

# The Changing Face of Tourism Industry in the Era of E-Communication

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**Abstract**—The advent of information and communication technology has changed the nature of contemporary tourism on a day today basis. Globalisation and better access of information through e-communications have created new levels of interactivity in the tourism industry. This interactivity is constantly transforming the nature of tourism products, processes, businesses in the tourism industry. E-Communications have changed the way business is done in the tourism industry. E communication is reshaping the fundamental structure of the industry as more and more number of tourist now depend on e-communications for planning and experiencing tourism. E-communication applications and solutions such as online hotel booking, ticket booking, information regarding available tour packages, and other desired travelling details provide anywhere anytime tourism services to the potential tourists. E-communication has impacted both demand and supply in tourism industry. The present paper is an attempt to understand the change E communication has brought in customer demands and supply by hospitality industry, tour operators, transport and travel services, destination information and various other aspects of tourism. The benefits of e-communication which accrue to each participant in the tourism industry have also been listed. An attempt is also made to analyze the gaps and limitations of e-communications in the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Tourism Industry, E-communications, change, benefits, limitations

## 1. INTRODUCTION

E communication is touching every aspect of tourism today. Adoption of ICT and resultant e-communications has reshaped the entire process of tourism. Digital services and mobile applications are ruling the industry and are assisting tourists to find and gather information as per their individual needs and preferences. A wide range of tourism and travel websites have emerged as the fastest growing communication medium.

Since tourism is a very important economic driver, the government is also using e-communication tools in order to promote the country's tourism sector in the global competitive arena. 'Incredible India' is one such step in this direction.

Today websites and mobile applications exist to provide relevant information regarding hotels, restaurants, airlines, ticket booking, tour booking, weather and traffic conditions,

transportation, city guides, places to visit, monuments details and guides, currency conversion and translation etc. As a result tourism industry is capable of providing anywhere anytime tourism services to the tourists. This magnificent impact of e-communication has been analysed in the present paper for both demand and supply participants in tourism industry. The benefits accruing to both sides i.e. customers and the suppliers in the tourism industry, have been discussed. However, the fast growth in e-communications have brought certain challenges for the stake holders in the industry. An attempt has also been made to understand and list them.

## 2. DECODING E-COMMUNICATION

E-communication is using electronic media for communication. E-communication means electronic medium of sending or receiving, conveying, socialising and interchanging the information. Such communication includes use of computer system, satellite network, internet and mobile applications and so on.. By electronic technology, people can easily access to worldwide communication without any physical movement and least cost.

### Role of E-communication in Different Forms of Tourism

Tourism is an activity done by an individual or a group moving from one place to another or from a country to another for performing a specific task or to visit a place. There are various forms of tourism prevalent today. Tourism service providers need to understand what are the specific information needs of a tourist in each form and how they can be met through e-communications. The present section lists the various types of communication and the specific information needs that e-communication is capable of meeting for that particular tourism type.

#### a) Cultural Tourism

- People are interested to know the literature, music, painting, urbanity, customs, traditions, heritage, habits, ways, life-style. They take journey to acquire knowledge, understand the culture well and to become familiar with the culture.

- **E-communications** have today made it possible to provide all information regarding cultural destinations, running festivals, activities and programmes.
- b) Medical Tourism**
- Medical tourism is a kind of trip that patients and his companion take from one country to another country to get cost effective and efficient medical treatment along with a great vacation at some of the most beautiful and historical place of particular nation.
  - **E-communications** today provide the facility of creating relation among the health provider's health professionals and patient. Information about the available treatments, hospitals, costs is easily available on internet.
- c) Religious Tourism**
- World represents various religious constitution of population. India is a multi-religious country, where various tours are organised to visit holy places such as Kailas Mansarovar Yatra, Amarnath Yatra, Char Dham Yatra etc.
  - **E communication** helps to promote tour packages, hotel booking, transportation and restaurants which give the opportunity to tourist to select best one according to their requirements and capacity.
- d) Eco Tourism**
- Eco and animal friendly tourism means visiting the natural habitat to watch the wild life.
  - **E communication provide** the information about destination where Eco tourism is available such as the popular wild life sanctuaries, bird sanctuaries etc.
- e) Rural Tourism**
- It means visiting the rural areas to understand the nature and quality of life in these areas. Businessman visits rural areas for business purpose to analyse opportunity and demand of areas. Usually people visit rural areas to meet the nature.
  - **E communication**—There are websites and packages available today on the net to provide information on Rural Tourism.
- f) Adventure Tourism**
- Tourism is often conducted for adventure by the young people. They like go for trekking, rock climbing, boating and river rafting etc. Basically, adventure tourism helps to remove the stress and tiredness of busy life through the thrill it provides.
- **E communication** have made all the relevant information about the suitable timing, places and packages for enjoying the thrill.
- g) Sports Tourism**
- Recently, Sports tourism has become commercial. Events such as cricket world cup, FIFA world cup, Common Wealth Games, Asian Games has taken initiative to sell online tickets and they sell them in packages that include flights, hotels and excursion. In Indian Subcontinent Cricket is very popular game and people are very crazy to watch it.
  - **E-communication** is playing a vital role to develop the sports tourism by its promotion and information
- h) Educational Tourism**
- The growing popularity of foreign degree has influenced students to go abroad.
  - **E communication** is beneficial for getting information regarding courses, eligibility requirements, admission processes and so on.
- 3. IMPACT OF E-COMMUNICATION ON TOURISTS**
- The previous section clearly reveals that different tourism options require specialised services and information which is made easily available by e-communications. Today, travellers rely heavily on electronic media to gather information and also to communicate their needs and wishes to suppliers rapidly. E-communication provides them the following benefits:-
- i. Tourists can get information about several tourism products and destinations and thus get increased choice.
  - ii. They are capable of doing more interaction with the service providers and ask for high quality products.
  - iii. Cost comparison is made easy due to e-communications, so the tourists are more likely to get high value for the money they are spending.
  - iv. They can access a large number of information in a short span of time and thus get value for time.
  - v. They can do hassle free, one window shopping of tour packages through one easy to use tool.
- An increased use of e-communication has definitely facilitated flexible, individualized and quality experience for tourists. However, it has also created certain risks and challenges for them, some of which are listed below:-
- i. The tourist may get access to incomplete or inaccurate information.
  - ii. The tourist may experience information overload, which causes time and effort to decide and select the desired and useful option.

