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The Progress of ICT Applications in Destination Marketing in Emerging Economies

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Introduction

The growth of many emerging economies has been predominantly driven by the tourism industry. Many countries are competing to attract potential tourists with the advancement of information and communications technology (ICT), as it creates many new opportunities to open the market (Aslan et al., 2021; Almatourism, 2019). There are some fundamental changes in tourism products and services due to the acceleration and interaction between ICT and tourism that have an influence on tourist behaviour (Chen, 2020). The ICT revolution has had profound changes in the lives of people, organisations, and the positioning of the tourism destinations with the promotion of tourist

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attractions and products (Wagaw & Mulugeta, 2018). Information is the lifeblood of tourism; hence, timely and accurate information that is relevant to customers is key to tourism production and satisfaction of demand (Buhalis, 2003). One of the significant forces driving change in the tourism industry is information technology. Since the year 2000, people have been witnessing the real transformational effect of ICTs and the Internet. ICTs, thus, play a critical role in the competitiveness of tourism organisations and destinations, as well as in the entire industry as a whole (Buhalis, 2003).

The use of ICT applications has become the norm during the COVID-19 era with all the social distance restrictions. ICT innovations have altered not only the ways people search for information about destinations and purchase travel products but also how they experience, communicate, and perceive destinations (Buhalis, 2003). The proliferation of ICT, with particular emphasis on the Internet, presents new opportunities for the marketing of emerging destinations. The e-tourism concept involves all business operations, from e-marketing, e-commerce, and e-finance to e-procurement, e-accounting, e-R&D, and e-HRM (Buhalis, 2003). E-marketing is the use of information technology in the processes of creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers, and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organisation and its stakeholders.

The tourism industry is a dynamic service sector that faces tough competition globally, with constant changes in customers' demands and expectations. That is why innovation is important for the survival of destinations and tourism businesses. As in other sectors such as manufacturing, the survival of tourism companies depends on their innovation. Otherwise, their services or products may become absolute in the market. With the support of stakeholders' collaboration, the entrepreneurs can play a significant role through exploiting global opportunities to achieve the branding destination image (Burns et al., 2014; Del Chiappa & Presenza, 2013; Shams, 2016). Investing in ICT to improve customer services is always considered an innovation process in the tourism industry (Labanauskaitė et al., 2020). The scope of this chapter relates to the effects of ICTs on destination marketing in emerging economies. In the first part of the chapter, the nature and scope of e-tourism and v-tourism

the tourism industry during the post-pandemic and also to unleash the potential of emerging technologies to keep the business within revival plans.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The volatility of the world requires the tourism stakeholders to embrace advanced technologies such as AR and VR to enhance their positions within the industry and to develop new e-marketing strategies to attract tourists who are staying home longer due to the restrictions of travel and social distance. In view of the recent development of AR and VR, integrated tourism products can strongly influence the customer journey with interactive engagement to reach out and inspire potential customers. The development of AR and VR experiences in tourist destinations has enhanced the perceived value of such destinations and created memorable experiences. Emerging destinations and tourism businesses should focus on a holistic approach to gaining a deeper understanding of customer expectations in the immersive experience and interaction.

Many emerging economies have adopted many AR and VR integrations in the hotel and tourism industry, while tourism destinations in emerging economies are still in the infant stages. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the promotional strategies of many emerging destinations towards AR and VR integration to harmonise technology and the needs of tourists towards the survival and recovery of tourism businesses and destinations. Transformation in marketing tools will have a significant impact on all aspects of operations to enhance customer experience and attract diverse market segments. This chapter contributes to the existing literature on the evolution of AR and VR by comparing the recent and traditional dimensions of hospitality and tourism destinations. The potential of utilising AR and VR as marketing tools is discussed theoretically by highlighting the creation of immersive and interactive experiences in various tourism and hospitality products. This chapter provides practical implications for hotel managers, tour operators, destination marketers, and tourism development associations to leverage advanced technology as an emerging marketing tool to position