Utilization of ICT Tools on Travel and Tourism Organizations in Madurai – A Survey

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in India it is the major contribution to develop the nation's economic growth in that information and communication technology industry is the major contribution in developing the industry in planning, organizing and marketing the product. Tourists can plan their vacations like which place they can visit, how to reach the destination, booking tickets, accommodation etc., from the home itself with the help of ICT. To analyse the use of ICT in the tourism industry in Madurai around 25 tourism organizations were surveyed. This paper represents the whole survey report followed by a detailed analysis of report findings and suggestions.
Keywords: Tourism, ICT, Madurai, Tourism Organizations.

Introduction

Madurai is one of the fastest growing cities in Tamilnadu especially in the field of tourism; basically Madurai is known for temple nowadays it's improving its infrastructure like shopping malls, amusement parks, theme parks etc., to attract more tourists around the globe. Use of ICT in the field of tourism can improve the quality of service; time saving and can avoid unwanted human errors. In this survey use of Information and Communication Technology in tourism organizations around Madurai were analysed with the help of pre structured questionnaire.

Literature Review

At present tourism is one of the fastest growing industries across the world. Tourist arrival all over the world grew at an average rate of 4.3% per annum and is contributing significantly in the GDP growth. World Tourism Organization (WTO) predicts one billion international arrivals in the year 2010 and has forecasted that by 2020 international tourism arrivals to the Asia pacific region will experience more than 400% growth from 105 million in 2002 to 438 million in 2020 [Gupta V., Gupta D.,2008]. Tourism is primarily a service industry as it does not produce any goods but offers services to various classes of people. It is a combination of various interrelated industries and trade like food industry, accommodation industry, transport industry etc. It involves activities like attracting people towards the destinations, transporting them, housing, feeding and entertaining etc.

In the process, it brings about tremendous infrastructural improvements and helps in the development of the region. Perhaps tourism is one such rare industry, which earns foreign exchange without exporting national wealth [Deepthi Shanker, 2008]. In the last few decades, information communication technologies (ICTs) have deeply affected the way business is performed and the way that organizations compete [Porter 1985, 2001, Porter and Miller 1985]. The tourism industry is affected by these developments and in particular the way organizations distributed their tourism products in the marketplace [Buhalis, 2000, Buhalis D., Licata M.C., 2002, Sheldon P. , Wober K. , Fesenmaier D., 2001]. Sharma has explained the issues regarding human resource management and has mentioned guidelines regarding the communication techniques [K. K.Sharma, 2000]. Peters and Pikkemaat presents empirical studies that identify the major "push and pull" factors of innovation in hospitality and tourism, providing vital information on how to measure innovation in the control and sustainable management of new service development [Mike Peters, Birgit Pikkemaat, 2005]. ICT's are entering in almost all of the day-to-day activities of human being in the same manner it has also entered in the tourism industry all over the world, the Internet and development of ICT's have revolutionised the entire tourism industry, generating new business models, changing the structure of tourism distribution channels and reengineering all the traditional processes. Davcev and Gomez discusses the novel applications of technology, and experience in applying recent ICT research advances to practical situations [Danco Davcev, Jorge Marx Gomez, 2010]. Sigala et. al. comprising of nearly fifty research papers serves as a global corpus of state-of-the art ICT Travel and Tourism research [Marianna Sigala, Luisa Mich, Jamie Murphy, 2007]. Connor et. al. represents cutting-edge research on the topic of "e-Tourism: The View from the Future" [Peter O'Connor, Wolfram Höpken,Ulrike Gretzel, 2008]. The ENTER 2008 conference papers cover a wide range of cutting edge topics currently driving research and development activities in the field of IT and travel and tourism such as online communities, user generated content, recommender systems,

mobile technology, platforms and tools, website optimization, electronic marketing, ICT and tourism destinations and technology acceptance [Wolfram Höpken, Ulrike Gretzel, Rob Law, 2009]. Gretzel et. al. address advances in mobile tourism services, online destination marketing, GPS-based tracking of tourist behaviours, decision support tools, website design and evaluation, online travel distribution, ICT adoption in tourism and hospitality businesses, virtual experiences, online information search, Web 2.0, social media marketing, and the role of ICTs in sustainable tourism development. It shows a high diversity in disciplinary approaches and methodologies used to explore the intersection of tourism and technology [Ulrike Gretzel, Rob Law, Matthias Fuchs, 2010]. Jennifer et. al. examines how the ICT and Internet gradually change the tourism industry structure in China; how important such changes are; and to where such changes will lead China's tourism industry. This exploratory research is conducted based on information collected from several tourism organizations, such as airlines, hotels, tour operators, visitor attractions and the tourism authorities within China . [Jennifer Xiaoqiu Ma, Dimitrios Buhalis, Haiyan Song, 2003]. Buhalis and Connor identifies a number of key changes in Information Communication Technologies (ICT) that gradually revolutionize the tourism industry. E-tourism and the Internet in particular support the interactivity between tourism enterprises and consumers and as a result they reengineer the entire process of developing, managing and marketing tourism products and destinations [Dimitrios Buhalis, Peter O'Connor, 2005].

Research Methodology

According to the survey topic, created a structured questionnaire in which questions represents qualitative and quantitative area to be filled by the participants. Quantitative questions used to grasp holistic picture on Information and Communication technology usage of the participants, whereas the qualitative data can be able to measure the awareness level and knowledge about the importance of ICT in tourism industry. These questionnaire was administrated through drop and pick later method.

