who travel independently by providing them with advice, published information, travel guides, lists of hotels and other useful information.

Independent tourists comprise domestic, inbound and outbound tourists. With increasingly affordable international travel, the economic contribution of independent travellers is often believed to be higher than the spend per head figures for organized mass tourism because individuals spend a longer period of time within specific regions or communities, although certain mass tourism markets (e.g. US travel to the UK) are still recognized as very lucrative, as are certain mass tourism products, such as cruise tourism. During recent years, with modern technology, e-tourism, the Internet, social networks and various technologies have encouraged and enabled many more tourists to become independent travellers.

**Further reading**


Dr. Christine Lee

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

The term information technology, or IT, refers to all technologies with a user interface, which includes mobile devices, networking, computing, hardware and software, the Internet, cloud computing and Web 2.0. In the current information age, considerable information and communication takes place using technology and for this reason the acronym ICT – information communication technology – was coined. ICT covers any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically in a digital form. Its adoption within tourism organizations is essential, as it underpins global distribution systems, marketing activity, customer relationship management and a range of consumer and academic research resources. Its importance for the sector should not be underestimated as it forms the lynchpin of user-generated content and social media, and virtual tourism is arguably at the heart of the development of software such as Google Earth.

During the past two decades, the adoption of ICT has been a key success factor in enhancing hotel performance (Siguaw et al, 2000; Sigala et al, 2001; Sirinak et al, 2011), improving operational productivity, lowering distribution costs, generating economies of scale through the supply chain and reducing travel costs across multinational chains. It can also play a part in enhancing customer satisfaction, reducing operating costs, increasing market share, and improving employee performance and service (David et al, 1996; Buhalas and Main, 1998; Jones, 1999; Huang, 2008; Tae et al, 2008; Karadag et al, 2009; Zelenka, 2009). In short, ICT has revolutionized the entire tourism industry (Buhalas and Law, 2008). Different forms of ICT have been widely adopted by, among others, travel agencies, hotel chains, airlines, tourism management organizations, car rental agencies and food and beverage outlets. ICT has also been used in supporting dis-intermediated marketing and the distribution of tourism products (Huang, 2008).

It is also generally accepted that the emergence of ICT has resulted in the rapid growth of the electronic marketplace associated with tourism (Norzaidi et al, 2007). Globalization and liberalization of ICT, particularly via the Internet, is regarded as the most cost-efficient tool for any business to gain bigger markets and the chance to compete with other rival organizations in attracting customers to their products, services and information (Tan et al, 2009). The favourable characteristics inherent in the Internet such as speed, user friendliness, low cost and wide accessibility have allowed electronic commerce (e-commerce) to be increasingly diffused globally, bringing countries together into a globally networked economy (Chandran et al, 2001; Gibbs and Knaumer, 2004), and also in terms of pursuing efficiency and quality (Mougayar, 1998).

Research related to the adoption of technology has generally been underpinned by communication theory (Scott Morton, 1991; Thorp, 1998; Luengo–Jones, 2001) to support studies on the identification of barriers and drivers of this adoption (Kauffman and Kumar, 2005). Different levels of technology usage can be identified in tourism businesses (Battisti and Stoneman, 2003) – namely, intra-firm and inter-firm adoption. Intra-firm is normally when one technology is fully adopted by an organization from its purchase to the full integration as part of the business strategy. On the contrary, inter-firm approach technology adoption takes place among tourism businesses regardless of the level of integration.
Table 6: Innovation theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of the theory</th>
<th>Processes involved in each element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social system</td>
<td>The social system would relate to a group of individuals who are engaged in achieving a specific goal. These individuals will be innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication channel</td>
<td>The communication channel relates to the means by which a message is communicated, which can include heterophilic (different) or homophilic (similar) individuals. Communication will be better between homophilic individuals, however, a certain degree of difference in relation to their knowledge about the innovation will be needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time factor</td>
<td>A time factor will be involved in the innovation-decision process, innovativeness, and innovation's rate of adoption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of the innovation</td>
<td>The characteristics of the innovation also have an effect on its likely adoption, which is defined according to its relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, triability and observability of the potential results emerging that it yields.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rogers (1969)

The adoption of technology in the tourism sector generally uses the innovation theory that was modelled by Rogers (1969), which outlines the process by which innovation, including ICT, is embraced by users. The four main elements of the process are outlined in Table 6.

As outlined by Otto and Ricchie (1996), tourism is a service industry in which creating and sustaining a competitive global advantage is critical. There is strong emphasis in the service sector on the consumer, and this consumer-centric position requires the service innovation to continue to meet and satisfy individual customers as consumers become increasingly sophisticated in their expectations. Hence, the role of ICT in supporting this service innovation has become critical.

In conclusion, ICT has played a phenomenal role in transforming the tourism industry globally. New innovations are transcending the efficiency and capacity of the industry, and the new systems are so powerful in their capabilities that they may change traditional understanding and experience. For corporate and business managers in the tourism sector, the continual innovation within ICT poses a challenge to managers who must decide which are beneficial and worthy of investment, but which must also first understand the potential benefits of the innovation in order to make this decision. Some ICT is critical to competitive success, especially user-generated content which is beyond the control of businesses. Consequently, ICT has, and will continue, to fundamentally revolutionize the tourism industry.

Further reading


Dr. Vikneswaran Nair

LEISURE

The Latin translation of leisure literally means ‘to be free’ (Cooper et al, 2008b). According to Sharma (2005, p138) and Cooper et al, (2008b, p16), leisure is the time available to an individual after work, sleep and other basic needs have been met. Williams and Buswell (2003, p5) stated that leisure can be viewed in terms of residual time, activity, function, state of mind or an experience. Stockdale (1985) identified three main ways in which the concept of leisure is used:

1. as a period of time, activity or state of mind in which choice is the dominant feature; in this sense leisure is a form of ‘free time’ for an individual;
2. an objective view in which leisure is perceived as the opposite of work and is defined as non-work or residual time;
3. a subjective view which emphasizes leisure as a qualitative concept in which leisure activities take on a meaning only within the context of individual perceptions and belief systems and can therefore occur at any time in any setting (Hall and Page, 2006, p3).

Youell (1995) emphasizes that a comprehensive definition of the term leisure would necessarily include all of the following elements:

- time outside of a formal employment situation;
- time over and above that which is devoted to necessary household chores;