

Managing the Asian Century

Erkan Sezgin *Editor*

e-Consumers in the Era of New Tourism

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Managing the Asian Century

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e-Consumers in the Era of New Tourism

 Springer

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Eskişehir, Turkey

ISSN 2364-5857

ISSN 2364-5865 (electronic)

Managing the Asian Century

ISBN 978-981-10-0085-0

ISBN 978-981-10-0087-4 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-0087-4

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015960203

Springer Singapore Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

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Printed on acid-free paper

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(www.springer.com)

Foreword

During the last decade, rapid developments in information technologies have significantly changed how travelers make their travel arrangements. These days a large portion of travelers are utilizing the Internet for their information search and for making their bookings online rather than relying in brick-and-mortar travel agencies. Travelers use the Internet to access and process travel-related information, to buy tourism products and services, and to express their opinions about different tourism products. Furthermore, consumers are able to access a large amount of information from different online sources such as industry suppliers (e.g., hotels, airlines, and restaurants), intermediaries (e.g., travel agents), controllers (e.g., governments and administrative sectors), user-generated online social networks, and many nonprofit organizations (e.g., destination marketing organizations). This has significantly changed the hospitality and tourism landscape and the way hospitality and tourism businesses conduct their operations. This also resulted in a large investment in technology from hospitality and tourism businesses, which have enabled them to provide the information required by the market about their products on the Internet. Scholars argue that this drastic shift is likely to continue in the future, making online presence and information technology a more important success factor for hospitality and tourism business.

Therefore, this book fills a void on hospitality and tourism e-marketing and serves as a helpful resource for practitioners as well as scholars of e-marketing. It focuses on e-consumers and e-marketing in the area of hospitality and tourism business. The book mainly focuses on the role of technology in consumer decisionmaking process, in the production and delivery of a satisfactory tourism and travel experience, impact of technology on travelers' satisfaction, loyalty and e-complaint, and e-word of mouth behavior. This book also focuses on topics like mobile marketing in tourism, using gamification as a tool for marketing communication in tourism, and the usage of e-loyalty programs in hospitality industry. Chapters on these

topics are likely to provide critical knowledge that can be used by industry practitioners and students who study hospitality and tourism. Overall, this book, edited by Assoc. Professor Erkan Sezgin, can be used as an important supplemental resource for both the industry and academia.

Washington State University
September 2015

Doğan Gürsoy

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to Consumer Metamorphosis in the Digital Age

İnci Oya Coşkun and Hakan Yılmaz

Abstract The role and characteristics of the consumer has evolved through a series of economic, social and technological developments. The power to control the market has passed from the producer to the consumer. As Karl Marx acknowledged by the end of the nineteenth century, production and consumption are related with each other inevitably, inherently and dialectically. Prosumers create exchange value for the companies; therefore, they inspire a fundamental change in the economic system, and this change has significant implications for the production process. Technological developments such as the introduction of personal computers, the Internet, social media and mobile devices accelerated the digital revolution and the metamorphosis of consumers into a new type of prosumers. Developments based on digital technologies continue to draw the borders of a new world with unique characteristics and dynamics. Briefly, consumer behaviour is influenced by the digital revolution, and it changed the classical understanding on production.

Keywords Consumer • Prosumer • Technology • Digital age • Tourism

1.1 Evolution of Consumers to Prosumers

The role and characteristics of the consumer has evolved through a series of economic, social and technological developments. The power to control the market has passed from the producer to the consumer (Rezabakhsh et al. 2006). In fact, Karl Marx first acknowledged the beginning of this change in 1867. Marx (1867 [2001]) recognized that ‘production and consumption were inevitably, inherently and dialectically’ related with each other (Ritzer et al. 2012). This recognition has paved the way for Toffler (1980) to introduce a new wave of economics (Chandler and Chen 2015). In his book, *The Third Wave*, Toffler (1980) defined prosumer as a concept ‘blurring the distinction between a consumer and a producer’

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(Gerhardt 2008). In marketing studies, the term prosumer is used as an acronym for either ‘professional consumers’ or ‘producer consumers’. For the purposes of this chapter, the latter is considered.

The concept of consumers involved in the production process has long been investigated in the relevant literature. Except for mass production (a low-cost production approach with standardized products or services), several theories including mass customization (mass production of highly customized products according to consumer expectations) (Hara and Arai 2012) and personalization/individualization (co-production and co-creation) (Humphreys and Grayson 2008) relate to prosumers. In order to understand the underlying circumstances of this evolution better, historical background should be investigated. In this case, Toffler (1980)’s three waves of economic development enlighten the process.

In the ancient times, people were producing goods and trading them with other goods offered by other members of the community. They were acting as prosumers to provide necessary goods simply to live. This could be regarded as the primitive beginning of consumers transforming into prosumers. After the Industrial Revolution, during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the economy was utterly defined by production. Ritzer argued that production and consumption processes were separated by the prevailing conditions of the Industrial Revolution. Industrial age is characterized by rapid increases in the population, transition to modern production methods using new machines, farmers migrating to urban areas as factory workers and the rise of the capitalist system (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) also state that even Marx and Baudrillard, major theorists of production and consumption respectively, realized the symbiotic relationship between these two concepts. They acknowledged that if consumers were missing in the market, production would have no meaning at all and vice versa.

In the post-industrial age (the so-called third wave by Toffler), advances in technology increased free time and accelerated consumers shift to become prosumers (Xie et al. 2008). Post-industrial prosumers have specific needs and expectations, a different lifestyle supported by new economic, social and technological changes. In addition, unlike their ancestors, they do not get involved in production out of necessities, but they enjoy being a part of it (Humphreys and Grayson 2008).

1.1.1 Prosumers of the Digital Age

Prosumers create exchange value for the companies; therefore, they inspire a fundamental change in the economic system, and this change has significant implications for the production process. In the industrial age, within a marketplace that the consumer had no other options, mass production was a viable and an efficient way of producing standardized goods with lower costs. However, as the free time and disposable income increased, consumers developed new tastes and expectations; they became unsatisfied by these standard products or services and asked for more. Then,

companies introduced mass customization, a way to keep the low costs of mass production in addition to involving the consumers in design and/or production phases (Hara and Arai 2012). After 1950s, technological developments such as the introduction of personal computers, the Internet, social media and mobile devices accelerated the digital revolution and the metamorphosis of consumers into a new type of prosumers.

The prosumers of the digital age have a complex lifestyle, combining work, and an active family life, adopting every kind of technology and embracing innovation and globalization (Gerhardt 2008). New communication channels such as social media, mobile communications and other Internet-based technologies provide the information they need, and they utilize this information to transform the marketplace on their behalf.

Today, it is all about information, as Egger (2011) states that ‘almost every aspect of life has become dependent on the quality and availability of information’. Information is an important element for all industries, but a crucial one for the service industry. Since services are intangible, experiential and perishable, information plays a significant role on the consumer experience. The content provided by the service companies determines the experiences of the consumers about the service not only during utilization, but also prior and subsequent to it (Stickdorn and Zehrer 2009).

1.1.2 *Tourism Industry in the Digital Age*

Tourism, as a service industry, has discovered the effects of information on tourist experiences. Tourism industry has always embraced the rise of new technologies, for example, the computer reservation systems (CRSs), the global distribution systems (GDSs) and the Internet. The dynamic structure of the industry allows both producers and consumers to react instantly to developments. ‘Experience’ and ‘value’ are the two outstanding concepts for the modern tourism industry. Generic and market-specific features affect prosumers of the tourist market. Niezgodna (2013) summarizes these features as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Generic and market-specific features of tourism prosumers (Niezgodna 2013)

Generic features	Market-specific features
Free time increase	Tourism product complexity
Unsynchronized work, mobility and relaxation	Tourist market trend towards individualization
Consumer behaviour individualized corresponding to the good or service	Co-creation of values and expectations through interactions among consumers and companies
Knowledge increased by experience and education	Tourist expectations and needs constantly changing

Salvado et al. (2011) encapsulates the demographics of the new prosumers, i.e. more individualistic, involved, independent, more conscious of their power and rights, expecting more convenience, authenticity and credibility due to shortage of time, greater life expectancy and increased environmental concerns. These characteristics demand more interaction and response to expectations. Most of the tourists have the opportunity to take single vacations within a year, so they have only one chance to be satisfied by the service provided. Since it is impossible to compensate a bad experience during their holidays, they are willing to get involved with the design and production processes as well as to help the companies in producing personalized experiences. Digital media has become an indispensable source for creating positive experiences through the interaction between producers and prosumers of the tourism industry.

Generational differences provide clues on how the expectations of tourists evolved through time, in addition to the differences between the prosumers of the former and the new era. Before identifying the tourist behaviour based on the generational differences, basic characteristics of different generations are to be comprehended, and they are listed as follows (Li et al. 2013):

- Traditionalists (or the silent generation) were born between 1930 and 1945. They appreciate discipline, hard work, loyalty and self-denial. They prefer status quo rather than change.
- Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964, right after the World War II. They are defined as a generation of optimism, exploration and achievement, since they have better life conditions than the traditionalists. They value individual choice and community involvement.
- Generation Xers were born between 1961 and 1976. They are described as individuals with independent spirits, sceptical and non-committal. Recognition of their needs as individuals is important. They value quality of work and life.
- Generation Ys were born between 1977 and 1995. They are confident, comfortable in embracing new technologies, self-reliant, ambitious and eager for challenges. They are globally oriented and care about self-expression.
- Generation Zs were born after mid-1990s. They are defined to be creative, worldly, over protected and communitarian digital and social natives.

All these generations have distinctive consumer behaviour, because they all have different lifestyles and conditions in addition to different environmental circumstances. For example, traditionalists appreciate hard work, because they were born in a crisis era and they were taught to work hard and save money. It affects their travel decisions, appreciating the chance they tend to take longer trips out of the country or region. Baby boomers were born after the war so they care about optimism and community involvement. They had children at their early ages, and because of that, they favour quality time with their family away from home. Baby boomers are frequent travellers, most likely for business purposes.

Even if they did not see any critical one, Generation Xers were affected by the conflicts around the world. They value life; therefore, they try to balance their work and family lives and more likely to go on holidays with their children. Generation

Ys were born into a digitalized world, and that makes them more curious and at the same time more familiar with destinations as they have access to a wide range of communication channels. As Generation Zs are at their early youth, they do not have the financial opportunities; however, as they are almost born digital, they are expected to care about their leisure time and integrate enjoying free time with their lives.

These brief explanations on generational differences show how technology, in fact digitalization, affects tourist behaviour. The metamorphosis of consumers into prosumers is likely to be more evident in the future by certain tools of digital transformation. Companies are likely to be more creative in the production process to allow consumers to vocalize their own expectations. The important aspects of digital transformation and their use in marketing communication are worth investigating.

1.2 Digital Transformation

Developments based on digital technologies continue to draw the borders of a new world with unique characteristics and dynamics. In such an environment, company's ability to survive and meet consumers' needs and expectations depends on their understanding of the rules of the digital world and acting in accordance. In other words, companies that are aware of the effects of rapidly developing social media networks and mobile tools on consumers' lifestyles, consumption habits and by extension consumer behaviour should also be aware that they need to review their strategies.

Unlike the middle aged, who can be described as 'digital immigrants', the young, who were born into the Internet era and can be characterized as 'digital natives', are able to think fast and act fast (Weber 2007). Two important concepts are encouraging the digital revolution: Interactivity and personalization.

Tourism, from a supply and demand perspective, is an area that creates cultural exchange opportunities for its participants. Interaction between participants is the architect of this exchange. Interactivity can be construed to mean the individual becoming active participants in the events around them rather than being passive observers. In interactivity, the individuals' activity is important. In interactive communications' environment, it is technically possible to send and receive individualized messages through a central program. It is also possible for each receiver to become a potential transmitter. It can be said that interactivity is a concept that transforms a viewer into a user.

Interactivity can be achieved in different ways in the digital media. First one is person-person interactive communication. This refers to two individuals who are separated by time and distance being able to undertake a verbal, non-verbal, written or visual communication process. The second is person-mass interaction. It is a type of communication where an individual, depending on the capabilities of the communications technology being employed, is able to direct the communication process without being hampered by temporal or spatial differences. The final type is

individual-technology/content interaction. Here, the individual is able to manipulate the content of the communication technology according to his needs, wants, expectations and interests.

In a world where one size does not fit all, technology is able to offer choices that fit everybody's wants and needs. This refers to personalization. Solomon (2003) mentioned a twofold benefit to personalization. This holds true for the tourism industry too. Personalization offers benefits for both the company and the tourist. From the business perspective, personalization prevents, at least partially, imitation by competitors helping the offerings be unique and strengthening the relationship with consumers. From the consumer's perspective, personalization increases the control the customer has on the goods and services purchased.

With the digital revolution, a number of concepts have influenced consumer behaviour. These concepts represent new technologies or ways of deploying and employing these technologies. These are social media, mobile communications and cloud computing.

1.2.1 Social Media

When media is mentioned, radio, television, cinema, printed materials as books and magazines, photographs and advertisements are first to come to mind. Media concept defines tools and methods used to communicate large amounts of messages to audiences across time and space (Vaast et al. 2013). In the information age, this type of media content consumption can be seen as old habits. Although media use and consumption have essentially remained the same, use of content has changed dramatically. Media is undergoing change. Developments in media technology are causing media content to diversify and change. It has transformed traditional media usage and consumption (Kietzmann et al. 2011). A new media concept based on digital technologies has emerged. Digital refers to everything being converted into numeric or digital form in new media tools. Social media platforms are one of the principle tools of this new media.

Since social media strategies have brought many innovations that affect consumer behaviour, it has become an important part of marketing (Anderson 2010). Social media's ability to offer multidirectional, interactive, peer to peer communications has a large role in this. The famous saying by Marshal McLuhan from 1965 'There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew' (Vallero 2005: 367) refers to social media. In the social media, also everyone becomes a part of the process. Everyone has been transformed into content producers. Consumers are able to share their experiences (Dave and McKee 2010). Having empirical information shared and transferred over the Internet is transforming social media into a very important concept.

Social media is different from traditional media in terms of sustainability, measurability and openness. This brings a new dimension to discussions about the effects of marketing communications over traditional media channels on consumer

behaviour (Anderson 2010). This effect depends on the content created and shared by consumers on social media and tends to increase the share of communication campaigns.

Social media is the right address for interaction between companies and consumers. Users who follow companies are able to get information about goods and services and take advantage of special offers presented over social media.

People are able to share random thoughts and develop new ideas through discussion (Weber 2007). The ability of social media to be updated in real time and people's acceptance of information presented through it and impartial increase the trust placed on social media, increased effectiveness on consumer behaviour (Dave and McKee 2010). Thanks to social media, consumers are able to speak to each other in addition to listening to each other. This enables individual consumers to spread their response, positive or negative, and affect the reputation of the company. Contemporary consumers are more aware of this power that social media gives them, and it increases the tendency to voice their demands on companies.

Lazarsfeld et al., in their research about the effects of media on voting behaviour, found that face-to-face communication and intergroup communication are more effective than media (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955). This led to the discovery that mass media does not directly affect people; rather, the effect is through opinion leaders of the social groups of which one is a member of. Accordingly, opinion leaders interpret the messages delivered through the mass media and spread this interpretation in their personal social network (Karlsen 2015: 302). When these effects are taken into account, it can be concluded that media is not all powerful, but that interpersonal communications are still important. The process of media messages reaching audiences indirectly, through opinion leaders, is called the 'two-step flow of communication' (Dave and McKee 2010).

Social media brought back the idea of multistep flow of communication into prominence once more. Indeed, opinion leaders, who Lazarsfeld and friends found, played the most principle role in intergroup interactions within the social environment and the communications process play the same role in the social media and cyberspace. Developments in media technologies and social life have made multi-stage flow models in communication relevant again (Bennett and Manheim 2006). Opinion leaders form the basis of communication flow in the social media. This makes them immensely important for social networks and related structure as social media phenomenon opinion leaders directly or indirectly shape consumer behaviour according to their worldview in their role as respected leaders and trusted sources.

The number of consumers who consult or consider the opinion leaders with a large number of followers regarding certain goods or services categories is increasing. This drives companies to place importance on opinion leaders. Many companies have even established social media departments to monitor these users.

Social media has a great amount of influence on consumers' shopping habits. One of the most important tools for this influence is interaction. Compared to traditional media, new media has penetrated everyday lives deeper and has become more accessible.

Social media reinforces relationships by removing spatial and temporal impediments to interaction. Today, many consumers interact and communicate with companies and among themselves through social media platforms. These platforms offer many benefits that are able to influence consumers' purchasing and decision-making behaviour directly (Kietzmann et al. 2011). First, these platforms accelerate the primary necessity of decision-making process, accessing information. Being able to access the right information quickly at the right time decreases costs. In addition, being able to evaluate competitors, the utility provided by the good or service, in light of comments and reviews by previous users is another important factor affecting the consumer behaviour. Through integration of various apps and software, facilitating booking and payment directly influences consumer behaviour.

Social media will be more intertwined with real life and become an increasing part of daily life. Public opinion will be formed through sharing personal and special experiences. An impressive tweet about a hotel whose service was satisfying will be more effective than a made-up news about the hotel or an expensive advertisement.

1.2.2 Mobile Communication and Cloud Computing

Cloud computing, or online information distribution by its functional name, is a general name given to services that enable sharing information through technology. It creates a commensurate relationship between the supplier and the consumer that was previously impossible. Knowing how to position themselves in this inevitable evolution towards a digital culture is one of the smartest business moves. Being aware of developments in the cloud and understanding possible directions of the evolution are indispensable for sustainability strategies in the new era.

All sectors will be affected with the mobile evolution including production, retail, logistics, health, energy, agriculture, media and entertainment sector. With the help of mobile cloud application, it will be possible to access to any data from anywhere. The Internet will be an unavoidable part of our lives, and globalization and competition will also increase (Sharma 2010). The mobile platforms of the future will penetrate into tourism sector more, and new technologies will offer new experiences to their users.

Cloud computing which will change the workings of many industries will also affect the tourism industry. It is clear that both tourism companies and tourists will be affected by this development. Cloud computing provides new software and application that socialize and facilitate online hotel reservations, purchasing and travel planning processes to the tourism industry. Hotels and travel agencies are able to accept reservations from all online channels like websites, mobile apps and social media platforms like Facebook. In addition, tourists are able to choose the most suitable alternative through various payment systems.

In the recent period, which can be characterized as digital evolution, the changes brought forth in the sociocultural structure by technology have brought a new dimension to marketing communication as it has in all other domains. Compounded by intensely competitive market conditions, product-centred approach of traditional marketing has left its place to a new marketing system where consumer is given centre stage (Solomon 2003). In the new consumer-focused marketing approach, the main issue for the brand is reaching the consumers, impressing them and increasing brand loyalty.

Digital marketing is not a selling method; rather, it is a process of association and communication to achieve increase in sales by the results obtained. Digital marketing has brought advantages like accessing new sources of competitive advantage, distribution models without intermediaries, supply chain optimization, developing new business models, being able to target previously unserved subsegments, utilizing market more effectively and more honest and transparent market cycle (Krum 2010).

Technological singularity is referring to a point where machines have the capability to simulate humans. This also means that machines will be able to assist humans in complex processes. Here machines will be able to collect data by taking into consideration the tourist behaviour and remove the confusion of tourists in decision-making processes or offer alternatives that tourists are not aware of yet. It is clear that cloud computing will influence tourist behaviour through the software offered. The developments in digital technologies have great effects on consumers and the consumers world, consumption habits and values change and will continue to change radically.

It is not possible for tourism companies to ignore the effects of instant messaging services like the highly popular WhatsApp on tourist behaviour. With the interest users are showing in applications that facilitate communications with people who they already have contacts with, the importance of SMS is diminishing, and its utility for tourism companies in communication with tourists is becoming debatable along, while its use diminishes.

1.2.3 Value

Value is a critical element in consumers' consumption and decision-making behaviour. Value can be defined as a subjective measure of importance, what something is worth or price. Therefore, since value is equivalence, it needs to be measurable. The concept of value arises when in a transaction between a buyer and seller, the utility attained is greater than the utility foregone. In other words, value can only exist when both parties feel happy for attaining more utility than the foregone alternative or the spent effort (Williams and Soutar 2009: 416).

The philosophy of 'think global act local', resulting from changes imposed on consumer behaviour by globalization, will find reciprocity in the digital world too. This will result in users from different cultures being offered customizations

appropriate to their cultures. One of the most effective ways of touching people's yearnings, meeting their needs and establishing good relationships lies in real or imagined brand ambassadors who personify brands establishing effective communications with people (Gobe 2002).

Doyle (2008) examines value in three dimensions. These are financial value creators, marketing value creator and organizational value creators. Financial value creators are objectives a company wants to achieve, but are not strategy. Marketing strategy is the most vital point of value-creating activities. Marketing strategy helps determine which consumers will be served and the advantages that will cause consumers to choose the offerings. Organizational value creators depend on appropriate organizational structure for attaining goals, organizational culture, organizational capabilities, relationships and shared values.

In this context, the role of the brand in creating consumer value is very important. Brands, which have been able to establish emotional connections in people's lives, are those which are able to meet consumers' principle expectations since people feel the need to trust and believe in brands (Solomon 2003). If companies want their brands to be liked by people, they need to be careful for behaving in this manner. In a process such as this, brands act as bridges that lessen the differences between cultures and people (Arvidsson 2006).

Emotional branding represents a deep social development and changes in consumer preferences and needs. Corporations establishing a good relationship by offering consumers' value and caring about consumers' values can attain a more meaningful dialogue and access an unlimited source of information. Consumers trust and appreciate brands that offer value but also want them to be more responsible. Therefore, many companies are making changes in their brand-related stories to give more prominence to value-based utilities in order to respond to consumer expectations.

Today, digital communications are moving away from being a reflection of traditional communication to become a principle communication platform. Brands are moving to communication strategies focusing on sharing the values they offer with consumers over digital and social media. The best way of utilizing technology as a marketing tool is presenting people entertaining and functional solutions. By letting people access commercial messages when they want to, they are able to form the most effective way of communicating with a volunteer audience (Gobe 2002).

1.3 Conclusion

The metamorphosis of prosumers in the new tourism era is based mostly and evidently on the technological developments. Especially, the developments in the digital age have influenced the consumer behaviour as well as the marketing strategies of companies. There is a new opportunity for companies to reach out to larger audiences with special focuses and to maintain consumer involvement in the design and production processes.

In this era, it is certain that companies, which create appropriate marketing strategies and embrace the efficiency of digital technologies, will be successful. Since every generation has a prominent characteristic, the next generation is expected to be born digital, and this means without using social media and other new communication channels, regarding the importance of values and experiences, creating new ideas and adopting new technologies, a company cannot survive.

Digital age has accelerated the transformation and existence of prosumers; hence, it created an environment that the consumers have the means to transfer their ideas on how the product would satisfy their needs. In addition, the companies now have the necessary information to adapt their products based on the needs and expectations of the consumers.

As a service industry, tourism evidently needs consumer feedback and support to create services that are more convenient. Furthermore, tourism is a global business, and it certainly requires companies to understand the global vision and adjust new strategies to a constantly changing world. Embracing new technologies of the digital age; using every possible source to get feedback from the proactive consumers willing to share their ideas, needs and expectations; and offering them new products seem to be the best ways for tourism companies to accommodate this new concept of globalization.

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Chapter 2

Mobile Communication and Applications in Tourism

Hakan Yılmaz and Serkan Olgac

Abstract Mobile communication has increasingly become a part of daily life. Tourism industry, as all other industries, has been affected by the advances in mobile communication. Because almost all definitions of tourism are based on travelling from one place to another for various purposes, the term ‘mobile’ is used as synonym for the words portable and moving. In this context, mobility is in the nature of tourism. Mobile communication, although currently not at the desired stage, will have a growing role in tourism. In today’s world, airlines, travel agencies, tour operators and hospitality businesses develop mobile applications and new business processes that take advantage of mobile technologies. This chapter attempts to reveal the relationship between mobile communication and applications in tourism.

Keywords Mobile communication • Mobile applications • Mobile Technology • Tourism industry applications

2.1 Introduction

Technological developments bring innovations in tourism industry, just as it does in all other industries. Almost all definitions of tourism are based on travelling from one place to another for various purposes. The term ‘mobile’ is used as synonym for the words portable and moving. In this context, mobility is the nature of tourism. As the mobility of information technologies and tourism merges, the importance of mobile communication in tourism becomes an important issue.

Mobile devices, which focused on data transfer speeds in the past, have transformed into a mobile computing platform complementing and sometimes replacing personal computers (Bose and Xi 2007). The rising popularity of mobile personal communication devices has found response in the tourism industry in form of applications and services to carry the traditional tourism services into the mobile domain. All these developments gave rise to widespread utilization of mobile communication devices instead of computers in tourism.

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Twenty-first century is also called the 'mobile age' (Kalakota and Marcia 2001). Propagation of mobile devices and technologies is taking place at a very rapid pace; currently, the number of mobile phones and devices has surpassed those of land lines (Lindgren et al. 2002). The increased penetration of mobile technologies in everyday life has caused major transformations in daily life, one of the most visible being the transformation of shopping habits. Persuading tourists to adapt mobile shopping behaviour is closely related to mobile communication technologies, which is ever increasing in prominence. The traditional mobile technology use behaviour that centred on keyword searches on the Internet is being transformed into new dynamic forms that centre on mobile apps developed for specific purposes.

One of the main factors that is making the mobile revolution possible is the advance of wireless connectivity technologies. With ever increasing bandwidth, which translates into faster connection speeds, the possibilities offered by mobile communications increase. One specific example is the transformation of e-commerce into m-commerce made possible by increased propagation of mobile technologies and devices (Tsai and Gururajan 2005). M-commerce is a type of e-commerce where technologies deployed are mobile communications and computing technologies (Lim and Siau 2003).

Presently, mobile communication is a concept that is fundamentally important for tourists and tourism businesses alike. Mobile application, which is one of the most visible benefits provided by mobile communication technologies, is presenting a previously unexplored vista of opportunities for tourists and businesses. Through mobile applications, today's tourists are able to fulfil needs that previously required assistance from travel agents, tour guides or printed travel guidebooks or maps. Using mobile devices, they are able to book flights, make hotel reservations, buy tickets for events and attractions and undertake virtually guided tours at various destinations along with a number of touristic services that traditionally required human-human interactions. This translates into convenience for the tourist and lower cost for the tourism business and ultimately can be translated into higher quality for both.

M-commerce applications, which represent commercial implementation of mobile communication, also present new job opportunities for tourism industry. Businesses, which exploit these opportunities more successfully, can improve their business processes by integrating mobile technologies, going as far as transforming all processes to include mobile communications (Lindgren et al. 2002). Integrating mobile communications into business processes is a prerequisite for businesses wishing to solidify their footing in markets made up of mobile communication users. This ultimately translates into unique mobile work processes that can lead to competitive advantage.

The information, services and applications available on the Internet have been increasing daily. Tourists' accelerating use of mobile applications is caused by the need to access accurate information quickly from this ever increasing mass of information. Tourists employing various mobile applications and services tend to customize their experience depending on their needs. Thanks to possibilities offered by rapidly advancing communication technologies, m-commerce is encompassing

every phase of travel and tourism. Shifts in sociocultural values caused by technological innovation are a major cause of this expansion (Krum 2010).

Mobile communications have provided the dynamics and impetus for a new and unique transformation in the context of social media. As new applications are developed, they need to take into consideration social media integration. As social media is a vast area that is taken into consideration in a separate chapter, this chapter does not dwell into it in detail. In today's world, sustainability for tourism businesses through meeting the needs and expectations of consumers hinges on adapting to mobile communications. In other words, businesses who fail to adapt their processes and strategies to this new world will face greater challenges in the future. The new virtual environments created through these technologies are no longer considered simple simulations of the real world but are becoming alternative venues for real-world interactions. Businesses who wish to have a place in this new world need to continuously monitor and adapt developments and innovations in the domain of mobile communications. Therefore, all actors in the value chain of mobile communications need to better understand their roles and positions. It is becoming more important than ever to foresee the moves of consumers and suppliers.

2.2 Characteristics of Mobile Communication

There are distinctive characteristics of mobile communication. These characteristics can be listed under the following subheadings:

- *Ubiquity*: Ubiquity refers to users benefitting from services and carrying out transactions independent of their geographical locations (Lim and Siau 2003). This is a very important characteristic for tourism. In a world where travelling is becoming more and more common, the tools which make it possible to carry information and access to such tools anywhere or anytime make the exchange of information easier than ever. This is also used to mean anywhere. Tourists benefit from mobile communication facilities as a first aid in the process of overcoming the obstacles that they face in their destinations. For example, when tourists want to buy flight tickets, they can compare the prices of different airlines with the help of relevant mobile applications no matter where they are.
- *Immediacy*: This feature is closely related to being ready all the time and in every place (Tiwari et al. 2008). Immediacy means the possibility of benefitting from services in real time. This implies that there is no delay between the occurrence of the event, the transfer of the data and the receiving of the data on the other side of the line except for latencies caused by the network (Bose and Xi 2007). Immediacy is a necessity for services concerning time and for services that require rapid reactions. For example, tourists can make reservations for an activity, which they plan to go in advance using the immediacy characteristic. Tourists have the opportunity to buy the service and product when they really need them. This characteristic makes it possible to make the purchase as soon as they intend

to buy. This helps a business finalize a critical process for their favour. When mobile communication lacks immediacy, tourists may either give up or change their decision to buy as the duration between the intention for buying and the action of buying expands.

- *Localization*: Technologies such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) make it possible for businesses to take the location of their customer into consideration in their product and service presentation (Tiwari et al. 2008). Thus, localized services help deliver the services and contents appropriate for the needs and desires suitable for where the consumers are. Geolocation is most commonly used by car rental companies in the tourism industry. Besides, this technology also has relevant applications for pedestrians and other vehicles.
- *Instant connectivity*: Mobile Internet services offered through current mobile network systems allow for instant and constant connection to the network; in other words, they are always online. That keeps consumers always connected to their network providers (Bose and Xi 2007). For example, tourists may find answers to what/where they can eat out instantly. In addition, they can also read the reviews and experiences of other people to make the most accurate decision.
- *Proactive functionality*: Thanks to the advantages of mobile communications such as being immediate, local and customized, new applications are offered in the marketing of products and services. Before approving the request to join a mobile programme, mobile service users' approval should be obtained (opt-in advertising) (Tiwari et al. 2008). Thus, mobile service users can access information about a brand sharing their cell phone numbers and some other personal details required. Short Message Service (SMS) can be used to send tourists informative messages about the most appropriate services in their locations. This really helps deliver the right information to the right person at the right place. Thus, tourist may access to the information they need without any delay.
- *Simple authentication procedure*: Mobile communication tools may be connected to networks of service providers through subscriber identity module (SIM) in the form of electronic cards. Clients are automatically identified by operators, thanks to this coding system (Bose and Xi 2007). Codes are put on SIM cards by operators to prevent the use of the service by others (Personal Identification Number–PIN). Thanks to the integrated use of solutions for consumer identification, the process of client identification does not take much time, and it turns into a simple and easy way of eliminating complex and unnecessary procedures.