Result and Analysis

In this survey mainly stressed 5 questions to the participants to know about the usage of ICT in the tourism industry. Totally 25 participants involved in the survey out of it 5 were Tour Operators, 12 are Travel Agents and the rest 10 of them are various star category hotels in Madurai
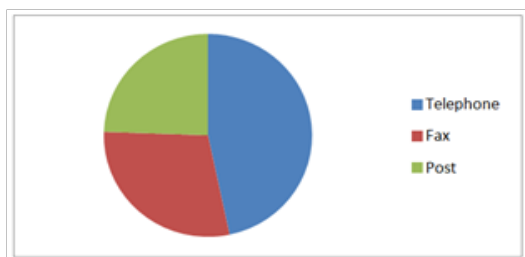
Traditional and Modern ICT Tools

Basically ICT tools are broadly classifies into two categories. First one is the traditional ICT tools which represents Telephone, Fax, Post, Newspaper Advertisement, Banner etc., on the other hand modern ICT tools which represents computer, Internet, E-Mail, website etc., Diagram 2 replicates that around 57% of the participants using the traditional ICT tools to promote themselves as well as for communication with the stake holders. In which the majority of the participants of 78% are using telephone/mobile, 63% are believe in Brochure and newspaper advertisement as effective communication tool and 59% of them are believe on their marketing team and sales representatives.
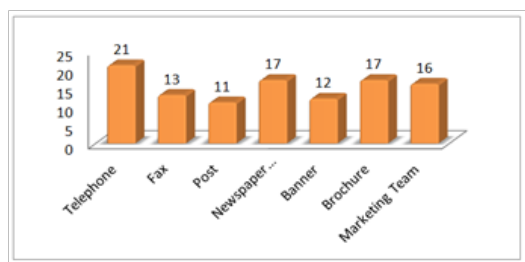

Diagram 2 Usage of Traditional ICT Tools

Modern ICT Tools

On the other hand Diagram Represents 70% of the participants are using modern ICT tools and it was observed 17 companies are having their own website to enrich themselves which means that 10 of the other participants don't have a website for their own. It seen that 85 % of the participants have an E-Mail facility but actually some of the organization are not using it properly because lack of knowledge and 59% of them are having Internet facilities within their premises.
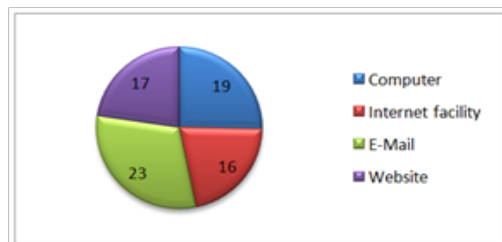

Diagram 3 Usage of Modern ICT Tools

Purpose of Using Internet Facility

According to the participant's response on the purpose of using internet facility out of 27 participants only 16 of them are using the internet facility frequently which means that 59% of the total population using it frequently in which majority of 81% of the organization using it for searching information, 75% are using for booking the resources such as accommodation, guides etc.,56% are using it to contact stakeholders of their organization and finally 39% are using it for online purchasing.
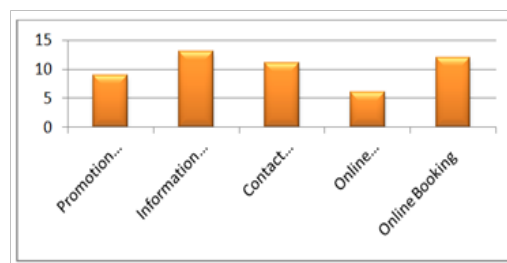

Diagram 4 Purpose of Using Internet

Frequent of Updating Website

Depends upon the survey report 17 companies out of 27 companies having their own website i.e., 63% of the total population and some of the organizations are planning to develop their website in future. When we looking at the participants website most of them are lack of information, some of them are having only in local language and some of the websites are developed by very basic general portal consists of single web page and did not have functions like online reservation, payments etc., very few of

them are maintain it properly. On the major part of updating of website 35% of them updating once in a year 29% are updating monthly/ frequently,12% of them are updating once in 2 years while 6% of the companies never update their website and they seems to be the same as they created.
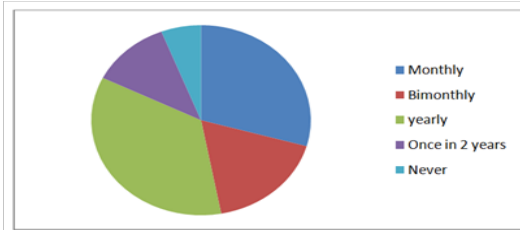

Diagram 5 Frequent of Updating Website

Conclusion

The major factor that found during the survey in Madurai with tourism and travel organizations, Firstly, Economic factor was at a moderate level, which restricts the use of ICT in tourism, secondly the working knowledge on ICT was at infancy level, more work to be done like visual information on websites, customer support toll free numbers, online feedback, payments, reviews and comments etc., to attract national and international tourists. Another thing noticed in the survey that 37% of the population didn't have a website for their own only few of the population using the ICT in full extent. It is expected that the state government take necessary steps to provide training on use of ICT like designing websites with online transaction, feedback, updating of website, use of Multilanguage in their website portal etc., in future they can attract more customers from national and international as well as can increase the economic growth of the state.

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