Development Trends of Digital Tourism in Uzbekistan under the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT: The very idea of going on a trip involves searching for destination information on search engines. Planning to visit a country involves 'digital processes' such as online booking, e-ticketing and taking advantage of online booking. These separate types of consumption form a major industry in which information technology is heavily involved. This is innovative tourism that we are blessed with as 21st century people.

KEYWORD: tourism, hotel, online booking system Booking.com, Silkroad.uz, dynamic pricing, virtual tourism, blockchain.

Introduction

Modern society and its components are complex dynamic systems whose integrity, functioning and development processes cannot be realised without information services. The level of development of a country's information resources determines its position in the world economic, political and social space.

One of the vivid manifestations of the globalisation process in Uzbekistan is the active development of international tourism, which has been growing rapidly in recent years. At the same time, the online travel market is the fastest growing sector of the global economy. Foreign tourists use the Internet to plan and organise their trips to Uzbekistan, which actively influences the development of Uzbekistan's tourism market. However, the coronavirus pandemic and related restrictions have had a negative impact on international tourism. Due to the pandemic, the tourism market has slowed down. But it should be borne in mind that in the current environment, competition between countries to attract foreign tourists has increased dramatically. It is in this challenging period that deepening the processes of digitisation of domestic tourism will be one of the main factors for increasing the competitiveness of the tourism industry.

In recent years, work has been carried out on dynamic packaging of tours in the tourism sector of Uzbekistan. This is a new technology for shaping and selling tourism products through direct access to airlines and their systems. [3, 35-37]

Dynamic pricing is increasingly being used in classic package tours, where tour operators are trying to move from offline sales to online sales. This is done by creating databases of tours, developing their software or industry programmes. The experience of tourism organisations in Europe and Asia shows that in the near

future, dynamic pricing will be the technological basis for a new digital strategy for the global travel industry. The share of dynamic packages created using digital technology accounts for half of the volume of travel products sold in the market. The advanced technology of a tour package allows for convenient online booking. Online sales of tours in Europe are growing mainly due to dynamically generated packages, which have reduced the cost of services provided.

The outlook for the Uzbek travel market is positive, and a number of travel companies are planning to build dynamic packages that are fundamentally different from the classic type, working with the possibility of having multiple partners worldwide. Some Uzbek tour operators have started using tour packages based on scheduled flights operated by the National Airline Uzbekistan Airways. Based on rail transport, dynamic packages have been developed for Afrosiab trains, Tashkent-Samarkand and Tashkent-Bukhara bus services, among others.

The explosion of innovation in tourism began in 1972 with a patent for the invention of wheeled suitcases by Bernard David Sadow of the United States Luggage Company and continues with the complete electronisation of the industry and the activation of artificial intelligence.

The biggest problem today is that people want the ultimate in comfort and there are always factors that get in the way.

Hotels, airports or other tourism businesses need to analyse the information of several hundreds or even thousands of customers and provide them with an efficient service. In addition, these businesses need to manage the flow of information concerning their employees and partners. Thanks to this, automation processes are taking place in many industries [1]. Computers, robotics and artificial intelligence are nowadays becoming commonplace for tasks that are difficult for humans to perform. An example of this is the development of Opera, Fidelio, Epitome PMS and other similar software that allows for the automation of hotel management.

Promotion of hotel services as well as reservation of rooms and related services is actively and successfully promoted today by many companies on the Internet. Today, with the help of online booking systems, travellers can find a desired hotel anywhere in the world and book a room there in virtually no time at all.

It was a major challenge for Jaxon's practice to bring the level of technology up to the point where it would make it really easy for hotel chain customers to book and pay for rooms.

Online hotel reservations using modern online services are a practical and convenient way to secure a customer's accommodation for a future trip. Online booking makes it possible to quickly and comprehensively view many hotel options, rate them according to several criteria, view reviews and choose the accommodation that is complete and suited to your needs.[2]

The customer's decision to choose accommodation is determined by many factors: previous experience, advertisements, recommendations, hotel location, hotel name, etc. [6, p. 365-368]

Of course, the ease of booking and the way the booking agent presents his/her business and prices can influence the guest's choice [4, p. 177-180].

The key to a hotel's success in the marketplace is the skilful use of reservation data [5, p. 92-96].

Hotel reservation information services differ in many ways. Because the uniqueness of the information service is important, which is reflected in the demand for the site.