2.3 Benefits of Mobile Communication

Mobile technologies that make access to information fast and easy from anywhere, at any time, and make it possible to deliver information to many users, force business to develop new strategies and to change their business processes. They also make it easier for businesses to most economically deliver their products and services to any

part of the world in the shortest time (Krum 2010). This is especially true for the tourism businesses which have started to use mobile application as service outlets. Tourists who are the end users can benefit from these developments. Therefore, it can be suggested that mobile communication offers benefits for both tourism businesses and tourists. It should be kept in mind that all the benefits offered by mobile communication are delivered through mobile applications.

2.3.1 Advantages for Suppliers

Tourism business should not consider mobile communication solely, as a part of their marketing strategy. Businesses can differentiate from rivals by developing innovative and distinct applications. Businesses also have the opportunity to update the products and services that they offer in real time over mobile communication networks (Lindgren et al. 2002). Tourism businesses can also market complementary products and services through cross-selling. They can deliver information to motivate buying during the consumers' shopping process.

Using mobile communications gives businesses an opportunity to sell their products and services across different languages (Paavilainen 2002). Additionally, some applications make it possible to establish direct communication with tourists. Business can easily and immediately learn about what tourists need and how they react to offerings with the help of mobile communication (Krum 2010). Thus, it becomes possible to take necessary precautions before problems arise and new ideas for products and services can be derived from consumers' experience and feedback. In a sense, tourists' demands can be foreseen before the needs and wants underlying the innovation emerge.

Business records the information of visitors and shoppers of their products and services. This information is later used for delivering information about new products and services and other promotional communications. This helps establish and maintain long-term relationships with consumers.

Mobile communication also facilitates business-business communication in the tourism industry. For example, electronic reservation delivery systems between tour operators, travel agents and hotels save time and minimize errors. Mobile apps designed to be used for administrative and managerial processes need to be simple and concise. In addition, website content load and loading latencies are important factors to take into consideration in mobile communications.

2.3.2 Advantages for Tourists

Tourists are able to purchase goods and services they want through their mobile phones. Mobile technologies also enable integration between various forms of information technologies in browsing and purchasing behaviours. From the tourists' perspective, mobile apps first and foremost simplify shopping by offering the

ability to browse, choose, purchase and pay for online purchases anytime anywhere (Paavilainen 2002). Thus, information search, which is said to be the most troublesome factor in shopping for tourism services, becomes much more simplified (Lindgren et al. 2002). Using mobile communications, consumers can compare the content, prices and properties of products and services instantly.

Mobile application can deliver customized content reflecting the characteristics of tourists. Thanks to this customized information content, users are able to access targeted, concise messages, which they are more receptive to. The fact that tourists use their own devices in mobile communication processes is also another advantage, as they do not have to adopt to other devices. Business should not force tourists to use technologies that have not been widely adopted just for the sake of using the latest technology. Complicated and novel high technologies will only hinder communication.

When tourists try to visit attractions in destinations, they may face ticket ques, especially if the attraction is a popular one. Thanks to mobile apps, these ques can be avoided and tourists can purchase tickets ahead of time. This will translate into happy, satisfied tourists. Tourists may be informed of promotions regarding the destination, and since these information messages will be targeted messages with customized content, they will avoid unnecessary message bombardments.

2.4 Development of Mobile Communication

Mobile communication is made possible with integrated deployment of technologies like embedded systems, databases and security systems. Mobile hardware, mobile software and wireless networks enable faster data transfer and processing, quicker user positioning and safer processes in m-commerce systems (Paavilainen 2002). Key technologies contributing to the development of mobile communications which increase their performance and functionality are chronologically listed below.

Figure 2.1 presents the developmental stages of mobile communication technologies.

The first-generation (1G) wireless technology consists of analogue mobile phone networks. Second generation (2G) consists of digital cell phone networks benefiting from wireless technology with limited bandwidth, and it was the first widely deployed mobile communication system as suggested by its name, Global System for Mobile (GSM) communications (Krum 2010). Third-generation (3G) wireless technologies offer higher bandwidth for the mobile devices compatible with applications requiring higher data use (Lim and Siau 2003). Fourth (4G) and fifth (5G) generations are the next generations looking for new solutions to mobile communication.



Fig. 2.1 Development of mobile communication technologies

2.5 Mobile Marketing in Tourism

Following the rapid development and widespread adoption, mobile technologies have found a place in marketing. Mobile communication tools have become indispensable in our daily lives; hence, marketing experts consider these technologies as presenting new opportunities and a new field of marketing.

2.5.1 Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing represents activities carried out using the consumers' mobile devices through a network connection (Kaplan 2012). Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) defines mobile marketing as a marketing method where companies carry out their advertisement and sales promotion activities through mobile channels for their target audiences (MMA 2015). Mobile marketing also comprises all branding activities carried out to trigger consumers purchasing behaviour through mobile channels (Krum 2010). According to another definition, mobile marketing is the marketing activity carried out through a mobile device (Pirnar 2013). According to these explanations, mobile marketing can be defined as a new type of marketing in which mobile devices are utilized for advertising and sales activities establishing an interactive communication with consumers.

Since mobile devices are portable, they help companies contact consumers anytime and anywhere. Therefore, marketing activities can be carried out easier and quicker than traditional channels (Artuğer et al. 2014). Contrary to popular belief, it is easy to apply mobile communication since it is enough to have SMS (Short Message Service) service, digital advertising or mobile advertising service to prepare and execute a mobile marketing campaign.

Mobile marketing campaigns are much more effective than traditional marketing campaigns in converting mobile users into customers. Moreover, it has lower costs than traditional methods, and it is easier for customers to access mobile campaigns compared to other methods (Hopkins and Turner 2012).

Contemporarily, quality of relationships established with consumers has become a significant measure directly affecting sales and brand image (Karaca and Gülmez 2010). Mobile services offer strong marketing potential for companies to communicate with their customers anytime and anywhere they want (Dickinger et al. 2004).

2.5.2 Development of Mobile Marketing

Mobile communication sector that is supported by information and communication technologies has attracted countries because of its added value and has become indispensable with its potential (Krum 2010). According to the report for ‘the Global Internet Usage Trends’ prepared by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the number of people connecting to the Internet will be 3.2 billion, and the forecasts indicate that two billion people will have Internet access in developing countries by 2015. The world population is estimated as 7.4 billion, so it can be suggested that one out of two persons will have Internet connection by the end of 2015.

European households are ranked first in Internet usage with a rate of 82.1 %, followed by Americans with 60 %. Individual Internet coverage is 77.6 % and 66 %, respectively. Mobile broadband usage rates show that Europe takes the first place with 78.2 %, followed by the USA with a rate of 77.6 %. These statistics can be interpreted as 78 out of 100 people has subscribed for a mobile broadband. Even the lowest rate is 17.4 % for Africa. The use of mobile broadband has increased 12-fold in the world since 2007 (ITU 2015). These statistics have significant meanings for mobile marketing, since the increase in the number of people using mobile phones makes it indispensable for companies to implement or increase mobile marketing applications (Şanlıöz et al. 2013).

Tourism is an important industry with considerable direct and indirect effects on the general economy. Mobile marketing campaigns are becoming more commonplace in the tourism industry, as with all other industries. The number of online bookings on smartphones through travel agencies has increased to a significant level. Mobile marketing is especially effective on last minute bookings.

According to the report of ‘Mobile Commerce’ released in the last quarter of 2014 by Criteo, a performance marketing technologies company, 66 % of the mobile travel bookings are carried out through smartphones. TripAdvisor’s comprehensive research in 2013 indicates that consumers use Internet access even when they are on holiday and 51 % of them use their mobile phones. Holidaymakers use the Internet to benefit from the activities nearby (33 %), to get information about destinations (26 %). As 72 % of them have positive attitude about reservation opportunities through mobile applications, 54 % of the holidaymakers demand hotels to switch to mobile environment (Tripadvisor 2013).

2.5.3 Characteristics of Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing is carried out through mobile devices; therefore, the users carrying their mobile devices with them and keeping them online ensures access of marketers to consumers. Today, consumer profiles are changing constantly with an increasing emphasis on having limited time. Thus, in their marketing activities, companies aim at establishing direct relations with the consumers independent of time and space (Hesselborn and Fremuth 2005).

Mobile marketing is a marketing method, which allows determining target markets, organizing campaigns which deliver messages and measuring outcomes instantly (Krum 2010). Unlike traditional marketing methods, the aim of mobile marketing is to establish contact directly with the consumers. Accordingly, instead of accessing large crowds through mass media, mobile marketing uses a direct marketing approach utilizing customized messages through mobile devices. With this approach, mobile marketing becomes cost-efficient and facilitates accessing target markets instantly.

One of the significant characteristics of mobile marketing is that it is measurable, and it is effective in raising brand awareness of consumers. By means of customized messages, measuring the effectiveness and collecting and reporting data on the number of recipients, participation rate and sales volume become possible. In addition, personalized messages are much more effective in raising brand awareness as the messages are customized to the individuals in the target market.

Mobile marketing uses a permission-based approach to marketing. An acknowledgement message is sent to the target market, and permission is obtained for further messages. As consumers have consented to receiving messages, this process increases the success of the campaign. As mobile marketing has an interactive structure, customers can actively be involved in the process. In this respect, mobile marketing applications can be either unilateral, from the company to consumers, or bilateral through the participation of consumers. Another characteristic of mobile marketing is that, by using the consumer information, it saves time and space to determine which message will be sent to whom and when, and thus it enhances the effectiveness of the campaign.

To summarize, mobile marketing is a more cost-efficient, quick, measurable, bilateral, customized method compared to direct marketing and other methods. Mobile marketing differentiates by rectifying the shortcomings of other methods and provides an important communication method for the companies to access their target markets (Arslan and Arslan 2012).

2.5.4 Mobile Marketing Tools

Companies employ mobile marketing tools frequently, as these applications make it possible to access larger audiences more effectively with lower costs compared to the traditional methods. These tools are listed and explained below.

2.5.4.1 Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Message Service (MMS)

Short Message Service (SMS) is the most widely used tool in mobile marketing. SMS is defined as sending and receiving plain text messages consisting up to 160 characters through mobile phones. These messages have been the most successful mobile marketing tool for companies (Hopkins and Turner 2012).

Multimedia Message Service (MMS), on the other hand, is considered as a text message in which pictures, music and video files can be added, with no character constraints as SMS. It is possible to send text messages with picture or video files without any loss in quality, captured either with a digital camera or with any other device. With lower marketing costs than television or radio, MMS has higher rates of return and client interaction. Besides, marketing through messages including visuals in addition to texts increases the sales rates and customer loyalty to products and services.

In the tourism industry, SMS and MMS are commonly used by hotels to increase their sales. An example of hotels benefiting from SMS and MMS tools would be Gunstock Mountain Resort, which organized a campaign lasting for four months. During the campaign, the company sent SMS to its loyal customers and earned 1000 US dollars per campaign (Şanlıöz et al. 2013). Companies generally prefer to send SMS and MMS about promotions, discounts, events and meals. Travel agencies prefer to send messages about discounts, delays or cancellations in addition.

2.5.4.2 Mobile Websites

Mobile Internet, defined as a system, which helps users to access mobile contents (MMA 2011), has increased its popularity within the last decade. This popularity led to the evolution of mobile websites that simplify Internet use on mobile devices.

Mobile websites are similar to ordinary browser-based websites; however, they connect through Wi-Fi, 3G or 4G networks. Their distinction from a browser-based website is that they are designed for touch-screen features of mobile devices (Summerfield 2015). A standard website can be viewed on a mobile device; however, some features may be unavailable or may not be practical for the user. Mobile websites are designed to fit smaller screens of the mobile devices and to be navigated by touch. When designing a mobile website, one should consider using smaller pages, simpler design and brief content to make it quicker to load and easier to understand (Hopkins and Turner 2012).

2.5.4.3 Mobile Coupons

Mobile coupons are electronic tickets sent to mobile phones that users can use for discounts when they buy a product or service (MMA 2007). In fact, mobile coupons are the digital version of traditional discount coupons used in traditional marketing activities (Im and Young 2013).

Mobile coupons, relative to paper coupons, have less risk of being lost, as they are stored digitally. As users always carry their mobile devices, they automatically carry their mobile coupons with them as well. Mobile coupons have more advantages than printed coupons, and they can be customized to consumers' interests, and they can be sent to consumers at any time of week or day, independent of working hours (Krum 2010).

2.5.4.4 Quick Response QR Codes

Quick Response (QR) code is a two-dimensional type of barcode designed and developed by Denso Wave in 1994 to monitor automobiles in the production line (Thulasidharan and Nair 2015). QR codes have matrix structure in that they have the capacity to process information both in vertical and horizontal axis. Thus, they can store more data compared to the one-dimensional barcodes (Jing et al. 2014). QR codes can be used to direct a mobile device to a specific website, to send SMS or e-mails and to share visuals (e.g. photographs, videos, pictures, etc.) (Krum 2010). Using a QR code is only possible via a smartphone with the relevant application or similar devices with integrated cameras to read the QR code.

QR codes are significant marketing tools used in limited fields embracing unlimited information. The fact that a QR code contains all the information related to the product/service makes it a successful sales representative for the companies (Lorenzi et al. 2014). QR codes offer several advantages such as sharing the product/service on all social media channels, navigating, encouraging creative applications and cost-efficiency. Moreover, QR codes are more durable, concerning availability and practicality that even when they are torn or they get three holes they still can function.

QR codes can be employed in the tourism industry as well as others. For example, the QR codes planted in 30 different districts on the pavements of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, large enough to be recognized, offer tourism information about the area. QR codes are also utilized in hotel facilities to give information about either promotions or special activities of the hotel or the entertainment activities to be held in the city. In brief, QR codes have become more and more common because of their practicality and the rapid increase in the number of smartphones.

2.5.4.5 Advergaming

As one of the mobile marketing tools, advergaming constitutes an important sector. The term 'advergame' is derived from the words 'advertisement' and 'game' (Ilgin 2013) and is defined as a mobile video game advertising the product/service of a company (WebFinance 2015). In other words, advergaming are mobile games used to advertise the products or services of a company. An advergame can be accessed through company websites or be downloaded on smartphones. Companies attempt to change consumer behaviour through the integrated use of advertisements and computer games.

Advergaming are different from advertisements inserted in games, since they are designed specifically for a company or a product/service. As they are entertaining, funny and free of charge, one can play it repeatedly. Thus, the advergaming stimulate players about the product or the brand (Krum 2010) and helps establish a brand identity.

The smartphone users prefer to play games on their smartphones rather than reading books or newspapers while waiting in airports, train stations or bus termi-

nals (Başkaya 2010). This change of behaviour creates a significant field of marketing for advergames. Tourism companies are utilizing advergames to advertise their own brands or to promote destinations. ‘Get Lost in Rotterdam’ and ‘Malmö’s Mobile Treasure Hunt’ are good examples of advergames to encourage people to explore destinations (Tussyadiah 2012).

2.6 Mobile Applications in Tourism

The developments in mobile communication technologies along with the increase in mobile devices and Internet usage have led tourism industry to utilize these technologies and create applications as in many others. Travel agencies and hotels develop mobile applications to advertise their brands, to market their products/services to consumers and to increase their sales. In addition, there are several mobile applications used for booking, holidays and/or flight planning and destination research in the tourism industry.

Mobile applications can be examined in two categories: based on function and user interaction levels. Functions include examples such as navigation (GPS, augmented and way finding), socializing (social network, communication), mobile marketing (contents/awards, alerts, discount), security/emergency (medical, emergency, information), transactional (auctions, financial/banking, ticket/reservations, shopping), information and entertainment (games, videos/TV, music, E-reader, photographs, fantasy sports). Regarding user interaction levels, the categories can be named as personal preferences, location, security, through the web, content addition, aesthetic changes and finally those applications that remain the same for everyone (Eden and Gretzel 2012). A study carried out through GooglePlay indicates that the majority of search through mobile devices are related with travel and guides, and the others are about transportation and weather forecasts (Fuentetaja et al. 2014). In this chapter, mobile applications are investigated according to the stakeholders of the tourism industry.

2.6.1 Destination Applications

There are several mobile applications to plan and facilitate tourists’ holidays. Designed as mobile travel guides, these applications offer information about destinations and details on how to get there, what to see and where to stay. TripAdvisor has developed an application offering city guides for several cities, such as Seattle, Tokyo, Berlin and Barcelona, to help destination planning, in addition to provide information about the restaurants, hotels, entertainment venues and events. Solo Destination, TripIt, World Travel Guide and Tourist Eye are good examples of destination applications for tourism.

Another example was developed by the Conservation Union of Courtesy National Parks. They created an application that helps easy access to all the information about the park and find directions without using any printed materials, in addition to information about the flora and fauna of the park.

CorfuAr is a mobile application that affects user preferences by offering appropriate alternatives suiting to personal characteristics. Unlike other mobile destination applications, CorfuAr provides a travel guide supporting individual feedbacks by mobile augmented reality (MAR) (Kourouthanassis et al. 2015). Smart Tour is a Korean application, developed by the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO), that serves as a walking tour guide. This Smart Tour provides audio guide about Korean history. In addition, it allows the user to create his/her own travel list under different themes. SmartMaps is an application offering detailed maps of every country in the world and geo-locates individuals' locations by using Geographical Positioning Systems (GPS) and provides information on restaurants and attractions at a specific destination. The most important feature of this application is the offline maps stored in the memory of the devices.

The first travel channel founded by YouTube, 'YouTube Vacationer', offers travel videos about various tourism destinations where users can also upload their own videos. It simplifies holiday planning, since the real holidaymakers upload the videos.

While making their travel plans, tourists may have the chance to compare several alternatives and collect information about other people's experiences by the help of these applications. The emphasis here is on the application to provide necessary information for the user in a clear and understandable way. Otherwise, users may give up using the application because of these unnecessary details. Applications offering information that suits the knowledge, interest, age and occupation of users would facilitate better outcomes (Kounavis et al. 2012).

2.6.2 Hotel Applications

The holidaymakers planning a holiday prefer to download hotels' mobile applications to get detailed information as their plans crystallize. Therefore, having an application for a hotel increases the chance of communicating with potential customers. In addition, customers contribute to the promotion of the hotel by sharing comments about their experiences and give ideas to those in search for a good hotel. Consumers get detailed information about hotels, book their stay and even use their mobile phones as digital room keys by the help of these applications.

There are several mobile applications specifically developed for hotels. These applications are used for hotel information, photo gallery, booking, room details, price lists, communication details, virtual tours, diaries, surveys and social media and push notification.

Marriott Hotels provide the opportunity to check in, complete with mobile key cards, before the guests physically come to the hotel, through a mobile application.

If the visitors arrive at the hotel before the room is ready, the application automatically informs them about the room status. The mobile application of Conrad Hotels supports reservations for room service, spa, airport transportation and bathing products. Similarly, Ritz-Carlton's mobile application offers QR code service that can be used for booking, city guides and event information. Four Seasons, Hilton, Hyatt Hotels and many others offer similar applications.

In addition to hotel-specific applications, there are also some examples that allow searching and making reservations for hotels. 'Hotels.com' is an application that can be used to search and book for more than 500,000 hotels in 200 countries. This application also gives users the chance to filter a search for given criteria and compare hotels. It also allows the users to check the reservation details even when their mobile devices are offline in addition to interactive maps of 70 countries serving in 34 different languages.

'Booking.com' allows the user to sort hotels according to price, facilities and guest comments in addition to neighbourhood, Wi-Fi, breakfast and customer services. Similar to Hotels.com, it is possible to search for more than 640,000 hotels in more than 40 languages 24/7. 'Trivago' is another example that offers a vast search opportunity through more than 200 reservation sites for more than 700,000 hotels. HotelGuide offers a search among the applications that are free of charge for the users. There are other applications such as HRS and Expedia.

2.6.3 Restaurant Applications

Companies focus on mobile applications to increase quality, to provide high-quality services for their customers and to promote their restaurants effectively. Similar to hotel applications, there are examples of restaurant applications providing individual information about a specific restaurant, as well as other examples offering search options for different alternatives.

'Burger King' application provides information on the nearest restaurant, in addition to contact details and maps of Burger King Restaurants in the area. 'Call and Order' button practically helps users to give their orders. 'TheFork' is an application, which makes it possible for users to make reservations for more than 19,000 restaurants in nine countries. It offers more than three million customer reviews to compare selected restaurants. Additionally, users have the chance to get 50 % discount on their next visit to the same restaurant if they reserve a table through the application. 'TheFork' also gives an electronic billing option, and users can score their reservations.

'Restaurant Nutrition' helps users to learn about nutritional value of foods served at restaurants using an automatically updated menu service. The user can keep a food diary and learn about gluten-free restaurants through the application. Yelp, Zagat, Urbanspoon, Open Table, LocalEats and Savored are considered as the best examples for this category.

The ticket application developed for the employees of Edenred Company is a distinguished example that is designed to simplify the employees' lives and to increase company effectiveness. It allows the employees to use their coupons at certain restaurants, collect account information, learn how bonus coupons can be used and benefit special deals through the application.

All these applications are becoming more popular as they allow users to make reservations and collect information about the restaurants and their menus, in addition to their contact details. The users also utilize these applications to order through mobile services and get instant access to promotions and discounts.

2.6.4 Transportation Applications

The mode of transportation, price and time are very important for travellers. Therefore, some mobile applications developed for such purposes offer users price alternatives, the opportunity to buy tickets and information about departure and arrival time, delays or cancellation. At the same time, there are other applications facilitating individual travels by giving directions to the destination. There are many examples of gamified experiences in the tourism industry, and it seems that the numbers will continue to grow with the help of digital technology developments.

With an application of 'Pegasus' airlines, clients can manage many flight-related services through their mobile devices very easily. With this application, which is offered free of charge, clients can plan their domestic and international flights and buy tickets. It is also possible to check in using the mobile application and to receive mobile barcode through e-mail and SMS. Thus, passengers can board the plane by just scanning a barcode if he/she has no checked luggage. With this application, passenger can buy any seat he/she wants, and he/she can buy the menu he/she wants beforehand. What is more, he/she can demand to be served first. In the application through which departure and arrival times can be followed, payments are guaranteed through 3D secure payment system.

The application of 'Turkish Airlines' is for making reservation, and passengers can score points through Miles & Smiles loyalty program. In the application through which mobile check-in is also possible, passengers can instantly learn about departure and arrival times. Buying tickets and choosing seats are also possible with this application. 'Skyscanner' is a search engine for flights. With this application that is used by more than 35 million people over the world, users can compare millions of flight and hundreds of airlines. This application, which is quick and flexible, is offered to users free of charge. This application, which helps find cheap and scheduled flights, directs users to the relevant flight agency. This application, which gives the chance to sort flights by price, cabin class, airlines, departure and arrival time, is offered in more than 30 languages. This application also offers widget service to view former searches. 'GateGuru' is another application through which passengers post their reviews about terminals and flights and the pictures they took. There are

also some other applications with similar purposes such as KAYAK, British Airways, United Airlines, Qatar Airways and FlightAware Flight Tracker.

Many applications by travel agencies make buying tickets and making reservations possible through mobile services. Most of these applications include navigation ability. The application called 'UK Bus Checker Free Live Times' gives the information of bus arrival time at each bus stop as well as smart journey planning and comprehensive road map. With an application through which all bus routes are available, service information is given in more than 40 villages and cities in real time. There are versions of the same application for London and New York. There are many applications developed for different cities. Some of these are Madrid Metro Bus Cercanias, İstanbul Transportation and London Live Bus Countdown.

The applications used in finding directions such as iGo, Yandex Navigation, Route66, Navmii GPS, TomTom and Map Factor offer HD quality maps, and they are easy to use and offer smart and quick searches. All of these applications have audio support in giving directions. Apart from such applications, there are also other applications developed for car rental companies and taxis. The application by 'Rentalcars.com' provides opportunities in 6000 locations over the world with low-cost guarantee. This application gives information in more than 50 currencies. The application of 'Car Rentals Market' serves in 135 countries with more than 500 vehicle options.

The application by 'National Car Rental' offers road assistance services to its customers. In 'Uber' application, unlike apps from other car rental companies, cars are rented together with a driver on demand, and customer is picked up at an agreed location and then taken to wherever he/she wants. Examples of rent-a-car applications are Avis Car Rental and Budget Car Rental. This application which was chosen as one of the best applications by Google in 2014 can be used in 30 countries and 420 cities. In this application through which a quick taxi search is possible, users can get information about taxis and calculate the estimated arrival time with the help of this application. With the application of '99 Taxis', it is possible to obtain drivers' identity and to see the photograph of driver. Credit cards or bankcards are welcome for payment. The application of 'Taxibeat' gives users a chance to choose any taxi drivers who have been ranked between 1 and 5 depending on users' reviews.

2.6.5 Mobile Applications for Events

By utilizing mobile applications, it becomes possible to deliver event announcements to a large number of audiences instantly. In addition to their practical use for the customers, mobile applications offer a cost-efficient means for the companies to introduce events.

'All Events in City' is a mobile application introducing more than 22 million activities in more than 23,000 cities all over the world. It also provides filtering by date and category and offers information about exhibitions, concerts, theatres, festi-

vals, parties, workshops, dances, conferences and sports events. The users may follow the artists or celebrities, and in addition, they may use the application to make new friends and follow their activities. It allows visitors to make plans for events in a city and share photos during the attended event on Facebook.

A similar application, 'Eventbrite', supports seven different languages. Users can buy tickets easily and quickly on Eventbrite. It also provides a calendar of events and a barcode system. There are several applications similar to Eventbrite on mobile platforms.

'SeatGeek' application functions as a search engine to query all relevant sites for a specific event. 'StubHub' offers interactive maps, buying options and information about the nearest bars, restaurants and auto parks to the event site. Most of these applications help users to prepare their travel plans.

2.6.6 Mobile Application for Museums

Museums are popular attractions for tourists. There are examples of mobile applications for tourists who want information about historical attractions of a country. These applications give information about the museum, in addition to the historical or artistic pieces exhibited.

'British Museum' mobile application offers detailed information about the art works, search option using key words or certain locations at the museum. In the application, visitors can see the settlement plan of the museum, choose a specific type of tour and use audio guides.

'Argela' is a unique application developed for the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. The most distinctive characteristic of this application is the Augmented Reality (AR) technology allowing visitors to capture and automatically identify the image of a piece through their mobile devices and serving information instantly. It is unique because it does not use QR codes or other forms of codes, but identifies the image of a piece through the integrated camera of the mobile device. The application offers the opportunity of mapping and listing, in addition to a photo and video gallery.

'Museum in Chicago' is an application designed to search for museums in Chicago under different categories and locate them on a map. It gives detailed information about collections, museum events and parking facilities.

2.6.7 Social Media Applications

Almost all of the mobile applications used nowadays function integrated with social media applications. It is very important for users to share the results that they obtained from any of the applications. Individuals can share any experience that they had at any hotel and share it on Facebook or they can get necessary information

about a restaurant from Foursquare. They can share the photos of the places, museums and hotels where they went on Instagram. They can share their comments about the airport they used on Twitter. As a new mobile application is developed, its social media dimension needs to be considered as well. Many hotels, restaurants and airlines use social media applications to build communication with their consumers. They share notices about their activities, discounts and brand news and they also evaluate the reviews posted by the clients. Considering these features, social media applications cannot be considered apart from mobile applications. As suggesting some mobile applications here as examples of their categories, special attention was paid to choosing the most popular ones with the highest number of users. Naturally, the applications used may differ depending on individual preferences and regions. We should remember that a new application is put into service every other day, and users' preferences change accordingly.

2.7 Future Trends

In the rapidly growing communication industry, the technology used in mobile communications has undergone continuous evolution. The number of smartphone users has steadily increased. These changes, which are expected to continue in the future as well, will transform into a mobile ecosystem. 5G technology, which is expected to come into service around 2020, will cause fundamental changes in mobile technologies with higher bandwidths and much more network throughput. All industries will be affected by the mobile evolution including production, retail, logistics, health, energy, agriculture, media and entertainment industries. With the help of mobile cloud applications, it will be possible to access any data from anywhere. The Internet will become an unavoidable part of our lives, especially with the spread of the so-called Internet of things composed of interconnected devices and globalization, and competition will also increase. The mobile platforms of the future will penetrate deeper into the tourism industry, and new technologies will offer new experiences for users.

Interactions will be human-human, human-object and, moreover, object-object. The concept of Machine to Machine as part of 5G technologies means that devices can communicate with each other, without any human interference and that they could store and report the received data. In this new era, every object connected to the Internet, such as automobiles, cameras, hotel key, bus seats and ovens in restaurants, will have an IP address. According to the report by Gartner, the number of devices connected to the Internet will be 26 billion; according to a Cisco report, it will be 50 billion; and according to Intel, it is predicted to be 200 billion. With the rapid increase in the number of devices connected to the Internet, the abilities of each devices connected to the Internet with regard to responding, data transfer and data analysis and reporting will also grow accordingly (Sharma 2010).

In this era, a tourist will be able to capture videos of places visited and with the help of wearable technologies access information on the move. Smart music players

will choose appropriate music to play by analysing the user's mood through monitoring the heart rate. A motion sensor ring worn on the thumb could control up to three devices with one single gesture; an activity monitor that counts the number of steps and reports the amount of calories burnt will be among some of the future technologies. Shoes with special motion sensors will enable users to control devices with feet or toe gestures.

The Internet of things made up of interconnected objects and devices will reduce the number of errors and mishaps in daily life. Autonomously controlled automobiles will connect traffic control systems and other road vehicles without driver interference and will be able to calculate optimum driving behaviour maximizing efficiency and minimizing accidents. Similar machine-machine interactive systems integrated with mobile technologies will transform the world we live in. Inevitably, gamification will be integrated with the principle platforms offered by the digital world, foremost of which will likely be the social media.

2.8 Conclusion

Rapid advancements in mobile technologies caused rapid diffusion of mobile communications throughout the world. Especially the widespread adaptation of smartphones and tablet computers and the resulting speed and ease of information access in recent years have transformed mobile communications into an indispensable part of daily life. Mobile communications make it possible to access any information from anywhere at any time. Mobile communications, which are faster and simpler to use than ever, have become a driver of economic growth of countries by its integration as a marketing tool and platform.

Tourism industry, as other industries, has been affected by the advancements in mobile communication. In today's world, airlines, travel agencies, tour operators and hospitality companies develop mobile applications to exploit the innovative opportunities provided by mobile technologies. It is important to design applications in a way that will meet the requirements of the industry. The applications must be easy to use, user friendly and practical. As new technologies are developed, inter-device operability and compatibility must be ensured. It can be concluded that mobile communication technologies will have profound effects in shaping the future of tourism industry as well as others.

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Chapter 3

Usage of E-Loyalty Programs in Hospitality Industry

Gökçe Yüksek and Özen Kirant Yozcu

Abstract Customer loyalty has become one of the primary goals of hospitality business. Since customer-based communication channels provide important strategic marketing management tools, hospitality business use electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) as a tool to achieve customer loyalty. Analysing the customer loyalty data online has enabled businesses to measure the antecedents of e-loyalty, namely perceived value, e-satisfaction, and trust. This study examines e-loyalty or reward programs in the framework of these concepts for hospitality business. To create effective e-loyalty programs, it is necessary to pay attention on the basic dimensions, such as customized quality, perceived value, satisfaction, trust, etc. These dimensions and the effectiveness of hotel examples are evaluated for the purposes of this study.

