

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT): A VERITABLE TOOL FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

It is fact that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has reshaped our everyday lives and the society in general. It has turned the world to a global village where an individual can access what is happening in the other parts of the world at a glance. It is in light of this that efforts were made to discuss the importance of ICT in the development of tourism in Nigeria. This work has demonstrated various ways by which ICTs have been adapted for the course in tourism. The benefits inherent in this technology are immense. It was revealed that almost every tourism products can be sold online without the consumer necessarily visiting the place before making any choice since tourism products are not already manufactured goods. Booking of flights and hotel reservations can be done online through e-mail, telephone calls and other internet services thereby helping to reduce if not remove entirely the time wasting processes of the old system. It is therefore obvious that its adoption is necessary for proper inclusion in these benefits and for sustainable tourism.

Key words: Communication, Development, Information, Technology, Tourism

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Information communication technology (ICTS) means the use of computer system and telecommunication equipment in information processing. It is the amalgamation of computer, communication and electronics to acquire, process, store and disseminate vocal, textual, pictorial and numerical information by micro- electronic-based equipments. Important of ICT; it enhance distribution of information at a glance, it is use for storages, retrieval and dissemination of information. It enhance buying and selling of goods and services online (e-commerce). It is also used in banking operation (e-banking), offices, even in the tourism industries. Tourism is the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work as well as day visits or excursion. It involves the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure,

business and other purposes (Deighton, 1996). Tourism is rapidly growing into one of the largest industries in the world. Its potential role as a veritable instrument for economic progress of any nation cannot be ignored (Undeme, 2010).

Tourism can be classified under two forms: Internal (Domestic) and International tourism. It can be historical/ archeological, eco-touristic, recreational or educational. It can relate to business, Culture or religion .However, it can also be perceived from the aspects of safari, environmental, youth and adult. Werthner and Klein (1997) observed that tourism services and products are based on confidence, information and communication.

Tourism is acknowledged to be very information intensive. In fact, Sheldon (1993) described information as the 'life blood' of the industry. He further stated that, without it, the industry cannot function effectively. Before a trip can be embarked on, tourists need information in order to plan

and choose between options. They also need information as the trip progresses since annual holidays or even the weekend breaks are increasingly associated with enormous financial and emotional risks. In western society, time has become a scarce commodity and, particularly for couples, synchronically shared time is even elusive. For many consumers, their annual holidays represent a major emotional investment that cannot easily be placed if something goes wrong (Pollock, 1995). Therefore, since travelers cannot pre-test the product or easily get their money back if the trip does not measure up to their expectations, access to accurate, reliable, timely and relevant information is essential to help them make appropriate choices. As Buhalis (1997) points out “the greater the degree of perceived risk in a pre-purchase context, the greater the consumer propensity to seek information about the product”. Unlike manufactured goods, tourism products cannot be inspected prior to purchase; therefore it is almost completely dependent on representations and descriptions to help consumers make a purchase decision (Go and Pine, 1995). Tourism products are also fixed geographically. Thus customers must travel and in effect consume the product in order to experience what they are buying (Bennett, 2003). Individual tourism products are diverse, and in many cases it is this heterogeneity which makes them attractive in the first place. In addition, tourism products are rarely bought individually, and the endless combinations and permutations of alternative travel routes, transportation modes, time and lodging accommodation make travel decisions difficult even for the initiated (Kaven, 1974). Suppliers, therefore, face a challenge, which Kaven has poetically described as trying to gain identity with untold millions of customers covering the whole spectrum of incomes, interests, knowledge, sophistication and needs.

