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Chapter 25

Tourism Industry: Digital Transformation


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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 struck the world, and nothing has remained the same. The various industries of the world can attest to how much effect the abrupt disruption amounted to their various sectors and how much it affected them in terms of revenue generation, human resources, and flow of operation. Although some were eventually able to gain their footing by being able to leverage technological solutions, tourism felt the brunt of the pandemic as the operations were brought to a sudden halt, and the tourism sector found it very challenging to cope. Many were let off their jobs, and what used to be a great source of revenue generation for several economies suffered a great loss. The pandemic without any doubt served as a wakeup call to the reality of the not-so-effective state of the tourism sector. Technology brought about the solutions with which other industries withstood the ravaging challenges of the pandemic. The digital world is the new normal for the world, and for the tourism industry to grow, it must find the best way to leverage technological solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the unique sectors of a nation. The world is a large place endowed with several wonders and various forms located in different countries and cultural representations. Alongside natural resources, nature has blessed the world with locations of unexplainable beauty and wonder that bring out the inner fascination in humans. The gift of beauty and awe is appreciated and mostly so in diversity. There are locations of wonders in the world that are associated with certain people, cultures, and historical feats. Starting from the Great Wall of China to the ruins of the colosseum, down to the Great Pyramids of Egypt, and all those other places which are not specifically categorized as part of the Seven Wonders of the World. There is so much surprise that exists in the world as a whole and these amazements were created to be observed and appreciated. Tourism Industry is built upon this possibility of enjoying these attractions.

To define Tourism, reference is made to terms like recreation, relaxation, people, and location. These are the four cardinal elements upon which tourism as an idea hinges upon. The people who visit different tourist locations are usually on a quest to achieve recreation and significant relaxation. A traditional 9-5 worker after giving so much of himself to his work, becomes antsy so much so that a vacation is the only alternative. A business owner whose daily lifestyle revolves around attending to customers and ensuring they have the best experience from his brand or a salesperson whose primary goal is to make more clients and hit sales targets become dithering. Tourism is the answer nature has provided to the question of stress and burnout. Nature in itself is a revitalizing phenomenon. Art has its origin from nature no matter how diverse it has become depending on the creative vessel. Art is the foundation, and art is rooted in beauty. Beauty is multifaceted in its therapeutics. The beauty of nature reflected in diverse locations across the world is what is sought after by people. This beauty will attract people from the farthest ends of the earth to witness it because it is believed that this kind of experience can only be gotten to the fullest in one way. Mount Everest is an epitome of attractions and similarly there is a reason why Rome is known for its art reputation. Paris is considered the city of love for a reason and all these reputations contribute to the basis of attraction for people from all over the world (Walton, 2020).

Interestingly, no nation or country is without its own endowment of the gifts of nature. Wonders of the world are far more than the seven most famous ones together with several yet undiscovered. However, for those countries that have been open enough to embrace what they have, their tourism sector has witnessed much growth and recognition. More in this regard will be specifically explored as we progress on this journey.

UNDERSTANDING TOURISM

Tourism is defined in the simplest terms, as the act of travelling, either for pleasure or business. Although, most of the time, the reason for engaging in tourism is usually to have fun and relaxation. The primary aim for most people is to spend a reasonable time away from home and all that represents work while engaging the use of commercial services in their pursuit of relaxation. Those who engage in tourism are usually referred to as Tourists. The process of tourism consists of a series of tours across several landmarks or tourist locations. A few essential elements are associated with Tourism, which are called as the 6 As of Tourism. These are known as Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available Packages, Activities and Ancillary Services.

The Tourism Industry

In the exploration of the tourism industry and employing digital means, to effectively transform it, it is imperative to understand what the tourism industry is all about. In clear terms, the tourism industry is the entirety of the activities and events connected to a significant journey of people, and in this context, tourists, move from one location to another that are mainly away from their primary abode. The tourism industry is one of the biggest in the world and one of the most lucrative in terms of national wealth generation and economic expansion. Several countries are big on their tourism industry and they pump in so many resources into their tourist attraction locations to make it up to global standards as that has been proven to ensure huge returns for them economically. The tourism industry is one with a wide range encompassing a lot more than the other industries. The influence tourism leaves alone is felt across other industries such as the hotel industry, the transport industry, the cultural sector, the art sector, the diplomatic sector and the sector of natural and mineral resources. Understanding that some of these other industries that are linked with the tourism industry are not so because of the fun alone, but because they are vital in terms of trips of business as well as other factors which may necessitate travelling besides for fun or solely work. Reasons in this regard would be travelling to get married in another country. To further clarify, tourism is not usually connected to those who are in a location for an elongated period. The tourism industry does not influence activities revolving around the kind of travel requiring the visitor to stay for anything more than a year especially in accommodation. In essence, those belonging to such category are not generally considered to be tourists.

