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Web and Technology: Beginning of New Era of Tourism Development

Dr. Renu Malra, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Tourism, University College, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

Accessibility of information through web has been increasing in developed countries. Tourism is an area which is getting a lot of attention these days. Tourism means people on move i.e. mobile and advanced features of mobile ICT suit admirably in the delivering of relevant and timely information that cultural heritage tourists demand. Various mobile ICT techniques like LBS (Location Based Services), Navigation aids have been using by the walkers, cyclists, hikers and others. This paper congregates exploration of the potential of web and Mobile technology in providing the relevant services in the development of tourism.

Keywords Tourism, Mobile ICT, Technology, Social networking websites, NFC.

In March 9, 2011, in Berlin, The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) announced its forecasts of travel demand for 42-destinations. In the Asia Pacific region, annual average rate of growth in arrivals to these destinations will be up to seven percent predicted between 2009 and 2013. While Asia is expected to receive growth with an average increase of around 7.5% per annum, North America will get its share in growth with an average around five per cent and the Pacific between four-to-five per cent, between that period.

Within Asia, Southeast Asia will be the fastest growing sub-region with just over eight per cent, followed by South Asia around 7.5% and Northeast Asia at over seven per cent (figures per annum). In

terms of traffic generation, it is Northeast Asia that will add an additional 65 million arrivals and the Americas will add close to 18-million more than in 2009. Following table reveal the fact that in the coming year Asian market will show the upward trend as compared to other markets.

Source: CED

Asians are getting wealthier, and the Asian tourism sector is one of the fastest growing in the world as also depicted from above table. Besides they are also getting more internet punter. Even the lack of infrastructure has not been stopping them from accessing the internet through mobile phones. According to Euro monitor International report in the year 2011 Online sales are a major growth catalyst, with online (8%) outpacing offline (1%) in value growth and expected to provide steady growth over the long term.

ICT plays an important role as a new method in increasing the demand in tourism industry, which in turn, results in attracting more tourists and generating more income, apart from further developing the tourism industry. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO) statistics, Iran is among the top five (5) countries in having historical and natural resources for tourism purposes. Unfortunately, Iran has not performed well in introducing its attractions to tourists via ICT tools yet (I. Mohamed and L.Moradi, 2011). Innovations in tourism deviate from the dominant innovation paradigm that was shaped by the manufacturing sector. Tourism is big users of ICT developed elsewhere but at the same time develops service innovations based on these technologies. The tourism industry presently employs ICT in pre-holiday phase to inform customers, help them to plan their trip and to book travel arrangements. ICT is heavily used during the travel (e.g. flights) and increasingly integrated in the offering during the holiday phase. ICT has already shaken up the value chain in the tourism industry

and will continue to do so in the years to come (Leo, 2010)

There are currently an estimated 1.8 billion internet users globally. There has been substantial growth in all world regions, with regions like Africa and the Middle east both recording growth in the last 9 years. Asia and the Pacific remain in the top position with over 760 million, representing over 40% of the total worldwide online population (UNWTO Report, 2011).

Further growth to 2.2 billion internet users is expected by 2013 (UNWTO Report, 2011).

- Asia will remain the biggest growth market where 43% of the world's online population will reside by 2013, with 17% of the global online population in China alone
- Growth in the United States of America, Western Europe and major industrialized nations in Asia-Pacific such as Australia, Japan and South Korea will slow to between 1% and 3%
- Europe's growth will be fuelled by emerging markets. Russia and Turkey will grow by almost 8% annually
- China's online population (already the largest in the world) will rise by nearly 11% each year over the next half decade. Other Asian countries with substantial online growth rates include India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines. More mature markets such as Japan and South Korea will rise by less than 2% each year
- Brazil is currently the fourth largest market in the world in terms of number of internet users, but despite a 7% annual growth rate over the next five years, it will drop to fifth position in 2010 when it is overtaken by India
- The countries of the Middle East and Africa currently represent just 8% of the global online population but over the next five years will see some of the highest growth rates, around 13%. Egypt, Iran, and Nigeria are among the countries with the highest growth rates in the region
- Online spending per capita is likely to

Table-1

Relative Market Share				
Origin Markets	% 2009	% 2011f	% 2012f	% 2013f
Americas	21.2	20.3	20.1	19.9
Europe	9.5	9.3	9.2	9.1
Asia	63.8	65.0	65.1	65.4
Pacific	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
Others	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9

remain highest in North America, Western Europe, and the developed markets of Asia throughout the next five years. The shifting online population and growing spending power among Asian consumers means that Asian markets will represent a far greater percentage of the total in 2013 than they do today.

