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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN TOURISM

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ABSTRACT
In this information age, there exists a widespread belief that attaining organizational effectiveness is closely related to the organization's ability to use timely, accurate and relevant information for making business decisions. Information Technology has played a pivotal role in each aspect of Tourism Industry. Travel and Tourism is one of the world's largest and also consistently growing industry. But after introduction of Information Technology it has flourished further. Whether it is a business tour or leisure trip, Information technology is helping us to make it more comfortable and enjoyable. Information technology creates win-win situation for both end customer and tourism industry. By using Information Technology, firms can develop and deliver the right product to the right customer, at the right price and place, without over depending on intermediaries.

Keywords: Customers, Information Technology, Internet, Tourism, Travellers

INTRODUCTION
In Today's era there is no field remain untouched by Information Technology. Even in tourism industry Information Technology is widely spread. Right from shortlisting travel destination, booking tickets, to providing online Ratings to Hotels, Information Technology is used at every step. Information technology has changed Tourism industry in last decade. ICT facilitates integration and enables customisation of tourism products to suit the needs of individuals. Due to changes in consumer behaviour of the tourist the market is becoming more segmented with each potential consumer.

HISTORY OF TOURISM
Definition of Tourism done by United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is as follows.

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes.

India has an ancient tradition of Tourism. As an industry it was existed in more of informal way. Indian Tourism industry has recorded tremendous growth since 1990s in terms of International and Domestic Tourists. Tourism Industry is among very few industries which generates high revenue with minimum investment. There are various sub types of Tourism industry like ancient Pilgrimage Tourism, leisure and Business Tourism, recently developed medical and Education Tourism.

IMPACT OF IT IN TOURISM
Due to Internet, World has become one global village which can be viewed on a mouse click. This is encouraging potential tourists to view their destination places before finalising. The Internet helps in business to business (B2B) transactions like sharing services and business to consumer (B2C) transactions like online Payment. Internet can be accessed through desktop, laptop or even on mobile phones. This is encouraging more and more travellers who prefer internet over conventional travel agencies to finalise their travel destination. Internet is also used extensively by travel agencies, Government tourism departments etc. End customer, traveller is looking for detailed information, which can be provided by tourist operator, government bodies through internet only, which is helping them to generate revenue. Travellers need various information about destination, like How to reach, nearby accommodation, related history, places must to visit, local conveyance, places of local cuisine etc. All this information can be provided to travellers by travel agencies, tour operators by using internet.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN TOURISM INDUSTRY MODULES
1. Transport Module: Few years back travellers or travel agent used to physically go and book tickets. But due to computerised booking system, anyone can book railway or airline tickets online. Potential traveller can online compare various transportation modes in terms of travel time, Price, Comfort etc., based on which he can choose and book tickets.

   Travelers can now get updates regarding their flight status via a website, a mobile app or automated calls. In addition, family and friends can also use online systems to track the arrival of their guests. Travelers can even do online check in to their flights and get Boarding Pass in mobile app. Local commutation has become

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easy by using online Map application in mobile. Travellers can store places of interest in this application and find places to visit even offline.

Travel agencies, airlines, hotels can store and access data of their customers through Internet. This helps them to offer customised tour package based on customer liking and traveling pattern. They can attract repetitive customers by offering loyalty points based on this data.

2. Accommodation Module: Accommodation is one of the basic needs for any tourism activity. Travelers and tourists need lodging for rest, while they are on a tour. Now potential travellers or travel agents can view accommodation details, actual photographs, other travellers reviews etc. on internet to shortlist their accommodation. Even they can compare prices of various online booking services through one website. Accommodation in the form of low budget lodges/hotels to world class luxury hotels is available at all the major tourist destinations to provide the tourist a home away from home. These are establishments that provide a place for the tourist to stay i.e. lodging facilities which are paid for the duration of the stay by the tourist.

   From Hotel point of view, computerized front desk technology enables to perform check-in duties ranging from room availability and reservations, to inventory, management. Front desk technology provides real-time information to facilitate efficiency and minimize wait time. Information technology help them to provide improved customer service and efficiently manage internal operations.

3. Attraction Module: Potential Travellers can view places of attraction before finalising tourist destination. Based on traveller's preferences he can choose historic places, places of adventure, holy places etc. One can find entry details, timing, transportation modes to reach places on internet. All this information enables traveller to choose right destination of his choice.

   One more interesting development due to information technology in tourism is audio tour and virtual tour. An audio tour is a pre-recorded message or commentary which includes the details of the places the tourist visits. The commentary which is available on handy devices provides the background information and other context related to the place of visit. Traveller can also take help of virtual tour, which consists of videos and still images along with sound effects. This gives real time experience to traveller, especially for differently abled travellers with the help of audio visual effects. These virtual tours are famous at historic places, museums etc.

ICT IN TOURISM

Information and Communications Technology, usually abbreviated as ICT, is often used as an extended synonym for information technology. Effective usage of ICT infrastructure in the tourism industry is vital for tourism development. ICT provides one easy to use tool which performs various operations like ordering, product selection, tracking, payment etc.

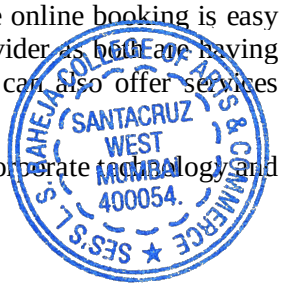
With the help of ICT customers can share information on social media and search on 'search engines regarding ratings on destination, feedback of service in hotels and environmental and social conditions. Number of hotels communicate directly with their customers by posting links about their services and promoting attractive packages. Online rating through social platforms and booking sites is creating positive pressure on hotels to perform and deliver the best services.

CONCLUSION

In developing country like India, tourism industry is not well organised to accept usage of Information Technology at full extent. Internet is commonly available at cheap rate, but awareness of taking advantage of its resources and functionality is very low. To get maximum benefit of Information technology, web services should be fully exploited.

But Information technology has brought slowly and steadily new positive changes in tourism industry. Direct selling to customer has increased through new intermediaries like internet portals where online booking is easy and Payment is secured. There is more transparency between customer and service provider as both are having direct access. Customers are asking for more specific services and service providers can also offer services based on needs and expectation of client.

In order to satisfy tourism demand and service in long term there is no choice but to incorporate technology and enhance the interactivity with the market place.



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