

# Use of Application among Tourism Service Providers: Steps towards Digitalization in Tourism with Special Reference to Kodagu District

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## ABSTRACT:

The research intends to present the increasing use of application in tourism activities by tourism service providers like Tour operators, travel agents and hotels specially in Kodagu district, Karnataka and is leading towards the replacement of traditional information sources such as maps, brochures, information manuals by digital technology (application). The paper also aims to showcase the power of applications in the modern world: Special reference to Kodagu tourism and how the tourism service providers in the mentioned region are helpful with the applications. The paper also throws light on the problems faced by the service providers with the increasing use of applications in tourism activities.

## INTRODUCTION

The technology is growing rapidly and the world is heading towards digitalization in almost all the activities. The influence of technology in tourism is much deeper and tourism activities of most of the tourists are depending upon the technology sources of information. [1]

The speed of technology is creating an additional growth in the tourism activities because the trends are based on a lot of capabilities to communicate and share information more efficiently and effectively through applications specially with the help of android and mobile devices. Digitalization is a journey towards shaping the better opportunities and future for future for tourism activities.

Digitalization is opening new doors for new opportunities to the tourists and it's also creating more awareness and building more interest for wanderlust among people. Without any doubt, "digitalization can be viewed as the motor of transportation for the tourism industry in the age of the internet economy".[2]

According to a survey by e- marketer, "travel based mobile apps are the 7<sup>th</sup> most downloaded apps category and almost 60% smartphone users regularly use travel apps while planning trips. Mobile apps and smartphone have improved to experience of users and also benefited tourism based companies in a big way".[3]

Smartphones are mainstream in this area with active android devices and ios surpassing 700millions globally by now global mobile data is growing rapidly to an impressive share of 13% of the internet traffic in 2012. In accordance about 50% of existing tourism recommender systems are designed for mobile devices.[4]

In this technologically transforming world, it is very necessary to understand the use of applications for all tourism service providers and also it's a necessity to be updated with the day by day changing technology to do effective business. Thus the research plays an important role in understanding the use of application by the tourism service providers and also the problems faced by them in Kodagu district, Karnataka.

### **MAJOR APPLICATIONS USED BY TOURISM SERVICE PROVIDERS**

**MAKEMYTRIP LIMITED**, An Indian online travel company, founded in 2000. Headquartered in Gurugram (also known as Gurgaon), Haryana, the company provides online travel services including flight tickets, domestic and international holiday packages, hotel reservations, rail and bus tickets. As of March 31, 2018, the Company has 14 company-owned travel stores in 14 cities, including one in their office in Gurugram, over 30 franchisee-owned travel stores which primarily sell packages in approximately 28 cities, and counters in four major airports in India under MakeMyTrip brand. MakeMyTrip also have offices in New York, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Phuket, Bangkok, and Dubai.[5]

**GOIBIBO**, is India's leading online travel booking brand providing range of choice for hotels, flights, trains, bus and cars for travelers. Our core value differentiator is the most trusted user experience, be it in terms of quickest search and booking, fastest payments, settlement or refund processes. Through GoStays, our customers enjoy standardised stay experience at certified hotel properties.[6]

**OYO ROOMS**, commonly known as **OYO**, is India's largest hospitality company, consisting mainly of budget hotels. It was founded in 2013 by Ritesh Agarwal and has since grown to over 8,500 hotels in 230 cities in India, Malaysia, UAE, Nepal, China and Indonesia.[7]

**BOOKING.COM**, Established in 1996 in Amsterdam, Booking.com has grown from a small Dutch start-up to one of the largest travel e-commerce companies in the world. Part of Booking Holdings Inc. (NASDAQ: BKNG), Booking.com now employs more than 17,000 employees in 198 offices in 70 countries worldwide., Booking.com invests in digital technology that helps take the friction out of travel. At Booking.com, we connect travellers with the world's largest selection of incredible places to stay, including everything from apartments, vacation homes, and family-run B&BS to 5-star luxury resorts, tree houses and even igloos. The Booking.com website and mobile apps are available in over 40 languages, offer 28,938,744 total reported listings, and cover 140,989 destinations in 230 countries and territories worldwide. [8]

**CLEARTRIP**, An Indian online travel company. The company operates an online travel aggregator website for booking flights and train tickets, hotel reservations, and activities in India and the Middle East countries. It has offices across India, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. [9]