The History of Tourism

The concept of tourism as the name suggests is a product of modern creation which means that although tourism is a more recent term, activities in line with the meaning of the term have been undertaken for years. Tourism has its forbearance traced to the times of classical antiquity. A distinction exists between the acts of tourism and the accounts of explorations according to history. The distinction between Tourism and the feats of explorers in the likes of Christopher Columbus is that there already lies a treaded path for tourists to follow unlike in the case of explorers who are just gaining the feel of a new location for the first time. Tourists have the advantage of the beaten paths created by many years of explorations as well as the added benefits of facilities in place to ensure the provision of needed items on the visit for the utmost benefit of the tourists on their journey to seeking pleasure and relaxation. Tourists on their journey also enjoy the benefit of being shielded from certain negatives (dangers, embarrassment, and hardships) which ordinarily should come with the journey they are embarking on by the virtue of countless experiences many have had by going on the same journey before them and having recorded experiences with diversities of people and culture. Tourism also extends across other interests and events giving rise thereby to an overlap of sectors and categories. As a result of the overlap which exists between tourism and other sectors, subcategories have been created to cater to the specific needs arising. Some of the subcategories under tourism include aspects such as medical tourism, cultural tourism, architectural tourism, and sports tourism where a kind of travel is undertaken to watch the favourite players play live in presence.

Tourism has its origins from the very time humans could travel from one point to the other. When it got to the early twenty-first century, tourism on the international level had gotten to be among the top world vital activities to the benefit of the economy. Locations in the Arctic and Antarctica were

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most significantly advantaged in the world. Studying the history of tourism is imperative to properly understand the ins and outs of the tourism industry especially in terms of how it got here. As narrated earlier, activities around tourism existed long before the word tourism was ever coined at the tail end of the eighteenth century. With the end of the 18th century and introducing the name -tourism, came the packaging of experiences under the umbrella of tourism (Walton, 2020). Acts that had to do with travelling and touring like sightseeing, organizing travelling around the available existing facilities, as well as emphasizing the important experiences to be envisaged on the journey can be traced down to the ancient Romans and Greek times. In essence, certain intricate aspects of tourism can be traced down in terms of origin to Greece and Rome. Both are entitled to lay claim on founding the kind of tourism that is aimed at celebrating locations of wonders with cultural significance. The cultural dimension of tourism is otherwise known as heritage tourism and many beach resorts arose under the historic site of nature's gift, the beach. Going by the idea of heritage tourism, the landmarks known as the Seven Wonders of the World today became tourist centres, especially in Rome and Greece.

The Seven Wonders of the World

One major topic under tourism that has also changed over the years is what is generally considered the Seven Wonders of the World. Initially, the seven wonders of the world were never comprehensively agreed upon by a body or group responsible for the governance of the world. Rather, the list came because of the need to grant tourists a concise list of their options when presented with the option of embarking on a journey. Also, these wonders as they are fondly called have been seen to change constantly as more record-breaking landmarks were discovered subsequently across the world. Just as in the case of making available a tourist pamphlet to keep the travellers informed of their proposed destinations, the seven wonders of the ancient world were set with an intent to keep the curious minds aware in case of the proposed intent of exploration. The first record of the seven wonders was documented by Philo of Byzantium of which other scribes who came after him had different opinions about what wonder should mean in the first place (Walton, 2020). The scribes in the early times decided on what was true of a wonder status and what not more than a figure of passing interest. An instance is the account of Herodotus who held that though the great pyramids of Giza in Egypt were quite impressive, they were not as impressive as the Egyptian Labyrinth.

According to ancient history, in no particular sequence, the seven wonders of the world were documented.

- The great pyramid of Giza in Egypt
- The statue of Zeus in Olympia, Greece
- The hanging gardens of Babylon
- The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus
- The Colossus of Rhodes
- The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus
- The Lighthouse of Alexandria in Egypt.

A Swiss company in the year 2000 founded a campaign to help highlight the Seven Wonders of the World afresh. The reason backing the move for a new list was because, from the previous list, only one of the landmarks was still standing - the pyramids of Giza, Egypt and as such, a new list had to be

made. The company created a poll to this effect and not less than 100 million votes were cast in favour of making the new list on the internet as well as by text. The results of the votes got out by 2007 to the excitement of many and the apathy of a few. In modern times, the seven wonders of the world have been highlighted to include in no particular order the following.

- The great wall of China, near Beijing
- El Castillo, ChichénItzá, México
- The Khaznah, Petra in Jordan
- Machu Picchu, Cuzco in Peru
- Christ the Redeemer statue, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Colosseum, Rome
- Taj Mahal, India

Impossible to Possible and Moving Beyond

There was a myth that no tourism is possible in Maldives with various reasons including the geographical location, size of population and the types of tourism products to be offered. In 1960, it was believed by the United Nations that the Maldives was not a suitable destination for tourism (Kundur, 2012). The UN's theory and myths are no longer correct as Maldives is a leading tourist destination in the world. It took off in the early 1970s with conventional mode and later transformed into mechanized and digitalized system through national determination, strategic planning and consumer oriented policies and safeguards. Historically, the good governance system of Maldives is evident that has made impossible to a possible significant share of tourism industry i.e. approx. 28% towards national GDP. It has also showcased transformation from conventional to modern technological system in which digitalization is important segment. Since there is a greater likelihood of changed patterns in all walks of life as a result of COVID-19, tourism in Maldives' like destination would also experience transformation for which technological solutions will play critical role (Gu et al., 2021). On the one hand, Maldives had many problems during the gestation period of its tourism industry. While on the other hand, it would likely face major challenge due to post COVID-19 digital transformation as tourism for destinations such as Maldives which involve a variety of industrial clusters from transportation services to hoteling etc. for which complex arrangements would be necessary. So, moving beyond the existing technological solutions is quite evident.