Keywords Customer loyalty • E-loyalty programs • Hospitality industry

3.1 Introduction

Digital technology has provided a new way of living tied with every part of our lives, thanks to the usage of Internet. Naturally, the Internet has equipped companies and individuals creative channels for their business and social lives.

The Internet is an effective vehicle for the travel industry, as it provides consumers with a quick and easy way to book travel and allows travelers more power over their travel planning and purchases. The Internet is also important as it opens a new world of marketing for hotels. For example, hotels could offer multimedia, tie-in with GDS database, tie into hotel's customer relationship management system with the help of information technologies (Murphy et al. 2008). Continuous improvement

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in information technology, content, service, and product value is crucial to the success of travel suppliers in today's online consumer market space. The fact also remains that existing customers are much cheaper to retain than new customers are to gain (Blattberg and Deighton 1996). As such, this shows the importance of customer loyalty in marketing communication and profitability in any company.

Additionally, there are two strategies most commonly used by hotel managers in order to gain a competitive advantage:

- Low-cost leadership through price discounting
- Developing customer loyalty by providing unique benefits to customers (Kandampully and Suhartanto 2000)

Loyal customers provide companies consistent database, more frequent purchases about, and higher profit margins (McCall and Voorhees 2010). Thanks to the results brought strategies are studied by academicians and industry professionals to develop customer loyalty. Loyalty defines a relation between a customer and a service worker; furthermore, loyalty and e-loyalty are strategies that a company develops to encourage a customer to repeat his purchase physically or electronically (Faed 2010). One of the important loyalty strategies is to develop an effective loyalty program to reach the customer. Loyalty programs can be used as a tool for increasing brand loyalty, reducing price sensitivity, encouraging word of mouth, and increasing the customer's pool (Uncles et al. 2003).

In the lodging industry, achieving customer loyalty is one of the most significant goals for the marketing department. Therefore, loyalty programs are the tools for doing so. Electronic word of mouth has also become crucial like traditional word of mouth, so online travel reservation forms are getting more powerful as they are the mediums for customers to share their experiences. Most of the hotels are developing "loyalty programs" to build a long-term relationship with their clients and to create an effective customer data base.

In this chapter, e-loyalty concept are explained and antecedents of e-loyalty such as e-quality, perceived value, e-satisfaction, and trust have been studied. Also, the relations between e-loyalty are discussed. After studying the antecedents of e-loyalty briefly plus the measurements of e-loyalty, according to these measurements, the e-loyalty program concept and its effectiveness have been examined.

3.2 E-Loyalty

E-loyalty, which means establishing a long-term relationship with an online customer, involves the difficult task of "humanizing digital loyalty" (Reid Smith 2000). E-loyalty refers to customer loyalty in the Internet market. Since Internet shopping malls have different structural features, such as no human element and material relating to nonexistent facilities, the concept of customer loyalty in the Internet market is also different. Generally, customer loyalty represents the attitude and preference of a customer for a particular company and product (Yoo et al. 2013, p. 672).

Various definitions have been suggested in the literature for the concept of e-loyalty. E-loyalty can be defined as a customer's commitment to and intention to repeat an online business (Gommans et al. 2001; Kannan et al. 2003). Gommans et al. (2001) defined e-loyalty as "intention to revisit a website." Loyal behavior may also cause repurchasing. Ilsever et al. (2007) defined e-loyalty as perceived loyalty toward an online Web site, with the intent to revisit the site or to make a purchase from it in the future. Additionally, Srinivasan et al. (2002) defined e-loyalty as a customer's positive attitude toward the e-retailer that results in repeat buying behavior. Cyr (2008) defined the e-loyalty as a "consumer's intention to buy" from a Web site, and that consumers will not change to another Web site.

Kannan et al. (2003) have been emphasized two aspects of e-loyalty. Attitudinally, e-loyalty can be defined as the strength of the online customer's commitment to an online business, how positively the customer feels about it, and the strength of the customers repurchase intention. On the behavioral side, e-loyalty can be defined by the actual frequency and volume of the customer's purchases and by the extent of positive word of mouth he or she generates.

According to these definitions given in the literature, e-loyalty is one of the strategic marketing management tools, which makes the customers repurchase many times using the Web page of the same brand. In the definition of e-loyalty, e-service quality, perceived value, e-satisfaction, and trust should be studied very well and used as a driver of an e-loyalty program.

The four levels of loyalty are cognitive, affective, conative, and action (Oliver 1999). "When Oliver's four levels are applied to a customer's purchasing behaviour on a website, an online customer has a preference (cognitive phase) to alternative websites and can develop positive attitudes (affective phase) toward the website. For the conative level, the consumer is expected to revisit the website and find the most favoured product available, but not necessarily engage in purchasing behaviour. Finally, the highest level of loyalty occurs at the action phase, where the customer is ready to revisit the website and purchases the product online" (Hur et al. 2011). To create customer loyalty, a company needs to meet and exceed the customer needs better than any known competitors.

Many scholars have investigated the antecedents to and consequences of e-loyalty. Srinivasan et al. (2002) proposed eight factors for understanding customer loyalty: customization, contact interactivity, cultivation, care, community, choice, convenience, and character. Hur (2011) has stated that those given factors of e-loyalty can support a success of Web site in an online business environment. Therefore, loyalty toward a Web site may be promoted and strengthened as online consumers repetitively use different quality functions and services offered by the Web site (Reichheld and Scheffer 2000).

In online business recommendations play a critical role, and customers frequently look for advices from loyal customers; therefore, e-loyalty can be considered a crucial concept as it influences word-of-mouth reputation and long-term profitability.

In addition, improving loyal customers is important for strategic management of the company (Gremler and Brown 1998). Moreover, loyal customers have the potential to increase revenues and profitability (Srinivasan et al. 2002).

Understanding relationships between drivers of e-loyalty represents an important opportunity to advance e-commerce research (Carter et al. 2014). Many researchers emphasized in their studies that important antecedents of e-loyalty are e-quality, perceived value, e-satisfaction, and trust (Cyr 2008; Christodoulides and Michaelidou 2011; Hur et al. 2011; Hsu et al. 2013; Carter et al. 2014).

3.3 Antecedents of E-Loyalty

Although there is no consensus regarding the factors that actually determine loyalty, some of the more frequently examined antecedents in the hospitality literature include e-service quality, e-satisfaction, commitment, communication, trust, and value (Berezen et al. 2013). In this chapter e-quality, perceived value, e-satisfaction, and trust have been studied concisely.

3.3.1 *E-Services Quality*

E-service quality has been defined in the literature by many different authors. Zeithaml et al. (2000) have defined e-service quality as the extent to which a Web site facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery.

Dunn et al. (2009) have stated that the quality of the product/service portfolio is also a component that consumers consider when appraising e-service quality. Dun (2009) has also said that many customers use Internet to find out travel products and services that are not easy to find out under a traditional travel circumstances. So, to provide different desired services and content details of the product in the format of travel companies' Web site can be a key to gain customer loyalty.

The content details can be modeled differently according to the product characteristics. There are different variations of e-service quality models in the literature. To cite an example, Zeithaml et al. (2002) proposed an e-service quality model including seven different dimensions, namely, ease of use, privacy, graphic design, information availability, reliability, compensation, and contact. In addition, Parasuraman et al. (2005) have developed a measure of service quality on online shopping Web sites that include four dimensions: fulfillment, efficiency, availability, and privacy. These dimensions of e-service quality are vital for online purchase and loyalty.

E-service quality is vital for online purchases and loyalty (Sigala and Sakellaris 2004). Many studies have been conducted in different industries on the relationship between service quality and customer's loyalty within the traditional context, which found positive, significant relationships between the service quality and loyalty.

In the e-context, e-service quality can also influence customers' behavioral intentions such as revisiting the Web site and positive word-of-mouth advice. Many researchers have proved the positive effect of e-service quality on customers' e-loyalty (Al-Hawari 2014).

Controlling and increasing e-service quality level in companies can be perceived by customers as potential benefits. This provides the customer satisfaction and retention. Service quality is a logical conductor of perceived value, and the dimensions which affect e-service quality have an indirect influence on perceived value (Blasco et al. 2010).

3.3.2 Perceived Value

Value is another crucial antecedent of customer loyalty, as customers with high value perceptions are strongly motivated to re-patronize a business (Yang and Peterson 2004).

Chen and Dubinsky (2003, p. 327) have defined perceived value as "consumer perception of the net benefits obtained in exchange for the cost incurred to obtain the desire benefits." Dunn et al. (2009) have emphasized that the concept of perceived value is based in the understanding of consumer needs and expectations. Additionally they have stated that the previous studies in the area of shopping behavior and services marketing have shown enough evidence of perceived value as an important determinant of purchase decisions and loyalty intention.

Yang and Peterson (2004) have claimed that customer-perceived value perceptions result from evaluating the relative rewards and sacrifices associated with the offering.

3.3.3 E-Satisfaction

Oliver (1981, p. 27) has defined consumer satisfaction as "the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with a consumer's prior feelings about the consumer experience." An ongoing evaluation of customer satisfaction is important for protecting customer loyalty (Deveraj et al. 2002). Hur (2011) has said that a customer satisfaction level shows how a company operates its business successfully and effectively.

According to Cyr 2008, a well-designed Web site can attract an online customer resulting with satisfaction, and repetitive satisfaction effect e-loyalty at last.

E-satisfaction refers to "the contentment of the customer with respect to his or her prior purchasing experience" with a given Web site (Anderson and Srinivasan 2003, p. 125). Researchers have identified antecedents of e-satisfaction. For example, to capture e-satisfaction, Szymanski and Hise (2000) used consumer perceptions of convenience, merchandising, Web site design, and financial security.

According to Hur et al. (2011), online consumers' expectations about information quality and perceived performance also affects e-satisfaction.

Numerous previous studies have acknowledged that e-satisfaction is not only the main driver of online shopping continuance intention, but also the key to build and retain a loyal base of long-term customers (Hsu et al. 2013, p. 290).

Hur et al. (2011) have stated that especially, without considering the satisfaction level or situational influences, loyal customers indicate powerful behavioral commitment and emotional connection toward an organization and its Web site. In addition to this, satisfaction is a result and evaluative process that provides the development of customer loyalty.

In this perspective according to Salehnia et al. (2014), positive effect of satisfaction on trust can be expected in the online environment.

To sum up, there is a positive relation between customer satisfaction and loyalty, and also e-satisfaction and e-loyalty. A satisfied customer trusts the company both online and off-line.

3.3.4 Trust and E-Loyalty

In online environments, researchers make an effort to solve the complexities of trust. Corritore et al. (2003, p. 740) have defined online trust that includes cognitive and emotional elements, with trust encompassing "an attitude of confident expectation in an online situation or risk that one's vulnerabilities will not be exploited." Nguyen and Nham (2014, p. 86) emphasize that in e-commerce, trust is mainly conceptualized in the diversified ways based on two categories: (1) a set of specific beliefs relying on the integrity, benevolence, and ability of an exchange partner to achieve a desired but uncertain objective in a risky situation and (2) a general belief that people are trustworthy.

Many E-loyalty studies have shown a positive relation between e-trust and e-loyalty. Trust has also been found to be a significant factor affecting customer's intention to purchase or repurchase from the same online vendor (Aikaterini and Douglas 2013, p. 101). Additionally, Yoon (2002) has conceptualized the trust as a causal link between buyer-seller relationship and customer retention and loyalty.

Trust is an important antecedent to loyalty, as customers can trust companies they patronize to do the right thing (Berezan et al. 2015). Customers want to indulge in more shopping from companies with trusted Web sites (Wang and Fesenmaier 2006). The concept of trust is considered an inherent characteristic of any valuable social interaction, and due to the relational orientation, it has become a popular topic in loyalty marketing. Trust can be at the center of e-commerce with much academic discussion surrounding security, promise fulfillment, and confidence. Selling high-quality products and commanding premium prices increase the reputation of a company, so this provides brand loyalty development (Tepeci 1999).

Berezen et al. (2013) has emphasized that if the level of trust is low, attitudes and behaviors of customers toward the company will be affected less. If trust's level is

high, then there will be more encouraging attitudes and behaviors, like being loyal and cooperation, shown by the customers.

Tan and Thoen (2001) first presented a generic model of trust for e-commerce consisting of two basic components, party trust and control trust, which are the primary determinants of trust. Wu and Chang (2006) pointed out the definition of trust in Taiwan's travel agencies, but other relationships between e-retailers and e-wholesalers remain unexplored.

Trust is closely aligned with emotional commitment in building loyalty for the hospitality industry such as hotels. Therefore, it could be a subtheme of that construct in frequent travelers' online discussions (Berezan et al. 2015, p. 203).

Few studies have examined the relative impact of trust versus satisfaction on e-loyalty. In one investigation, Web site trust and satisfaction were found to equally affect Web site loyalty. Alternately, Luarn and Lin (2003) have found satisfaction to have a stronger impact on loyalty than trust in an e-service environment.

Shortly, it can be said that there is also a positive relationship between trust and e-loyalty. After studying the concepts of e-quality, e-satisfaction, trust, and perceived value briefly, the dimensions of e-loyalty have been explained in the next part.

3.4 Dimensions of E-Loyalty

Where the business is conducted at a distance, risks and uncertainties can occur. Customers have to trust the company presenting images, promises, and prices; otherwise, they will change their mind and find another company. When customers trust an online vendor, they are much more enthusiastic about sharing their personal information that enables the company to initiate a relationship between them.

The advent and growth of "Business to Customer" (B2C) e-commerce has magnified the importance of building a loyal visitor base to an e-commerce Web site (e-loyalty). Most B2C e-business models have relied on an intensive effort to generate a customer base and subsequently on achieving profitability based on "lifetime revenue potential" from each loyal customer (Porter 2001).

A lack of focus makes building loyalty much more difficult. Customers desire Web sites that are simply designed, fast to load, and easy to use (Reichheld and Schefter 2000). Customers want to do business with a site, which makes their lives easier.

The Internet is a powerful tool for strengthening relationships (Reichheld and Schefter 2000). Developing e-loyalty in a virtual environment and moving consumer from a browser toward an e-commerce Web sites require essential prerequisites. Web activities are the tools, not strategies. According to the literature, dimensions or drivers of e-loyalty are given below.

Reichheld and Schefter 2000 have studied repurchase patterns at leading Web sites and have found out that the five determinants of loyalty are quality customer support, on-time delivery, compelling product presentations, convenient and reasonably priced shipping and handling, and clear and trustworthy privacy policies.

Gommans et al. (2001) has studied traditional brand loyalty literature and pinpointed similarities and differences between traditional brand loyalty and e-loyalty. Indeed, they have developed a conceptual framework of e-loyalty and its underlying drivers. As such, they propose a model for e-loyalty with the underlying drivers consisting of value proposition, brand building, trust and security, Web site and technology, and customer service.

These dimensions include several issues (Gommans et al. 2001, p. 48):

- Value proposition: customized products, product quality, guarantees, pricing, large set of choices, and well-known brands.
- Web site and technology: fast page loads, easy to navigate/browse, personalized Web site features, designed for targeted customer segments, language options, effective search functions, server reliability, content, and quick shopping check-out processes.
- Customer service: fast response to customer, easy to contact, free online applications, easy payment methods, fast delivery, delivery options, and customer reward systems.
- Trust and security: trust, third party approval, privacy, reputation, reliability, authentication, and non-repudiation.
- Brand building: brand image building and involvement and community building.
- As “loyalty diamond” has been proposed before by Murphy (2003) for the hospitality industry, it can be converted to “e-loyalty diamond,” and the components of this diamond can be trust, value, database management and communication, and process.

Devaraj et al. (2003) have suggested a model of online purchase which goes through the e-loyalty, and they emphasize that three factors affect the purchase decision such as efficiency, value, and interaction. For efficiency, time, ease of use, and effort are needed. For values, price and quality should be discussed. Loading time, information, safety, and navigations are necessary for the interaction.

Dunn et al. (2009) have explained the measurements of e-loyalty with a perspective of the usage of Web services in light of the alternatives. The traditional results of customer loyalty include recommendations, complaint behavior, purchase intention, re-patronage decisions, search motivation, and willingness to pay more in usage of Web services.

Eventually, the quality, price, guarantee of the product in short value, easy usage of Web site and technology, trust and security, brand image, information, and recommendations can be the dimensions of e-loyalty concept. Consequently, e-loyalty programs should be developed in the light of some these dimensions.

3.5 E-Loyalty Programs

One of the major trends in marketing communication is reaching the customer in many ways. Creating participation platforms and viral advocacy and organizing special events or sales promotions for experimental marketing can be strategic

marketing tools for company's relationship management. Company's aim should be addressing the customer, as by making the final purchase the customer stays loyal to the company. Therefore, companies should develop customer loyalty programs by continuously making a new product or updating the product.

Loyalty programs are implemented to reward valuable customers and to understand the needs of the customer and serve them more effectively. Loyalty programs have two main goals: (1) to increase sales revenues by increasing purchase levels and (2) to maintain the current customer base by strengthening the relation between the customer and the brand (Uncles et al. 2003).

The secrets of successful loyalty programs, which are planned in detail, include customer's opinions. Developing a loyalty program means getting into a long-term commitment with the customer (Butscher 2003).

Figure 3.1 explains the elements of customer loyalty program concept. The first step is always determine the goals of the program. Then create the target groups and explain the benefits of the program. Understanding the value of the product in the customer's eyes and which benefits drive the sales are the significant components for the marketing managers of the company. The most crucial part of a loyalty program is what sort of benefits have been offered by the company. The soul of the loyalty program is the easy usage of these benefits. The financial part of the program



Fig. 3.1 Elements of a customer loyalty program concept (Butscher 2002)

has to be studied for the long term and covers the costs of the program. Companies conduct many small-scale tests of creative customer acquisition programs and make investments in those that are likely to bring customers whose long-run revenues justify their acquisition cost (Reichheld and Schefter 2000). Another step is determining which channels should be used for communication. A communication plan should also be prepared for internal customers. The staff should interiorize the loyalty program and promote the sales of the program. If internal staff supports the loyalty program, they can obtain customer's information correctly and process the data in detail, thus valuable data will generate. An updated and correct data is the most effective marketing tool for today's competitive market. The last step is to evaluate the success of the loyalty program. Evaluation involves finding out which parts of the program are working well or which sections need to be improved.

A loyalty program can be seen as a support of brand extension (Uncles et al. 2003). For example, in Starwood's Preferred Guest (SPG) loyalty programs, an SPG member may redeem his/her Starpoints instantly for a variety of hotel products and services during his/her stay at certain SPG participating hotels (www.starwood-hotels.com/). An SPG member can use Starpoints in hotel's restaurants or in SPA services in hotels. This affects the cross-selling of hotel services that increase hotel revenues. This can affect the cross-selling of hotel services such as SPA or Food and Beverage positively and can increase hotel revenues.

Loyalty programs are also important from a marketing perspective as four strategies can be used for developing repeat trade – purchase level and brand loyalty. The first strategy is to evolve the size of the brand, second is to create niche brand, third is to become a super-loyalty brand, and fourth is to have a desire for change. It has to be noted that the first strategy is more common (Uncles et al. 2003). For example, in Marriott Reward Program, there are 15 hotel brands, more than 3800 location over 70 countries (www.marriott.com), whereas in the Hilton HHonors Program, there are 4200 location in 93 countries (hhonors3.hilton.com). With the help of the loyalty programs, brands enlarge their distribution channels. As a result, the accessibility to the brand is much easier.

Loyalty programs are easier to implement in e-markets due to the presence of database technologies that are essential component of e-commerce sites (Gommans et al. 2001). E-loyalty might have the ability to empower the database of customers with the prediction on customer behavior and attitude (Faed 2010). Promoting and supporting “data base/user groups” to develop loyalty has been seen to be an important tool in management practice.

Butscher (2002) has studied the hierarchy of goals of customer loyalty programs and has created three categories as core goal, main goals, and secondary goals. In interpreting these goals to e-loyalty programs, the core goal of an e-loyalty program is to increase revenue, profit, and market share. After determining the core goal of an e-loyalty program, it should have main goals like customer loyalty, win new customers, build up a strong database, support other company departments, and

create communication opportunities. Secondary goals should involve an increase in visit frequency at point of sale, increase purchase frequency, develop problem solutions, support public relations of a company, add customer support capacity, support dealer network and other goals, and improve product brand and company image.

McCall and Voorhees (2010) have studied the loyalty program effectiveness, and they underline that the structure of loyalty program (program tiers), structure of rewards (reward type, reward magnitude, reward frequency, reward framing), and customer factors (customer-program fit, role of the customer) are the main drivers of loyalty program effectiveness.

Figure 3.2 shows the adopted version of e-loyalty program effectiveness. The drivers of e-loyalty program effectiveness can be categorized into three segments. First, e-loyalty programs are structured as levels and conversions between these levels. Second, rewards are the attraction part of an e-loyalty program and should have types, greatness, frequency, and framing. Third, these programs should fit the customer needs and wants so that the customer will believe in these program benefits and take an active role in the usage of these e-loyalty programs. In conclusion, these drivers totally affect the e-loyalty program in many ways. As a result, customers will visit the company’s Web page more frequently and use the benefits of the e-loyalty program, which will affect sales positively. While customers use these program benefits, they will not focus on pricing, so price sensitivity will decrease. When customers believe in the benefits of the program, they advocate themselves, and this will increase the relationship between the company and the customer so long-term relationships can develop. Customers use electronic word of mouth

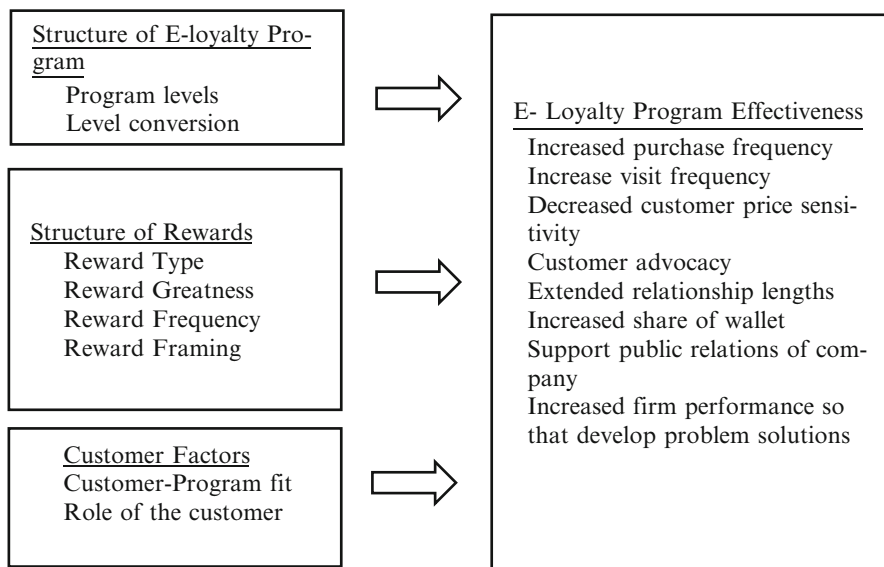


Fig. 3.2 Drivers to e-loyalty program effectiveness (Adapted from McCall & Voorhees 2002)

(eWOM) with the traditional word-of-mouth method; therefore, the publicity of the company will also be affected positively.

Loyalty programs are now a mainstay in hospitality industries. Virtually, all hotels and restaurants provide some incentives to customers to encourage loyalty programs, and managers are looking at various options to improve their programs (McCall and Voorhees 2010).

In the hospitality industry, there is no loyalty program which is known as e-loyalty program. In addition, there is no hotel loyalty program that provides every need of the customer. Each one has different core goals. For example, Best Western targets budget-minded business and family business. Best Western's main goals and secondary goals are also different. Their flexibility, levels, transitions between levels, and redeeming ways are changed according to the types of the hotels.

Table 3.1 gives brief information about the effectiveness of the e-loyalty program. The hotels are chosen according to the US News & World Report's Top 3 at Best Hotel Rewards Program (<http://travel.usnews.com>). The hotels given below have been evaluated according to Table 3.1. The examples of different hotels can be increased if it is needed.

Table 3.1 explains what kind of details should be included in hotel's e-loyalty programs. First of all, hotel's e-loyalty programs should have a structure. In this structure, there are levels of program and the components of these levels should grip the attention. In this way, customers would have a desire to pass on to the next level. The elements of the levels are related to the structure of the rewards. Rewards are crucial indicators for customer's usage of the program as the customer is the main player for these e-loyalty programs. His needs, wants, and characteristics affect the program's effectiveness. Hence, hotel managers should determine their target customer very carefully as customers should fit the program. As it is seen in Table 3.1, reward types and quality have differences between The Best Western Rewards and The IHG Hotels & Marriott Rewards. The reason lies in the difference between core goal and target market of the hotels.

Most of the hotels try to improve their e-loyalty programs because they try to increase online reservations directly to the hotel. The reason of this strategy is the increase in commission rates to online travel agencies. If the customer makes the reservation directly from the hotels' Web page, there will be no commission fee, so this reservation is more valuable for the hotel revenues.

InterContinental Hotels Group has seen an 80 % increase in Internet revenue after launching "The Lowest Internet Rate Guarantee," and with the help of this promotion, a win-win situation for the customer has been provided. Also the Wyndham Group has spent \$4–5 million on upgrading their Web site to make the connection faster and to improve the technology to develop repeat customer relationships (Miller 2004).

In most hotel loyalty programs, there are also rewards for internal customers who serve these loyal guests in the hotels. For example, staffs also earn points if they sell this loyalty program to the guest during the guest stay and win another loyal guest. An SPG (Starwood's Preferred Guest) program is another classic example where there is a special application called "Thank You Cards." SPG mails Elite Thank You

Table 3.1 The effectiveness of e-loyalty programs (<http://www.marriott.com/rewards/earn-points/miles.mi>, <https://www.ihg.com/rewardsclub/us/en/enjoy-rewards> and <http://www.bestwestern.com/rewards/benefits/>, 10.06.2015)

<i>The Marriott Rewards</i>	3800+ locations 14 brand over 70 countries
Structure of e-loyalty program	Basic member Silver membership Gold membership Platinum membership
Structure of rewards (some examples from the rewards)	250+ ways to use points No blackout dates Dedicated customer service line Member exclusive offers Earn points or airline miles Earn bonuses and base points Fifth redemption night free Hotel rate discounts and partner offers Free standard in-room Wi-Fi
Customer factors	Customers earn rewards with partners in travel, shopping, finance, and airline companies
<i>The InterContinental Hotel Group's Rewards Club program</i>	4700 hotels
Structure of e-loyalty program	Club Gold elite Platinum elite
Structure of rewards (some examples from the rewards)	Extended checkout Complimentary weekday newspaper No blackout dates Free Internet Priority check-in Complimentary room upgrades Guaranteed room availability
Customer factors	Customers earn points with partners in travel, shopping, and also airline frequent flyer club
<i>The Best Western Rewards</i>	Over 4000 hotels
Structure of e-loyalty program	Best Western Rewards Gold elite Platinum elite Diamond elite
Structure of rewards (some examples from the rewards)	Elite bonus points per stay Points never expire Hotel stay rewards with no blackout dates Best available room Welcome snack and beverage
Customer factors	Customers earn points with partners in travel, shopping, and also airline companies

certificates to their members. The purpose of these certificates is to acknowledge good service that a Starwood employee has provided to the customer. Customers hand out these cards to successful employees during their stay. Employees have their own accounts and the Platinum certificates are worth 500 Starpoints for the staff. As such, employees earn Starpoints and use them in the same ways as a customer in other hotels or SPG partners (<http://loyaltylobby.com>).

In loyalty programs, the types of the rewards are classified into “hard” or “soft” benefits. Hard rewards are generally tangible, for example, discounts and gifts, whereas soft rewards refer to special communications and preferential treatment (Bridson et al. 2008). In the above given examples in this chapter, both have hard and soft benefits which in themselves affect the customer rationally and emotionally.

3.6 Conclusion

Business use the Internet to promote and distribute their products and services, in addition to provide information for their customers (Murphy et al. 2008). Customer relationship management has taken a new form with the emergence of the Internet and continued advances in the technology. In this context, the Internet has become a crucial tool for marketing communication to create customer loyalty for online business. Achieving customer loyalty in the hospitality industry provides positioning in a competitive market. E-loyalty, which refers to customer loyalty online, provides a long-term relationship with an online customer. Considering its effects on long-term profitability and word-of-mouth (WOM) referrals, e-loyalty is considered as an important marketing tool. The antecedents of e-loyalty are e-service quality, perceived value, e-satisfaction, and trust where quality constitutes value and value provides satisfaction. If the customer is satisfied with the value of the product, it leads to trust, then e-loyalty is created.

The basic dimensions of e-loyalty are as significant as the antecedents. Many studies have shown that customized products, quality, recommendation, purchase intention, on-time delivery, trust, security, database management, and other factors can be considered as a dimension of e-loyalty. Incorporating these dimensions, e-loyalty programs can be formulated as a tool to create and sustain loyalty in today’s competitive environment.

The purposes of loyalty programs in the hospitality business can be listed as attracting new customers, establishing a strong and effective customer database and sustaining company-customer relationship. In addition, they are used to improve the brand image of the businesses. To succeed, these goals have to make the program effective. The structure of e-loyalty programs and rewards as well as the customer are the factors defining the effectiveness of these programs.

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Chapter 4

New Toy of Marketing Communication in Tourism: Gamification

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Abstract Digital technologies have become completely indispensable in our daily lives; therefore, there is an urge for demand on new technologies and services based on these technologies. The change in marketing trends is mainly affected by the traditional methods that are insufficient to attract and maintain consumer interest. The new marketing communications tools embrace new approaches based on non-traditional tools and the old ones are no longer considered as appropriate for the new consumers of this age. Gamification is a very new marketing communication strategy that aims to unite loyalty programs with the most recent innovations in game design. This chapter attempts to explore the use of gamification as a tool for marketing communication in tourism. We argue marketing communication efforts in tourism and give examples of this tool in tourism enterprises, after a clarification of what gamification is and is not.

Keywords Marketing communication • Communication technologies • Gamification • Tourism

4.1 Introduction

Development of communication technologies has led to a globalizing community. Digital technologies have become a crucial part of our daily lives, and therefore demand for new technologies and technology-based services has accelerated in recent years.

The advances in technology have directed companies to utilize these as a tool for marketing, since they expand and diversify the marketplace. Digital/technological marketing is a way of reaching massive amount of audiences by using technology. Marketing channels have diversified from traditional ones to augmented reality, daily deal/opportunity sites, search engines, viral marketing, e-mail marketing, and finally gamification.