**AGODA**, One of the world's fastest-growing online travel booking platforms. Established in 2005, the start-up quickly expanded in Asia and was acquired in 2007 by Booking Holdings Inc. – the world's largest seller of rooms online. Agoda is headquartered in Singapore, with 53 offices in major cities across over 30 countries and over 3,700 staff worldwide. It provides a network of over 2 million accommodation properties, including apartments, villas, homes, and hotels backed by over 15 million real traveler reviews. Agoda was a pioneer in non-hotel accommodation, offering villas and homes throughout the region from the very start. [10]

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

Most of the studies in the area of tourism in Kodagu district are confined only to the Residents perception, tourism opportunities and the impacts of tourist's activities. This research aims to throw light on the uses of technology (application) by tourism service providers and its importance.

1. To find out the problems faced by travel service providers with the use of applications in their business.
2. To know whether they prefer to use applications or traditional information systems.
3. To identify the scope of E- tourism in Kodagu.

### **LIMITATIONS**

The researchers surveyed only 40 tourism service providers in Kodagu district which may not sufficient. This research work is the first base of a set of works developed by the research team around the new era of digital transformation of tourism industry specially in Kodagu, meaning that the majority of this work is to provide a set of state of art information.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Tourism researchers have primarily focused on travellers, their needs, behaviour, and motivations up until at the 1980's (Lankford 1194)[11], much researchers has been conducted for convenience of tourists but very few researchers took place to understand the convenience and available information resources to the tourism service providers. The relationship between tourism and technology has been very intensive [12] [Buhalis D and Law R.2008]

Buhalis and law argued that tourists became more selective, sensitive to price, and more sophisticated and reducing the energy in tourism activities like tour planning due to the dissemination of it in tourism [13] [H.Gunawana] still people can plan tours in much easier way with the help of apps, and can trace the route with GPS, book hotels, tickets and get information in a single tap.

As Dadape says the purpose of the application is to help the tourists to get information of tourist attractions so that they can decide the destination precisely (14). [Dadape, 2012]

## METHODOLOGY

The study was descriptive and time series in nature. However, secondary sources of data were consulted for the purpose of gathering background information supporting the study relevant primary data were collected using the combinations of quantitative (field survey) and qualitative (interview) methods. Primary data were collected through questionnaire method. A questionnaire was administered to 40 tourism service providers of Kodagu district in different regions namely Madikeri, Virajpet and Somwarpet (travel agents, hotels and tour operators, homestays and resorts).

## RESULT

Almost all the tourism service providers like travel agents, hotels, resorts, homestays are aware about the uses of travel applications among them, 92% of the tourism service providers are the regular users of technologies and applications in their business and among 84% are using these applications to promote their travel business and to get to know their fellow competitors and services provided by them and to get genuine feedback of their customers.

78% of tourism service provider are happy and satisfied with the use of application and 22% of them are not much satisfied are not feeling much comfortable with the use of applications in their business.

52% of the tourism service providers are not aware about the recently released and used applications.

81% of the total tourism service provider's opinion that the information available in the application regards business activities is relevant. In other hand, 18% were not so satisfied with the information's in application.

Among 100%, 60% of the service providers are using less than 10 application regularly, 28% of them are registered for 10-15 applications and only 12% were using more than 15% applications in their business.

From the study researchers came to know that most of the tourism companies getting 40% of booking from Make My Trip.com (MMT) and 20% from Goibibo, 20% from OYO, 10% from booking.com and 10% and from other apps.

88% of the service providers are facing problems with use of applications like over booking, cancellation of rooms, promotion jumps, problems with the tax calculations, internet problems etc.....

Even though most of the tourism service providers are facing problems with the rapidly growing technology and continuously updating applications. They prefer to use these applications rather than traditional sources of information and booking activities.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The internet has brought about a lot of changes in tourism industry specially on the marketing sector. Continuously changing technology and applications are playing very vital role in this field. Majority of the tourism service providers of Kodagu district are more benefited out of tourism applications and updated information systems. Majority of the tourism service providers are facing minor problems, but also they prefer to use applications rather than the traditional information sources.

Kodagu is a tourism hotspot with its environment and attractions. Tourism service providers can be seen as the backbone of tourism activities of the district, strengthening them with the progressing technology and creating awareness about the use and benefits of applications can boost tourism towards digitalization of the whole tourism business process. The preference of tourism service providers towards the technology shows that the business is coming out of technological resistance and heading towards digitalization and growth. With the findings of this study we can conclude that tourism activities in Kodagu district is stepping forward on the way of digitalization.

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