The Sectors of Tourism

The grand nature of tourism explains the need for its integration with other industries of a nation. The demand for the integration existing between tourism and other sectors arises from the need every tourist is set to face when undergoing a journey. People are different and as such various individual needs also differ from person to person, the need of every person has to be met to create for them the best travel experience. Travelling or Tourism is more than the place being visited; it is about the whole experience a tourist gets to face on a journey. The need for a wholesome travel experience is what motivates most travel sectors and agencies to do all they can to make their service the best. The best travel experience is always on the move to replicate itself. The realization of the need for a constantly improving tourism experience in a nation is not dependent on the tourism sector alone (Walton, 2020). Every other sector

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that plays a significant part in creating an experience for tourists has the responsibility to offer the best kind of service. In essence, all hands need to be on deck giving rise to the integration across sectors. In this segment, the sectors that play a vital role in optimizing the tourism experience will be thoroughly explored.

TRANSPORTATION

Travelling is all about movement and the required destination and experience will determine the kind of transportation to be engaged in. The main concern of the transportation industry is to assist in getting the tourists to their intended destination by providing them with the most suitable means of transport. Included in the functions of the transportation industry is the responsibility of providing the tourists with the means to first get to where they are headed. Once arrived safely and settled, they may also be responsible for shuttling the tourists from their base to the different locations during their entire touring experience. The services of the transport sector could be in the form of travelling by air, sea, land or rail.

Air Transportation

The role played by the airline sector is of great importance, especially in the new age travel industry. Airlines provide travellers with access to transportation within their country and outside their country. International and domestic flights help get passengers to their intended destination with the aid of commercial aircraft. The airline sector provides services in two main forms, chartered flights, and the scheduled flights.

Rental Services for Land Transportation

A great number of tourists count having the access to a car a vital part of their entire experience when on a tour. Having a car provides you with a level of independence and you are free to explore some special areas of your own. A rental service presents itself as a solution to the demand for navigation independence by those who desire it. Usually, car rental services are situated closely to the airports and many at times operate in partnership with some travel agencies and airlines.

Water Transportation

Just as in the case of airline transportation, water transport is a sector responsible for all things travelling on water. Under the category of water, transport is vehicles like ships, ocean liners, ferry transport, and many more. Water transportation aims to provide tourists with the best possible experience while on water. A great part of the world wonders lie on the path of the sea and they can only be appreciated by travelling on water. There is also the cruise liner experience where the part of the whole experience is formed by being on the vehicle itself. Locations that are rich in water landmass have their water transportation sector greatly engaged to suit the needs of their visitor. Water transportation has evolved over the years and is still constantly evolving.

Rail Transportation Service

The role played by the rail transport sector needs no emphasis. Railway transport can be traced as far back as the period right before the industrial revolution. The evolution the rail sector has seen over centuries is mind-blowing. Not only do railways provide tourists with a safe and fast means of travelling to destination, but there is also the vast option of moving on ground or travelling underground. The travel option in the railway gives tourists the chance to commute across major cities as well as towns.

The Coach Transport Service

Another transport sub-sector that plays an equally vital role to those already mentioned is the coach and bus service. The bus service contributes much help especially in terms of long-distance travel and helping newly arrived passengers to get to their prepared accommodation without any hassle. Also, the coach service is responsible for travels involving groups of people who would like to share a touring experience in the form of events like daily trips to locations of local attractions, popular destinations as well as commuting to close towns and within cities.

THE ACCOMMODATION INDUSTRY

The accommodation sector is often used interchangeably with the hospitality sector. Travelers from anywhere in the world, when they are on a tour or visit, always need a place to settle for them to lodge, sleep, rest, and generally unwind. Ordinarily, a tourist is classified to be one only when they exceed a 24hour stay and by that require to spend time overnight in the location toured (Samarathunga & Gamage, 2020). Under the accommodation, several divisions exist based on the need to cater to specific demands of tourists. The subsections under the accommodation industry include:

Hotels

Hotels are the most regularly known form of accommodation for travellers and visitors. The link the hotel industry has with the tourism industry is inseparable. Essentially, hotels serve the function of providing guests with lodging options. Beyond the provision of essential lodging facilities like a comfortable bed and bathroom and resting facilities, there is a wide range of other services which a hotel can provide for tourists. Hotels vary in their service delivery and this is what makes up the distinguishing factor among several hotels. The tourism industry is in the first place responsible for the kind of experience tourists get when embarking on a journey. Therefore, it is their duty to ensure that the visitors get the best kind of hotel experience.

Airbnb

Another great option in terms of accommodation that has risen in recent times is the shared form of accommodation, otherwise known as Airbnb. The shared accommodation arrangement allows for the users of the Airbnb platforms to list out their available spare rooms for renting out for a short while

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(Samarathunga & Gamage, 2020). The shared accommodation can be by an individual or in the form of common spaces shared with a few other people.

Hostel Accommodation

The hostel kind of accommodation is usually of a lesser cost than the hotel or shared accommodation. This kind is suitable for those who are aiming at reducing their cost of travel or are embarking on the journey on a lower budget. Hostel accommodation is different in that it is a more socially stimulating form of accommodation and many visitors only get to rent bed spaces but share the bathroom and kitchen facilities.