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In mass communication tools, the messages are increasingly losing their authenticity. When tourism is concerned, tourists have begun to view marketing communications messages built around biased and directed information with more suspicion. This is resulting in a transition from mass messages to individual-oriented messages. Gamification attempts to reinforce desired behavior through in-game elements like competition, prize, rank, and badge and score tables. This in turn makes gamification an irresistible marketing tool for brands. All types of organizations, as well as the tourism enterprises, have realized that they have to offer various kinds of incentives through digital channels to increase customer loyalty (Moise 2013). Gamification provides any advantages for brands by motivating through entertainment and competition and increasing loyalty and interaction.

Gamification is a very new strategy that enables businesses to establish unique and strong bonds with stakeholders (Zichermann and Linder 2013). Gamification has become a trending topic in recent years throughout the marketing industry to keep consumers returning back to their brand, product, or service (Donato and Link 2013). Hamari et al. (2014) claim that gamification is used as a means of maintaining user engagement and increasing the use of service by companies.

Gamification aims to unite loyalty programs with the most recent innovations in game design. Using game design elements to motivate and increase customer activity has drawn attention in digital marketing efforts. Gamification has attracted public interest across productivity, finance, health, education, and sustainability in addition to media along with contemporary life (Deterding et al. 2011), and in the recent years, gamification is being applied often for the benefit of the users/customers (Koivisto and Hamari 2014). The main idea in gamification is integrating game strategy, tactics, and rules not only for consumers but also for employees (Moise and Cruceru 2014).

Consumerism, crowdsourcing, and social media applications increasingly utilize the structure of gamification. Jagoda (2013) gives examples to daily life attraction of gamification such as the Chore Wars (a website that you can claim experience for doing housework), nike-n shoes (transforming running routine into a contest by tracking statistics and using avatars), Foursquare (a smartphone application offering a progress to become the mayor of a retail venue by simply checking in), and so on. Ubiquity of smartphones, digital media, and internet has provided a backdrop for games and gamification applications.

This chapter attempts to explore the use of gamification as a tool for marketing communication in tourism. We argue marketing communication efforts in tourism and give examples of this tool in tourism enterprises, after a clarification of what gamification is and is not. The chapter concludes with future trends and implications.

4.2 Marketing Communication in Tourism

As with other industries, in the tourism industry too, marketing plays a vital role in establishing and developing systematic relationships between supply and demand. Getting the right messages to the right people is perhaps one of the most important

factors in determining the success of tourism industry (Suli et al. 2013). However, when compared to other industries, due to unique features of tourism, marketing has a more critical role in establishing communications between tourism supply and demand and value creation process (Hackley 2005). In marketing, value is created and presented through the marketing mix that is composed of product, price, place, and promotion. Marketing is a sum of decisions regarding developing the right goods and services, supported through effective promotion (communication), and being offered at the right price at the right place (Belch and Belch 2012). These four components are called the marketing mix.

In the tourism industry, product and service denote not only the inherent features but also the utility bundle and solutions provided for tourists' wants and needs. The price reflects the financial and intangible costs incurred beyond just the monetary payment. Place is a system of intermediaries that ensure that goods and services flow from tourism businesses to tourists and are ready for consumption where needed (McCabe 2009). Promotion can be viewed as coordination of all activities and efforts to promote an idea convincing target audiences to purchase goods or services and establish channels of communications toward this end (Belch and Belch 2012). The tools used by an organization to realize their communication goals are called promotion tools, and generally, these tools are comprised of advertising, public relations, personal selling, and sales promotion.

For most people when marketing is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is selling or advertising. Selling is only the part of marketing that reflects on the consumer or in a sense the visible tip of the iceberg. Actually, marketing is a long-term process that begins even before products are produced and continues after they are purchased (McCabe 2009). Advertisement, although, perhaps the most visible, is one of the tools used by businesses to invite consumers to communicate for the purpose of informing, exciting, or reminding (Reid and Bojanic 2006). Marketing communication is used to inform the various publics about the value created and is used to share messages regarding the value offered, events, etc. (Bowie and Buttle 2004). Advertisement is one form of marketing communication activities.

Of the four components of the marketing mix, promotion is fundamentally related to communications. With time, promotion has separated from the other three components of the marketing mix to be used synonymously with marketing itself, especially since most contemporary marketing activities center around communications. In this sense, communications can be said to be more prominent in the marketing mix. The principal functions of communications can be summarized as informing, educating, convincing, and reminding the present and potential customers in order to facilitate transactions (Bowie and Buttle 2004).

Marketing communications is used to denote the communications between businesses and target audiences in order to attain specific goals. Therefore, these goals need to be evaluated in terms of parties that want to form a unity of understanding (McCabe 2009). While the desire of a business to inform and attract target audiences represents the goals of one party to the communication process, the consumers take part in the process with goals like becoming informed, remembering, and facilitating decision-making. Marketing communication tools are used by

hotels (Bowie and Buttle 2004), travel agencies, local authorities of destinations, and states in influencing tourists and other stakeholders.

By the end of 1980s, marketing communications had developed an integrated perspective and having captured the attention of academicians and practitioners spread widely across the world. However, in a review of the literature over the 30 years since the coining of the term, it was observed that the definition of integrated marketing communications has constantly evolved (Kliatchko 2005: 7). According to Kotler (1996: 602) integrated marketing communications is a process where there is a single communications manager responsible for all communications activities of a business; different communications mix tools are deployed appropriately at the right time and all communications activities are coordinated. Here all marketing communications activities, from advertising to reach target audiences to sales promotion and from public relations to physical atmosphere of the sales channels, need to be performed in a coordinated and integrated manner.

In a world where hundreds of new products enter the marketplace, competition is becoming more intense and it is becoming more difficult to attract consumers to a product, convince them to experiment, and transform them into customers. As the physical differences between offerings are decreasing, brands are increasing their efforts to differentiate.

4.2.1 Marketing Communications Mix

Marketing communications mix denotes tools and applications that mediate achievement of marketing communications goals. It is rooted in the marketing mix. Marketing mix, as widely accepted, is made up of product, price, distribution, and promotion (Shimp 2007; Belch and Belch 2012). In service offerings, the mix is usually supplanted with people, physical evidence, and processes. Marketing communications can be seen as an expanded and, in terms of goals, differentiated format of promotion while emphasizing the communications functions of other marketing functions.

4.2.2 Advertising

The history of advertising is as old as history of exchange and trade between humans. This gives advertising a privileged place in marketing. Advertisements, which we are exposed to frequently in daily life, sometimes inform us about brands; at others, they amuse and entertain and at others interrupt our favorite programs. Advertisement is generally regarded as communication with the goal of selling (Hackley 2005; Shimp 2007). It is a type of marketing communication that aims to convince a consumer and cause behavior change by motivating to purchase. Although many models are developed to measure the effectiveness of advertising, effectiveness of advertising is widely debated.

Advertisement is an impersonal form of marketing communication that is undertaken by paying for an idea or a service. Mass communication tool selection is an important issue in advertising. In choosing the medium, the marketing approach and target audience or consumers are a good starting point (Belch and Belch 2012). In tourism, advertising has an important share in enabling consumers compare destinations regarding natural, cultural, and historical attractions.

Nonetheless, there is criticism about advertising in the tourism industry (Middleton et al. 2009). One of the most important of these criticisms is that many tourists make the decision regarding a destination before searching for information. Also it is indicated that advertisements by destination marketing organizations have very little influence on the decision to visit a destination. Destination selection is based on numerous variables like accommodation, touristic attractions, dining, entertainment, and shopping facilities. In tourism advertisement, while it may be somewhat effective, it will not always be able to be right on target.

4.2.3 Public Relations

Public relations is a type of marketing communication that aims to establish and develop communication based on mutual understanding between a business and target audience (McCabe 2009). It is accepted as communications management for regarding, understanding, and ultimately shaping public opinion to support organizational goals. In public relations, it is imperative that the messages being given need to be true. In public relations communication flows from the enterprise to stakeholders and from stakeholders to the enterprise.

Tourism industry is one of the industries most susceptible to crises. In communications, crisis communications has become a domain with increasing prominence with recent emphasis being placed on precrisis preparation. Crisis management, which is accepted as a specific type of public relations, is one of the most important managerial functions of public relations.

It should be noted that tourism businesses do not use public relations solely in a crisis communications context. Public relations plays a critical role in establishing, shaping, and managing the corporate image of tourism businesses. Successful corporate social responsibility management, also, is a result of effective communications in public relations context with intra- and extra-enterprise groups.

4.2.4 Sales Promotions

Sales promotion is generally considered to be a “below-the-line” activity, the point of which is to stimulate sales or otherwise direct consumers to behave in a particular way. Sales promotion communications involve three principal target audiences: employees (mostly sales force), intermediaries, and consumers (McCabe 2009). The purpose of sales promotion activities aimed at consumers is to attract potential

customers and convince them to purchase (Percy 2008). Activities toward sales force and intermediaries are aimed to increase and stimulate the performance of these two groups. Price discounts, coupons, rebates, loyalty programs, sample products, competitions, and raffles can be given as some examples of sales promotion tools.

Sales promotion is built around expected action and the main goal is to stimulate this action. In tourism discount tours, tours offered exclusively through certain intermediaries and last-minute deals are the most widespread sales promotion tools. Special discounts aimed at promoting double rooms instead of single are another common practice. Other types of sales promotions in tourism include joint promotions with third-party businesses or organizations, such as travel supplement reader offers, discounted hotel rooms with vouchers collected on purchases of other goods, money-off vouchers through the accumulation of purchase points on credit cards, etc., free samples, giveaways or discounted “degustation” menus, and direct mail promotions.

4.2.5 Personal Selling

Among marketing communication tools, personal selling, which is especially used in industrial marketing, refers to communication efforts where the seller and potential buyer come face to face (Bowie and Buttle 2004). This is a highly effective form of communication because the seller can respond to the individual needs of the consumer and provide a tailored and flexible solution (Copley 2004). The goal here is to persuade the receiver of the message for an action, namely, buying through the interpersonal communication being established.

Taking into consideration the emphasis placed on being customer oriented in contemporary marketing and the opportunities presented by the internet technologies in reaching customers it may be possible to increase sales force effectiveness in personal selling. Effectiveness is driven by the expertise, motivation, and personal qualities of the sales force. Personal selling is important for intermediaries like travel agencies and tour operators. Flight attendants have a primary service role and a secondary sales role. Many hospitality workers in a range of different departments can “sell up” or “cross-sell” services once a service encounter has been established.

4.2.6 Other Marketing Communications Tools

Marketing communications tries to impress target audiences with its creative use of new tools in addition to different media and applications. Word-of-mouth communication, product placement, commercial exhibits and fairs, guerrilla marketing, and ambience are just some examples.

4.3 Gamification

Gamification is a concept originating from the digital media industry, first used by Terrill (2008) in a BlogSpot. In this early definition of the concept, Terrill (2008) defined gamification as “taking game mechanics and applying them to other web properties to increase engagement.” This seems more like the description of a gamer putting the technical features forward. Therefore, we need to define two technical concepts to understand the systematization of gamification: Game and game mechanics. A game is (Juul 2003: 9)

a rule based formal system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned to different values, the player exerts effort to influence the outcome and feels attached to it, and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable.

Volkova (2013:150) states that game with its features has a strong interaction with the modern information society and stands on three pillars: interactivity, screen phenomenon, and virtuality. Interactivity stands for the game and the player engaging in coauthorship and online simultaneity. Screen phenomenon is the pillar that attracts the user by combining sound, image, digits, and text and creates a sense of personal belonging. Finally, virtuality is voluntary behavior to virtual existence within the rules and established boundaries of a game accompanied by excitement and joy with the feeling of “another being.” Donato and Link (2013) characterize game mechanics as the actions, tactics, or mechanisms used to create a compelling experience for the consumer. These technical details are the ones, basically, used in gamification to gamify a specific action and engage the customer.

Deterding et al. (2011) refer to some parallel terms used (e.g., funware Takahashi (2008), playful design (Ferrara (2012))), yet “gamification” became an institutionalized term after the widespread adoption of the concept after the second half of 2010. Since then, many researchers attempted to define gamification in their own point of view. For example, Zichermann and Linder (2013) considers it as a process of using game thinking and mechanics to engage users to the core activity with an enhanced perception.

Harris and O’Gorman (2014) embraces the definition of Gamification.org and clear the confusion that gamification does not mean turning something literally into a game, but “the presence or addition of game-like characteristics in anything that has not been traditionally considered a game.” Houtari and Hamari (2011) suggest a definition from a service-based marketing perspective as

service packaging where a core service is enhanced by a rules-based service system that provides feedback and interaction mechanisms to the user with an aim to facilitate and support the users’ overall value creation.

In another study, Houtari and Hamari (2012: 19) summarize this definition as a process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences in order to support user’s overall value creation, emphasizing that gamification cannot be based on the use of game elements; instead, it has to be understood broadly as a process where the gamifier attempts to increase the gameful experiences rather than basing

it on a set of methods and mechanics. They also discuss the measure of successful gamification applications stating that if gamification were designed solely to increase marketing figures, then there would be a conflict between increasing sales and creating valuable experiences.

In this chapter, we embrace the definition of Deterding et al. (2011) as

the use of game design elements in non-game contexts.

This definition has four dimensions, namely, game, elements, design, and non-game contexts. They identify gamification as related to games, not play, where play is conceived as a category containing but different from games. They refer to Cailliois' (2001) approach using concepts of "paidia (playing)" and "ludus (gaming)," whereas paidia is used for a free form, improvisational recombination of behaviors and meanings and ludus denoted playing structured by rules and competitive goals. Video games have become a cultural medium with their increasing ubiquity, adoption, and institutionalization in the past three decades; references and metaphors regenerating from games spread around the world and everyday life (Deterding et al. 2011). Figure 4.1 shows the positioning of games, toys, play, and gamification.

Ritterfeld et al. (2009: 6) refer to structured (serious) games as "any form of interactive computer-based game software for one or multiple players to be used on any platform and that has been developed with the intention to be more than entertainment." On the contrary, pervasive games have "one or more salient features that expand the contractual magic circle of play spatially, temporally, or socially" (Montola et al. 2009: 12).

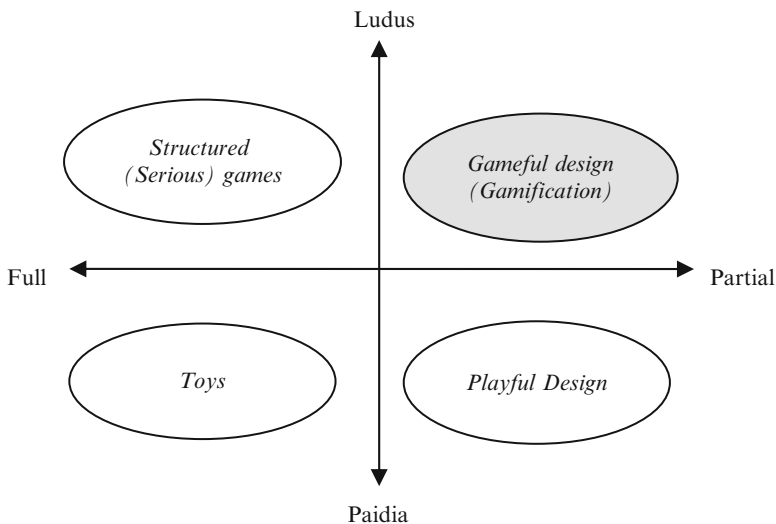


Fig. 4.1 "Gamification" between game and play (Deterding et al. 2011: 13)

Elements refer to the characteristic components to games, found in most of the games, which are significant for the gameplay. Game design elements are categorized in five levels of abstraction as interface and game design patterns, game mechanics, design principle, and game design methods. Here the authors emphasize gamified applications/gamification include game elements and are not full games as regular entertainment games or structured (serious) games. Final dimension refers to the nongame contexts implying the use of game elements for purposes other than their normal use for improving the user experience.

Gamification became one of the hottest new strategies in business using the latest innovations from games, loyalty programs, and behavioral economics to attract and maintain users' attention and loyalty (Zichermann and Linder 2013). The rules and strategies of game playing are employed for both internal (employees) and external customers (Moise 2013).

4.4 Elements of Gamification

Chechanowicz et al. (2013) report that there are many researchers developing frameworks and design patterns for games and gamified tasks. They identify six common elements for gamification process:

- **General Framing:** Details on who is offering the gamified context and why
- **General Rules and Performance Framing:** Performance conditions to orient the user toward a good performance in the gamified context
- **Social Features:** Interactions with other users (e.g., comparing experiences, communication, competition)
- **Incentives:** Offerings of the gamified context practically, materially, or virtually to the users
- **Resources and Constraints:** Boundaries of the gamified context that the users should agree to participate
- **Feedback and Status Information:** Providing information about what is going on, what to do next, and what the user and others have accomplished through the context

Deterding et al. (2011) give a framework on the indispensable components of gamification to enhance its effects and sustainability to the users: Fun, effort, skills, rewards, competition, and rules facilitated by interactive digital technology. However, gamification is a concept enhanced and polished by the development of digital media and became a phenomenon recognized both by entrepreneurs and by customers.

Palmer et al. (2012) asserted the effects of gamification on businesses within the scope of engagement economy. Table 4.1 summarizes their suggestion on the elements and tools of gamification.

In connection with these elements and tools, we can argue a game design process identifying six stages of gamification proposed by Bista et al. (2012):

Table 4.1 Elements and tools of gamification (Adapted from Palmer et al. 2012: 56)

Elements and tools	Explanation
Progress paths	Narrative guides and challenges that change as the user progresses
Social connection	Support and competition structures that enable epic wins
Feedback and rewards	Rapid indications of success, both virtual and real
Interface and user experience	Esthetic design and platform considerations that enhance fun and ease

- Gamification contents
- Potential member actions
- Point range
- Allocation of points to actions
- Set of badges
- Allocation of badges to points

These phases combined with the gamification components assure that the users will have all the information to assign for the gamified context and what to do with the rules and their target. As gamification applications are supposed to have certain boundaries and rules to be easily understood and embraced by the users, identifying every detail is of extreme importance.

The implementation areas for gamification have a wide range, because it is not a monolithic concept (Harris and O’Gorman 2014). For example,

- Educators may harness gamification to help students to focus and become fast learners.
- Companies may use it to improve employee productivity and morale simply to add some excitement and competition in the workplace.
- Companies may also utilize gamification for their marketing efforts to improve customer loyalty and engagement and increase profitability.
- Governments may take advantage of gamification to ensure regulations are obeyed (e.g., red lights or speed limits, environmental protection).

4.5 Using Gamification as a Tool for Marketing Communication in Tourism

With the decrease in effects of traditional marketing communication techniques, tourism marketers began to use gamification as a target-focused communication approach. In addition, increased marketing costs as a result of increasing competition in the tourism sector serve to decrease the effectiveness of traditional marketing communication approaches. From this perspective gamification as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry can be viewed as the result of search for, compared to traditional tools, lower cost, more creative, and remarkable marketing communication tool deployment.

According to Ries and Trout (1986) marketing communications need to focus on different more than better. At a time when originality in tourism products is decreasing, this approach deserves more attention. Since over time many products in different categories are becoming more and more alike, it is not possible to use a single marketing communication strategy that covers all contingencies.

Presently unidirectional communication toward tourists is being replaced by multidirectional communications. Instead of voicing the businesses' message to tourists, a new approach that attempts to establish dialogue and conversation with tourists is being adopted (McCabe 2009). Digital media are replacing traditional media, and as a result, new communication strategies are evolving. It is becoming easier to reach tourists and deliver marketing messages anywhere and anytime, thanks to diversifying media. This is resulting in modern, pluralist practices of which gamification is one.

There are many correct answers to the question as to why gamification is an important marketing communication tool in the tourism industry. Technological advancements in the communication field have resulted in tourism industry to be characterized by "prosumers," which is a portmanteau of producer and consumer and refers to individuals who take part in producing their own content in goods and services. Prosumer refers to the merging of the producer and consumer of tourism. This does not just refer to people who consume their production; rather it is a blurring of the distinction between the producer and consumer and the production and consumption. Gamification is able to serve as a bridge in these mergers and reinforce the relationship between tourism businesses and tourists.

Tourist's experiences, satisfaction levels, reviews, and responses are other noteworthy reasons. Under intense competition, every thought, opinion, experience, and suggestion has the potential to be an invaluable source of information for tourism businesses. Through these communications, tourists are able to shape goods and services offered. Of course, this can only be possible if channels of communication between businesses and consumers are established and if businesses actively engage consumers in dialogue. For example, when tourists' action of rating businesses is evaluated from the other side, we find that businesses have begun to rate tourists according to their level of utilizing goods and services being offered. This is increasing the importance of cooperation and collaboration in productive and creative processes. Gamification aims to transform this approach into a game.

The annual turnover of gaming industry has surpassed that of movies. Although it has been stated that the best way to establish a relationship between games and goods and services of the tourism industry can best be established through gamification practices, it is clear that, for the tourism market, this communication strategy is still very new and that developing the necessary skills and experiences for expertise and application development will require time.

Gamification, as a concept, is not very novel for the tourism industry. In tourism, gamification is frequently used, especially by airline businesses, for example, earning

miles in frequent flyer programs. As the miles accrued increase, the loyalty status of the consumer increases, resulting in higher awards and privileges like priority check-in, priority in seat selection, priority boarding, free tickets, and upgrades. This in turn motivates the consumer to be loyal to the airline.

Games are viewed as important actors of popular culture. Games are able to spread globally in a relatively short time and are an important leisure activity undertaken by many people. This will result in gamification's influence on tourism goods and services as the practice becomes widespread. A gamification application aiming to affect tourist's attitudes toward a specific brand where the game or portions of the game are structured in a manner incorporating the brand will affect the brand's image positively. Since positive brand images will influence tourist behavior, the business will increase brand awareness and interest, and as an ultimate result is likely to derive benefits in competition.

An important characteristic setting gamification apart from other marketing communication tools centers on message delivery. Other marketing communication tools attempt to "catch" tourists outside their own preferences. In other words, it is highly unlikely that a tourist will make a conscious effort to view the same advertisement repeatedly. In gamification applications, the tourist is a willing participant in the game and associated message delivery as part of the game. For example, a gamification application regarding a certain destination may help tourists shape their perceptions about the destination and establish an in-resort itinerary. How the destination is integrated in the game, which features are emphasized, which parts of the resort are visible, and how detailed will be the factors that will determine the in-resort itinerary.

In order to ensure long-term success and developing a sustainable communication strategy, tourism businesses need to develop a new philosophy that focuses on tourist behavior. Understanding tourists' behavior patterns is one of the greatest challenges in tourism. While research on basics of tourists' travel decisions and destination selection continues, the findings tend to vary. Gamification hopes to establish repeating behavior patterns.

The stage of decision-making process which the target audience is at, is an important issue in choosing the correct gamification strategy (Hsu and Powers 2002). For example, the communication strategy toward a tourist who has just discovered the need for a vacation and the one that has prebooked a year ago needs to be different. Therefore, the strategy toward a tourist who has just become aware of a need for a vacation or the one that has begun information search about vacations should be informative. Informative strategy should aim to establish awareness about the destination or resort and the features and benefits of the amenities should be emphasized. Gamification applications toward first-time users should be designed to offer content that is more informative.

In the process of evaluating alternatives and making purchase decisions, a gamification design based on convincing communication strategies will be more appropriate. The application should emphasize superiority of the offerings compared to competitors and the benefits and added utility to be derived from the purchase.

In the post-purchase evaluation stage, a gamification design based on remaining strategy will be more suitable. This will reinforce the mindshare of the goods and services for the consumer and future purchase decisions can be facilitated (Hsu and Powers 2002). Therefore, when designing gamification applications, the target audience should be segmented into homogenous market segments. Also gamification alternatives that are appropriate for different stages of the decision-making process should be offered.

When gamification applications are being prepared as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry, attention must be paid to ensure that the goods and services being promoted should be integrated into the game construct as a natural component of the scenario. Else, the desired effect cannot be realized. By effectively designing and implementing the tourism good into the application, it can be possible for a larger audience than could ever be possible with traditional tourism marketing tools to be reached and for this audience to expose themselves to the product message over and over voluntarily.

4.6 Gamification Applications in Tourism

Games are a powerful industry comprising a market share of \$93 billion in 2013 and an estimated growth to \$222 billion by 2015 (Weber 2014). The advances in mobile technologies, location-based technologies, and virtual reality have motivated game designers to create innovative gameplay for diverse purposes and multiple contexts, including tourism. Tourism industry is characterized as an experience industry and new technologies provide tools for developing and/or enhancing these experiences. Gamification has the power to change people's motivation and behavior by creating unique tourism experiences.

Buhalis and Law (2008) claims tourism industry has always been one of the first ones to engage new initiatives. Latest developments confirm that gamification has become a major trend in the recent years. The current use of gamification by the tourism industry is divided into two dimensions: increasing brand awareness, attracting potential customers, and building up a destination image by online/offline games, and encouraging more engagement and enhancing tourist experiences on site by location-based mobile games (Xu et al. 2013).

Nunes and Mayer (2014) identified the use of mobile devices in all phases of a trip and we adopt it to all types of digital content in Fig. 4.2.

Xu et al. (2013) analyze the tourist motivations to play a game and summarize the main motivations as curiosity, exploring a destination and socializing for pretravel, fun and fantasy experiences on site, challenge, and achievement for post travel. These motivations drive tourists' attention on the destination and the attractions.

As mentioned before, gamification can be and is used as a tool for marketing communication in tourism. In fact, tourism enterprises gave the early examples of gamified contexts or gamification. Hotels and aviation sector have used it for many years (Bajdor and Dragolea 2011). Hotels use loyalty card systems, where the repeat customers collect points and use them for free accommodation, upgraded services, etc.

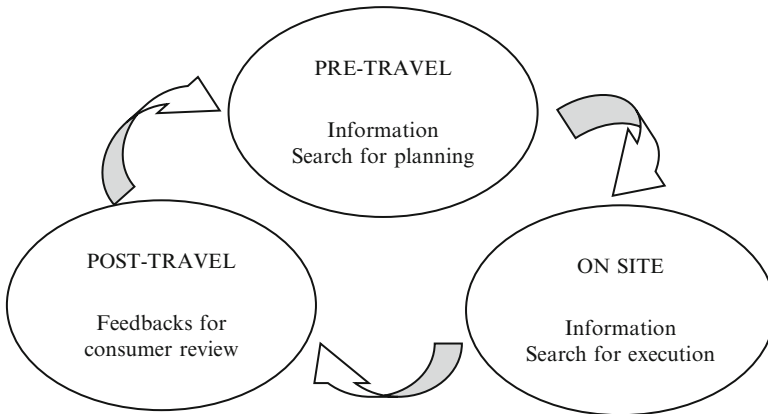


Fig. 4.2 Digital content usage of tourists (Adapted from Nunes and Mayer 2014: 54)

In the aviation sector, airline companies generally provide frequent flyer cards. Frequent flyers collect flight miles, and they get free flights, upgraded seats, or special ground services at airports.

Houtari and Hamari (2012) state that gamification process is not always provided by the core service provider itself; instead third-party providers, customers, or other customers may be possible providers for gamification. In tourism, all of these providers are available. For example, hotels' loyalty card can be provided by the hotels and, at the same time, by their business partners or sponsors to widen the reward opportunities. Similarly, airlines or banks may provide frequent flyer cards, but in this case, the banks let the customers to collect credits and/or miles to spend on both free flights and shopping as well. Tourists may gamify their trips and share their experiences through websites (e.g., Foursquare, TripAdvisor, and Expedia) and consider other customers' opinions about a specific tourist attraction. However, we have to clarify that gamification needs two parties: The core service provider and the customer. Gamification can be considered as a goal for the service provider in case it helps increase sales, maintain and sustain customer loyalty, and improve brand value. Nevertheless, it is a tool for other service providers, such as third parties, since their ultimate goal is not increasing the core service provider's customer value but to increase their own profits or something else related with their own company. As this chapter is all about using gamification as a tool for marketing communication, concentrating on tourism enterprises, we focus on how these enterprises develop and implement their gamification strategies.

In the hotel sector, Le Club Accorhotels is a classic customer loyalty example of gamification. Simply by preferring their hotels, Le Club Card gives you the opportunity to get discounts, last-minute reservations for better prices, and the feeling of a VIP customer. Booking.com also provides a discount program for loyal customers, calling them "Geniuses."

MyTUIfly.com is the customer loyalty program of TUI, and in this program, you collect FriendChips that can be used to shop flights, accommodation services, and

rental cars that are offered online on the website. Similarly, Lufthansa, British Airways, Singapore Airlines, and many other airline companies have reward systems for their loyal customers.

There are some good examples of mobile applications to be labeled as gamification efforts. For example, tripventure is an augmented reality mobile application enhancing destination experience of tourists providing the opportunity to play a specific theme in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, Paris, London, Stockholm, Rome, and Barcelona. Similarly, A Walk In My Shoes is designed to guide a tour in Shakespeare's Stratford, and Stockholm Sounds is a free game-based augmented reality guide for visitors to Stockholm's best music and sound experiences offering rewards for good players. Drallo offers challenges designed for discovering new locations and landscapes in Switzerland including quizzes, treasure hunts to play, and score and win. TravelPlot Porto was designed to create a fun and engaging way to visit Porto's history, monuments, events, sights, and gastronomical delights while trying to locate a hidden treasure.

Disney Memories is a good example for theme parks' gamification efforts. With this application, Disney offers a platform to refresh your memories by designing photos with famous Disney characters and share them on social media. The Dutch Theme Park Efteling is another good example of gamification that it offers planning a day at the park within a game setting.

There are many examples of gamified experiences in the tourism industry, and it seems that the numbers will continue to grow by the help of digital technology developments.

4.7 Future Trends

Gamification, whose principle strategy is rewarding participants for tasks, is likely to be adopted widely as a marketing communication tool in the tourism industry. In a sense, gamification has the potential to shift competition from tourism businesses to tourists. An example can be given from resort hotels as the practice of giving small gifts and awards to guests who win the gamification competitions performed as part of animation programs. This will increase the privileges offered by tourism businesses and also increase the tourists' choice of using these privileges based on their rank.

Planning the effects of deploying gamification as a marketing communications tool in tourism industry on loyalty and awareness appears to be more complex compared to traditional marketing communication approaches. There is no guarantee that the gamification application will be liked and adopted by many. This is likely to increase the number of tourism businesses that will attempt to utilize the strategy and derive the possible benefits.

By designing gamification applications to present new experiences for tourists, businesses will be able to create awareness and move a step ahead of the competition. What is meant by experience-based gamifications are applications that are not

just audiovisual, but include all five senses. Of course, as game experience entertainment-based marketing communications applications develop, the share of traditional marketing communications is expected to diminish.

As the role of experience increases, gamification application design is likely to shift from a tangible reward-based approach to an approach that places more emphasis on intangible values. Generally, it is seen that users like to collect badges and points in return for achievements in the application. But offering emotional values through gamification will establish and strengthen emotional bonds between the business and users. It should be kept in mind that most of the brands known as “Lovemarks” are businesses, which have established strong loyalty bonds with their customers. Therefore, in the process of developing and sustaining brand loyalty, which is one of the primary functions of deploying gamification as a marketing communications tool, the role and importance of emotional values will be a critical trend in the near future.

