tool for marketers soon. For the uninitiated, neuro marketing is a strategy that analyzes measurements of a person's brain activity and nervous system to determine which types of content they find engaging. It is essentially designing marketing materials (including your website, ads, email campaigns and content) to evoke specific neurological reactions that trigger emotions or responses that are linked to purchasing. You can use this information to optimize your content accordingly and adjust your strategies, improving the effectiveness of your marketing.

CONCLUSION

Every industrial revolution was catalyzed by a major technological evolution. Today is no different. With 90% of the world's data having been produced in the last two years and more than 26 billion smart devices in circulation, we are living in an era of unprecedented technological innovation—one that has spurred the Fourth Industrial Revolution. While the internet has changed everything, it is worth remembering that the old forms of marketing still carry weight. Despite the growth in digital advertising, TV still takes a third of ad spend in the globe and continues to grow, albeit at a slower rate. Digital marketing communication has number of characteristics that make it the preferred communication alternative of modern era. The impact of digital marketing communication has been significant in categories like electronics, fashion, online music and games and many others. The world, with the increasing number of internet users, rural population joining the digital revolution, decreasing data prices, internet enabled cheap priced devices and overall

enthusiasm around digital platforms, technology and devices; has put itself on the surging trend in terms of digital statistics.

Embracing digital trends does not mean discarding traditional marketing methods. Keep up with the trends while integrating the old for solid marketing success. As we have seen in this chapter, tourism and hospitality is a complex system that is built up of industry sectors including accommodation, recreation and entertainment, food and beverage services, transportation, and travel services. It encompasses domestic, inbound, and outbound travel for business, leisure, or other purposes. And because of this large scope, tourism development requires participation from all walks of life, including private business, governmental agencies, educational institutions, communities, and citizens. Recognizing the diverse nature of the industry and the significant contributions tourism makes toward economic and social value, there remains a great deal of work to better educate members of the tourism industry, other sectors, and the public about the ways tourism contributes to our province.

KEY TERMS

- **Content Personalization:** Tailoring marketing messages and content to specific audience segments or individuals, enhancing relevance and engagement.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.
- **Digital Marketing:** The use of digital channels and technologies to promote products and services to consumers. It is especially crucial in the hospitality and tourism industry for reaching target audiences and offering up-to-date information on offers and prices.
- **Digital Touch Points:** Various stages in the customer journey where digital interactions occur, influencing decision-making.
- **Information Technologies:** The technologies used to collect, process, and distribute information, which have significantly influenced the ways businesses, including the hospitality and tourism industry, reach and engage with their target audiences.
- **Mobile Optimization:** Ensuring websites and content are designed to function effectively on mobile devices, crucial for engaging modern consumers.
- **Neuromarketing:** A marketing strategy that uses brain activity and nervous system responses to optimize content and evoke emotions or responses linked to purchasing behavior.
- **Personalized Travel Experience:** The use of data and digital marketing tools to tailor travel services and experiences to individual customer preferences and behaviors.
- **Political Stability:** The condition where a government is free from turmoil, conflict, and uncertainty, which significantly influences the perception of a country as a safe and attractive tourist destination.

- **Service Quality:** The overall impression consumers have about the superiority or inferiority of a service, encompassing responsiveness, empathy, tangibility, reliability, and assurance. It refers to meeting or exceeding customer expectations and delivering value.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can neuromarketing be ethically implemented in digital marketing strategies without infringing on consumer privacy?
2. What are the potential benefits and challenges of using data to create personalized travel experiences for customers?
3. How can service companies in the tourism industry accurately identify and meet customer expectations to enhance service quality and improve destination image?
4. What are the benefits and challenges of integrating artificial intelligence, such as chatbots, into hotel websites to increase direct bookings and enhance customer service?
5. In what ways can hotels leverage user-generated content and visual storytelling to differentiate themselves and attract travelers in a crowded digital marketplace?
6. In what ways have advancements in information technologies transformed consumer behavior in the hospitality and tourism industry, and what strategies can businesses employ to keep up with these changes?
7. How has the shift from desktops to mobile devices impacted digital marketing strategies in the hospitality and tourism industry, and what are the key considerations for businesses adapting to this change?
8. How do political and economic stability impact a country's ability to attract tourists, and what measures can governments take to enhance these perceptions?
9. In what ways can the systematic promotion of cultural events contribute to the development of tourism, and what strategies should destinations employ to effectively market their cultural heritage?
10. How can hotels effectively manage their digital presence across multiple platforms and devices to maintain consistency and maximize reach?
11. What strategies can hotels employ to optimize their websites for mobile devices, considering the significant impact of mobile browsing on booking decisions?

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