The Camping Experience

Other than the regular forms of accommodation where a picture of home away from home comes readily to mind, there also is the form of accommodation that involves spending the night outdoors (Samarathunga & Gamage, 2020). Camping may be voluntary on the part of the tourist but in recent times, commercial campsites are more common and are structured with the necessary facilities of convenience (ROGERSON & ROGERSON, 2020). Although, using the commercial campsites attracts certain fee which is why many would want to embark on camping on their own and in groups as it is more fun that way. Camping is the default option for those who are on a hiking journey. The need for a camping experience differs in comparison to other forms of tourism. Extra caution is taken because it is an outdoor experience and as such, visitors cannot be treated the same way they would have been if they were being accommodated in a hotel.

The Bed and Breakfast

Often referred to as B&B, the bed and breakfast kind of accommodation provides tourists with service in the line of overnight residence and breakfast in the morning generally, visitors are provided with privacy.

Cruise Lines

Under the accommodation industry, there is also the cruise form. In their own right, cruise liners amount to accommodation. In a typical setting, cruises afford the guests the allocation of their cabin as the whole idea of a cruise is for it to last a long time. For the whole period, the guests are set to be on the ship for the larger part of the trip.

Agri-Tourism and Farmhouse Accommodation

The evolution of tourism has seen tourists become more willing to lodge on a farmhouse during their period of visitation (Samarathunga & Gamage, 2020). Many times, their stay on the farm is on a self-catering basis. Farmhouse accommodation is directly linked to the idea of agri-tourism where there is the whole package for tourists to make farm visits and experience the activities that go on there per season. Sometimes, tourists are motivated to join in the fun activities on the farm to form a part of their entire tourist experience.

Time Share Accommodation

The Time Share is the sort of accommodation arrangement where the ownership of space is shared amongst a group of people. Otherwise known as vacation ownership accommodation, each visitor is assigned their time frame of stay which normally falls between one to two weeks. During the period of stay, the tourist is entitled to the entire use of the property.

THE FOOD AND DRINK SECTOR

The food and drink in a tourist experience contributes a large chunk of what it turns out to be. Food and drinks form an integral part of the culture and as such represent the identity of a people which is why it can hardly be separated from tourism. The role food plays are an interesting one especially in terms of serving as a refreshment means to visitors at the diverse stages of their travel experience. A tourist's food experience starts from when he embarks on the journey and food is served to him on a plane, to the catering service employed all through the period of his stay as well as the ones indulged in during local visits in their touring destination. Besides eating being a necessary act to stay alive and vital, it is also a great material for socialization. Tourists meet new people and form relationships over a shared meal. The food sector is split into four different categories. There is the restaurant service which ranges from the family suitable ones to the brands that offer more services of luxury. Also, there is the catering service where individuals are employed to render food services and are more common in particularly remote locations. There is also the service of facilities such as bars, cafes, and nightclubs. All are instrumental towards the food experience of a tourist.

THE ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR

The primary motivation for most tourists is the quest for recreation and motivation. Entertainment serves as a great avenue to be met. Many options can be of entertainment to a tourist, and it lies on the stakeholders in the tourism sector to help the visitors come up with the most exciting activities to indulge in their travel experience. Besides, being the crux of the reason for visiting, officials in tourism must ensure that information is provided generously on the locations of attraction, fascinating landmarks, and events of fun lined up for anyone visiting. Examples of activities of entertainment can involve festivals revolving around the culture and arts of the location of the visit and this would greatly involve the culture and art sector working closely with the tourism industry to deliver the best kind of fun experience for those visiting. Shopping is another great source of entertainment for visitors; it is the first point of tourist attraction in some situations. The retail industry must work hand in hand with Tourism as many travel destinations will have to provide shopping facilities for tourists (Choi et al., 2018).

THE IMPACT OF TOURISM

The tourism industry impacts different aspects of any nation. Where tourism is developed, it will reflect on the overall development of a nation.

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The first impact of tourism is the economic impact. Tourism helps to generate local employment either directly into the industry or indirectly in the other sub sectors related to tourism (Perles-Ribes et al., 2021). Growth in the industry helps stimulate more profit in the other related industries domestically. For example, sectors like the hotels, accommodation facilities, restaurants and individual catering facilities, transport, and entertainment as well as the retail industries are all able to grow their revenue under Tourism. Also, the tourism industry helps to generate foreign exchange for the benefit of the country's economy. That way, capital resources are sourced, and new money generated. Locally, tourism is beneficial as it helps to diversify the economy towards improved infrastructure. Tax revenue increases because of the activities in the tourism sector. However, a few downsides to the economy can be in form of a spike in the demand resulting from increased tourist activities over the cost of land and housing as well as essential commodities. There may also be an increase in the provision of health care services as well as security (Kılıçlar et al., 2018).

Tourism also bears social impact on the country by improving the standard of the community through an improved economy. Besides, cultural facilities and recreational facilities can be employed to benefit the local communities while it does the same for tourists. Also, the general community outlook is constantly developed to suit the global standard it wants to be known for. The esteem of the members of the local community is further boosted as they enjoy the prestige that comes with being from a location of tourism. This also proves to be a foundation of better understanding despite diversity among the people (Chang et al., 2020).