Inevitably, gamifications will be integrated with the principle platforms offered by the digital world, foremost of which will likely be the social media. In the future, as adaptation of gamification spreads to a point where it is implemented not only by bigger businesses but also medium and small businesses, the number and diversity of applications are sure to increase. Implementation of gamification will contribute immensely to tourism businesses by providing data on consumer behavior regarding tourism goods and services selection, especially when supplemented by data collection through mobile technologies and smartphones.

4.8 Conclusion

Contemporary businesses face new and changing marketing trends in their marketing environments. The reasons for diversity and change in marketing trends center on increasing intensity of competition in all industries and the inadequacy of traditional methods in exciting consumer interest. When evaluated from marketing communications tool context, we find new approaches based on nontraditional tools. The new marketing landscape, which is primarily shaped by information technologies and consumers, has also necessitated changes in marketing communications.

People are exposed to messages numbering in the thousands everyday. In such an intense communication environment, just being remembered, let alone directly influencing purchasing behavior, is becoming increasingly impossible. Consumers facing intense communications and message flow are not able to comprehend or even perceive most of these messages. People’s exposure to advertisement messages takes place usually far from sales points. Traditional marketing communication tools are mostly prepared for consumer goods and therefore are seen as a factor that increases the costs of goods and services.

Many marketing communication applications which were until recently thought of as the correct tools are being replaced by new approaches. The plethora of choices offered to consumers is necessitating new communications media to facilitate

decision-making. Technology is also assisting communications in becoming ubiquitous. It appears that those who are able to adapt to these changes quickly will be a step ahead in competition.

When a tourism product is being promoted in a game, it needs to be kept in mind that the promotion should be made in a gamification application. In addition, it should be noted that perfection in gamification design does not always ensure widespread adoption. This process of change is also related to roles and responsibilities associated with marketing communications. Businesses desiring to differentiate from their competitors need to offer many different applications and incentives to ensure stakeholder loyalty. One of the best ways of attracting stakeholders is gamification, which is an innovative marketing communications tool based on rewarding and exciting games.

Global development and change have brought innovation in the field of marketing communication as it has in all areas of life. The transition from “supply-oriented” offerings to “demand-oriented” goods and service offerings in all industries are one of the most prominent causes and effects of these changes. Therefore, this has forced businesses to transition from production-focused constructs to consumption-focused constructs. This results in empowering the consumer and makes it imperative for businesses to better understand the consumers’ world, consumption patterns, and values. In marketing communications, monologue-based approaches are being abandoned and dialogue-based approaches are being adopted.

Competition has increased the importance of relationship between tourism businesses and tourists. Competitors can quickly imitate technologies, innovation, and strategies; however, intangible concepts like customer relations, satisfaction, and loyalty cannot be easily imitated. Therefore, benefits derived from the relationship between tourism businesses and tourists have become more valuable than ever. Insight and familiarity with tourists give businesses very important information on how to establish loyalty. Convergence is not only taking place between the producer and consumer; this convergence is resulting in merging and unifying various communications tools too. Gamification is a new marketing communication strategy that aims to meet these new challenges.

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Chapter 5

The Symbolic Representation of Tourism Destinations: A Semiotic Analysis

Hakan Sezerel and Birgül Taşdelen

Abstract This chapter addresses the symbolic representation of touristic destinations. The main contribution of the chapter is to highlight the rivalry in symbolic context via tourism promotional materials. This chapter is an attempt to decipher the Turkish way of challenging symbolic competition. We discover tourism strategy is based on reconciling Western values such as technology and comfort with the values of the East: hospitality, timelessness, and exoticness. The current tourism promotional videos highlight a local color, which align with self-orientalism in Turkish tourism promotion. This type of promotion, when considering the non-monolithic and differentiated structure of tourism, has some drawbacks in the era of symbolic competition. The chief interest of this chapter was to answer a single question: The relationship between the destination and the tourism promotion: “how is the destination represented?” To answer the question, the relevant literature is scrutinized and a semiotic analysis is conducted. The analysis shows that Turkish tourism promotional videos focus on a kind of self-orientalism. This focus slightly indicates the institutional gaze permeated in Turkish tourism promotional materials. This gaze, along with the discourse, posits Turkey as a Third World country to compete with its, primarily, symbolic synopses: unchanged and unrestrained. This gaze concurrently reproduces an image of Turkey as an Oriental country, which does not match with the tourism strategies for the next decades. This sort of promotion pose a problem when making efforts for the country’s promotion in several areas and besides encompasses all touristic activities. The first section of the chapter presents the current literature and the theoretical framework on tourism representation. The second section includes semiotic analysis in tourism studies and a case from Turkey. The last section comprises the conclusions and suggestions for the future trends.

Keywords Tourism destinations • Symbolic representation • Semiotic analysis

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5.1 Introduction

Tourism, when approached instrumentally, as a “mechanism” that a tool of “economic leverage” that transforms natural and cultural assets – *the sources* – to goods and services due to its very “nature.” Additionally, a series of problems emerge such as which of these natural and cultural assets will be part of valorization and how. The chief problem occurs with the “nature” of tourism commercialization: the tourism assets highly depend on the cultural and symbolic world of a given place. In other words, the touristic goods and services are almost unconceivable commodities without their unique sociocultural habitats.

The developing countries rely on the tourism industry in order to make up the difference on economic development with the ones considered as developed. According to the Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Investment Support and Promotion Agency (ISPAT) (2013: 5–11), the total contribution of global travel and tourism industries to the gross domestic product (GDP) exceed USD two trillion with 2.9 % in 2012. Turkey has a place with a share in total GDP of approximately 4 % (USD 32.3 billion) which surpasses industries such as automotive, communication, financial services, mining, education, and the manufacturing of chemicals. On the employment side, the tourism industry ranks second after the public sector by adding around two million jobs to correspond to the 36.8 million foreign visitors in 2015 (TUROFED 2015: 1).

This chapter suggests that the Turkish tourism promotion strategy tends to highlight the intangible, generally symbolic, “assets” in order to derive economic benefits. Hence, the touristic rivalry is, as an additional layer, ongoing among with the distinguishing values of (tourism) competitors. The extant literature suggests that tourism itself is a business, which provides symbolic goods and services for consumers who are seeking for a “secular ritual” (Hummon 1988). The supply and promotion of this symbolic consumption are structured in a pattern: the “tourist gaze.”

The escalation of mass tourism generated a widespread phenomenon, the so-called tourist gaze (Urry 1990), to educate and discipline the modern tourists on what to look and how to look at things that are organized for their pleasure. This organization around touristic attractions required to be promoted to receive tourists from all over the world. The attractions in tourism industry have their marketing and promotion strategies to attain a place in the market. Possessing solely a set of touristic assets (natural, cultural, etc.) is not adequate for attracting tourists and the methods to stimulate tourist’s attention comes into play. Then one is compelled to ask: “Why should I visit this destination?” The industry is already prepared to provide some objects to respond proactively: tourism promotional materials.

The following problem is common among tourism destinations. The quality of commodities is not merely sufficient for tourism marketing. Additionally, a given destination competes with others in regard to experiences and the semantic world. It is the salient component of a commodity: a destination competes with others as an idealized touristic attraction (Chatelard 2008). The distinctive character of tourism

destination may sometimes be the cultural assets, per say. The assets consist of interaction with tourists and change in time. In brief, the tourism field presents striking features in searching of a social construction. The tourism authorities in Turkey emphasize the importance:

Movie production industry shall be used as a tool (STRATEGY: 24). There is still room for increasing per capita expenditure in Turkey by focusing on the luxury travel and tourism niche which includes areas such as golf tourism. • Turkey can leverage its rich culture and historical, assets along with its natural beauty along with its sunny climate, golf courses, and beautiful coastlines to draw premium tourists who spend more. ISPAT (2013: 13)

In brief, the social construction of a tourist place is constructed socially and merits particular attention. The social construction paradigm, which consists of various approaches, basically, argues that the social and cultural phenomenon is produced by cultural and historical forces and relies on the human interactions and communications. In this view, the “events” are not given but instead constructed by social interactions and practices via negotiations and formulations. The “events” sometimes appear as fashions and many times formed as traditions. Correspondingly, the experiences of an individual, the sense of reality, and even the social world incessantly is constructed (Iwashita 2003).

The mechanism of social construction in tourism is traced back in tourism literature over the last 40 years in the following terms: the representation of the other, authenticity and staged authenticity, the commoditization of cultural heritage, and various others (MacCannell 1973; Greenwood 1977; Cohen 1988; Wang 1999; Bianchi 2009). The perception of the abstract characteristics of the tourism fields as a “socially constructed field” also meaning the places exceeding their physical presences becoming a common understanding, particularly, in critical tourism studies (Pritchard and Morgan 2001). In brief, the relationship between the tourist and the tourism destination is continuously reproduced and transforms the touristic event.

Pagenstecher (2003) states that since the emanation of photographic meaning in the 1840s, historically, tourism has been attributed to places including cities and rural areas, privileges of visualization, and “the gaze.” This attribution, accompanied by tourism gentrification (Gotham 2005), galvanizes the transformation of the vast areas to a photo frame; in other words, generating the simulacra of tourism (Baudrillard 1983). This progression also affected the meaning of the tourism, along with the development of modern tourist guides, package tours, and touristic websites.

As seen, the touristic attraction of a particular tourism field is generated from the overlapping of the tourist’s expectations (which are also constructed) and the tourism supply. Young (1999: 385) distinguishes two phases in touristic destination’s construction: (a) the production of the tourism field and (b) consumption of the touristic destination. The (re)production of the touristic destination plays a pivotal role in the tourism industry. For instance, from the outset in cultural heritage tourism, heritage tourism is in an area of hypercompetition. In this sense, tourism professionals would not hesitate to benefit from the “reality” that fictionalized around the cultural heritage. In summary, “the good story sells” (Palmer 1999: 319).

Nonetheless, this approach presents its own problems. The core problem is the local stories of a given area. It can be seen that in cultural tourism marketing, a selection takes place. The selection is limited to a sequence in history and a selected topography and the images. The frequency of usage of the selected images and symbols accompanying with stereotyping rises as main identifications. Thus, other representation opportunities that have potential to compete with this mainstream interpretation cannot find any place. It can be assumed that a touristic destination is socially constructed and a “touristic reality” is developed. Another study implies that tourism materials and interviews also shape the image of tourism destinations like the risky ones (Africa), some secure (Europe and North America), and the others risky but exotic (Asia) (Carter 1998).

There are several benefits for today’s tourist to know a touristic destination beforehand. It gives the tourist the opportunity to evaluate his/her preferences by comparisons among the destinations based on socioeconomic criteria and the cultural taste. This overview can only be possible for a potential tourist via touristic materials/signifiers/indicators (e.g., films, travel guides, photographs, posters/banners, brochures, blogs, articles, etc.). The visual and/or audio content consists not solely of the concrete values but also the abstract values. The abstract values are composed via the interaction of the signs and symbols; in other words, the signifier and the signified. In this framework, the destinations are also found in another aspect of symbolic competition. Which properties sustain the competition as being unique?

When promoting the destinations under *ceteris paribus* (all else equal), and considering the competition in the symbolic level, it appears that the rivals have a sole strategy: promoting its “target” tourist, the one who is stereotyped by the destination actors. The promotion then operates on a set of symbolic experiences. For instance, the prominent concepts – originality, nostalgia, and the touristic experience – are put to work for constructing the reality and providing a touristic experience. Amirou (2000) argues that if the destination lacks originality, the tourism industry comes into play to produce it (imitating the wildness, rural life, etc.). The travel experience then transforms itself into an authentic and a utopic experience depending on a collective experience of the ancestors and a history that no one virtually remembers. In short, the rivalry expands itself from a real topography to a symbolic topography that consumption is accommodated in a symbolic manner.

The symbolic consumption experience (Ekinici et al. 2013), like the “traveler’s game,” is a holistic approach consisting of facilities that encourage tourists to self-fulfillment as the “modern pilgrims” (MacCannell 1973) elude their “real life statues.” In light of these assumptions, a framework is needed to comprehend the pattern, which accommodates the reproduction and the marketing of the touristic meanings. Echtner (1999) indicates the requisite for examining all types of tourism promotional materials which serve the process. This study, therefore, adopts the semiological analysis to decipher the hidden meanings in tourism promotional videos. In the study, the question below is addressed:

- How is the destination represented in the relationship between the destination and the tourism promotion?

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents a brief literature review on tourism representation. The second section comprises of an empirical study on official promotional videos of Turkey. The last section contains the conclusion, limitations, and future trends.

5.2 Representation of the Tourism Destination

Echnter's (1999) initial study, which points to the research opportunities for applying semiotics to tourism, forwards three important questions to comprehend the "mechanism" of tourism promotion. The seminal study draws a holistic model to join tourism agents together: the destination, tourism advertisement, and the potential tourist. In the model, the tourism promotional materials play a mediator role between the destination (designatum) and the potential tourist (interpretant). The framework modified from Peirce's semiotic triangle to tourism semiotics is shown in Fig. 5.1.

According to the model, the potential tourist makes her travel decisions throughout the touristic promotion and the image of a prospective destination to travel. Herein, the destination exerts efforts to be selected in a competitive environment. The first attempts are to be assured that the promotion of the destination is done accurately. This is where a great amount of signs and images initiate via brochures, guides, and the other visual, printed, and audio media. The potential tourists then have a chance to consider "the images of destinations in order to assess the balance between similarities and differences, comfort and danger" (Jenkins 2003: 310). Beerli and Martin (2004: 659) list the components of destination images including (a) natural resources, (b) general infrastructure, (c) tourist infrastructure, (d) tourist leisure and recreation culture, (e) history and art, (f) political and economic factors, (g) natural environment, (h) social environment, and finally (i) atmosphere of the

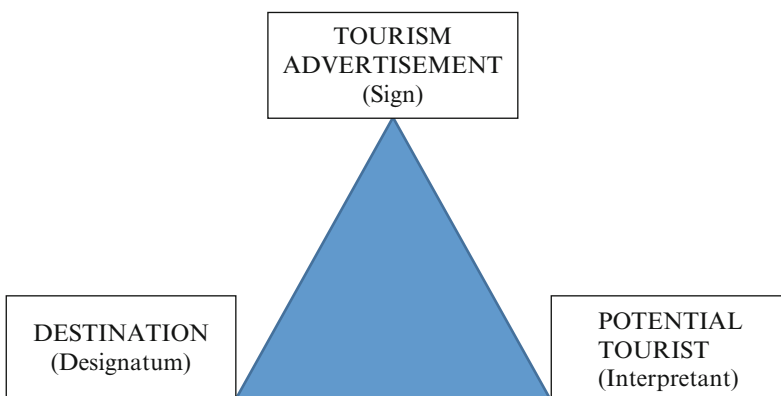


Fig. 5.1 The tourism semiotic triangle – a tourism marketing rendition (Echnter 1999: 53)

place. When examining all the factors, the potential (prospective) tourist may be completely unaware of the real conditions of the destination. Hence, the institutional actors of the receiving destination need to promote the destination according to marketing goals. The tourism representation then begins to play a distinctive role on achieving the touristic roles. Then a set of questions arises: "What are the convenient tools to leverage a certain destination's attraction? How to promote a destination's symbolic features and highlight the unique assets possessed?"

Although the fluid characteristic of the interaction between signifier and the signified obstructs making a precise interpretation (Harkin 1995: 653), Jenkins (2003) asserts that a touristic image is determined and disseminated by the actors of the tourism industry. Once an image is created, then the image is represented and circulated. In her study on the "backpacker tourists," Jenkins identifies the process as a circle of representation. The myth makers of tourism project an image for a certain destination and then the tourists perceive the image. The constructed icons are visited and photographed.

As can be seen, this approach attributes an active role to the tourists themselves. The promotion is for enabling the tourist's involvement. The destination image also relies on several factors identified by Beerli and Martin (2004: 660) as information sources (primary, induced, organic, and autonomous, and secondary, previous experience and intensity of visit) interact with the personal factors (motivations, vacation experiences, and sociodemographic characteristics) affect the perceived destination image. The model suggests that the cognitive has impact on affective image and the overall image. The affected image also has an impact on the overall image. In summary, the formation of a given destination's image occurs by the advertent and the advertent efforts of the given actors and the structure of the destination.

The image of destination is multifaceted phenomenon and so the "meanings" are produced throughout. Scholars underline the meanings as gender stereotypes (Jenkins 2003; Salazar 2012), authenticity, and local colors (MacCannell 1973; Greenwood 1977; Cohen 1988; Harkin 1995; Wang 1999; Bryce 2007).

Echnter and Prasad (2003) analyzed the representation of tourism destination in the so-called Third World countries via travel brochures from the eye of the developed countries' tour operators. The countries including China, Egypt, India, and Turkey were clustered in the "Oriental countries." These countries are represented as (2003: 664) touristic attractions (man-made (from the past) ruins, palaces, monuments, city gateway) and the atmosphere (mystical, opulent, strange, past versus present). The study also distinguishes the myths created around the Third World in three synopses according to the place, the time, the natural, the built, the host, and the tourist: (a) unchanged, (b) unrestrained, and (c) uncivilized. These three synopses, particularly the unrestrained, are overarching themes comprising the connotations such as "unspoiled," "untouched," and untouched in the third world promotion. This conceptualization also refers to the images of exotic, paradise, and timelessness (Britton 1979).

Although there is a certain amount of literature on tourism representation, the analysis generally focuses on the written media of tourism promotions. In addition, the analysis conducted on Turkey (Baloglu and Mangaloglu 2001; Bryce 2007) are acquired from tour operators in the United Kingdom and the United States. The data demonstrates the positioning of Turkey relative to the other countries (Egypt, Italy, and Greece). Hence, the analysis on tourism promotion films is required to variate the accumulated knowledge. The other point is that the studies on Turkey – considered as a gateway from Europe and Asia – may shed some light on the current analysis with the provided findings aligning both sides (the West and the East).

Additionally, the promotional films may give some insights to scholars of multi-disciplines. Considering these and other reasons, we attempt to apply a study on tourism representation of Turkey via the tourism promotional videos. This chapter attempts to shed light on a part that is dismissed. The official promotional videos of Turkey would contribute to a macro level perspective that amalgamates both the strategy and the representation (content) parts.

5.3 A Study on Tourism Representation

This section presents a study on tourism representation of Turkey via tourism promotional videos. The section is divided into three titles: the semiotics, the method, and the findings and discussion.

5.3.1 *The Semiotics*

This study employs the Semiological Analysis of Barthes (1974) to refine concepts like reconstruction of social reality, touristic representation, and experience. Culler (1981) points out that employing semiotics in tourism studies is a plausible way to comprehend the phenomenon.

Barthes asserts that (1974: 110), languages that are used by people to interact with each other, such as myths, behaviors, visuals, show cards, and furniture, fashion shortly every meaningful unity that has a connotation comes together to build social meanings in terms of lingual and semiological levels. The units of these meaningful arrangements which have been identified with social representations are called indicators. Barthes (1974: 111) emphasizes that in the relationship between the indicative and the indicated, the indicated is not an “object” at all, but rather a mental design of the object itself.

On the other hand, Barthes agrees that the indicator becomes meaningful together with its environment and apart from its environment; its meaning will turn out to be relative, which was suggested by Saussure (1916). However, Peirce (2014) moves one step forward and defines the indicator as a triadic process. In the first level, individuals encounter something concretely; namely, the first level is the grade that

we experience through our feelings. In the second level, the concrete item that we encounter animates a different situation. The relationship between the indicator and the indicated comes out in this level. The third level is the process during which one understands what is represented and interprets the relation between the indicator and the indicated one.

Semiology deals with how the meaning is created rather than the meaning (system) established through indicators. Incidentally, this refers to the “ideology” which affects the sense of the individual toward the world around him directly. According to Barthes (1974), “bourgeoisie, thanks to the meaning processes, converts its own historic class culture into the natural space with universal qualifications.” Therefore, the relationship between the two items is established to legitimate the power of sovereignty. When bourgeoisie converts its culture to a natural space, the marginalization/othering of resistant groups turns out to be possible. Today in the post-Fordist production, what is more important is the experience and the meaning presented to the individual through the goods produced by many industries rather than their values. The tourism industry that is also one of the fields of the capitalist industrialization, commercialize its goods and servings more than they deserve via indicators.

Touristic places, rather than being a physical space, enable people to find themselves to satisfy their motives and are socially shaped areas of togetherness. Together with the collective consciousness reshaped by the destinations competing with symbolic experiences, modern pilgrims have tended to idealized target points without lagging behind others. The individual, who thinks that he lost his real life, experiences his imaginary life in these places patterned by signs and symbols (indicators). In this sense, the semiological method, which has the capacity of presenting the sub-meanings referred by the indicator, turns out to have a critical quality at this point. Like in each field of the social sciences, the semiological method seems to be used necessarily to analyze the indicators used in tourism industry as well.

5.3.2 *The Method*

Turkey’s official promotion authority (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism Directorate General for Promotion 2013) announces the components of Turkey’s image in an official report with the headline “Meeting Point of the West and the East” as (a) a cradle of civilizations, (b) Turkish hospitality, (c) Turkish gastronomy, (d) diversity of activities, (e) historical and natural wonders, and (e) high-quality facilities. From this point, the official marketing targets as a macro destination:

- Strengthening Turkey’s image in the world tourism market
- Positioning Turkey as a modern and hospitable country with a deep cultural heritage offering a unique travel experience
- Promoting Turkey using different messages from rival countries offering the same promises

The strategic depictions above are associated with the production of tourism promotional materials. Hence, we investigated the official websites of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey. The research data was acquired from the publicity videos in the website of the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In this study, we only included analysis of Turkey's introductory films of tourism and Istanbul trailers. To analyze the data, videos from the website had been selected with a sample survey, and these videos were analyzed with a semiological method. As for the semiological analysis, we used the relationship of meaning between the signifier and the signified which was developed by Barthes. Findings presented in this study were acquired from the samples selected among the introductory videos that were available on 23 December 2013.

The lengths of the promotional videos that were analyzed vary from 22 s to 1 min. The videos are watched by the researchers individually, and then the interpretations are written. Finally, the pair of interpretations is compared. The researchers explained in detail to each other the underpinnings of their interpretations relying on the data acquired from the promotional videos. Afterwards, the findings of the study are written. Later, the researchers compared their findings and understandings based on the relevant literature.

5.3.3 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study and the discussion. As part of the study, five promotional videos have been analyzed holistically.

This study highlights the umbrella concept of tourism promotional videos as commitment to the "local color." *The local color*, a concept of emphasizing on the local cultures that attracts tourists, particularly targeting Westerners, presents itself as a synthesis of the eastern culture comprises beyond time, mythological, and authentic flavors with the comfort of the technology of the West. The distinction is an "imaginary geography" (Said 1985). In this sense, it is impossible to talk about the orientalism without the orientalists. The promotional videos examined also emphasize the orientalist's view through the cultural and historical assets. The subtexts are familiar with the mainstream themes in Third World countries.

In general, underdeveloped countries share a common theme: pledging an "unreal" world. In other words, the mystification masks reality. The unreal (Istanbul, timeless) image also distinguishes itself as "paradise." It is not a surprise to see how many hotels are named after "paradise" in Turkey. The words in the promotional videos are "unspoiled," "untouched," and the "paradise" (Britton 1979: 321; Echtner and Prasad 2003).

The other common theme is the coexistence of the values of the West and the East. The assumption of "a country is attractive in terms of tourism for coexistence of modern and tradition" (Chang and Holt 1991). The belly dancer image is quite significant. The movies include the belly dancer, "dansöz." The belly dancer is a very distinctive image that is used in promotional videos. It takes a new significance in promoting the "authentic" Istanbul – Turkey's tourism capital – which is rapidly

gentrified by modern market economy (Potuoğlu-Cook 2006); the dansöz image brings an additional layer when it is deployed as a nostalgic element of the modern city. The dansöz is dancing in prestigious convention halls in “Ottoman nights” and is attributed as an exotic asset. However, the daily life of the dansöz is very harsh and far from being elite in terms of occupational life. This confirms the assumption that folk dances and particular parts of a culture is commoditized (Greenwood 1977: 131, 133). The tourism destinations target the prospective tourists for economic interests, which poses a problem of consumption beyond the concrete things such as other commodities (Hummon 1988:180).

The other representation is on the host side of the local people of the destination. The representation of these people is often rigged with myths and traditions. The “real” life and the national identities, on the other hand, are neglected. These representations and images serve for the touristic purposes (Palmer 1999: 318). The authenticity is embodied via stereotyped people and the cultural assets (Wang 1999: 355). For the local people, the attributed images limit their real beings (Silver 1993).

In short, both the tourist and the local people are restricted by the touristic discourse. The discourse, which is reproduced with tourism promotional media, tends to stereotype the non-Westerners as mysterious, backward, and sensual (Caton and Santos 2009: 192). These findings also match well with the comprehensive study of Bryce (2007) that uncovers the orientalist’s point of view drawn on the notions of Foucault and Said. In the study, he analyzes both Egypt’s and Turkey’s representations in tourism brochures of the biggest tour operators in the United Kingdom. He discovers that the themes embodied in brochures reproduce a sense of destination image associated with Turkey including (a) being a generic sun/sand/sea destination (see the findings of this study – heaven and freedom), (b) being in the crossroads (see the findings of this study – love of continents), and (c) division of the West and East (see the findings of this study – the exotic East and the modern West).

These insightful deductions from the brochure scripts have their reciprocity in Turkey’s promotional videos over an extended period of time. This reciprocity becomes concrete in that the producers of Turkey’s promotional videos replicate the same patterns. In short, a country located between the East and West provides touristic experiences aligning the exotic and the “modern life’s” comfort, freedom, and collectivism, a mixture of cultures, foods, and beings. Yan and Santos (2009) assume that the East likewise adapts its presentations as “self-orientation” in order to respond to the Westerners gaze. The self-orientation has a wide range of diffusion over the signs and symbols in representation of daily life of the East.

Salazar (2012: 871) suggests that it would be an inadequate comment to reduce these representations that only for commoditization and commercialization but also they operate as the conveyors of the Western myths and stereotypes – an ideological tool to trace how discourse is formed. These embodied stereotypes appear in the promotional videos (see the findings of this study/swimming lady – harem). Jenkins (2003: 317) states these gender stereotypes as worldwide circulated clichés (e.g., a woman in a swimsuit or men in sport). The videos examined are likewise representing a man playing golf, woman swimming, woman walking in a swimsuit at sunset, a woman showing her daughter an album, and men climbing a mountain. These findings are consistent with the literature on tourism representation.

Table 5.1 Analysis of tourism promotional videos of Turkey

Promotional video – 1 duration: 60 s
The signifier: sea, beach, and a swimming lady
The signified: heaven and freedom
Meaning: In this film, an image of exotic and untouched place is formed in the viewer’s mind with a vision of island surrounded by the sea. The color of blue used in the film symbolizes freedom and peace. At the same time, the camera zooms in a smiling lady which also shows that the place is safe and peaceful
Promotional video – 2 duration: 33 s
The signifier: a smart and beautiful lady, subway, crowd, and horsemen
The signified: attractive, modernity, speed, time, and historic heroes
Meaning: a beautiful and attractive lady who wears a satin blue night attire the tail of which and her hair scatter by the wind of metro is waiting, a hero comes from an exotic world and spills rose leaves on her head in the scene which was created by some fictional techniques like fast motion. This puts an emphasis to that peaceful and nostalgic lifestyle which is missed by the western people who are fed up with crowded and noisy places. In order to create an impression that Turkey vanishes the limits of time–place, the slogan “Turkey welcomes you” has been put on the vision of the smiling and attractive lady
Promotional video – 3 duration 43 s
The signifier: Ottoman palace, harem (seraglio), dancer girls with fez and turban, sultans, Kapikulu soldiers, and historic and mythological heroes like mermaids
The signified: exotic East, authenticity
Meaning: During many scenes of the introductory film, “an exotic East tale” is told and presented by using mythological and historical characters like dancer girls with fez and turbans wandering sometimes in Istanbul and sometimes in the south, sultans, Kapikulu soldiers, and mermaids. In fictional verbalizing, there are some extraordinary events and anachronisms
Promotional video – 4 duration 22 s
The signifier: lady, man, bridge, whirling dervishes, the Hittite sun, janissary band of musicians
The signified: love, East–West
Meaning: In the last scene of the introductory film during which the lady and man come from the East and West running toward each other, a love theme which depends on a fictional verbalization is presented. In this scene, what is shown is the meeting of the man and lady in Bosphorus which interlinks the East and West by using elements like Hittite symbol coming out of the sea, a Trojan horse, statues belonging to the Byzantine emperor, and dervishes. The aim of editing the scene in a love theme is to give the meaning of authenticity, romance, and exotics for the viewers by creating some extraordinary events and anachronisms in time and setting. In the end of the film, we can see the slogan “Love of continents Istanbul” over the couple – who run and embrace each other among the hands of dervishes standing still on two continents – standing on nearly the whole cultural heritage of Turkey
Promotional video – 5 duration 22 s
The signifier: Nimrod mountain national park (komagene) statues, a golf pitch
The signified : the exotic east and modern/sophisticated west
Meaning: Camera turns to a golf pitch after wandering among “the Nimrod mountain” and “Nimrod national park statues.” In the moment when the camera turns to the golf pitch after recording settings with historical fragments, the idea of experiencing different types of tourism playing golf is given to the modern Westerner who follows the routes of the exotic East

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter attempts to decipher the Turkish way of challenging symbolic competition. We discover the tourism strategy is based on reconciling the Western values such as technology and comfort and the values of the East: hospitality, timelessness, exotics, etc. The current tourism promotional videos highlight a local color, which align with the self-orientalism in Turkish tourism promotion. This type of promotion, when considered the non-monolithic and differentiated structure of tourism, has some drawbacks in the era of symbolic competition.

The main focus of this chapter was to answer a single question: The relationship between the destination and the tourism promotion: “how is the destination represented?” To answer the question, the relevant literature is scrutinized and a semiotic analysis conducted. The analysis shows that Turkish tourism promotional videos focus on a kind of self-orientalism. This focus slightly indicates the institutional gaze permeated in Turkish tourism promotional materials. This gaze, along with the discourse, posits Turkey as a Third World country to compete with its, primarily, symbolic synopses: unchanged and unrestrained. This gaze, concurrently, reproduces an image of Turkey as the Oriental country, which does not match with the strategic plans for the next decades. This sort of promotion poses a problem when making efforts for the country’s promotion in several areas and besides encompasses all touristic activities.

This chapter is one of the first attempts to apprehend the current promotion strategies and representation of Turkey via tourism promotional videos. There is still a lack of comprehensive analysis both in content (including the other promotional materials, tourist guides, brochures, etc.) and the method (content analysis, discourse analysis, etc.) of Turkish tourism literature. The authors hope to trigger a debate of taking tourism studies – primarily the critical tourism studies – in Turkish tourism literature.

This study has several limitations. Primarily, the other tourism promotional materials were beyond the scope of the study. A comprehensive research on tourism promotion including the visual, audio, and written might strengthen the conclusions. This study focuses on the semiotic analysis. The content analysis accompanying the present study might enrich for more accurate implications. Lastly, a variety of promotional materials could be examined in order to see the differentiation of the perspective of several stakeholders including the domestic/international tour operators, local governments, nongovernmental organizations specialized in tourism, and the tourism schools in all levels.