Today, on average, more than 70% of travel agencies, Internet agencies, individual hotels, hotel companies, etc. make an initial reference to search engines on their websites. Statistically, hotel queries account for 35%

of all tourist traffic. It is known that any Internet search engine generates thousands, if not millions, of search results for a given criterion at a time, in most cases the user sees the search results presented on the first page.

On the Internet, you can book hotel rooms via thousands of different systems. The hotel enters into a joint working agreement with the system, in which the hotel determines the % of the amount the hotel will pay for each booking. The higher the %, the higher the position, which means that the consumer will see the establishment that pays the system the highest % first in the hotel list.

Each of the systems has its own hotel database, providing detailed descriptions of hotel rooms with photos and reviews. The client can choose the country, city, location, hotel category, room category, fill in the booking form and send the order. Once payment is guaranteed, the client will receive a voucher with booking confirmation by email. Accommodation facilities offer various discounts and promotions when booking online.

The most common hotel reservation systems are Booking.com, Hotels.com, .Agoda.com, Ostrovok.ru, Trivago.ru, etc.

Booking systems are compared according to the following criteria:

➢ The number and variety of hotels represented;

➢ Availability of different language versions of the service;

➢ Availability of hotel reviews

➢ Simplicity of service.

Today's consumers want to purchase hotel services in a way and at a time that is convenient for them. Accommodation facilities need to be proactive by using the latest technology to sell rooms and additional hotel services.

Trends in the use of internet technology:

➢ Increase in the number of special offers on online booking systems;

➢ Improvement of hotel websites;

➢ Expansion of hotel activities in social networks;

➢ Use of mobile offers.

The latest Internet technology and the global information network nowadays offer not only technical but also new economic opportunities. Modern advances in communication technology have led to the creation of a global electronic business environment. Information technology plays an important role in today's economic environment. The world economy is becoming increasingly electronic. The Internet, as the brightest expression of new information technologies, has become a symbol of the new world, new political and economic solutions, a symbol of modern man. New technologies make it possible to optimise both the production process and the sales process.

The development of the Internet is causing travel businesses around the world to develop at such a rapid pace that many companies are struggling to adapt to the new technology. Although the profitability of e-commerce has not yet been fully analysed, travel agency participation in the e-world in the US and Western Europe is developing very rapidly. Companies are gaining new, highly effective marketing channels by having their own websites or pages on the internet and using internet booking systems.

Our country has seen many reforms in this respect in recent years. In particular, in 2016, the State Tourism Committee launched the online portal www.uzbekistan.travel. Travellers will get all the information they

need through this portal. For example, tourists or organisations can find information about historical sites, get answers to their questions about tourist destinations, routes, history, geography, culture, traditions, etc. The portal is currently being fully updated based on market needs. In particular, new sections are being created and processes are underway to optimise them for mobile traffic. The committee has also created pages on Facebook and other social media. This has a positive effect on improving the quality of specialised services.

In order to implement the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No 3724 dated May 14, 2018 *"On measures for advanced development of e-commerce"* the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications Development together with the State Tourism Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, launched a national and international information system Silkroad.uz in the segment of HoReCa services. On 5 October 2018, the presentation of this system took place within the framework of the Tashkent International Fair "Silk Road Tourism". The Silkroad.uz hotel reservation system allows guests to receive, book, bill and pay in a few minutes. These services are convenient for guests, hotel staff and other market participants.

In order to improve the tourism industry, the State Tourism Committee promotes entrepreneurial activity by setting up a unified reservation system in pilot mode.

Silkroad.uz hotel booking system is fully compliant with the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as with the development trends of global technological criteria. The main advantage of displaying availability of real hotel rooms and notification of the client about booking a room is in real time mode.

The system provides for possibility of automatic registration of the state fee. It simplifies reporting. It reduces the level of errors associated with the human factor.

Analysis of the current state of development of Uzbekistan's hotel industry shows a positive growth trend. According to the State Statistics Committee, 1,156 hotels operated in the country as of 1 January 2021. The growth rate of the total number of rooms for 2016-2020 increased from 18.1 thousand to 29.2 thousand units in residential buildings. The occupancy rate of hotels and inns of Tashkent city in the last days of March was 83.6% and for the republic - 70.8%. In March 2019, before the pandemic, 68,800 foreign nationals were staying in hotels; in March 2022, 72,000 foreign nationals were staying in hotels. This is almost twice as many as in March 2021, when 37,600 people were staying in hotels in Uzbekistan. Over the past four years, 833 new hotels have been commissioned in our country. The total number of beds reached 1,442, the number of rooms reached 33,400 and the number of bedrooms reached 71,200. According to the ministry, up to 4.5 million foreign tourists will be accommodated by the end of 2022. Such dynamic growth of hotels and similar accommodation facilities allows us to talk about their almost stable growth.

