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Tourism Expansion: A Challenge For Environment Protection In A World of Technology

Dr. Puneet Aneja

Asstt. Professor and Head, Department of Public Administration, A.S. College, Khanna (Punjab).

ABSTRACT

Tourism is the world largest and fastest growing industry and almost all segments of the society participate directly and indirectly in tourism. Travel is the fundamental right of every human being. Over the past sixty years, the tourism sector has grown to become a pillar of the global economy, driven by political cooperation, social change and far - reaching advances in technology; both in communications and infrastructure. As we all know that the travelling from one place to another was very difficult in the immediate past, but now with the help of modernization and advent of technology it has become very easy and comfortable. Information Technology in tourism, such as computer reservation systems, yield management systems, and tourism-marketing systems, have been among the pioneers of leading-edge technology applications and have driven the dynamics of development in tourism services. Tourism is regarded as one of the most successful applications of electronic commerce. The present paper provides an overview of use of technology in tourism industry. In this paper an attempt has also been made to aware the tourist about the use of technology in availing the services offered by different players of tourism. Further efforts have been made to aware the tourists about the negative aspects of technology on environment specially the e-waste and excessive use of polythene.

KEYWORDS : Tourism expansion, environmental degradation, socio-economic growth, ICT etc..

Introduction

In these precarious economic times, the hospitality industry composed of tourism and travel is facing a exemplary question. Technology has the great advantage that it allows tourism industries to replace expensive human labor with technological labor, thus not only reducing labor costs but also avoiding issues of customer service. Yet technology may produce a whole new set of unintended consequences.

How does it draw the line between technology and personal service? There is no doubt that technology plays an important role in tourism and travel. Most of us are now used to booking our airline reservations on line, dealing with telephone trees and other cost saving devices. These technological advances have allowed corporations to save on manpower while at the same time empowering customers to make their own decisions. On the other side of the equation, travelers use more technology than ever before and often the tourism industry has taken advantage of this desire (need) to stay in touch with its clientele. Most of us are now used to being almost harassed with on-line surveys or computer driven telephone calls. Now we have entered into the world of e-marketing, a system that may be called an advanced form of "spam."

Although many hotels do provide free internet services, many of the "better" hotels have added additional charges for local calls, for internet access and a per page fee to receive a fax. These additional charges combined with less personalized service often means that travelers have the idea that technology has become a one-way street. Technology is used to provide less personalized service and at the same time to generate additional revenue at hotels, on airplanes, and at transportation hubs.

Despite the misuse of technology, tourism and travel are highly dependent on technology and its use has made life a whole lot easier. There is no doubt that the cell phone has become a major part of our lives. And although technology etiquette may lag behind technology machinery the inconvenience of someone speaking too loud on a cell phone is more than outweighed by the safety, security and convenience that cell phones bring to most of us. On the other hand, technology's growth has allowed worldwide terrorism to attack the tourism industry. Cell phones can save lives or detonate bombs; air conditioning units serve to make life bearable in hot climates, but also pollute the atmosphere and can be carriers of disease. The dawn of the computer age permits us to know weather forecasts around the world, allows business travelers to stay in touch with their offices and to supersede the problem of cross time zones negotiation, but can be used to destroy air travel.

Technology then has become a mixed bag for the tourism industry. It creates a great deal of conveniences while at the same time has been used as a way to increase revenues and to lessen customer service.

The world of technology has made air travel safe and abundant but has also brought about the need to go through long security lines and daily hassles. Certainly, some parts of the industry have begun to use technology prudently. When used ethically, technology can be a great help in increasing our communication and security. If on the other hand technology is used for selfish or destructive purposes than it can become a nemesis within the travel and tourism industry. Hamlet's question "to be or not to be" has never seemed more poignant in its relationship to travel and tourism. To help you decide how much or how little technology is right for your tourism business, Tourism Tidbits offers the following suggestions:

Remember that tourism is about people "interfacing" with other people, No matter how good your technology may be, technology does not provide human warmth of take-home experiences. Be mindful that tourism is about the selling of memories and then ask yourself at what point are you willing to sacrifice memories for efficiency.

Make sure that your employees are well trained in the use of technology is only as good as the people who use it. Often tourism centers hire people who simply are not up to the task, misuse the technology and create more problems then they solve. Train, train and then train your people some more. Do not update so often that your employees' knowledge base lags behind the technology's capabilities.

Use technology wisely: While even the best computer can never substitute the care and love that comes from another human being, technology if used properly can solve many a problem in tourism. Among these are:

Issues of time Nothing upsets the tourism industry's clientele as much as the misuse of time The proper use of computers to facilitate both check-ins and check-outs of places such as hotels, allows the person-on-duty to attend to other problems.

Clarity and consistency In an interrelated multi-lingual world a great deal of information can be provided to guests in their own language without linguistic, pronunciation or grammatical errors.

Ease of place – use technology and social networks to allow visitors to research from home and to gather basic information. However, many hotels and transportation companies seem to hide telephone numbers on their web sites. Combine basic information that can be given on a computer with the human side of information. Remember that if the tourist can never reach you, then you may find that your customer has found a more user-friendly location.

Environmental Issues with Tourism

Tourism in the past was not much sophisticated and tourists used to face lots of inconveniences at the tourist destinations and not special

attention was given to protect environment neither by government or by private players of tourism, because of which on the one side the states were enjoying the socio- economic benefits of tourism and on the other side face the problem of environmental degradation. Many people still wonder if tourism is an environmentally friendly industry. Due to past mistakes the public often is cynical about tourism and it is not unusual to hear people wondering out loud if the desire to change sheets once every three days is more about saving the hotel money then about saving the environment. There is no doubt that tourism, at least in the past, has not always been environmentally friendly.