This kind of aggregated data may elucidate the diversity of opinions, efforts, and practices. The authors expect to see further studies, which amalgamate the critical tourism studies and tourism promotion.

The following suggestions might be helpful for the further research in the field:

- The core competences of the area should be addressed: scholars need to pay particular attention to the socially constructed dichotomies such as the East–

West, men–women, high–low cultures (modern–primitive). The emphasis on the essentialist and given facts also restricts a clear vision of receiving tourists and the local people of the destination.

- There is a need for studying the tourist’s travel experiences from their perspective: The current literature can be elucidated and applied to studies on the tourist’s side. It means to design a research which posits the tourists as a joker – instead of spectator/actor (see Boal 2000) and empower them to question the quality of their experience. This may help to analyze if the existing tourism promotional materials and the destination promotion match with their actual aspirations.
- The promotional materials on the Internet should be examined. While a variety of studies were undertaken on semiotics, relevant to this book, there is still need for critical studies on representation in the consumption (new) e-consumer era.

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Chapter 6

Customer Decisions on Hotel Booking via Mobile Phone and Tablet Applications: A Case Study of Luxury Hotels in Bangkok

Kobkrit Sooksatit

Abstract In line with the rapid expansion of smartphone or mobile phone usage, phone applications have become a key channel for making accommodation reservations. However, a majority of hotels in Bangkok do not realize the impact of mobile device application awareness on the hotel business. The aim of this study is to discover the importance of mobile applications on the decision-making process of customers, especially among luxury hotels in Bangkok. This chapter also clarifies the effectiveness of using mobile device applications for making hotel reservations, check-in, and check-out including the payment process. Furthermore, this research emphasizes the importance of mobile applications on hotel marketing. In this research, data collections are adapted. Secondary sources are required to uncover different types of booking resources to hotels in Bangkok and their popularity, through the growth rate of mobile phone and tablet application usage. The basis of this research emphasizes the Sofitel So Bangkok hotel and Leading Online Travel Agent, a tour agency in Bangkok, to influence the awareness of using mobile device applications in making accommodations and helping the business owner aim mobile device application marketing at the right target. Mobile device applications become an income generator for many major hotels in their businesses. According to this research finding, the trend of hotel reservations through mobile device applications has increased significantly. Therefore this research result suggests that hotels in Bangkok should adopt mobile device applications to promote their business especially rooms and facilities bookings. Consequently, developing their own mobile device applications for the hotel business is highly recommended to increase competitiveness of the hotel business in the future.

Keywords Mobile device application • Customer decision • Hotel booking • Bangkok

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6.1 Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's most popular industries. Even though there is slow economic and geopolitical tension growth in some regions, the travel and tourism sector remains a significant part of the global economy (approximately 9 % of world GDP or equal to US \$7 trillion). Meanwhile, the amount of international travelers is increasing (Roberto and Tiffany 2015). According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC 2015), the travel and tourism sector is forecast to remain growing at 4 % annually, even quicker than transport, financial services, and manufacturing. In addition, the Council has observed a rapid growth in global tourism over the last 50 years. In 1950 there were 25.5 million international visitors which grew to an appraised 650.5 million people by the year 2000. Many factors had contributed to this increase in consumer demand in recent decades, including a rise in the standard of living in the developed countries, decreasing costs of travel, and greater allowances for holiday entitlements. Tourism is a considerable export for a huge number of developing countries, and the principal export for about a third of these. Statistics for domestic tourism were not so easily and simply available. However, it is certain that domestic tourism was also growing considerably in many Latin American and Asian countries. For Thailand, it is one of the huge income generators. The tourism segment generates 8.6 % of the total GDP in 2014, and is expected to increase by 3.4 % in 2015 (WTTC 2015).

Thailand has seen continuous and rapid growth in mobile technologies and online business, and some believe that this industry growth will never stop (Yoo et al. 2008). In recent years, a key engine that drives the growth of tourism has been the Internet (Bhatiasevi and Yoopetch 2015). Thailand has a plan to promote the use of ICT to cover Internet, e- and m-commerce, online marketing, payment systems, and reservation systems for the tourism business (Bhatiasevi and Yoopetch 2015).

This chapter is to let the hotelier realize the impact of mobile device applications on hotel business. The aim of this study is to discover and show the awareness of mobile applications regarding the customer's decision-making process especially among luxury hotels in Bangkok. Lastly, we clarify Sofitel So and their mobile device application competitors by using the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers 2003).

6.2 The Internet and Digital Technology

It is significant to understand the concept of the role of digital technology: "The internet, the software applications, and the devise that allow people to connect to network whenever, wherever and whatever they want to" (Ryan and Jones 2009). The digital media channel has rapidly grown the power for anyone to create and share content. The biggest change regarding digital technology is that a huge digital social network can connect people all over the world. The virtual world may be seen

as a second life. Digital media are attracting billions of users. A new type of digital signage is popping up every day everywhere people go.

Humans cannot predict the future but three things can be explicit. First, communication is mostly in digital media and plays an important part in human life. Second, the content that is in visual form can be found easily in everyday life. Third, the variety of digital media communications is spreading all around the world; consumers have been using the virtual world to overlap with the real world (Urban 2004).

Main Element of Online Promotion Channel in Digital Marketing Innovations (Ryan and Jones 2009)

- *Website*: The website is the hub of the digital world. This tool is the most important channel because it's a vital piece where all of the company's online activity is directed to their prospects.
- *Search engine optimization (SEO)*: One part of the website is SEO. It is the list of content for which customers are searching. Thus, the SEO makes the content accessible to both buyers and sellers. The ranking search results are the place to be competitive and increase targeted traffic to your company website.
- *Pay-per-click search advertising (PPC)*: This advertising method offers your company website in the search results page for a chosen key phrase. The PPC could quickly generate the search engine traffic rate.
- *Affiliate/performance marketing and strategic partnership*: It is a strategy to establish a partnership with another company website in a mutually beneficial relationship in order to promote the company's service and product.
- *Online public relations*: Online channel PR such as blogs, press releases, and article syndication creates a positive image of your brand and company as an authority.
- *Social media*: This channel is the most massive growth area for online marketing. All the people around the globe use this channel to receive and share their contents. Good examples of this category are Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Tumblr.
- *E-mail marketing*: This is to maintain an ongoing relationship with existing customers and new prospects who are willing to receive the company's information.
- *Mobile marketing*: Smartphone penetrations are growing fast on the mobile Internet; it means the customers can access the company's content anywhere and anytime.
- *Customer relationship management*: Maintaining existing customers and giving away rewards are important digital marketing elements. Digital technologies make the company directly and effectively connect with your customers.
- *Content marketing*: People always understand the importance of good content and a search engine will rank the company page by content offering.
- *Display media*: Two-way communications include a display screen, kiosk, online video, realtime bidding, online audio, auto check in counter, and so on.

A travel company posts their recent activities on a mobile application such as Trip Advisor and Lonely Planet applications, resulting in interesting consumer

feedback. This allows the consumer to participate in the travel destination image, both positive and negative. It consists of content such as photos, essays, and video aimed at promoting their products, services, brands, and issues.

The consumer can search for and acquire information at a very low cost in a digital environment. The Internet efficiency view contends that its features will result in a market where the retailer's location is not physical and consumers are fully informed about prices and all available alternatives. This could help in maximizing retail profits. The product information is separated from the physical product. An important effect of this is that the physical form of the product no longer constrains its organization, its quantity, or its presentation (Ryan and Jones 2009).

6.3 Digital Customer Behaviour

How do consumers decide which service and product or brand to purchase? This question is even more pertinent when the consumers decide to purchase a product or service, as the adoption of new digital marketing is almost equal to adopting a major change. Consumer decision making is an important research area with direct impact on the digital marketing process of a company. A company's ability to establish and maintain satisfying exchange relationships requires an understanding of buying behavior. Buying behavior includes the decision process and acts of people involved in buying and using the product.

Nystrom (1990) said that "The influence of technology is pervasive. It affects our everyday lives, influences how business is conducted, how we spread our leisure time, and how we communicate."

To develop a more effective digital marketing strategy is to focus on customer decision-making. Resulting strategies may be modified or altered depending upon how the consumer acquires, processes, and uses decision-making information when purchasing. The company's digital marketing activities and effective communication must understand the buying-related and decision-making behaviors of consumers. With different consumer understanding the psychological processes that affect consumer behavior can help segments (Ryan and Jones 2009).

The Internet and digital technology have changed consumer behavior and increased purchasing power. According to Urban (2004) "These new phenomena threaten the prevailing parties of many businesses. In the travel industry, travel agent is being supplanted by consumers who do research and book their own travel on-line."

Due to the Internet, as well as other information technology (IT) applications, mobile devices are a tried and tested system of communication which aside from being low cost, is accurate and secure (Ryan and Jones 2009). Overall, the Internet is an important medium in the online public relations and marketing communication process for the hotel industry (Law et al. 2010).

Traditional marketing provides companies and product images with only one-way communication. On the other hand, new digital marketing tools facilitate effec-

tive and two-way communication. The consumer-created content contributes to the product and service image for prospective tourists (John et al. 2011; Yumi et al. 2012).

6.3.1 *Why Digital Marketing Is Important*

1. Introduces an entirely new channel to sell and market products.
2. Allows new pricing option and individual promotions to the customer.
3. Enables new hot media communication.
4. Offers opportunities to find new product needs and launch new products.
5. Supports improved distribution and service.
6. The Internet provides a new channel for buying services or products, giving the customer more variety when buying services or products. The Internet also supplies information about the product and services, to compare offerings between companies, and to read third-party reviews about the product or service performance (Urban 2004).

According to Kent and Ian (2008) “Marketers need to determine which mix of channels is right for their marketing needs. Engaging digital creative information should encourage participants to adapt your digital marketing around their personal preferences and desires.”

With digital technology, the opportunity for direct promotion to customers allows the customer to opt onto a mailing list rather than one being pushed on him or her. Digital media technology has put the customer in charge, creating a fundamental shift in the dynamics of marketing. According to Wind and Mahajan (2007) it is noted that “Pity the poor company that fails to see this or refuses to play by the new rules.”

Nowadays, people love to travel to new places. To produce the experience of travel and increasing access to and awareness with the Internet, the Internet will drive a huge amount of travelers to manage the bookings by themselves and modify their travel research up to reservation accommodations, rather than trust the limited options often provided by offline agents (Amadeus 2013).

Across the seven countries’ destinations, more than 46 % of travelers are taking their decision on their own travel booking accommodation and arrangements via the Internet, and this is expected to rise to 52 % in the near future. The continuous growth in self-managed travelers particularly will be in the number of outbound tourists such as from China, Korea, and Japan. Recently travelers have been making hotel reservations and travel arrangements on average 12 weeks before leisure travel, and 6 weeks before business travel (Amadeus 2013).

Business travelers want flexibility, accuracy, and greater confidence in their travel arrangements. Those are the reasons for making their own hotel reservations online. On the other hand, leisure travelers prefer self-managed booking because they like to explore the experience of discovery and it is also cheaper. This trend of

self-managed travelers will drive the online travel agent industry to offer a side range of services catering to them (Amadeus 2013).

6.4 Mobile Devices and Mobile Innovation

First, M-commerce is the delivery of electronic commerce capabilities directly into the consumer's hand. This is the most important tool to be explained in the following chapter. Second, there are many types of mobile device that can connect people and electronic stores to buy products and services anytime and anywhere. Last, the smartphone trend and the way that companies communicate valuable information to customers by using mobile applications is also provided in this section.

6.4.1 E- and M-Commerce

Rogers (2003) established the diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory. It explains how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and spreads through a specific population or social system. The result of this diffusion is that people, as part of a social system or behavior, adopt a new idea or product. Adoption means the person purchases or uses a new product, and acquires and performs a new behavior (Rogers 2003).

There are five established adopter categories (Rogers 2003).

- *Innovators*: These are people who want to be the first to try the innovation. This group of people is adventurous and interested in new ideas. These people are very willing to take risks, and often the first to develop new ideas.
- *Early Adopters*: These are people who represent opinion leaders. They enjoy leadership roles and change opportunities. They are already aware of the need to change and so are very comfortable adopting new ideas. This chapter focuses on strategies to appeal to this population. This group does not need information to convince them to change.
- *Early Majority*: These people adopt new ideas before the average person. They need to see evidence that innovation works before they are willing to adopt it. Strategies to attract these people include information on how many other people have tried the innovation and have adopted it successfully.
- *Late Majority*: These people are uncertain of change, and will only adopt an innovation after it has become popular.
- *Laggards*: These people are bound by tradition and very conservative. They are very uncertain of change and are the hardest groups to adopt it.

A business innovation can replace an old way of doing business by using modern technology. Moreover, a successful company focuses on existing technology to

support, enhance, or extend its core business (Coltman et al. 2001). As a modern way to conduct business and opportunities for new companies, electronic and mobile commerce have played an important alternative role. In general, we can categorize Internet/electronic (e) and mobile (m) commerce as the different tools to support and do business via the Internet (e) and/or with a mobile device (m) (Zhao 2006). Some examples of a popular online travel agent that focuses on both electronic and mobile commerce are Expedia.com, Booking.com, and Agoda.com. M-commerce can be understood in equally diverse ways; indeed there may be a number of different definitions for e- and m-commerce that are all correct (Zhao 2006).

M-commerce can be expanded to transform the hotel business process to maintain a competitive advantage (Yoo et al. 2008). In fact, e- and m-business components can be the core competence areas for some companies, whereas for others they are only tools to maintain their competitive advantage (Amit and Zott 2001). Value creation in e- and m-business is one of the most important issues in deciding about e- and m-business component investments (Zhao 2006). In many occasions, that e- and m-business offer the companies that utilize them enhanced potential for greater earning through the new possibilities the enable due to convenience, speed, ease-of-use, cost and labour saving, and enhanced communications (Lederer et al. 2001).

M-business can be adopted by unsophisticated customers if they are made easy to use and if they offer substantial benefits to the customer. The company must have this service instead of nice-to-have e- and m-business elements (Jävenpää et al. 2003). When the customers see the potential and good concept, they become more interested to change from old customer products and learn new e- and m-tricks; where there is a will, there is a way. Usage rate and the acceptance of customer responsiveness are key drivers of the success of m-commerce (Heinonen and Strandvik 2007).

Mobile Hotel Reservation (MHR) was established to assist the hotel's guests to access their desirable hotels. This system brings opportunities for hoteliers to reduce cost, promote, and sell their products with realtime information for their guests (Wang and Wang 2010; Yoo et al. 2008).

6.4.2 PCs to Mobile and Other Devices

Marketers need to develop digital marketing to assess their consumer and prospect base carefully and to choose a mobile device approach to marketing communications. Now life today is even more stress-free, so different customer segmentation and analytics will show on mobile usage (Jordan 2014).

There are many different types of devices used for mobile operations (Table 6.1).

Smartphones are a combination of cellular phone and PDA, which allow access and data transmission using cellular networks. Smartphone functions are Internet browsing, wireless e-mail, personal information management, fax, LAN connectivity, local transfer between phone and computer, data entry, remote data transfer, remote control of electronic homes, and business systems (Shah 2014).

Table 6.1 Some common devices and their key features (Shah 2014)

Mobile device	Key features
PDAs	Wireless modem
(Handhelds, pocket PCs)	Access via cellular networks to the Internet, company applications, e-mail, instant messaging, and so on
Laptop	Smaller version of a PC, with flat screen and keyboard in one portable package
Tablet PC	Combines laptop, planners, calendars, notebooks, and handheld devices such as PDAs into a single device
GPRS devices	The technology that supports most current mobile phones, allowing access to e-mail and the Internet on the move
	Suited to sending and receiving small bursts of data, such as e-mail and Web browsing
Bluetooth	A way of instantly connecting up electronic devices
	Can talk to any other device provided it is in range (usually 10 m, but this can be up to 100 m for some equipment)
Smartphone	Combination of cellular phone and PDA
	Access and transmission of data using existing cellular networks
	Conventional phone functions and endless other features

The key features of smartphones are permanently connected and have a much higher data transfer rate, unlike the wire access protocol (WAP) mobile phone; it also has much more functionality in applications, including the capability to connect with many platforms and systems, and interfaces for a variety of uses and users (Shah 2014). The smartphone is in more than 60 % of US households, and 30 % of US people have a tablet in Internet-equipped households. The rest of the globe is not far behind. Nowadays, sharing information through mobile devices has almost doubled since 2008 (Jordan 2014).

More people have Internet access via mobile device than via PCs. In the future, the growth of mobile technologies will be even faster because of enhanced technologies such as 3G and 4G, video communication, social networking, smart mobile devices, and voice-over-Internet protocol (VoIP). The graph in Fig. 6.1 shows the dramatic increase in popularity of smartphones. This has affected the industries and their operations as well as strategic management (Shah 2014).

In the past, Internet users preferred to use a PC rather than other devices. But in 2012, the number of smartphone users rapidly increased to become the leader of Internet user devices. In the future, we can predict that the smartphone will continuously rise and PCs begin an “untouched” era (Fig. 6.1).

The graph in Fig. 6.2 shows proportions of leisure travelers who use smartphones to make bookings by age group. The age group between 18–30-years old is the highest percentage of smartphone users who use it to make hotel reservations. The top three nations that use smartphone bookings are Korea, Indonesia, and China: Korea has more than 75 % of the respondents, followed by Indonesia which holds 45 % and China 32 %. From this graph we can assume that the younger generation will make reservations by smartphone accessibility more important than before.

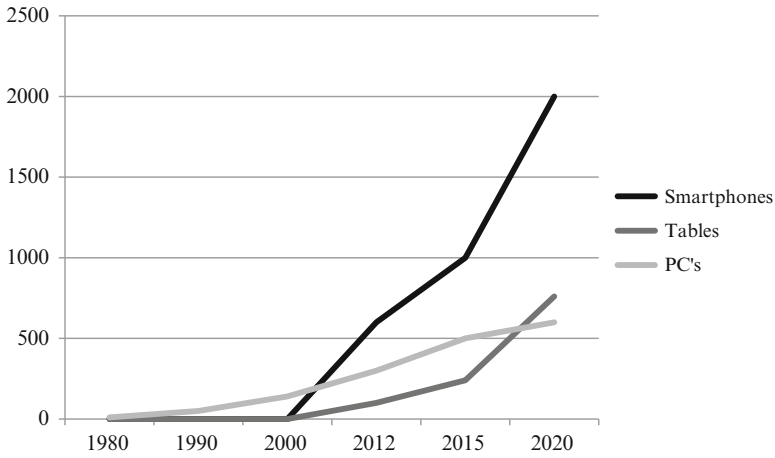


Fig. 6.1 Smartphone, tablet, and PC forecast to 2020 (Rules 2012)

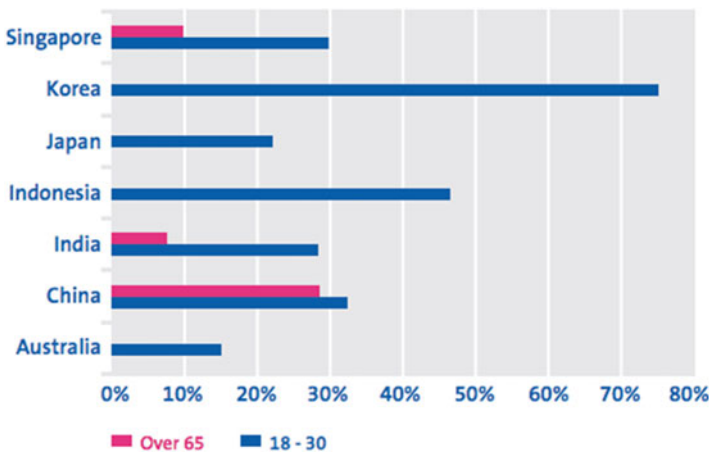


Fig. 6.2 Proportions by age group of leisure travelers who use smartphones to make bookings (Amadeus 2013)

It is estimated that for this year there will be more than 190.5 million smartphone users. In the upcoming 2019, the number of smartphone users will reach 236.8 million. And 85.5 % of smartphone users are Internet users; 52 % of smartphone users check their phones at least more than two times in an hour, with 11 % checking every few minutes. In this era, many people said they could not imagine living without their smartphones. This year, all advertisers will invest in smartphone advertising. Also travelers depend on their smartphones to stay organized and connected with social media. They can contact their people back home, make a hotel and flight reservation, and other travel arrangements (Krista 2015).

6.4.3 *Mobile Applications for Accor Hotels*

Mobile applications are one of the marketing tools that make marketing offers. Thus, mobile applications simplify the customer's life through easier transactions, social networking, content dissemination, personal productivity, and leisure (Gasimov et al. 2010). Mobile application marketing offers hotels and information sharing, games, choice selections, maps, and travel planning (Kuan-Yu Chen et al. 2012). At present mobile applications support a wide range and simple functions that include transportation arrangements; hotel, restaurant, and bar information; location and map directions; tourist attractions; and support picture and video sharing via e-mail and social media. Last, mobile applications are very useful in making last-minute online accommodation bookings (Kuan-Yu Chen et al. 2012).

Accor is the world's leading hotelier. Accor hotels break into three scales from luxury to budget hotel to attract both business and leisure segments around the world. Sofitel, MGallery, Pullman, Grand Mercure, and The Sebal are categorized as luxury-upscale, followed by midscale Suite Novotel, Novotel, Mercure, and Adagio; last is economy scale: ibis Styles, ibis, ibis budget, adagio access, and hotelF1 (Haire 2015).

Romain Roulleau, Senior Vice President e-Commerce and Digital at Accor Group heads a team working on a mega (\$280 million) project to transform the traditional to digital environment of Europe's biggest hotel operator. In 2013, digital channels overwhelmed traditional television for the first time. So, Accor revealed a new business strategy: to position digital technology at the center of a customer experience and the Accor Group (Pamela 2015).

In October 2014, the digital strategy was revealed. This great transformation provides Accor an outstanding platform to scale up. With Accor's mobile application the user can check in and check out of over 480,000 rooms in 3700 hotels over 14 brands in 92 countries around the world. Accor Hotel Group focuses on two main areas: finding the right balance between direct and indirect booking, and generating huge growth in mobile usage. Recently, the Accor Group has 40 % traffic in hotel reservations coming from mobile devices, which is forecast to reach 50 % in the coming years (Pamela 2015).

Accor was not only building one main application for the group but also a travel companion for the users. The Accor mobile application provides every single service that is available in the hotel. From the guest's check in and check out, room service, arranging late check out, accessing the concierge, booking and payment at the restaurant can all be accomplished via mobile applications. Moreover, the French travel software company Wipolo aims for more advanced features by providing the guest with an all-in-one experience. The functions that the Accor application provides include flight and hotel booking, restaurant, sharing trip information through social media, and land transportation. Within 24 hours of arriving at the hotel, the guest will receive a popup message with the Accor application (Pamela 2015).

The same as other big chains, Accor has to admit that the online travel agents, the competitive edge regarding booking, can compete during the guest's stay. An Accor

strategy plays an important role with the data. A customer-centric approach aims to use the customer's databases to ensure that every single piece of relevant information about a valued guest is recorded centrally. This useful information is to ensure a personalized and relevant followup (Pamela 2015).

Accor Group invented a strong digital ecosystem, not only e-commerce, accorhotels.com, and its brand website but also m-commerce, Accorhotels application and its brand application; additionally Accor Hotels have a loyalty program called Le Club Accorhotels. Accor has also established sustainable and innovation hospitality to focus on customer-centered approach development (Haire 2015).

Over 150 destinations have been included in Accor's online booking solutions for tourism professionals. This tool was established in March 2014 with 500 hotels in 150 destinations. By the end of 2015, this professional booking solution will be accessible in more than 750 hotels, which attracts more than 3500 leisure groups of customers (Haire 2015).

Accor hotels have their own brands of mobile applications, such as the Novotel and Sofitel brands. However, the mobile application functions are about the same. The application connects through location service on a mobile phone, whether the customer wants to stay locally or book another hotel outside the country in a few clicks. All room rates are the guaranteed best price and secure payment and guests can claim if they find a cheaper website or application. Loyal customers can have special offers and the latest information from the hotel's brand. The Accor's hotel brand applications have direct access to Le Club Accorhotels account (loyalty program) to collect loyalty points. Plus, a new feature came out in 2013 whereby customers could access their reservation in realtime by using smartphone and tablet via the applications. Finally, the loyalty card is directly available on a mobile application in just a few clicks and customers can access their information such as point balance and special rates realtime (Accor 2013).

6.5 Customer Decisions on Mobile Applications

In this chapter, customer decision theories are explained and applied to this new finding and customer decisions on mobile applications are clarified.

6.5.1 *A Brief Explanation of Chosen Theory "Five Established Adopter Categories"*

Figure 6.3 shows the five established adopter categories. This chapter mentions only the innovators and early adopters' states. Innovators are a state wherein customers who want to be first develop a new idea or are in a risk-seeking category. Likewise, the early adopters' state includes the customer who is already aware of the need to change and so is very comfortable adopting new ideas (Rogers 2003).

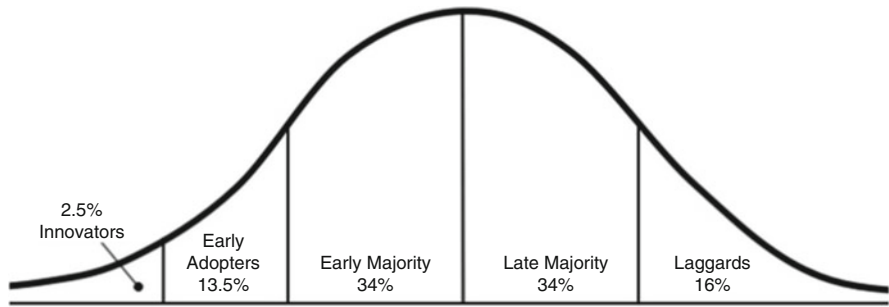


Fig. 6.3 Five established adopter categories (Rogers 2003)

Table 6.2 Online travel agent year-to-date report for Sofitel So Bangkok and its competitor in April 2015

Sofitel So Bangkok Hotel	YTD 2015	YTD 2014	Year over year increase (%)
Room nights	1493	1055	42
Average booking window	43.9	38.2	15
Average length of stay	2.6	2.5	4
Mobile share	17 %	17 %	0
Sofitel So’s competitors	YTD 2015	YTD 2014	Year over year increase (%)
Average booking window	37.2	32	16
Average length of stay	2.5	2.5	0
Mobile share	24 %	12 %	100

Consumer decisions in tourism industries have always been subject to modern information communication technologies and online media has recently begun to have an impact on the travel industry in a tremendous way (John et al. 2011).

Four stages of the consumer process consist of consider, evaluate, purchase, and advocate. Consumers go through all the stages when making a purchase (Hudson and Thal 2013). Furthermore, Lim and Dubinsky (2004) mention that customers need more information about the product or service before buying because the customers cannot actually experience the product or service they intend to purchase. So, the information of the key features and details of product and service play an important role giving customers enough confidence in making a decision on online purchases.

Customers prefer an application with many features and are interested to see wide content on the application. Currently, the hotel mobile applications have similar basic features. To develop mobile applications is not just only to increase downloads but also maintain current loyalty customers. The customers choose the reliable and functional mobile application features (Kuan-Yu Chen et al. 2012).

Table 6.2 is an explanation of the current situation for Accor’s hotel mobile applications. The table shows Sofitel So Bangkok customer decisions via the online travel agent website and mobile site. Comparing the same period of time from the

1st of January to the end of April in 2014 and 2015 there was a year over year increase. The average booking window is an average length of days a customer decides to make a reservation before actual check-in day. The average length of stay is an average length of days that customers decide to stay in the hotel. From the beginning of the year to the end of April 2015 Sofitel So Bangkok holds 1,493 room nights, an increase over 2014 of 42 % (year over year increase). Thus, the average booking window or average reservation lead-time was increased from 38.2 to 43.9 days and the average length of stay was increased from 2.5 to 2.6 days. In addition, the mobile share of the customer’s reservation system remained the same. In contrast, Sofitel So Bangkok’s competitors’ mobile share rapidly increased 100 % since 2014 (Fig. 6.4).

The pie chart shows Sofitel So Bangkok and its competitors on mobile performance in April 2015. Mobile applications show customers have chosen the online travel agents’ application to make a reservation. The mobile website shows the customers who have chosen to book via an online travel agent website by using a mobile device. Finally, nonmobile is the other devices on which a customer makes a reservation such as laptop, tablet, or PC. Year over year performance shows the percentage change is increasing from the same period in 2014.

The customers of Sofitel So Bangkok and other competitor hotels also made reservations through online travel agent websites (83 % and 76 %) rather than using a mobile device to make a reservation (17 % and 24 %). On the other hand, year over year, the percentage of mobile applications and mobile Web has been greatly increasing by 215 % and 249 % for Sofitel So Bangkok. For its competitors, the increase was 89 % and 23 % from same period in 2014 (Fig. 6.5).

The graph shows customers’ search records for accommodations of Sofitel So by using desktop PC, mobile phone, and tablet. In 2013, more than 63 % of customers were searching for hotel accommodations by using a desktop PC. In 2014, the percentage of customers that browsed this accommodation through mobile phone has increased to 29 %. While, desktop PC has decreased to 57 %.

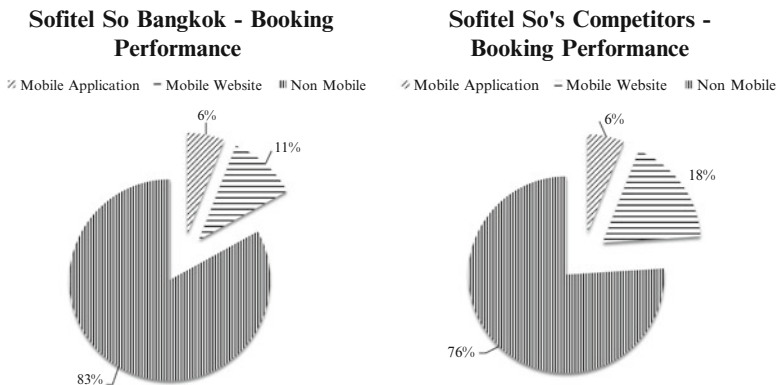


Fig. 6.4 Sofitel So Bangkok and its competitors’ mobile performance in April 2015

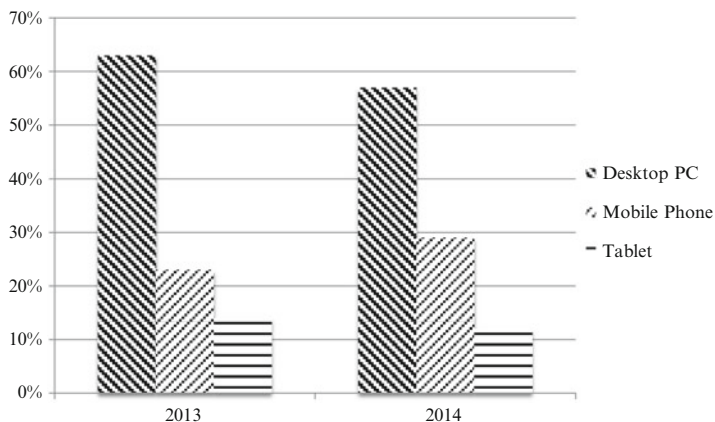


Fig. 6.5 Customers' search record for accommodations of Sofitel So using different devices

As the finding of this chapter, the Bangkok m-commerce market is still in the first two stages. There is only a small group of travelers who fall into the innovators and early adopters states. If we compare the above figure between 3.2 and 3.4, it shows that travelers who use mobile phones and mobile phone applications to make a reservation are still a low segment. However, the amount of usage is rapidly increasing year over year.