- iii. E-communication may not provide the required information in the local language of the tourist traveller.
- iv. ICT knowledge may become essential to use e-communications.
- v. Tourists also run the risk of electronic frauds and abuses.

#### 4. IMPACT OF E-COMMUNICATION ON SERVICE PROVIDERS

E-communication has provided unique opportunity to service providers to re-design tourism products, service processes, promotion schemes and distribution channels. A variety of benefits have accrued to hospitality industry, tour operators, travel agencies and helped them do more and more business easily. Some of the important benefits to them are listed below:

- i. Easy access to tourists:- E-communication has provided direct contact with the customer and have thus enabled the service providers to understand better the diverse needs of the travellers.
- ii. Wider reach:- E-communication has provided the reach to those who were unreached uptill now. Through e-communication, service providers are able to connect and promote themselves to the wider population. This has enlarged their scope of business.
- iii. Improved services:-E- communication has helped the service providers to streamline and improve the processes dramatically by providing efficient and effective communication mechanism.
- iv. Improved operations and supply chain management:- Use of e-communications in variety of tasks saves time and enhances operational efficiency. The resultant better supply chain management allow improved customer relationship.
- v. Reduce costs:- The improved operational efficiency, better management and control reduce some of the operation costs of the service providers in the tourism industry.
- vi. Supply feedback:- Through e-communication facilities such as social media and platforms like face book, twitter blogs etc., customers get the ability to share their feedback on destination food, quality of service, environmental & social conditions. This feedback provides the service providers an opportunity to improve the levels of service, develop high quality products and processes and strengthen their brand image.
- vii. Improved inter-industry networking:- E-communication provides platforms for inter-industry interactions which help the service providers to co-ordinate activities and to add value to the product and the processes.

No doubt e-communication has brought boom in the tourism sector. But it has also brought many new risks and challenges for the service providers in the tourism industry. Some of the prominent challenges are listed below:-

- i. E-communications require huge investment in infrastructure development. Frequent changes in technology demands further investments in the future.
- ii. The customers are becoming more demanding as they are exposed to several tourism products and destinations.
- iii. E-communications require continuous co-ordination and exchange of timely information
- iv. The need of continuous market research has emerged to remain competitive and build brand image in the market.
- v. E-communications bring extra costs for maintenance of ICT and require a range of tasks to maintain efficiency.

#### 5. E-COMMUNICATION IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TOURISM

Tourism began when the time began. However, the drivers of tourism kept on changing with time. . Today availability of e-communication has made the world hyperthin. The ability of the e-communication to inform and to break boundaries allows consumers to choose a tourist destination anywhere in the world and even beyond. With an improvement in the economies of scale brought about by the online economy, travel and tourism is fast becoming a buyers' market. Electronic communication has created the need to provide new options for extending and enhancing tourism services by the tourism industry. The e-communication tools have transformed tourism globally. It has resulted in a paradigm shift in customer demands and service delivery processes. On the one hand, customers have become more sophisticated, more informed and thus ask for high level of services, new high quality products and value for their time and money. On the other hand, e-communications have helped service providers to promote themselves and to redesign tourism products to address individual needs of the customers. E-communications have made the tourism industry competitive for the service providers and have introduced some new challenges for the tourists too.. Nevertheless, e-communications provide a powerful tool that brings synergy effects by increasing accessibility, visibility of information, availability of variety of products and processes and opportunity to reach the targeted customers across the globe.

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