Tourists habits and Environment

There are many reasons why we in the tourism industry must face numerous challenges when it comes to proper stewardship of the earth. Travel is hard, and people on vacation or a business trip want to be pampered. Many visitors believe that part of the fun of traveling is leaving cares and concerns behind and enjoying those little extras luxuries that are not part of most people's every day lives. Thus, when on vacation we tend to use more towels than necessary, and are not always as conscious of our ecological responsibilities as we should be.

Furthermore, most travelers never consider that even although they are not paying for the water in a hotel, on a macro level its usage has a major environmental impact. Restaurants, hotels, and attractions often keep their air conditioning at sweater weather conditions. Attractions and transportation centers often stay lit up all night long, adding to the earth's light and energy pollution. The problem with this attitude is that when we move from the individual to millions of individuals, then the collective damage becomes severe.

Another problem in keeping the world green is the over use of concrete and the lack of plants and beautification projects. Too many urban areas have become fields of concrete held together by rivers of asphalt. These area are not only visually unappealing, but tend to hold heat in causing higher air conditioning usage. Plants are nature's way of turning carbon monoxide into oxygen and are the planets living lungs. Cities that create green spaces not only add beauty to their visitors and citizens' lives but also help to replenish our oxygen supply and green spaces are an easy and inexpensive way to lower crime rates.

Tourism and travel then are faced with the issue of balancing the needs of the environment with the needs of its customer base. If travel becomes too hard, then it may lose its enchantment and glamour; if on the other hand it does not respect the Earth then there may be no place to which to travel.

Safety measures for protection of Environment at Tourist Destinations
Promotion of green tourism and by discovering innovative ways to protect the environment, tourism may assure that it will continue to offer products and services that are pleasant to the eye, and good for generations that are yet to be born. The wise travel and tourism marketer promotes the ecological health of his/her area in all written, oral and visual marketing efforts. In the present paper following are some of the policy aspects and suggestions which can support the growth of tourism industry along with environment protection and turn travel and tourism from a polluter and energy waster to a green commodity that is elegant, gracious and enchanting.

Promote hotel sensible laundry policies

For example do not only employ such tried and true methods of washing sheets every three days rather than every day, but also consider the use of new technologies such as light bulbs that save on light/heat pollutions.

Develop a green tourism measurement scale for your community.
Because most communities have no overall environmental plan, few locales know how well they are doing in creating green tourism. Develop an overall city plan that includes such things as: traffic control, transportation issues, water usage, pollutants emitted into the atmosphere and natural water resources, animal protection, garbage disposal, paper usage. Make sure to tailor your measurement scale to the needs and challenges of your community or location, and weight those factors most heavily that have the greatest impact on your community or location. Take the time to review your tourism area. Is it easy or difficult to throw away rubbish? Is protection provided for sensitive foliage? Are people made aware of what

is harmful and what is permitted? Remember that in a multi-national, multilingual world signage must be understandable not only by those who speak the native language but also by foreign guests. Also remember to inform while guarding against noise and sign pollution.

Remind people that good security begins with a sense of environmental pride. Many tourism security professionals emphasize that good security starts with beautification projects and good environmental control. For example, New York City learned that by cleaning up the trash, fixing broken windows, and getting rid of graffiti that it was able to lower its crime rate considerably. In a like measure the more any of us care for out environment, the more pride that we have in it and the lower the chance of crime.

Think sensibly. Sometimes the least innovative is the most ecologically friendly. For example, paper towels in wash rooms come from an renewable resource, tree farms, but electricity is not only expensive to produce but also its production is environmentally unfriendly. Replace electric hand drying machines that not only are ecologically unfriendly but also tend to spread germs with paper towels made from tree farms.

Restaurants can exemplify good environmentalism. Restaurants can be careful to use soaps that pollute less and serve water only upon request. There are a numerous washing devices on the market that use less water and less power than hand dishwashing. In fact, washing by hand is often less ecologically friendly, uses more pollutants and requires more hot water than does an eco-friendly dishwasher.

Eco friendly at your car rental places. Attractions and car rental companies should switch to electric cars as soon as possible and instead of running buses for local transport, use mini-vans, golf carts or other vehicles that tend to use a minimal of fossil fuels.

Turn environmentalism into a form of marketing. All too often people in the travel and tourism industries forget that a clean and healthy environment does not take away from the bottom line it adds to it. Do not define "green" in its most narrow sense of the word, but rather in its broadest sense. Few people will spend a lot of money to eat over a garbage dump, but many people are more than willing to spend top dollar to eat in a charming setting, be that setting a table overlooking an ocean, a crystal clear lake, a beautiful garden, or a forest.

Conclusion

The technology always tries to meet the requirements of the people and meeting the challenges of globalization and touches almost every aspect of the tourism industry. If we are smart enough to use the benefits of technology such as convenience, speed, and accuracy and avoid some of the pitfalls, lack of human contact, user friendliness, size of lettering, and lack of human contact, then technology can be a great time and cost saver. But if the tourism industry forgets the importance of the human element and that tourism is all about the experience then it is making a major error. At the end it can be concluded that Tourism in India has emerged as a front runner in the socio-economic growth of our country. The tourism potential in India is very high and it is growing every day, every week, every month, and every year with a steady pace. Keeping this aspect in mind Eco-tourism needs to be promoted so that tourism in India helps in preserving and sustaining the diversity of the India's natural and cultural environment and the negative impact of excessive use of technology, e-waste, deforestation, garbage etc. can be controlled.

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