Major Technology Trends in Tourism:

1. Internet of Things (IoT):

Internet of Things describes a worldwide network of intercommunicating devices. Sensors and intelligence are being connected to the Internet to identify sense and communicate data promptly, includes image recognition technologies, embedded sensors and Near field Communication (NFC) payments.

Tourists visiting the Spanish Unesco World Heritage city of Caceres will be able to borrow an NFC-enabled phone free of charge, allowing them to get information on the city, pick up discount coupons and access museums during their stay. Google Nexus S phones will be provided to any visitor to the western Spanish city who requests one at the tourist information centre. Future plans include extending the functionality throughout the city so that visitors can also use the phones to buy goods in shops (NFC world, 2011)

2. Contextual and Social User Experience:

In the USA, about 52 percent of the 152 million adult leisure travelers – or some 79 million people – already use social media. Among airlines, Air Asia claims to have generated 13 percent of sales through its Facebook fan page that has over a million followers, (ITB, 2011). For the hotel industry, social media encompasses a range of internet based platforms, which include traveler review sites such as Trip Advisor and Yelp, online travel agencies like Expedia and Travelocity, as well as social networking sites, blogs and content sharing websites. The influence of sites that have a 'Book now' button cannot be underestimated (hotel-industry, 2011).

Moreover, TweetAFlight, is transforming Twitter into an instant sales channel for airlines. The whole process can be summed up in three words: Tweet. Reply. FLY, A trade mark given to this service.

3. Mobile Computing (Smart phone, Ipad):

About 40 percent of international travelers own a smart phone with internet and e-mail access and other functions, of which more than 40 percent use their devices to get destination information; 34 percent of business travelers and 26 percent of leisure travelers use them to make

booking changes during their trip, over 57 percent have a conventional mobile phone, nearly 2 percent still do not have a mobile phone, more than 37 percent of international leisure travelers are also using social networks by mobile access while traveling (WTM, 2010). 32% of French mobile users and 28% of those in the U.K. plan to book on their phone in the next year, just 20% of Germans anticipate doing so (Phocuswright, 2011). Recently Google introduced Schemer applications for the android mobile and I phones, which help in exploring new cities, a boom for tourism industry.

4. Apps Stores and Marketplace:

By 2014 there will be more than 70 billion downloads from Apple and Android app stores. Closely related to mobile, advances in social media and geo-location sites and applications were cited as key areas of opportunity for travel marketers to target their customers on the move and reward loyalty. Although American, sites such as Foursquare and Gowalla are fast gaining penetration in the UK and Europe. Google Goggles and Layar are driving the trend towards augmented reality. Travel companies are keen to find out more about this area of new technology and opportunities that it presents for their brand (European Travel Commission). Tripwolf, one of the most famous mobile travel guides, has advantages like offline availability, the individual city guides, the maps, and even the augmented reality view can be made completely offline available. This is one of the critical success factors for mobile travel apps, since roaming costs for data connections can be extraordinary high.

5. Gamification:

The trend in online games, already popular in the entertainment industry, is set to extend to the travel industry. The WTM Global Trends Report 2011 reveals the 'gamification of travel' is already taking hold with companies and tourism organisations including Lufthansa and Tourism Ireland using gaming techniques to create brand awareness and build loyalty. Last year Tourism Ireland unveiled its Ireland Town game on Facebook giving it the potential to engage with more than 62 million people. The report, carried out in conjunction with Euromonitor, also highlights campaigns such as Nothing Like Australia with Australians encouraged to upload a photo and share their holiday experiences with the world. The experiences were then used to create an interactive map.

According to Gartner, by 2015 more than 70% of Forbes Global 200 companies will have at least one gamified application.

The WTM Euromonitor research also reveals location-based social networks such as foursquare will start to target travelers with local deals while airlines will launch games based on status levels (tnooz,2011)

Web and technology are shaping the new form of tourism industry, either it is internet booking, social media, mobile technology and apps or gamification, everything is playing a tremendous role in determining the industry. Facebook is the leading social network in the US, but it is experiencing rapid growth throughout Europe. According to comScore Facebook is the most popular social network in 11 out of 17 European countries.

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