Another great impact tourism has on a nation is cultural. As is well known, tourism and culture are intertwined as the culture of the community communicates the experience as a whole. Culture adds colour and spice to the tourist's journey. More so, a traveller may be unable to remember the details of the history of the location visited and many of the related matters. However, the cultural experience is one that would be forever imprinted on the mind of the traveller. Tourism helps to improve cultural awareness. Revenue can be generated and are instrumental in preserving historical monuments, archaeological sites and landmarks of antiquity. Although, there are levels of criticism about the delusion of culture and its importance being constantly diluted, culture is only preserved through sharing. Tourism helps culture to flourish when it is exchanged for the mutual benefit of the local hosts and travel visitors (Zhuang et al., 2019).

Also, tourism holds a great impact on the environment because it creates more awareness for the community. Through awareness, there is the preservation of the environment for the posterity.

THE MOST TOURIST FRIENDLY COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

Presently many countries can benefit from tourism because they have been able to build a highly formidable tourism sector. The top four countries with buoyant tourism are France, Spain, The United States, and China. France is named as the number one destination of tourist visits. It is not far-fetched having France as the world's most visited country because of its beauty, rich culture, exquisite cuisine, and historical landmarks. Beyond the gifts of nature, France is endowed with; it has been able to lure millions of visitors every year by leveraging on its tourism industry. One factor that distinguishes France from other countries in terms of Tourism is that there is consistency in the service of experience rendered to tourists regardless of where they are from. The testimony of the French experience is the same from every mouth of a one-time French tourist. Also, France has been able to replicate the experience in such

a way that anyone can enjoy it from anywhere in the world. France has been able to leverage the tool of technology and the French experience is brought to whoever wills it even in the comfort of their homes by the virtue of the digital world.

INTEGRATING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

One of the most sectors that were hit by the 2020 pandemic was the tourism industry. Before the pandemic, tourism was a booming industry with more growth being realized across the board of countries. Domestic tourism is an aspect that was gaining more ground as well and the governments of many countries were set on ways in which they could get the best out of their tourism sector domestically. Tourism is also a topic that concerns continental matters as locations of tourist attractions when they are categorized are often done in line with the continents in which they exist. Many countries were gaining ground in terms of their tourism and this was of great advantage to their economy.

With the first hit of the pandemic, countries were forced to go on lockdown as the virus gained widespread across continents (Traskevich & Fontanari, 2021). Preventive measures were put in place to ensure the flattening of the curve of virus spread. With lockdown across countries, international flights ceased operations. In countries where lockdown has affected, the impact was felt across states because the interstate ban was as well affected. International tourism has struggled the most for the whole of 2020 as many countries practically shut down about 90 percent of travels in and out for over six months, making the international tourism industry fall in revenue between 80 and 90 percent for the year. Many regional and rural areas, however, fared reasonably. The regional areas were able to scale through by the virtue of early relaxation pronounced on the local lockdown. Though it was tough, critical affairs of the state needed to be continued even amid a pandemic. Besides, frontline workers had to be specially considered as they were key to the healthcare and medical sector of the state.

With international tourism reopened in the later part of 2020, there were great hopes for recovery, and more so, with the news of the coronavirus vaccine discoveries. Yet, with the second wave of the corona virus, the tourism industry remains in uncertainty. Ordinarily, there is the issue of getting every citizen to receive the vaccine, then there is the other part of ensuring visitors or immigrants pose no threat to the country being visited in respect of coronavirus (Baum & Hai, 2020). The government indeed provided support to cushion the full effect of the pandemic blow on the industry, especially to minimize job loss. Despite the measure put in place by the government it is still clear yet that more needs to be done in a well and better-coordinated way to restore travellers' confidence, support tourism businesses to survive, promote domestic tourism, provide clear information to travellers and businesses, strengthen cooperation within and between countries, and build more resilient tourism which is sustainable. All in the area of efforts to further promote the tourism industry is a matter possessing different facets. If anything, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic revealed the aspects requiring improvements in the several industries of a country, including the tourism industry (Sharma et al., 2021).

Without any iota of doubt, technology paved the way for solutions to the challenges brought on by the pandemic. By the imposed lockdown, several businesses took a major break from on-site work, schools were closed, entertainment centres were shut down and any facility serving as a form of social gathering took a break as a form of preventive measure to ensure social distancing. However, when all of these happened, it seemed like life was coming to a standstill. The plans most people had been toppled, weddings were postponed, trips had to be cancelled, and several tourists who went on the visit were stuck in

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the cities they were visiting. More importantly, as the whole lockdown period extended, many people got restless, jaded and in a rut. Tourism which used to serve as a means of escape whenever individuals were getting hinky was no longer an option because travel bans had been imposed across countries. The whole situation got worse for those who worked in the Tourism Industry as they no longer had work because the movement was largely restricted. At the most, travelling was restricted to the domestic limited destinations and this was based around strict orders. People got to travel only when it was necessary.