6.6 Conclusion

Mobile device applications become an income generator for many major hotels in their businesses. According to this research finding, the customers of the Sofitel So Bangkok have fallen into innovators and early adopters states. Thus, the trend of hotel reservations through mobile device applications has been increased significantly. Therefore this research result suggests that hotels in Bangkok should adopt mobile applications to promote their business, especially rooms and facilities bookings.

The author hopes that this chapter will help hotel owners and anyone interested in seeking the importance of having mobile applications for hotels as a part of marketing strategy in satisfying the customers by implementing a more convenient channel. Customers could make a reservation by using the hotel's mobile applications, which also generate higher revenue with lower cost. In the near future, mobile applications and smartphone users will become a more crucial tool for hotel reservations. To provide complete and updated hotel information, the mobile device application is one of the tools that create a good relationship with the customer. Consequently, the development of their own mobile applications for hotel business is highly recommended to increase competitiveness in the future.

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Chapter 7

MoViT: A 3D Mobile Virtual Tour App of Panguil River Eco-Park

Sean Archie I. Urriza, Maden R. Ferrer, Niña Jonessa Dizer,
and Ellenita R. Red

Abstract The fast changing world of technology affects many areas of society in a positive way including tourism. The use of emerging technologies such as virtual reality, multimedia, and mobile technologies is changing the tourism industry through showcasing the wonders of undiscovered nature hidden beneath the undiscovered municipalities, such as the Panguil River Eco-Park (PREP) in Pangil, Laguna, Philippines. Potential visitors can now reach these hidden wonders of nature without actually being in the vicinity with virtual reality tour. Uncertainties as to what to expect in the vicinity would be reduced, giving them an opportunity to explore and roam around inside which has led to the development of the 3D Mobile Virtual Tour Application (MoViT) for the Panguil River Eco-Park which was developed and designed employing story conception, concept scripting, feasibility analysis, script writing, system evaluation, revision, integration, and system operation. Based on the result of the usability testing, the study was able to provide an experience of the eco-park giving the potential visitors a “feel” of the eco-park. Moreover, the staff of the Eco-park was asked to validate the design of MoViT app and persuade visitors whose initial intention is to just swim in the river and is not interested on visiting the other points of interest such as the waterfalls. The results showed that the respondents were able to use the virtual tour guide application and were able to determine the different points of interest with ease, and they were able to have the “feel” of the eco-park.

Keywords eTourism • Mobile application • Multimedia system • Virtual reality • Virtual tour

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7.1 Introduction

The use of emerging technologies such as virtual reality, multimedia, and mobile technologies has an impact into the modern tourism industry as Hay (2008) stated in his study that the tourism businesses could use a 3D virtual environment (VE) to bring and attract the attention of hard-to-reach potential visitors. Similarly, in the study of Zhuowei and Lai (2012), they agreed that the application of virtual reality technology in tourism could meet the tours and aesthetic demands of those people who do not have the capability of getting there at a certain level. Virtual reality is a rapidly developing computer interface that is available everywhere and anytime, so it ensures convenience and safety for the user (Shao et al. 2013). In addition, the uses of digital media as an information resource and communication platform for tourists have grown significantly. Electronic gadget manufacturers, telecommunication providers, and social media developers have been collaborating to enable tourist to acquire, store, disseminate, and exchange information in a multimedia-friendly format about their travel plans and itineraries (Divinagracia et al. 2012).

This study was created to help visitors and potential visitors of Panguil River Eco-Park in Laguna to find their way inside the eco-park by using the mobile virtual tour application. Since Panguil River Eco-Park has been the source of income in Pangil Laguna, marketing the eco-park could greatly help the municipality. By the use of mobile virtual tour, tourist all over the world can virtually experience being inside the eco-park beforehand. They can experience the attractions and activities as well as to roam inside the eco-park. In addition to that, Panguil River Eco-Park is located in a remote location in southern part of the Province of Laguna, Philippines, making it hard to be reached by visitors and thus only allowing them to see the place in brochures and blogs. This gives the potential visitors the element of uncertainty of what they would expect if they visit the eco-park. However, with the use of virtual reality, it was intended to dispel the element of uncertainty and gives the visitor an experience of actually being inside the eco-park without actually going there. Therefore, making a mobile virtual tour of the eco-park would greatly affect not just only potential visitors inside the country but also around the world.

The goal of the study was to create a virtual reality tour that can allow visitors and potential visitors to have an experience of the activities inside the Panguil River Eco-Park. Specifically, the study was intended to create a 3D virtual environment of the different points of interest which includes the administration's office, police station, hanging bridge, swimming pool, cottages, camping sites, Pavilion, Biak-na-Bato, and the Ambon-Ambon falls inside the eco-park, provide an auditory experience that replicates the sounds of the environment, and help the users to navigate and guide them toward their selected destination.

7.2 Related Literature

7.2.1 *Virtual Reality*

Advancement in technology has been evolving in every way possible, making the impossible possible; one of which is experiencing things at the convenience of your own home or at the grasp of your own hand. Virtual reality, or VR, can be defined as a special kind of simulation that has used everyone's imagination that can greatly influence work, education, and leisure activities. It is also designed to immerse users to a great extent that they cannot differentiate 3D computer-generated environment from the real world. A three-dimensional multisensory is an immersive and interactive 3D digital environment of a scene that gives the user the sense of being in the real world and obeys the laws of physics (Balogun et al. 2010; Roussou 2004).

VR has many potentially useful applications in tourism and is helpful for learning. Virtual reality is divided into two styles: "high-level" and "general-level" styles. High level refers to the unification of the virtual environment with the 3D virtual world and advanced input and output devices (Shao et al. 2013). Several devices were used for inputs in a high-level VR like, for instance, one for each senses except of course for the sense of smell and taste since they are often least regarded senses for VR (Guttentag 2010). The general level already provides the user the experience of being in a real world and the convenience of interacting in the virtual world using a personal computer. The experience of navigating and interacting with the virtual environment in their own perspective will give them a virtual experience. Virtual reality is giving users a virtual experience in a computer-generated 3D environment or the virtual environment (Shao et al. 2013).

Virtual Experience This can be described by its capability to physically and psychologically immerse the user in the virtual environment. Immersion refers to the extent on how the user is attached to the virtual environment and isolated in the real world. Thus, virtual experience can be classified into two, a "fully immersive system" and the "semi-immersive system." A "fully immersive system" is when the user is totally immersed to the virtual environment as if he/she sees the virtual environment as same level as the real word, while the "semi-immersive system" is when the user can still interact with his environment.(Gutierrez et al. 2008; Shao et al. 2013). The study was deployed on an iOS device; as a result, the user would not be limited to the interaction in the real world. Additionally, the study only includes the sense of sight and hearing and having a fully immersive system would be the inclusion of all the senses of a human. Thus, the study falls on the category of semi-immersive system.

Multimedia It is the interactivity of text, graphics, sound, video, and animation. Multimedia has been a part of almost everything in our daily lives, whether it comes to entertainment, leisure, and most part of it is in the tourism and marketing sector. Multimedia is a tool that maximizes the interaction of text, graphics, animation, audio and video, and image video to create dynamic and interactive systems (Famukhit et al. 2013).

Virtual reality is built with the interaction of different elements of multimedia that will trigger the senses of the user. The core element that builds virtual reality is multimedia, as it imitates the real world by the use of different elements of multimedia like, for instance, as to imitate the real world objects, it uses graphics, a 3D model. Virtual reality system is intensified by stimulating the senses of the user especially visual and auditory senses of the user (Cheong 1995) as it triggers two of the senses used by an individual to interact with the real world making the virtual experience more realistic. The study makes use of all the elements of multimedia except video since the interaction of other elements would help the study to trigger the visual and auditory sense of the user. Additionally, these elements were also the major key elements in the study. The graphics and animation were the defining elements that would build the 3D virtual environment, while sound was used for the auditory simulation, and the interaction of text, graphics and animation was used to guide the user in navigating through the 3D virtual environment.

7.2.2 Information and Communication Technology in Tourism

Information and communication technology, or ICT, has been greatly affecting tourism in many ways that thus as technology advances, so does the ways on how the tourism sector transforms. Tourism is viewed by many as travel for recreation, pleasure, or instruction, often in organized group (Balogun et al. 2010). Tourism can be categorized into three, and they are (1) cultural tourism which consists of museum, art, galleries, cultural, religious and national festivals, historic monuments, and natural features such as sites and buildings, arts, and crafts; (2) ecological tourism which has geological, geophysical, and geomorphologic features (mountains, water, falls, springs, beaches, national parks, games/forests reserves, botanical/zoological gardens, etc.); and (3) modern tourism which comprises of hydroelectric power, dams, oilrigs, sporting facilities, travel and accommodations, and other notable engineering structures (Ayeni 2006).

The union of ICT and tourism is referred to as “eTourism” (Buhalis and Law 2008). Thus, ICT is continuously changing tourism in ways that it can best adopt to the changing society of the world. ICT is continuously changing the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism organizations especially on how they are conducted in every marketplace and on the interaction of consumers and the organization (Buhalis and Law 2008).

Tourists tend to bring map especially when they are traveling at a foreign destination. They research on the destination they want to go and the expenses they will have on the way to their destination and upon their stay. By the help of ICT, tourists can improve the quality of trips and at the same time, reduce their uncertainty and risk of not enjoying the trip (Fodness and Murray 1997). There are four major factors that influence information search in tourism and they are the composition of vacation groups, the presence of families and friends at the destination, prior visits to the destination, and the degree of novelty associated with the destination (Snepenger et al. 1990).

ICT can help visitor search for information about the destination they wish to travel, making them well informed about the place, the activities, and the expense they may have incur upon traveling. Making visitors well informed on the destination they are headed can empower them. Therefore, ICT manages to give solutions on these problems; one area of the solution is virtual reality. Virtual reality can cover the six principal areas of tourism, planning and management, marketing, entertainment, education, accessibility, and heritage preservation (Guttentag 2010; Shao et al. 2013). VR can produce a map including all tourism elements, such as terrain, routes, road transport, services, facilities, tourist attractions, and activities. It can also provide the visitor a bird's eye view of the destination they want to go as they can foresee the range of travel in advance for their travel. Given all the tourism elements, the study includes the terrains, routes, facilities, tourist attractions, and activities. VR can serve as a marketing instrument for travel agencies, as VR strives to dispel elements of uncertainty and ensures that visitor's expectations of their impending visit are equitable to the subsequent actual experience (Cheong 1995) because it can provide complete information about the place and at the same time, give the user a virtual experience of actually being on the destination that the user can actually choose ahead of time the right destination they really want to travel. Compared to travel brochures and multimedia packages, they only give a tourist general information on the destination they want to go (Cheong 1995), making a VR a better marketing tool to convince tourists to visit the actual destination.

7.2.3 Human Computer Interaction in Virtual Reality

Human Computer Interaction, or HCI, has been defined as the interaction between computer and human. It has been used entirely on every project, as it is the basic factor on designing interfaces. The principle behind HCI has been to make user feel comfortable at the first instance the user uses the system. An effective HCI design makes the user know the directions on how to navigate the system upon first glance. In virtual reality, users must not feel confused in navigating all through the system's user interface since it would conflict the main purpose of VR which is allowing the user immerse in the system. HCI plays an important role in VR, as it will make the user more immersed into the system. According to Krueger (1991), VR as an interface must possess "the three I's": (1) immersion is when the user must feel he/

she is the center of the virtual environment imitating like that of the real world. Each time the user's senses are tapped, the more and more he/she would be able to immerse himself/herself to the virtual environment; (2) interaction makes the user more immersed to the virtual environment; he/she must continuously interact with the virtual environment at the same time the virtual environment would interact with the user; and (3) imagination in VR is an imaginary world created by the user's mind. Thus, everything the user desires can happen to the virtual world that of which will make it more interesting to the user and at the same time make them more immerse to the virtual environment.

Being able to observe "the three I's" can make the VR system to successfully make the user engage in the system and not feel bored while using the system, as though the user is living his life inside the VE. The three I's can be achieved by successfully implementing the visual and auditory simulation in the system (Cheong 1995). In addition to that, imagination can be achieved by a visual experience: having to see the actual color of the environment, the form, and the movement in the environment would greatly increase the visual experience in which all of it is seen in the virtual environment (Edelman and Tononi 2000). Although VE cannot imitate the real world, VE is unable to replace the actual feeling of being in nature and seeing, hearing, feeling, and breathing an environment that is real (Musil and Pigel 1994). McClure also asserts that the real world possess "a high level of complexity, randomness, and uncertainty" (McClure 1994) and that VE does not have the ability to process the vast amount of information required to imitate the realistic experience in the real world.

Horan (1997) devised a virtual reality model that illustrates on how virtual reality system interacts with the user and how it would immerse users to the virtual environment. The model is divided into two parts: the actual reality and the virtual reality. In the actual reality, it allows user interaction mediated by a device to the virtual reality. While on the other hand, in the virtual reality, it would get the user's input and process it in the environmental tools that consist of the environment model, the interaction model, and the resources. The environment model is the actual 3D environment that was responsible for the overall display of the virtual environment, while the interaction model was responsible for the interaction of the user on the virtual environment. Lastly, the resources were the set of tools that support the virtual environment.

In enhancing the virtual experience of the user while using the virtual reality system, the system must be designed while observing nine factors (Horan 1997; Shao et al. 2013; Osman et al. 2009). Therefore, the study was designed following all of the nine factors stated in Table 7.1.

The system was created using the general-level style of virtual reality. The study follows the system design by Shao et al. (2013) as it progress from story conception, concept scripting, feasibility analysis, script writing (behavioral module design, multimedia creation, and model construction), system evaluation, and system operation.

Table 7.1 Virtual reality system design factors

Design factor	Description
Attractiveness	Virtual environment must be as nearly attractive as the real world, since it tends the user to be immersed to the environment
Background sounds	Pertains to the natural sounds (birds chirming, flowing rivers, winds blowing, etc.) the user will hear on the virtual environment
Customizability	Users must be able to freely roam the virtual environment
Diffusibility	Covers the usability, user friendliness, and the compatibility of the system to the hardware it is installed
Interactivity	This is the field that will trigger the user's interest; thus, making the user interact with the virtual environment can make the system more interesting and will make the user more immerse into the system
Navigation	The user must freely navigate through the virtual reality system
Quality of scenes/ images	Image quality must be strictly observed as such that virtual environment must nearly imitate the real world
Speed of scene movement	The scene movement must be realistic as to the speed of the transition of the scene it must observe a real-time speed
Text description	Text must be clear and sharp in the virtual reality system. It must not get in the way when the user is navigating through the system

7.2.4 Mobile Applications

Portability has been a factor in the advancing technology today. Technology always makes system to be portable that almost every system today has a mobile version that has the same functionality of the desktop version system. The use of mobile devices is continuously increasing due to the fact that they can be handheld and used everywhere and anytime and has the ability to perform tasks like other desktop systems (Harrison et al. 2013). Mobile tourism is classified into four: mobile guide application, mobile phone navigation assistant, web-to-mobile applications, and mobile web-based applications (Kenteris et al. 2011). The study can be categorized as a mobile guide application.

Mobile Guide Applications These are mobile projects that use mobile devices offering tourist information about a certain destination. It tells about the routes to every points of interest in the destination and also the activities that can be done in the site. Majority of the mobile guide applications are stand alone or does not need a network to be used (Kenteris et al. 2011). The study falls on this category since it deals on providing user routes and activities to different points of interest inside the Panguil River Eco-Park.

iOS It is a mobile software developed by Apple Inc. This software has been created entirely for iPhones and iPads in which it can work well with the device. The iOS Architecture comprises of four layers (Apple Inc 2014). The Cocoa Touch layer contains the key framework for building an iOS application as such that this frame-

work will define the appearance of the application being developed. It also provides the basic app infrastructure and support for the key technologies of a mobile device. These key technologies are multitasking, touch-based input, and many high-level system services. The Media layer contains the multimedia elements that can be used in the application. The study greatly triggers this layer of the iOS. The Core Services contains the fundamental services for an iOS app as it provides the individual technologies to support location-based features, iCloud, and networking. The Core OS is the layer that deals with accelerometer, Core Bluetooth, and other services that are used in communicating and security. iOS had been a great help for business-type users. According to Good Technology (2014), iOS device activation starting from January to March 2014 has a total of 72 % compared to Android having a 27 % of the total device activation, making it to the point that iOS users were continually growing as months passed by, making it the perfect device to be used in marketing.

Good Technology (2014) also illustrated the percentage of iOS tablet activation and Android tablet activation. Given the results, iOS tablets or iPads have a percentage of 92 % compared to the Android tablet percentage having 8 % of the total percentage of tablet activation from January to March 2014. StatCounter (2015) also illustrated that as of 2014–2015, iOS tablets have 70.54 % of usage in the Philippines compared to Android tablets having only 28.4 %.

Given the result of Good Technology (2014) and StatCounter (2015) reports, iPads would be advisable to use as a marketing tool. The study provides navigation for the user of the system; iPads has a retina display screens that can display a more accurate and clearer picture of the navigational route that the system will provide. Thus the study was deployed on an iPad device.

7.3 Methods

The locale of the study was Panguil River Eco-Park located in Pangil, Laguna, Philippines. It is a 12 ha ecological tourist spot at the heart of the fourth-class municipality of Pangil in Laguna. It is capably owned, managed, and maintained by the local government. The eco-park comprises of a 20 m hanging bridge that leads to the resort proper. The pavilion is found at the center of the resort, which is used for events such as wedding receptions and large meetings. Inside the resort proper, a paved 1 km path is found which leads to the Ambon-Ambon waterfall. Picnic huts line both sides of the riverbank and the Pavilion is located at center of the resort. Lastly, it also includes a police station, shower, and restrooms (PhilStar 2011).

The research design used in the study was quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data that was gathered and then simplifying it. The main goal of this type of research is to signify and describe objective reality with the aim of simplifying, establishing, forecasting, and monitoring human performance (Davis et al. 2013).

Panguil River Eco-Park visitors vary accordingly per season. During peak season, which consists of summer and hot days, the eco-park has an average of 1500 visitors per day. While during nonpeak season, which is the rainy season, it has an average of 300 visitors per day. There are 21 regular employees in eco-park, which consist of the general manager, assistant manager, tourist guides, a cashier, a gardener, and a security, and the remaining comprises of utilities personnel, lifeguards, logistical staff, and administrative staff.

A basic input-process-output was used for the conceptual framework of the study, which is shown in Fig. 7.1. The input phase includes the different points of interest and map of the Panguil River Eco-Park, which is used in the development of the application.

The tools that were used for data gathering were interviews, exploration inside the eco-park, and usability testing. Photos were taken during the exploration in the eco-park for reference in making the virtual environment. Secondly, an interview was conducted with the general manager for the information about the different points of interest. With all the data gathered, a documentary script was created for the narration in the application. The study followed the system design by Shao et al. (2013) as shown in Fig. 7.1. The order of progression would be:

Story Conception Story conception is the phase that covers identifying, understanding, and studying the associated problems that arise and would arise in the eco-park. This also covers the planning of different objectives that would solve these associated problems. It also involves working with the eco-park general manager, staff, and tour guides to refine the data so that it can be useful to the study. It also includes visualizing the overall concept of the application which includes the design, modules, and methods.

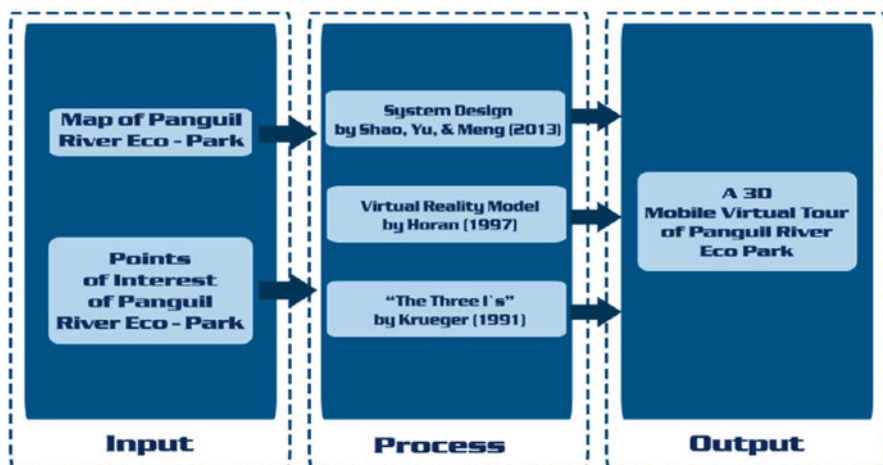


Fig. 7.1 Conceptual framework of the development of MoViT

Concept Scripting This covers the interview and the data gathering. An interview was conducted with the eco-park's general manager. The interview contains questions that would be relevant for the development of the application. The question and answer of the interview was noted and recorded with a mobile device since it is the most common way to record an interview, which prevents difficulties later in the research process and for clearer overview of the conversation based on DiCiccio-Bloom and Crabtree (2006). The questions asked during the interview on the locale were about identifying (1) the average number of visitors per day during peak season and nonpeak season, (2) the number of employees, (3) the activities done at the site, (4) the main and minor attractions of the site, (5) the types of cottages beside the river bank, (6) which structure of the cottage was preferable if applied on a virtual tour, (7) the trail used by visitors and if it was the only trail that was accessed, (8) the closing time of the attractions, and (9) if they have a top-view map that could be used as a reference for the development of the system. After the interview, it was also vital to explore the locale's vicinity and other informations in the eco-park for the development of the system. The exploration of the eco-park was conducted whereas the reference in the creation of the virtual environment was done by taking pictures inside the vicinity.

Feasibility Analysis The feasibility analysis covers on where and how the application would be deployed and used. To make the study feasible, certain compatibility aspects had been strictly observed. Memory issues are one of the biggest problems in the deployment of the study. The study was proposed to be deployed on mobile yet 3D models and animations usually took bulks of memory to be able to run well. It is for that reason that 3D models and animations had been strictly done in the finest way that mobile devices could run them as smoothly and as realistic as possible. iOS devices have a 1 GB of RAM and a motion coprocessor thus making it the best possible options for the device where the study would be deployed.

Script Writing This activity covers the creation of the documentary script. The documentary script contains the overall flow of tour narrations of the application. It starts upon entering the gate of the eco-park and placed in certain points inside the virtual environment. It contains all the information about the points of interest that the application will articulate upon triggering a certain point in the virtual environment.

Behavior Module Design The development of the application has three phases: (1) behavior module design, (2) multimedia creation, and (3) model construction. Behavior module design covers the interaction of the user in the application that of which it would cover the integration of the 3D virtual environment to the player controller, with the use of Unity3D, so that the user can interact and roam around the virtual environment. The interactivity of the user to the virtual environment is based on the virtual reality model of Horan (1997). The virtual reality model of Horan consists of two parts, namely, the actual reality and the virtual reality. The actual reality consists of the participant or the user; the user would interact with the

virtual reality, while the virtual reality consists of the environmental tools, the virtual environment, the device, and the other environments. The environmental tools are divided into three parts: the environment model, interaction model, and resources, which would together create the virtual environment. The environmental model is the actual 3D model of the eco-park while the interaction model would be the one responsible for the interaction of the user to the virtual environment in the study and would be the player controller. Lastly, the resources are the tools used in creating the environmental model and the interaction model and that would be the Autodesk Maya and Unity3D. Next is the device; this would be the iPad; this is the means of the user to interact with the player controller to interact with the virtual environment. Lastly is the other environment such as the network model, but the application does not need an Internet connection to work.

Multimedia Creation This phase covers the overall visual aesthetics of the application, thus includes the user interface. The design of the user interface observed the three I's by Krueger (1991). The first "I" is immersion; the user interface of the application was designed to attract the user's attention to the virtual environment. Less objects are placed on the screen such as mini-map, controllers, drop-down menu, and a compass. It will also portray that the user of the application is the center of things inside the virtual environment; thus upon exploration of the virtual environment, it increases the user's degree of immersion to the application. The second "I" is interaction; the user, using the controllers, can freely roam around the virtual environment. Lastly, the third "I" is imagination; since the virtual environment was designed to imitate the actual eco-park, it will trigger the imagination of the user, as it would portray that they are actually roaming around the actual eco-park. Additionally, roaming the 3D virtual environment can result to many possibilities depending on how the user will use the application.

Model Construction This phase is where the 3D virtual environment was created. The virtual environment was created using Autodesk Maya as the modeling and texturing tool. Models were based on the pictures collected during the exploration of the eco-park. The first created models were the buildings inside the eco-park followed by the landscape of the eco-park. The sample structures of the virtual environment of the eco-park are shown in Figs. 7.2 and 7.3.

Model Scene Integration This includes the process of combining the user interfaces created, the narration, and the virtual environment. The process was done in Unity3D where different models were placed based on the picture collected and in the top view of the eco-park via Google Maps. The scenes include the main menu, about, instruction, and the virtual tour itself as shown in Figs. 7.4 and 7.5.

System Evaluation, Revision, and Integration This phase contains the deployment and usability testing. In the deployment, the application was deployed on an iPad 3 where it contains larger screens, which would help visualize the virtual environment to the user. Additionally, it can also be deployed on an iPhone 5 since iOS devices come with retina displays; the image quality of the application is better.



Fig. 7.2 Actual (L) and 3D (R) structure of the cottages



Fig. 7.3 Actual (L) and 3D (R) structure of the Ambon-Ambon falls

Usability testing allows users to test the application and let them critique application for suggestions and revisions. Two types of usability questionnaire were developed: one for the employees and one for visitors and potential visitors. The study is composed of three respondents: (1) visitors in the eco-park, (2) potential visitors of the eco-park, and (3) employees of the eco-park. The survey contains question on mobile ownership and familiarity in using its functions and application. Additionally, it also includes questions on the elements needed for a virtual tour guide such as visual aesthetics, simulation, navigation, and interactivity. The categories are summarized as follows:

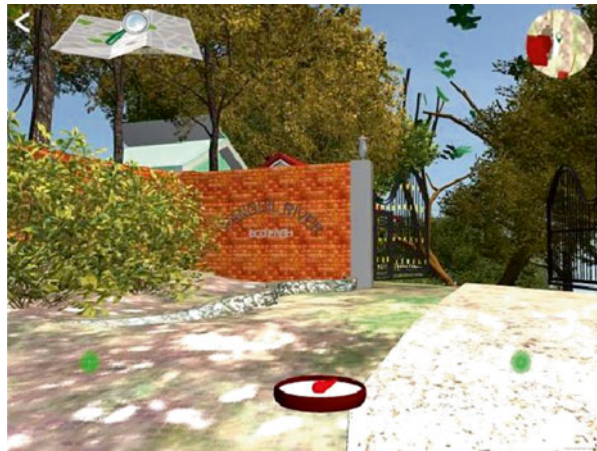
Visual aesthetics The objects and scenes that were implemented in the system must be as nearly attractive as the real world, and the image quality used must be strictly observed since it tends the user to be immersed to the environment. Text used in the system must be clear, sharp, and must not get in the way when the user is navigating through the system for a better use of experience for the users.

Interactivity This is the field that will trigger the user's interest, thus making the user interact with the virtual environment. The user friendliness and the compatibility of the system to the hardware is also covered which will make the system more interesting and will make the user more immerse into the system.

Fig. 7.4 Main menu interface



Fig. 7.5 Virtual tour interface



Sensory simulation This is divided into two, namely, auditory and visual. Auditory pertains to the natural sounds such as bird's chirping, winds blowing, and flowing rivers that allows user to hear on the virtual environment. Visual was the scene movement, must be realistic as to the speed of the transition of the scene, and must observe a real-time speed. Users must also be able to freely roam the virtual environment.

Navigation The user must freely navigate and roam through the virtual reality system to increase the feeling of being inside the VR system.

The study made use of the Likert scale to measure the result of the usability of the system. The Likert scale contains a five-point scale, 5 as the highest, which is interpreted as "very good," and 1 being the lowest, which is interpreted as "very poor." The five-point Likert scale interpretation is illustrated in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Likert scale interpretation

Mean	Verbal interpretation
1.00–1.79	Very poor
1.80–2.59	Fair
2.60–3.39	Average
3.40–4.19	Good
4.20–5.00	Very good

System Operations This includes the completion and integration of the application. Users can download the application in App Store. The application would start with the main menu and proceeds to the virtual tour when the start tour button was selected. The users can freely explore the eco-park giving them a glimpse of what to expect when they actually go to the actual eco-park.

Hence the study's final output was a 3D Mobile Virtual Tour App of Panguil River Eco-Park in Laguna. The mobile app includes 3D tour of eco-park; it provides navigational guide upon choosing the points of interest, yet it will not prohibit user to freely navigate through the virtual environment, but it will just provide a guide on how to get to the point of interest.

7.4 Results and Discussion

There are three types of respondents for the study: visitors, which are the local and nonlocal visitors, the staff, and the potential visitors of the eco-park. The local and nonlocal visitors are people who were at the vicinity during testing while the potential visitors are the people who are not in the vicinity of the eco-park. On the day of the usability testing, the eco-park has a total of 139 visitors and 10 employees present that day. As for the potential visitors, the study has 30 respondents that were conveniently selected. Table 7.3 shows the summary of number of respondents for the study.

On the first part of the questionnaire, staffs were asked about their personal information such as name, age, job position, gender, and length of service. Visitors and potential visitors were asked about their name, age, gender, and place of residence. Also, they were asked if they owned a mobile phone and if they were familiar with the functionalities of their phone. The second part was divided into four categories, namely, visual aesthetics, interactivity, sensory simulation, and navigation of the application. In the category of visual aesthetics, they were asked if the display text was consistent; font style used was readable; text descriptions were easy to understand; elements in the virtual tour guide were simple, balanced, and have unity; and images were clear, recognizable, and in high quality. For the interactivity category, they were asked if the application helped them remember how to use it, if it is easy to learn how to use it, and if it gave them an immediate feedback about their actions. For the sensory simulation, they were asked if the simulation was too fast or too

Table 7.3 Number of respondents

Type of respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Staff	10	5.59
Visitors (local and nonlocal)	139	77.65
Potential visitors	30	16.76
Total respondents	179	100

Table 7.4 Percentage of user's knowledgeable on mobile technology

Category	Staff (%)	Visitors (%)	Potential visitor (%)	Average (%)
Owens a mobile phone	90	100	100	96.67
Familiar with functionalities	70	89.58	100	86.53
<i>Total percentage</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>94.79</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>91.60</i>

slow, if it helped them to have a “feel” of the eco-park, if it was engaging to use, if they were able to recognize different kind of sounds, if the sounds were appropriate, and if it was pleasant to hear. For the navigation category, there were two sets of questions for the staff and visitors. Staffs were asked if the virtual tour guide was easy to use, points of interest were recognizable, and if the route that the application gave was correct. Visitors and potential visitors were asked if they were able to follow the directions, if points of interest were recognizable, and if it was easy to use.