2.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This is a non-experimental and explorative study. It focuses on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with particular concern on its effects on tourism development in Nigeria. As an opinionated paper, this study is exploring previous works on ICT and Tourism, while the process of induction and deduction was equally adopted in the process of analysis and interpretation of data. The main aim of this work is for appreciation of how ICT and Tourism influence one another. On the other hands, it also hopes to highlight the need for stakeholders in tourism to take this rampaging technology into cognizance and see the need to harness it for sustainable tourism in the country. Specific attention is being focused on internet-based Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

2.1 Information Technology and its Roles in Tourism

Information technology (IT) is a driving force in the current information driven society. Its role in the tourism industry cannot be quantified. It facilitate trading partner with other industries, provide facilities, distribution of product and services, provide information online to consumers in order to plan their trip, create a new business environment and also help tourism professionals to define the boundaries of the proposed tour site and its surroundings. It gives information on weather, altitude and other information to pilot on board. It help tourist on air to communicate during emergency and also to other pilot on airplanes with traffic control station. Information is very important at every stage in the sales cycle of the tourism product (Pollock, 1995a). Information must be able to flow quickly and accurately between the client, intermediaries and each of the tourism suppliers involved in servicing the client’s need.

The amalgamation of Computer and telecommunications has become an almost universal feature of the tourism industry (Bennett, 2003). Its power allows information to be managed more effectively

and transported worldwide almost instantly (Frew and Pringle, 1995). As a result, it had and continues to have a major effect on the methods of operation in the tourism industry. However, it has not affected all functions and sectors equally. As Poon (2003) points out, it is having the greatest impact on the marketing and distribution functions. Airlines use technology to manage and streamline their operations and gain strategic advantage. Information technology has reshaped our commerce and society in general. Goods and services are provided to the consumers online (e-commerce, e-governance, e-banking) to mention but few. McGuffie (2004) posit that tourism enterprises need to understand, incorporate and utilize IT strategically in order to serve their target markets, improve their efficiency, maximize profitability, enhance services and maintain long-term profit.

2.2 Evolution and Development of Tourism

The mass tourism that exists in many parts of the world today has its origins in the years immediately following the conclusion of the 1939-45 second world war. Rising standards of living, increased leisure time and developments in transportation resulted in a sharp increase in demand for international travel, which has grown steadily to the present day. Tourist destinations responded to this demand by developing a wide variety of tourist facilities and amenities. The origins of tourism can, however, be traced back much further than this to pre-Egyptians, when there was a limited amount of travel associated with festivals and celebrations of a religious or spiritual nature. The early Egyptian civilization displayed a primitive social structure that rewarded the privileged classes with leisure time to enjoy such activities as dance, music, drama and archery. Travel in Egyptian times tended to be for the purpose of trade or associated with religious activities.

In Nigeria the birth of tourism came to light in 1960 when it got independent with the flow of tourists of different kinds into the country. However, this manifested early in 1962 when the Nigeria Tourist Association (NTA) was formed as semi-public sector having direct participation in the formulation of government policies on tourism. The association had its members coming from the federal government, Shell Company, Tobacco Company, private Hoteliers, Airport hotels, some foreign airlines and the national carrier. In 1976, decree No 54 of 1976 reconstituted the NTA to Nigeria Tourism Board (NTB). In July 10 1990, the then vice president Augustus Aikhomu reviewed the board at Eko Holiday Inn. However, in 1992, decree 81 of December was promulgated to give birth to the Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC). Through this decree, every state in Nigeria was required to form Tourism Board at the state and Tourism committee at Local Government level. In 2004, the National Assembly re-affirmed this through an Act of the parliament and its amendments.

2.3 Tourism in the Past and Present Information Technology Era

Information communication technology (ICT) has come to stay and its influence is becoming all pervasive. It has revolutionized the way services are provided to consumers of various goods and services in many areas of human endeavour, tourism inclusive.