In the many problems of the pandemic, technology came in as the relieving solution. Schools were able to transform into online learning and all educational activities were conducted online. The same applied to other forms of businesses and professions, remote work became the order of the day. In combating boredom and restlessness, technology was largely useful. Novel solutions that answered the specific needs of several corporations were put in place to make them run effectively in the virtual space. Several other industries though suffered the hit of the pandemic severely at the beginning, were eventually able to find their footing in the middle and regained the lost ground. However, unlike the other industries, the tourism sector suffered a pandemic period loss. It became truly obvious from the immediate and ripple effects of the pandemic that though the Tourism Industry had been experiencing so much growth over the years, it was not ready for disruption like the COVID-19 pandemic. While other industries were able to scale through, however roughly with the help of technology, the tourism sector found itself stuck as there was no baseline to build technological solutions to suit the demands of the pandemic times. Now, in the time's post-pandemic, there is the challenge of gaining back all that was lost (Brouder et al., 2020). The process to this recovery is not exceptionally a straight one as there are diverse angles to it. However, the best approaches to rebuilding and restoring the Tourism Industry should take on the following.

Job Retention and Provision

As the pain points of many under the pandemic are losing their jobs and means of livelihood, the first point of call should be in the lines of job creation (Perles-Ribes et al., 2021). Solutions to be devised in the industry must be able to stand the test job relevance and durability. People must feel that a sense of security comes with doing what they are paid to do. The major challenge the industry is facing after the pandemic period is that of job retention and provision and stakeholders have so much part to play in terms of creating job opportunities. More importantly, solutions in line with job opportunities must be those that would take the health safety of the workers into account. For instance, a job that cannot guarantee the continuity of workers at the instance of a challenge is not one of the great advantages. To properly approach this solution, great consideration should be accorded to those sub-sectors of industries that are interrelated to the Tourism Industry. The transport, accommodation, hospitality, and entertainment sectors can be avenues for job creations for people who work or are willing to work in Tourism. Ordinarily, when people think of the job opportunities that lie in Tourism as an Industry, what usually comes to mind for them is being a Travel agent or a Tour Guide. Whereas Tourism is a lot wider than being a Tour Guide, it is indeed a full-blown industry where many make their careers from. Opportunities for job creation exist in Tourism and stakeholders must make the most of them. Besides, the international aspect is not all that there is to Tourism. Domestic Tourism is a greatly underutilized aspect of the industry. Most of the structures entrenched at the international level can also be replicated locally but in apparent smaller forms. That way, opportunities become so diverse that if the international aspect is

down for some reason, the domestic part is well off enough to suffice for the period the international tourism takes to return on track (Bakker, 2019).

The organization of Activities; Travel and Tourism Business

Tourism is bigger than travelling; it involves the entirety of a new experience of an entirely different location for a tourist. Planning a trip for a visitor should be about creating the best kind of experience beginning from the travel experience to the accommodation, mode of transport, feeding as well as the reception (Samarathunga & Gamage, 2020). The organizations of the activities in line with the intended experience can be segmented in such a way that it is easy for the tourist to decide on what kind of tourism experience he or she wishes to have. The structuring of the touristic experience turns travel and tourism into a real-time business. To properly achieve a great business structure, again, the other concerned industries must be carried along. The reason for the integration of industries is to help lay out the best-related options that can cater to a diverse pool of visitors from anywhere in the world. From the business point of view, tourism is viewed as a service, and tourism is seen as customers or clients. The travel experience is delivered to them in form of service and the better the service experience; the more likely tourists are to recommend more people for such a similar travel experience. By the time referral keeps mounting, the industry would experience a boom which would, in turn, reflect on the economy of the nation.

Promoting Domestic Tourism

Domestic tourism is thoroughly underutilized across the board. The pandemic made the dire state in which domestic tourism exists clear. Many do not pay attention to the potential present in states locally to attract local tourists (Samarathunga & Gamage, 2020). Essentially, a great number of people believe true tourism is achieved only when one travels outside of one's country. Whereas, there is much that can be done in terms of tourist experience domestically. The reason for the underutilization of local tourist potential is mostly because of underdevelopment. Many who live in areas where landmarks of tourism worth exist hardly see the worth in them because they are already over familiar with what they have around them. It holds no sense of awe for them anymore because they are so used to seeing it. However, people who no longer hold any sense of wonder for nature's gift they have, tend to see those landmarks in a new light when strangers visit and view their environment with so much awe. Going by this, resources need to be directed towards the development of domestic tourism. Besides, tourism invested locally will most definitely evolve one into becoming of international standard.

One great way in which domestic tourism can be promoted is by leveraging social media (Kayumovich & Kamalovna, 2019). Granted, the international tourist location already has its reputation in its favor and as such, domestic tourism has to put in multiple efforts to gain a significant level of traction. Leveraging the influence of social media can help increase further awareness and publicity. Social media can be of great advantage because it helps to channel the awareness of domestic tourism to both a local and a global audience. More importantly, it provides an avenue where those who are interested can be targeted easily and vital information to properly convince them can be passed across in a matter of minutes. Domestic tourism is also a great way to boost the economic sector of a nation alongside international tourism (Liu et al., 2019). It provides a range of variety and a means of cultural appreciation for the citizens who live in the areas of landmarks. Citizens in the locations of domestic tourism have a

Tourism Industry

reputation going on for them such that when they visit other places, they are known for the landmarks in which their home represents.

Information in Tourism and Businesses

Communication is key in Tourism and it is a vital aspect that contributes to the growth of the industry. There is a proper way of passing across information that has to do with travelling and the business of tourism. For many travellers, information is not gotten right so they embark on a particular journey with the wrong expectation in mind. Details of the experience must be accurately and concisely disseminated to the intended tourists (Kim & Youn, 2017). In passing the right information, choosing the most suitable platform when communicating is key as well. Also, communicating with individual tourists is different compared to passing information across to businesses.