The number of people who were knowledgeable with the different functionalities of a mobile phone is shown in Table 7.4. The potential visitors got the highest percentage with a total of 100 %. On the other hand, the staffs got the lowest percentage of 80 %. In average, majority of them owns a mobile phone, but only 86.53 % of them are familiar with the functionalities of a mobile phone.

The result of the first category is shown in Table 7.5. The highest mean for the staff is that the virtual tour has clear images, while the lowest mean for the staff are the simplicity and balance of the elements. On the other hand, the visitors and potential visitors' highest mean were the readability of the font style and recognition of the images. The lowest mean for the visitors and potential visitors are the unity of the element and the recognition of the images respectively. This is due to the unfamiliarity of the images since they are not yet familiar with the vicinity. The clarity of the images got the highest average mean, while the balance of the elements got the lowest average mean. Overall, all groups agreed that the elements, text, and images were done remarkably well.

The second category is about interactivity. The highest mean that the staffs, visitors, and potential visitors have in common is the usefulness of the application, which helps the user remember how to use it. The lowest mean for the staffs is being able to easily learn how to use the virtual tour, while both the visitors and potential

Table 7.5 Computed mean for visual aesthetics

Visual aesthetic	Staff	Visitors	Potential visitor	Average	Interpretation
Text display size is consistent	4.30	4.31	4.57	4.44	Very good
Font style is readable	4.20	4.48	4.67	4.45	Very good
Text descriptions are easy to understand	4.50	4.38	4.50	4.46	Very good
Elements are simple	4.10	4.44	4.50	4.35	Very good
Elements are balance	4.10	4.33	4.43	4.29	Very good
Elements have unity	4.20	4.15	4.57	4.31	Very good
Images are clear	4.80	4.33	4.57	4.57	Very good
Images are recognizable	4.40	4.48	4.30	4.39	Very good
Images are of high quality	4.60	4.42	4.60	4.54	Very good
<i>Overall mean</i>	<i>4.36</i>	<i>4.37</i>	<i>4.52</i>	<i>4.42</i>	<i>Very good</i>

Table 7.6 Computed mean for interactivity

Interactivity	Staff	Visitors	Potential visitor	Average	Interpretation
The virtual tour helps me remember how to use it	4.40	4.46	4.63	4.50	Very good
The virtual tour makes it easy to learn how to use it	4.30	4.35	4.63	4.43	Very good
The virtual tour gave me an immediate feedback about my actions	4.40	4.29	4.37	4.35	Very good
<i>Overall mean</i>	<i>4.37</i>	<i>4.37</i>	<i>4.54</i>	<i>4.43</i>	<i>Very good</i>

visitors' lowest mean is the immediate feedback about the actions of the users of the virtual tour. Therefore, the application was easy to use due to the first-person view interface. The results show that the virtual tour triggers the user's interest, which makes them interact with the virtual environment as shown in Table 7.6.

The third category covers the sensory simulation found in Table 7.7. All of the staffs, visitors, and potential visitors have the highest mean for helping them to have a "feel" of the eco-park since it actually looks like the real eco-park. The categories that got the lowest mean from the staff, visitors, and potential visitors were the speed of the simulation, how appropriate are the sounds in the virtual tour, and if the sounds are pleasant to hear. For the average mean, the results show that the virtual tour is able to give users the experience of being inside the eco-park. However, the virtual tour needs improvement on the auditory simulation, which got the lowest mean.

For the last category, which is the navigation, there are two sets of results. The first set is for the staffs while the second set is for the visitors and potential visitors. The staffs are separated since they are the ones who are valid and have more knowl-

Table 7.7 Computed mean for sensory simulation

Sensory simulation	Staff	Visitors	Potential visitor	Average	Interpretation
Simulation is not too fast or too slow	4.00	4.19	4.37	4.19	Good
Virtual tour helps me to have a “feel” of the eco-park	4.60	4.44	4.47	4.50	Very good
The virtual tour guide is engaging to use	4.20	4.38	4.47	4.35	Very good
I am able to recognize different kind of sounds	4.20	4.81	4.33	4.45	Very good
Sounds in the virtual tour are appropriate	4.30	4.00	4.37	4.22	Very good
Sounds are pleasant to hear	4.10	4.10	4.33	4.18	Good
<i>Overall mean</i>	<i>4.23</i>	<i>4.32</i>	<i>4.39</i>	<i>4.31</i>	<i>Very good</i>

Table 7.8 Computed mean for navigation by staff

Navigation	Staff	Interpretation
The virtual tour guide is easy to use	4.00	Good
The points of interest are recognizable	4.40	Very good
The route that the virtual tour guide gave is correct	4.60	Very good
<i>Overall mean</i>	<i>4.33</i>	<i>Very good</i>

edge of the vicinity. This is also due to confirm the staffs if the route that the virtual tour guide given is correct. As a result, the highest mean from the staff is the virtual correctness of the virtual tour guide’s route. The first set of the navigation category is found in Table 7.8.

The second set for navigation which is the mean of visitors and potential visitors is shown in Table 7.9. The highest mean for the visitors and potential visitors is that the users were able to follow the directions and the virtual tour was easy to use correspondingly. Conversely, the visitor’s lowest mean is the application’s ease of use while the points of interest recognition is the potential visitor’s low. The average highest mean is that users were able to follow the directions while the recognition of the points of interests acquired the lowest average mean. The controls were just the same with other game applications and since it was deployed in a touch screen device. The user will have to tap and hold the controls and point to the directions where he wants to go, which enables them to use the virtual tour easily.

The overall rating for the 3D mobile virtual tour application can be found in Fig. 7.6. The highest mean was the interactivity since the virtual tour helps the users have a “feel” of the eco-park since it actually looks like the real eco-park, the app was easy to use, and the controls used were easy to remember. The virtual tour was

Table 7.9 Computed mean for navigation by visitors

Navigation	Visitors	Potential visitor	Average	Interpretation
I am able to follow the directions	4.46	4.57	4.52	Very good
The point of interests are recognizable	4.35	4.40	4.38	Very good
The virtual tour guide is easy to use	4.29	4.63	4.46	Very good
<i>Overall mean</i>	<i>4.37</i>	<i>4.53</i>	<i>4.45</i>	<i>Very good</i>

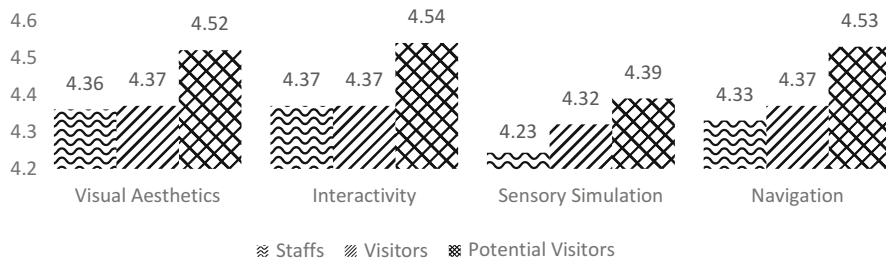


Fig. 7.6 Overall rating of the 3D mobile virtual tour application

able to trigger the user’s interest having them interact with the virtual environment. Sensory simulation got the lowest rating due to the low audio of the application because it is supposed to capture the relaxing sound of the eco-park. If the sounds were very loud, it will make the ambiance unrelaxing to hear. Overall, the potential visitors have the highest mean in all of the categories, which makes the target audience reachable.

7.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study is intended to create a virtual tour that would allow visitors and potential visitors to have a virtual experience of being inside the Panguil River Eco-Park. With the use of the system design by Shao et al. (2013), the three “I’s” by Krueger (1991), and the virtual reality model by Horan (1997), the study was able to achieve the completion of a mobile 3D virtual application. The accomplishment of the study was determined from the results of the usability testing that consist of four categories: visual aesthetics, interactivity, sensory simulation, and navigation. The study was able to get feedback from the different users, which were the staff, local and nonlocal visitors, and potential visitors. There are users who commented that the eco-park looks better in the 3D environment and that the application helped them to have a “feel” of the eco-park especially in the trekking part, and majority said that the application was useful to them. They were able to have a glimpse of the eco-park and the waterfalls even though they did not trek to the falls, but unfortunately, they

also stated that the sound of the application needs some improvement as to make it louder. As for the potential visitors, they have mentioned that even though they do not have much idea about the eco-park, they still managed to roam around and have a “feel” of the eco-park through the mobile virtual tour app.

For the recommendations for future studies, the study suggests to have an augmented reality version for users who are actually present at the vicinity. Augmented reality generates a composite view for the user that is the combination of the real scene viewed by the user and a virtual scene generated by the computer that augments the scene with additional information. In terms of navigation, augmented reality can measure the effectiveness of navigation devices. Information can be displayed indicating directions and meter and weather and terrain. In terms of tourism, augmented reality applications can enhance a user’s experience when present at the vicinity by providing real-time informational displays regarding a location and its features, including comments made by previous visitors of the place. The study also suggests that other tourism industry such as cruise ships, hotels, resorts, amusement parks, museums, and other eco-tourism industry can be able to use this method to promote and affect the tourists’ choice of destination. Lastly, the study suggests having information technology training for the employees in order for them to maximize the information technology tools that they use.

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Chapter 8

Marketing for New Tourism Perceived by East Asian E-Consumers

Erkan Sezgin and Semra Gunay Aktaş

Abstract Rapid growth in the info-communication technologies for the last two decades has modified and sometimes reorganised the disciplines, and marketing is not the exception. Either new software such as applications or hardware like smartphones enabling new tourists for more information search has helped or forced professionals develop new marketing tools. This study focuses how East Asian tourists perceive new tourism marketing in specific to mobile applications, gamification, semiology and e-loyalty. Mean results of five East Asian tourist nations revealed that they are friendly to new applications and new marketing.

Keywords Mobile applications • E-loyalty • Gamification • Semiology • Travel review websites

8.1 Introduction

Internet usage and e-commerce have been growing rapidly over the last two decades. E-commerce revenues were expected to reach some 680 billion US dollars in 2011 (Rao 2011). Wong and Law (2005) reported that 9 billion US dollars in year 2003 would expand to 17 billion US dollars in 2007, which in itself formulates 20 % of all lodging sales.

Needless to say, consumers share their hospitality and tourism assessment not only in the real world but also in the virtual world. Hence, technically, this has led to the transformation of word-of-mouth (WOM) in the real world to the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in the virtual world when marketing is considered. Hospitality professionals recognise the difficulties of evaluating tourism products before purchase because characteristics of intangibility are involved (Lewis and Chambers 2000). They also believe that WOM and/or e-WOM is indeed efficient methods for marketing tourism products. Goldsmith (2006) defined e-WOM as a complete informal communication directed at consumers through Internet-based

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technology related to the usage of particular goods and services. Litvin et al. (2008) consolidated the e-WOM channels on the Internet, which include product reviewing and evaluating websites, blogs and virtual communication portals, news groups, e-mails, instant messages and chat rooms. Product reviewing and evaluating websites comprise travel review websites (TRWs), and they are an easily accessible e-WOM channel. Consumers may refer to the reviews of others on TRWs and make their own evaluation on the hotels and destinations (Sezgin 2013). With consumers more likely to cross-shop and do price-check than ever before, the WOM, online reviews, incentives and transparent benefits of the service will often be the deciding factors in the online travel purchase process (Tuominen 2011). On the other hand, fake reviews have been a source of concern within the travel industry, with many suppliers voicing suspicions that at least some of the reviews are attempts by companies to bolster the reputations of their own products or to disparage competitors' products. Aiming to provide a solution on this issue, four students at Cornell University of the United States of America had created a software programme that could sniff out bogus positive hotel reviews on TRWs. The students claimed that their software could spot fake reviews with 90 % accuracy, compared to the accuracy rate of 50 % when this is performed by individuals (King 2011).

Given the research gap, the overall initiative of this chapter is to understand how East Asian tourists perceive new tourism marketing specific to mobile applications (mobile apps), e-loyalty, gamification, semiology and TRWs. Mean results of five East Asian tourist nations revealed that they are friendly to new applications and new viral marketing tools.

8.2 Theoretical Framework

In the literature, the studies mainly focus on online sales, mobile apps, e-loyalty, gamification, semiology and TRWs separately rather than a holistic perspective on the mentioned terms as the components of new marketing in tourism.

8.2.1 *Online Sales and E-Commerce in Tourism*

Today online sales are getting more popular in almost every industry that even clothing companies – where consumers prefer to try before they buy – start online marketing. The tourism industry is no exception, with virtual travel agencies, hotels and airlines selling products via their websites. Moreover, some virtual travel agencies (e.g. agoda.com) provide reviews for prospective consumers, so they can read previous consumers' comments before making their decisions.

From the travel suppliers' perspectives, the development of the Internet and e-commerce in the travel and tourism industry allows them to reduce transaction costs with “disintermediation”, which means that travellers are able to bypass retail travel agencies and deal directly with the suppliers of travel products (Heung 2003).

Taking the reliability of web pages and increasing interest in e-shopping into account, McCole (2002) examined the role of trust in e-commerce and how trust is best manifested in websites selling travel-related commodities.

Another similar study is the one in which researchers Wong and Law (2005) examined the room purchasing inclinations of consumers using hotel websites by interviewing a sample of 638 passengers visiting Hong Kong. The authors claimed that the study contributes highly to the field; simply put, the respondents underlined the equipped features for successful hotel websites that help achieve better revenue management. Likewise, Kim and Kim (2004) investigated whether past online purchase experience related to airlines, hotels or time-share resorts influences respondents' confidence in carrying out transactions online. Results show that the determinants affected the respondents' online reservation intentions differently according to their past online purchase experience.

On the other hand, Heung (2003) investigated the barriers to implement e-commerce as perceived by travel agencies in Hong Kong. The results of Heung's study indicate that Hong Kong travel agencies are mostly concerned about management support and participation when they decide to implement e-commerce in the marketplace. Kolsaker et al. (2004) examined consumers' online purchase willingness. Their research findings indicate that airlines and online travel agents must target the Hong Kong market with a clear value proposition, which includes user-friendly sites, streamlined payment procedures and offline customer support. Similarly, Cho and Agrusa (2006) stated that the factors affect the ease of use and usefulness towards online travel agencies and customer satisfaction. They found that customers' attitudes towards online travel agencies significantly impact the level of e-satisfaction.

Examining the characteristics and effectiveness of hotel websites, the results of Schmidt et al. (2008) study indicate that small- and medium-sized hotels in the Balearic Islands in Spain (a developed tourist destination) and in the south of Brazil (a developing destination) are employing their websites as mass media tools, ignoring the potential of interactivity and one-to-one communication. Cheng et al. (2010) analysed the distribution of Chinese tourism websites (CTWs) and their online marketing effects. The findings imply the number of tourists has a strong statistical correlation with the number of CTWs.

Some researchers investigated the website evaluation studies in the realm of tourism and hospitality and found that evaluations by phases and features are simple and easy to use. Their findings can serve as a guide for practitioners in helping them to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of their websites by adopting different evaluation approaches (Ip et al. 2011).

8.2.2 Mobile Apps

Developments in the field of mobile hardware technologies have also brought developments in the software field. Mobile apps are software improved for mobile devices such as mobile phones and tablets used by almost everyone in the info-communication

age. Mobile applications may vary depending on the mobile device and operating system and can be downloaded from the relevant application store. While there are many operating systems that have been improved, the two of them, iOS and Android, are the most popular operating systems for mobile device manufacturers.

Mobile application should not be confused with the mobile website. Mobile website applications are the adapted versions of normal website for mobile devices while mobile apps are software installed on the mobile device (Hopkins and Turner 2012).

Mobile apps can be installed on mobile devices as paid or unpaid via the relevant application store depending on the content and functionality of the application (Sarikaya 2013). More mobile applications are being developed everyday in an increasing market share for mobile operating systems (Chi and Richard 2010). Application stores of the operating systems consist many mobile applications in categories such as news, photography, banking and entertainment.

Mobile applications provide quick access to relevant news while Facebook can stay constantly connected to social networking applications like Twitter. All e-mail addresses could be controlled by mobile e-mail applications and a navigation application help for direction finding (Dongul 2013).

As a result, mobile apps play an important role in human life by making it easy to access to the information needed and an entertaining tool for the leisure.

8.2.3 E-Loyalty

Customer loyalty in the online business is known as “e-loyalty”. E-loyalty has been delineated in various ways in the literature. Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) define the concept as “the customer’s favourable attitude towards an electronic business, resulting in repeat purchasing behaviour”. E-loyalty is seen as an essential element for marketing due to its trigger role in the profitability in the long run and its inevitable effects such as word-of-mouth referrals.

The complementary fragments of e-loyalty can be deduced from the literature as e-service quality, perceived value, e-satisfaction and trust hence. To have it all in one speech, quality of product is an attribute which cannot be substitutable with another aspect of it for creating satisfaction through product value and satisfaction paves the way for the loyalty. E-loyalty programmes are vital tools for marketing rivalry, since they enable companies to build loyalty in one group and heterogeneous groups concurrently. It is also a common implementation for hospitality industries to benefit from these programmes in order to withstand competition and grasp market share. Gaining new customers, having a strong and effective customer database, providing long-term relations between customer and company and keeping the customer in the circle of the company can be shown among some aims of the usage of these programmes in the hospitality industry.

8.2.4 Gamification

Gamification is not a new concept in business. In fact, for many airlines, gamification is an essential part of their business strategies. As all frequent flyers know, the more flights booked through the same airline, the more “miles” (i.e. points) (Donato and Link 2013) those flyers receive. Gamification (Zichermann and Linder 2013) is the hottest new strategy in business, helping leading companies create unprecedented engagement with their stakeholders. The main idea is to use strategies, tactics and rules that are applied in games, in relation with not only employees (Moise 2013) as well. Gamification has been defined as a process of enhancing services with (motivational) affordances in order to invoke gameful experiences and further behavioural outcomes (Hamari et al. 2014). In defining gamification, Huotari and Hamari (2012) highlight the role of gamification in invoking the same psychological experiences as games (generally) do. Gamification, the process of applying the psychological and sociological factors that drive intense game play to consumer measurement, enables us to understand the thought process behind consumers’ willingness to participate in and comply with consumer behaviour and attitude measurement tasks. Games fit perfectly in a situation of global interactivity because, in fact, they are bilateral communication themselves (Volkova 2013).

Gamification is only an extension form of customer relationship management which is a strategy that a company uses to handle the customer’s interactions, like giving them fidelity cards in order to offer them discounts or points to purchase cheaper or to receive products or services as gifts from the organisation (Moise 2013). Gamification has proliferated in recent years throughout the marketing industry and, by extension, in market research. But while both disciplines seek to promote engagement for their respective needs, marketing uses gamification to keep consumers returning to a product or service, while marketing research is exploring its use to engage panellists to respond and comply fully with an information gathering task (Donato and Link 2013). The most likely strategy of designing for gameful experiences is to use game design elements, and the most likely goal of using game design elements is gameful experiences. Yet analytically, gameful design and gamification frame the same extension of phenomena through different intentional properties – as the design strategy of using game design elements (gamification) or the design goal of designing for gamefulness (gameful design) (Deterding et al. 2011). The secret of gamification’s explosive popularity is in the intersection of the interests of all participants in the communicative space (Volkova 2013). It is believed that further refinement and extensions, based upon past and future studies, could make this a highly useful resource for those who wish to design gamified experiences.

8.2.5 The Social Construction of Touristic Places

When considering the tourism capital of a given destination, a distinguishing component of this capital comes to the forefront: the touristic image. The image of a given tourism destination is a key player regarding to tourism attraction. Therefore,

the touristic promotion strategies rely on the images that are (re)produced by tourism destinations. Scholars identify the social construction around, so-called the tourism destinations (MacCannell 1973; Greenwood 1977; Cohen 1988; Harkin 1995; Wang 1999; Bryce 2007) for the last four decades.

The mechanism of social construction is observable in tourism promotional videos. Hence, the materials in the videos not only convey solely information about the whole destination and the touristic assets but also function as a meaning producer. The meanings are generated via cultural, historical and the social contexts. The promotional videos are widespread on new media and easily accessible. In a wider sense, these videos are becoming a major part of tourism marketing and promotion. This situation brings an academic question: how these materials are representing tourism destinations?

This study amalgamates this question with other topics (toys, complaints, etc.) to identify the representation of destination in the era of new tourism technologies and the future of tourism.

8.2.6 *Viral Marketing for E-Consumers*

Claiming that e-WOM is easy to adopt in tourism because it is more related to information flow rather than product flow, Pan et al. (2007) suggested that reviews on the Internet are important sources for prospective travellers. Gretzel and Yoo (2008), on the other hand, argued that online reviews are entertaining and up-to-date when compared with hotels' own promotional sources. Some researchers suggested that positive online reviews have positive impact on consumer behaviour (Black and Kelley 2009; Vermeulen and Seegers 2009). Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) also noted that negative online reviews have little impact on consumer behaviour. Ye et al. (2009), collecting data from the largest Chinese travel website and targeting on the impacts of consumer reviews on hotel reservations, improved a log-linear regression model. They found significant relations between the online consumer reviews and hotel sales. Hilde et al. (2009) aimed to provide an integrated literature review of factors influencing consumers' responses to brand websites, to describe the state of research in the past 10 years and to give an overview of the theories used in brand website studies. Their results revealed which person-related factors (e.g. involvement or flow) and website-related factors (e.g. usability or interactivity) influence responses to websites and brands. To explain such responses, many studies integrate new theoretical concepts (e.g. interactivity or telepresence) into traditional theories. Furthermore, the review shows that the current state of research is limited by the use of forced exposure, student samples and the measurement of affective responses.

Schegg and Fux (2010) imply review websites allowing customers to express their opinion regarding the service offered during their stay by awarding points to preselected criteria or by publishing their comments. This feedback can provide valuable information to service providers. Whether these alternative sources of marketing research fulfil the quality criteria of classical marketing research has not yet

been fully explored. In this contribution, the question asked is whether there are significant differences between the results provided by traditional marketing surveys and those provided by more alternative surveys using the web. The explorative analysis of the Swiss tourism destination Saas-Fee shows that the customers' appraisals of the offers do not differ fundamentally between classical marketing research and the evaluations on review websites. However, anonymous forms of assessment on customer evaluation portals or online questionnaires seem to lead to more critical results compared to classical face-to-face marketing research. Marchiori et al. (2011) claims Hotel Reviews Websites (HRWs) are the most used online sources to evaluate accommodation alternatives. However, they often present an overwhelming amount of unstructured or only semi-structured information which is not shared between all the systems and which cannot be easily analysed in an automatic way. This study aims to automatically analyse hotel evaluations for a given number of Swiss hotels by comparing hotel reviews. Furthermore, the consistency of users' countries of origin in their evaluations has been studied. The results show that there is an overall agreement on considered HRWs and a general consistency among reviewers with different countries of origin. Tuominen (2011) similarly questioned if there is a relationship between the performance of a hotel and the number of reviews written, consumer review averages, recommendation percentage and the TripAdvisor ranking. It was noted that there are correlations between hotel performance and the number of reviews provided as well as the ratings of the reviews. Hsu et al. (2012) investigated TRWs as innovative marketing venues for hotels through a qualitative case study of TripAdvisor, with particular focus on the top ten hotels in Las Vegas for 2012. The results of their study showed that TripAdvisor is an important venue for e-WOM marketing of hotels. The referral effect of reviews is strong. Actual bookings after reading the reviews are highly likely. No evidence of false reviews emerged from the top ten hotels in Las Vegas for 2012. As such, hotels should seriously consider TripAdvisor as a place to influence the expectations, perceptions, hotel choices of consumers and the way of innovative marketing strategy for attracting potential customers. Finally, Madlberger (2014) investigated how Eastern European hotels are evaluated by travellers in comparison with other regions in Europe and what perceived strengths and weaknesses of Eastern European hotels can be identified. The study of Madlberger (2014) analysed travellers' evaluations of 2153 hotels in 25 European capitals on the leading travel platform TripAdvisor.com. The research methodology applies a novel approach by conducting content analysis of the structured five-point ratings on seven evaluation criteria. The findings show that hotels in Eastern European capitals are very positively evaluated in the 4- and 5-star classification categories.

8.3 Methodology

The subjects of this study are East Asian tourists who visited Cappadocia of Turkey before. The total population of the study is infinite. The tourists were questioned if they had visited Cappadocia before in order to distinguish the respondents with the

Table 8.1 Descriptive profile of respondents

<i>N</i> =117	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i> (%)
<i>Age</i>		
21–30	21	17.9
31–40	69	59
41–50	15	12.8
51–60	12	10.3
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	45	38.5
Female	72	61.5
<i>Education</i>		
High school	3	2.6
Graduate	66	56.4
Postgraduate	48	41
<i>Nationality</i>		
Japanese	27	23.1
Chinese	66	56.4
Korean	9	7.7
Indonesian	3	2.6
Taiwanese	12	10.3

purposive sampling method (Tongco 2007). The reason for choosing “Cappadocia” as visited area in the eliminating item is more related with the “cultural tourists” who are believed to be more “researchers”. On the other hand, the descriptive profile of respondents is demonstrated in Table 8.1. As can be seen from the table, 117 total respondents from five different East Asian countries have agreed answering the questionnaire. The majority of nations are Chinese (% 56.4) and Japanese (% 23.1) respondents while the major gender of respondents are female with % 61.5. The respondents are mainly from 31 to 40 age group (% 59) and more “graduate” (% 56.4) education level.

Perceptions of East Asian tourists on viral marketing tools were undertaken in this survey. The survey for the sample picks out perception-related questions (items) apart from the demographic questions. *Phenomenology* method – which is one of the qualitative research methods – was used with the subject group of nine people who are contributors to “e-consumers in the era of new tourism” book, in the process of developing the survey items (Patton 2002, p. 104). On the other hand, the respondents of phenomenology experiment in this study created survey questions (items) by negotiating during the experiment. 29 items were developed at the end of the interview and 20 of the items were selected for the questionnaire.

There are some limitations that affected the progress of developing measure regarding to qualitative “phenomenology” research method usage. The structures of the items in the scale are inconvenient for assessing the reliability and validity to the measure. Furthermore, the response rate of the survey (*N*: 117) is relatively low for applying such statistics. A one-page questionnaire consisting of 25 questions was

administered face-to-face, by e-mail or by a link on the web page. Apart from the demographic and eliminating questions, the respondents were asked to answer 20 seven-point scale questions ranging from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) in order to indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement with each item used to measure each construct. The collected data was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0.

8.4 Results

Table 8.2 demonstrates the consolidated mean results of all five nations' perceptions on viral marketing tools as well as other references for e-consumers.

As can be seen from the Table 8.2, the statements "I frequently use the internet for my reservations" (mean: 6.28), "NMA provides general information about a destination" (mean: 6.13) and "I surf on the internet before I make my travel decisions" (mean: 6.03) have the highest ranks when the mean scores are considered.

Table 8.2 Consolidated mean ratings of East Asian tourists' perceptions

<i>N</i> = 117	Rank	Mean	Sd
1-I make my own research before I travel to a country	9	5.49	1715
2-TRWs provide "objective" information	12	5.21	1627
3-I surf on the internet before I make my travel decisions	3	6.03	1125
4-I visit the country's official tourism websites	15	4.51	2250
5-Social media reviews are important for my travel decisions	8	5.56	1539
6-I frequently use the internet for my reservations	1	6.28	908
7-The internet reviews of the hotel I stay are correct	6	5.69	1118
8-NMA provides general information about a destination	2	6.13	1047
9-NMA is a growing part of my holidays	4	5.95	1382
10-NMA facilitates touristic activities in the destination	4	5.95	1181
11-NMA supports experience in the destination	5	5.77	1335
12-I learn from social media about local culture while travelling	11	5.26	1743
13-When travelling I adapt myself to the traditions of the country (e.g. food, habits and customs)	14	4.82	1789
14-The tourism promotion videos affect my travel decisions	10	5.33	1565
15-Before travelling I watch the tourism promotion materials of the country	13	5.05	1888
16-The representation of the culture in tourism promotion is important	6	5.69	1269
17-NMA facilitates my travel	7	5.67	1293
18-I make my travel decisions via traditional ways (face to face, travel agency)	17	3.67	1629
19-I always make comments on TRWs	16	4.46	2238
20-I think the tourism promotion on the internet is more efficient	5	5.77	1392

This could be the implication of Internet-friendly tourist type as well as familiarity to NMA. The table also demonstrates that the tourists are not very much fond of the statements “I make my travel decisions via traditional ways (face to face, travel agency)” (mean: 3.67), “I always make comments on TRWs” (mean: 4.46) and “I visit the country’s official tourism websites” (mean: 4.51) since the mean scores of the items got the lowest ranks from the respondents. Especially the item “I make my travel decisions via traditional ways (face to face, travel agency)” with a 3.67 mean score could imply that the tourists of “circuit tourism” organise their own travel opposite to “holiday tourists”.

8.5 Conclusions and Limitations

Many studies on general marketing and consumer behaviour suggest that online customer reviews influence consumers’ information search behaviours and the market success of products. Yet little is known about the impact of viral marketing in tourism, and few academic efforts have been exerted in the tourism and hospitality context to test claims about the role of viral marketing on tourists.

This chapter comprises of the concepts, namely, mobile apps, e-loyalty, gamification, semiology and TRWs in the light of an umbrella concept which is called the “new marketing tourism tools”. In the study, the relevant concepts are scrutinised and elaborated.

The study demonstrates that the cultural tourists are familiar with the new tourism marketing tools. The viral marketing tools are frequently used in tourism industry, because of its very nature. Tourism is characterised as a service-based industry which the transmission of the information is emphasised rather than the “material” of the tourism product.

When considering the holiday tourism as the distinguishing part of the mass tourism, it can be still observable that conventional travel structure is produced via the tourism intermediaries. The cultural tourism, on the other hand, is more elastic to adapt its tools to the new media technologies while its consumers are more aware of the information around the tourism destinations.

Hence, the new generation of tourists is associated with more as “investigators” than the learners; it implies an assumption that these tourists tend to explore the facilities and the touristic products and services on their own. This brings another issue on the tourism manager’s agenda. If the tourist is ascribed as an autonomous demander who accesses all the information without intermediaries, then it has several impacts on the travel industry. The viral and/or the new technologies of tourism marketing impose the key actors of the industry to project the future of promotion and marketing.

Some limitations which are associated with this study could provide directions for future research. One limitation could be tied to the survey scale of the study which was developed by using phenomenology method of qualitative research

method. The inconvenience structure of survey items restrains the assessment of reliability and validity statistics to the scale. Another limitation is about the sample group of the study. The response rate (N:117) is relatively low for applying such parametric tests to the sample. Collecting more responses and selecting the convenient items for statistical methods will contribute better in the further studies.

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