Before the development of computerized systems, booking an airline ticket was a complex process. Airlines periodically published their schedules and fares in booklets, which were then distributed to travel agents. If a customer wanted to book a flight from Nigeria to Paris, for instance, the travel agent had to identify which airlines flew on the required route and examine each of their schedules to see if they had a flight which met the customer's requirement. Bennett (2006) posited that the process is traditional and delayed customers such that

they could spend 80% of their time and resources doing things that prepare them to make a booking. He further observed that operations were very expensive, from the labour point of view. Heintzeman (1994) viewed it as slow process and unsatisfactory. However, with the introduction of computers, the industries process became faster. Services such as airline booking, hotel reservations, tourism product and

services, searching, booking and processing are done at touch of some buttons (Knowles and Garland, 1994). Information communication gives instant access to real-time and pricing which helps to greatly increase the quality of the service available, since information can reach millions, we cannot ordinarily reach within a short period of time.

Table 1: Receipt from international tourism, world exports and gross national product (GNP) of some selected countries (US\$) 1998-2008

Country	Tourism Receipt 1	Export 11	GNP 111	%1/11	%1/111
Egypt	1,586	4,352	34,073	36.4	4.7
Nigeria	78	7,383	40,301	1.1	0.2
Morocco	933	2,872	14,363	33.0	6.5
Kenya	344	961	7,414	35.8	4.6
Gambia	36	-	175	-	20.6
Mali	37	260	1,555	14.2	2.4
Togo	40	220	984	18.2	4.1
Mexico	3,479	20,656	150,251	16.9	2.3
Spain	14,760	34,160	233,261	43.2	6.3
Unite Kingdom	10,235	131,210	599,804	7.8	1.7
USA	23,505	254,122	453,859	9.2	0.9
Italy	12,174	116,575	598,590	9.2	0.5
France	11,870	143,391	718,101	8.3	1.7

Source: WTO compendium of tourism statistic 1998 – 2008

A close study of Table 1 reveals that Spain in 1998 – 2008 earned US\$14.8 billion amounting to 43.2 percent of her total export and 6.3 percent of her GNP. The corresponding figures for Egypt, Nigeria, Morocco, Kenya, Mexico, United Kingdom, Italy, France etc are respectively US\$1.5 billion, 36.4 percent; US\$78 million, 1.1 percent and 6.2 percent US\$ 933 millions, 33 percent and 6.5 percent, US\$ 344 million, 35.8 percent and 4.6 percent, US\$ 3.5 billion, 16.9 percent and 2.3 percent US\$ 10.2 billion, 7.8 percent and 1.7 percent and US\$ 9 billion 6.3 percent and 1.7 percent. When Kenya`s contribution to total export is 35.8% and 4.6% to the export and GNP respectively. Nigeria`s contribution is just a very negligible 1.1% export and 0.2% GNP. This ought not to be so in view of enormous resources that are scattered all over the country. There abound several untapped

attractions in the rural areas such as waterfall, stone images and beautiful outcrop of rocks in strategic locations. This explains the basis of often assertion that Nigeria is not lacking but adequately endowed in terms of potentials for tourism development; while the missing link is tied to lack of willingness to develop them.

Table 2 shows reservation services in the leading hotel chains on the web sites. It is revealed that Cendent corp./hfs inc ranked the most high being number 1 on top, holiday inn(s) world wide2, Best western international 3, Grouper Accor 4, Choice hotels 5, Mariott international 6, ITT Sheraton corp. 7, Promus cos 8, Hilton hotel corp.9, Carlson hospitality 10, Hyath hotels 11, Inter- continental hotels 12, Hilton international 13, Grupo sol media 14 and Forte hotels 15. The reservation method for number 3 is through their telephone number.

On the contrary, the rest of the hotels can be reach through their web sites. All services

are done online through the web sites displayed above.