Diplomacy and Intercountry Contributions

When talking of tourism, nations and continents are involved. Tourists to travel are from certain cultures and systems. Tolerance is key when dealing with people of diverse cultures and this is a factor to be taken cognizance of by the tourism industry. The country itself has a great role to play in tourism especially in the aspect of policy formulation and implementation. The world is fast becoming global and migration very rampant than ever. Before anyone can make the solid decision of moving to their country of permanent residence, they must have had a feel of what their intended country is like before moving finally. The country has the responsibility of tolerance and empathy for the story of their tourists. It is therefore the role of the industry to provide services in terms of diplomatic functions to foreigners that come to make the experience as accommodating as possible for them (Zhang & Xu, 2019).

Building a Sustainable and Resilient Tourism Industry

Another approach to take in improving the tourism industry is the approach of building sustenance and resilience in the industry. The weak points of the industry were brought to the fore by the COVID-19 pandemic (Traskevich & Fontanari, 2021) and now more than ever, the tourism industry must be built in a way that it can withstand the different tests of time. A sustainable industry would mean that in times of challenges, the workers in the industry would not have the fear of being let off their jobs because of the inability to sustain them. It means that even without direct input by the government of a nation, the tourism industry has a structure in place that would ensure the generation of funds regularly. Sustainability means that the industry serves as a strong source of economic boost for a nation as a means of revenue generation. Building a resilient tourism industry will ensure that it is strong enough to stand the test of time. It means that the landmarks constituting the center of attraction for tourists all around the world are constantly maintained and taken care of. Preservation is the key to resilience. Building a sustainable and resilient tourism industry is a way of having the people involved as the center of priority. It is a way of ensuring those future generations to come also partake in the current wonders that exist in the world today. Unlike in the case of the ruined world monuments, nations take it upon themselves to preserve what makes the life of their tourism industry (Guzman et al., 2018).

Distinguishing between the real vs Make belief experience

The world we live in today is one where genuineness is appreciated especially in terms of services rendered. No one wants to feel like they have been disadvantaged in anything, especially in terms of their experiences. In this age of social media, storytelling takes great precedence in influencing people's decision-making process (Huertas, 2018). Therefore, the average person can easily tell when a make-belief story is being sold to them. No one is ready to simply lap up any form of story cooked up to gain their attention or make them quickly convinced to take a journey for the short while. Storytelling can be employed as a tool to tell real and genuine stories. That way, intending tourists when they are making their decisions are making it based on real-life experiences. Many are more likely to resonate with the genuine story of what to expect on a trip than an obvious belief of the endless assurance that the package offers. The tourism industry needs to be able to strike a good balance between these two. Fortunately, most people are generous at sharing their stories and when engaged the right way can help to convince thousands and millions of people in the process. Many are more likely to go for a story that is real than that which they feel is made up (Salet, 2021).

Integrating Digital into Tourism- The future of the Tourism Industry

Going by the many signs and patterns of occurrence in recent times in the tourism industry, it is clear that a great level of digital integration is urgently needed. It is a given that the industry requires short-term policies to enable the tourism industry to tackle and survive side by side with the pandemic in the short run. However, it is also imperative for the government and the industry to have foresight and take productive steps to learn from the unprecedented crisis which revealed the vast lacuna in preparedness and management of shocks. The crisis is a big opportunity to go back to the drawing table and rethink tourism for the future. Tourism is at a crossroads and the measures put in place today will determine and shape the industry tomorrow. Governments and the industry need to see the implication of the pandemic in the long run and therefore capitalize on digitalization to transform and promote the structure needed to build a strong, resilient, and more sustainable tourism economy (Kayumovich, 2020).

The importance and need for progressive digital transformation in the world as a whole are paramount (Buhalis & O'Connor, 2005). The future of work is no longer what it used to be where people got the luxury of time to prepare themselves to stay relevant based on skill demand. Businesses are changing their tactics from how they used to run to suit the realities of the technological times we are in. Though many tried to deny it and shift the possibility of the future of work across industries, it is no longer deniable that the future all has been anticipating is here and now. Demands of the technological age range from the need for individuals to become technologically savvy to institutions and corporations putting measures in place to ensure a smooth running even when workers are not physically present. Solutions posed by technology are not far-fetched. Operators in the industry need to improve their e-commerce presence, demand generators need to offer digital experiences, and destination marketing organizations need to up their games. So how can the tourism industry offer new and improved forms of the structure during the COVID-19 pandemic with digital transformation?

The imperativeness of leveraging digital excellence has never been more important. Digitalization provides the tools, frameworks, and technologies to create and/or add value to tourism products and experiences but the success of digitalization depends on the capacity of the tourism sector to share, learn, and collaborate. Potential tourists, who want to discover new places, visit these destinations by

being convinced. More importantly, the impetus for tourists is to share new experiences. The reality is that amidst COVID -19 restrictions, these discoveries can only happen online. The question posed now is how exactly the tourism industry can leverage the tool of technology. The answer to this question is what is known as Digital Hygiene.

WHAT IS DIGITAL HYGIENE?