Among the new, non-traditional types of tourism, virtual tourism stands out. "Virtual tourism is a human activity that uses modern computer technology and communication networks to create and obtain the most realistic sensational information about a desirable destination out of those that actually exist".

The advantage of virtual tourism is that it can be used by all social strata, such as the disabled, people without sufficient means to get around physically and in real time, and others. All that is needed is a computer with the appropriate applications and programmes and a home Wi-Fi connection.

Virtual tourism has become particularly relevant due to the coronavirus pandemic. Quarantine and self-isolation procedures have been introduced in many countries, including Uzbekistan. Under such conditions, using the possibilities of virtual tourism, one can effectively get acquainted with cultural, historical, recreational opportunities of different countries and visit favourite sights in 3B format.

Another advantage of using digital platforms to promote tourism is blockchain technology, which has the potential to revolutionise the tourism industry. The use of blockchain to improve the quality of tourism

services is being explored, which could significantly change the process of designing and delivering travel packages. It is a distributed database technology based on an ever-expanding chain of records and is resistant to tampering, revision, forgery and theft. Often, blockchain copies are stored on different computers and processed independently, allowing travel providers to bypass intermediaries and work directly with consumers, particularly without agency fees for airlines to reduce distribution costs. Introduces customer loyalty programmes that make direct bookings more attractive.

As a result, all intermediaries can leave the market and the tour product will be of higher quality and cheaper, increasing the responsibility of travel service providers.

With the expansion of the digital segment of the travel market, the business of classic tour operators may lead to their unprofitability: the low profitability of tour operator activities does not allow them to balance the risks associated with the production of a wholesale tour product.

Conclusion

In today's environment, tour operators and agencies need to develop new services and products using digital technologies to sustain business and survive in the tourism market. In a situation where the use of digital technology is driving intermediaries (tour operators) out of the travel market, travel companies must pay particular attention to improving the digital technology used. It provides a new set of fast and efficient tools.

Tourism has become one of the most important economic sectors in the world. In many countries around the world, the tourism industry provides jobs and opportunities for professional growth. At the same time, employment in the sector is growing almost twice as fast as in other service sectors by employing several professionals in the same service. For example, a travel agency manager, an accountant, a director, etc. are involved in selling a travel package.

Changing personal values and preferences of tourists play an important role in tourism development. Therefore, travel companies are challenged to move to digital platforms in order to fully implement and adapt innovations, innovations in the tourism sector, to fully account for the current changes, fluctuations and trends in the sector.

The reservation system involves booking seats and rooms in advance. With this process begins the service of guests in the hotel. Modern information technologies allow to organize hotel's work as effectively as possible. Hotel reservation system really strengthens integration processes, creates a guarantee of reliability when providing hotel rooms, brings additional benefits and makes a great contribution to the development of the hospitality industry.

Information technology plays an important role in today's economic environment. The world economy is becoming increasingly electronic. The Internet has become a symbol of the new world, new political and economic solutions and the modern man as the brightest expression of new information technology. New technologies make it possible to optimise both the production process and the process of selling and buying products. Because of the interdependence of information technology, it is of particular importance in establishing relationships between economic counterparts - individuals, households, firms, government agencies.

Important facilities and opportunities have been created in the field of information and communication technologies. A striking expression of this is the rapid development of e-commerce, that is, modern Internet shops, payment systems, sale and consumption of goods, as well as provision of services via the Internet. The Internet is a powerful communication tool that allows you to effectively search for new business partners. [7, 815-821]

E-commerce makes it possible to change almost all the processes that take place in modern business by putting them into one whole. This type of business takes advantage of all the technological innovations to develop its field. Today, companies are looking for new markets that incorporate new information technologies. Information technology has developed and stimulated the development of freight and passenger transport. Using remote access technology, users can access goods and services with minimal loss of time. As a result, the quality and volume of delivery of goods and services has increased.

Since tourism is one of the priority sectors of the economy, full digitalisation of this sector is necessary.

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