Table2: Reservation services in leading hotel chains on the web sites

Rank	Hotel chain	Website URL	Reservation method
1	Centent corp./hfs inc	Brand –based. eg www.ramamda.com	Online reservation through travel/ web.
2	Holiday in world wide	www.holiday-inn.com	Online reservations
3	Best western international	www.best-western.com	Through telephone number
4	Grouper Accor	www.hotelweb.com	Online reservation
5	Choice hotels	www.hotelchoice.com	Online reservation
6	Mariott international	www.mariott.com	Online reservation
7	ITT Sheraton corp.	www.ITT-Sheraton.com	Online reservation
8	Promus cos.	Brand-based e.g. www.embassysuites.com	Online reservation
9	Hilton hotel corp.	www.hilton.com	Online reservation
10	Carlson hospitality	Brand-based, e.g.comwww.raddison.com.	Online through travel/web.
11	Hyath hotels	www.hyatt.com	Online reservations
12	Inter-continental hotels	www.interconti.com	Online reservations
13	Hilton international	www.hilton.com	Online reservations
14	Grupo sol media	www.forte-hotels.com	Online reservations through travelocity
15	Forte hotels	www.forte-hotels.com	

Source: <http://Londonvicarage.com>

Table 3 shows the country's most visited by tourist from 2006 to 2008. In 2008, there were over 922 million international tourist arrivals, with a growth of 1.9% as compared to 2007. In 2009 international tourists arrivals fell to 880

million, representing a worldwide decline of 4% as compared to 2008. The region most affected was Europe with a 6% decline. On the average, France has the highest figure while Mexico has the least.

Table 3: most visited Countries by international tourist arrivals

	Country	Regional Market	Tourist Arrivals 2008	Year 2007	2006
1	France	Europe	79.3 million	81.9 million	78.9 million
2	United state	North America	58.0 million	56.0 million	51.0 million
3	Spain	Europe	57.3 million	58.7 million	58.2 million
4	China	Asia	53.0 million	54.7 million	49.9 million
5	Italy	Europe	42.7 million	43.7 million	41.1 million
6	United Kingdom	Europe	30.2 million	30.9 million	30.7 million
7	Ukraine	Europe	25.4 million	23.1 million	18.9 million
8	Turkey	Europe	25.0 million	22.2 million	18.9 million
9	Germany	Europe	24.9 million	24.4 million	24.4 million
10	Mexico	North America	22.6 million	21.4 million	21.4 million

Source: UNWTO technical manual: collection of tourism expenditure statistics, 2009.

The world Tourism Organization reports the following ten countries as the most visited in between 2006 and 2008 by number of international travelers. When compared to 2006, Ukraine entered the top ten lists, surpassing Russia, Austria and

Mexico, and in 2008 surpassed Germany. In 2008 the U.S displaced Spain from the second place. Most of the top visited countries continue to be on the European continent.

Table 4: International tourism receipts

Ranking	Countries	UNWTO Regional Market	Year		
			2008	2007	2006
1	United states	North America	\$110.1 billion	\$96.7 billion	\$85.7 billion
2	Spain	Europe	\$61.6 billion	\$57.6 billion	\$51.1 billion
3	France	Europe	\$55.6 billion	\$54.3 billion	\$46.3 billion
4	Italy	Europe	\$ 45.7 billion	\$42.7 billion	\$ 38.1 billion
5	China	Asia	\$ 40.8 billion	\$ 37.2 billion	\$ 33.9 billion
6	Germany	Europe	\$ 40.0 billion	\$ 36.0 billion	\$32.8 billion
7	United Kingdom	Europe	\$ 36.0 billion	\$ 38.6 billion	\$33.7 billion
8	Australia	Oceania	\$24.7 billion	\$ 22.3 billion	\$17.8 billion
9	Turkey	Europe	\$22.0 billion	\$ 18.5 billion	\$16.9 billion
10	Austria	Europe	\$ 21.8 billion	\$ 18.9 billion	\$16.6 billion

Source: UNWTO TECHNICAL REPORT 2008.

Table 4 shows world tourism ranking based on their income. The international tourism receipts grew to US \$944 billion (euro 624 billion) in 2008, corresponding to an increase in real terms of 1.8% on 2007. When the export value of international passenger transport receipts is accounted for,

total receipts in 2008 reached a record of US\$1.1 trillion, or over US\$3 billion a day.

The World Tourism Organization reports the following countries as the top ten tourism earners for the year 2008. It is noticeable that most of them are on the European continent, but the United States continues to be the top earner.

Table 5: International tourism Expenditures

Rank	Country	Regional Market	Year		
			2008	2007	2006
1	Germany	Europe	\$91.0 billion	\$83.1 billion	\$73.9 billion
2	United States	North America	\$79.7 billion	\$ 76.7 billion	72.1 billion
3	United Kingdom	Europe	\$68.5 billion	\$71.4 billion	\$63.1 billion
4	France	Europe	\$ 43.1 billion	\$36.7 billion	\$32.1 billion
5	China	Asia	\$ 36.2 billion	\$ 29.8 billion	\$31.2 billion
6	Italy	Europe	\$30.8 billion	\$ 27.3 billion	\$ 26.1 billion
7	Japan	Asia	\$27.9 billion	\$26.5 billion	\$26.0 billion
8	Canada	North America	\$26.9 billion	\$24.7 billion	20.5 billion
9	Russia	Europe	\$24.9 billion	\$.22.3 billion	\$ 18.2 billion
10	Netherlands	Europe	\$21.7 billion	\$19.1 billion	\$17.0 billion

Source: UNWTO yearly International Tourism Expenditures.

Table 5 shows nations annually expenditure. The World Tourism Organization reports the following countries as the top ten biggest spenders on international tourism for the year 2008. For the fifth year in a row, German tourists continue as the top spenders. Germany rated the highest expended country on tour with total expended valued at \$91 billion dollar in 2008, \$83.1 billion 2007 and \$73.9 billion dollar 2006. United states \$79.7, \$76.7 and \$72.1 billion dollar, united kingdom \$68.5, \$71.4 and \$63.1. France \$43.1, \$36.7 and \$31.2 billion, China \$36.2, 29.8 and \$24.3 billion, Italy \$30.8, \$27.3 and \$32.1 billion, Japan \$27.9, \$26.5 and \$26.9 billion, Canada \$26.9, \$24.7 and \$20.5 billion, Russia \$24.9, \$22.3 and \$18.2 billion and finally Netherlands with \$21.7, \$19.1 and \$17.0 billion dollar all in 2008, 2007 and 2006 respectively.

3.0 CONCLUSION

In line with submissions by Connor (2009), information is the life blood of any organization; it is needed in every facet of live especially in contemporarily time when internet has ensure that information is at the fingertips. Advancement In technology equally has its impact on diversification of information. Various literatures equally affirm the role of information as the tool for librating and unlocking the wealth of a nation. The influence of information and communication Technologies (ICTs) which is a product of marriage between information and technology has also touched the field of tourism. It is playing vital roles in the development of tourism.

This work has demonstrated that tourism is not an isolated economic activity; the sector is composed of several branches. The effects of tourism were not limited to foreign earnings alone but also earnings from local resources. Unlike the industrial sector, which benefits the wealthy only, it

has the capacity to trickle down the line benefiting different categories of workers. It has been shown that its immediate impact is usually more widespread than that of export to many other goods or services. While exports of mineral products, for example create income for persons working in hotels, restaurants and cafes, travel agents, transport enterprises, places of entertainment, sports and recreation. It creates multiplier effects whenever the tourist spends his money. In view of benefits inherent in incorporation of ICTs into tourism development, it is necessary to state that this technology cannot be ignored if this part of the globe is to be included and meet up with emerging challenges.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is hereby recommended that tourism industries in developing countries should hook up to the current trends in information technology and subsequently endeavour to keep up with relevant developments in information and communication technology. At the same time, the policy maker should endeavour to make policies and laws that will enhance tourism development in our dear country, Nigeria.

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