Digital hygiene is the foundation and basics of a digital presence. Digital presence is how you and in essence, your business appears online. It is the basic building block of utilizing the best impact of your digital asset. The tourism industry has a lot to learn and do when it comes to digital hygiene. The world of technology is the world of possibilities. However, only those who can leverage them to suit their areas of strength and to make up for their limitations can enjoy the endless benefits of the new digital age. Tourism should not remain in its archaic form, and truly many countries still struggle with this reality.

The industry's digital hygiene needs to be so superb that it can attract tourists to have a tour of the destination, and even inspire an electronic paid tour. In this digital age, people hardly want to hear from operators or destination marketing organizations about a destination because it is expected of them to have a positive review since that is where they earn their living; but potential tourists will trust the review of another tourist who has paid a visit to the destination or used the service. Now, operators in the industry need to build a strong digital presence and hygiene, where main information about their tourist center can be gotten such as their COVID-19 hours of operations, phone number, Google maps location, menu, photos, reviews, etc.; a website that will give potential tourists a tip of the "ice cream" they are about to enjoy; and most importantly, give potential tourists the review that comes from those who have visited or used the service. Potential tourists will consider paying a visit if there are more positive reviews about the services or destination, and how the operator has responded to both the positive and negative reviews. And they will be glad to give their positive review if they are pleased with your destination and services, increasing the business' growth popularity (Goenadhi & Rahadi, 2020).

A great way to integrate a digital presence is through social media (Moro & Rita, 2018). The space of social media is one of great wonder especially with the advantage of easy publicity. You can show the world what you want them to see and have it circulated to millions in a matter of minutes. The services of social media influencers can be engaged. Many have made a career by being travel bloggers; these categories of people make a living by curating experiences across several locations of the world. Social media also presents a wide range of options for information to be included in the web blueprint. Information placed on the socials is generally known as content and content can be in diverse forms. It can be in a written form, in the form of an image, audio, or video format. The implication of the wide range of options on digital media for the tourism industry means that content around tourism and people's travel experience can be curated creatively. In essence, someone who travels can decide to not enjoy the entire trip alone but take many others who may not be physically present on a journey of his or her experience. That way, many others now have inkling into what being on that journey feels like and as such are more curious to experience it firsthand. If anyone in this category should be given an opportunity, they would not hesitate to take it a step further by going on that journey physically. Besides, there is a lot that can be done to pique the interest of tourists from anywhere in the world on the internet. The tourism industry can partner with travel enthusiasts who are tech savvy to help create tailored content to suit the demand of the times the world is in at the moment. Approaching this the best way would be to single out those

who are excellent at what they do to strategically execute. So, the stakeholders want to go for the best content writers to create mind blowing written content about places people can visit. To properly achieve the goal of awareness, written forms like articles, blog posts and email newsletters can be employed to drive the execution of the written consent form (Hua et al., 2017).

Another avenue for much traffic is through visual image stimulation. Pictures of landmarks can be taken and uploaded online. Excellent Image artists can be engaged to tell visual stories of people experiencing the awe present in these majestic locations. Pictures have been known to form lasting images in the minds of people thereby, creating in them an impression of familiarity through interacting with them.

Video content is gaining a truckload of influence on the internet and the Tourism industry can leverage on this. When it comes to the production of video content however, a number of factors have to be taken into consideration as they can either make or mar the full impact of the entire story telling. The devices used in the production of a video content have to be top quality, such that when an audience sees it, they experience something akin to the feeling of being on the journey in person. If there is a voice narrating or a person anchoring, excellent delivery and audience engagement have to be the top priority for them (Peralta, 2019).

INNOVATING TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LIKE VIRTUAL TOURS

Another innovative dimension to this digital presence and hygiene in this COVID-19 restriction is this: people can actually visit your destinations virtually and pay a token (Chirisa et al., 2020). This sounds weird, right? Yes! But desperate times call for desperate measures. Some tourist centers around the world have imbibed this. Imagine, you can visit the beautiful places virtually in Switzerland (Luzern, Zermatt, Zurich Air, St. Moritz Air, etc.) all from the comfort of your couch through your laptop or Smartphone. And pay just a token, saving you time and stress. Tourism can be revolutionized. You can stay at home while you can experience scenic views. That way there is a lower cost because no travelling is involved, the entirety of the travel experience is brought to the visitor at the comfort of their home. Virtual tours can be of advantage to less popular locations because the internet allows them to be represented. To effectively achieve the goal of virtual tours, influencers can be engaged to make the whole process a lot more interesting. The dynamics in operation when it comes to the virtual world are different from that of the physical. As much as technology is interesting and of great benefits, there is the downside to it. Many forms of content exist online that are competing for the attention of the average individual. As a result, the attention span keeps getting shorter. So, there is the need to keep the content catchy and gripping enough that the audience is more than willing to stay through to the end of the virtual experience. Also, because of the great load of information available online, there is the tendency for information overload making the virtual audience become easily overwhelmed. To help the virtual tourists, it is imperative to keep your content simple, fun, and short. That way, the aim of taking the audience on a journey is achieved without too much hassle. Embedded in virtual tours can be virtual exhibitions as well. The arts, crafts, instruments of culture and creativity can be shared to millions of people all over the world (Wagler & Hanus, 2018).

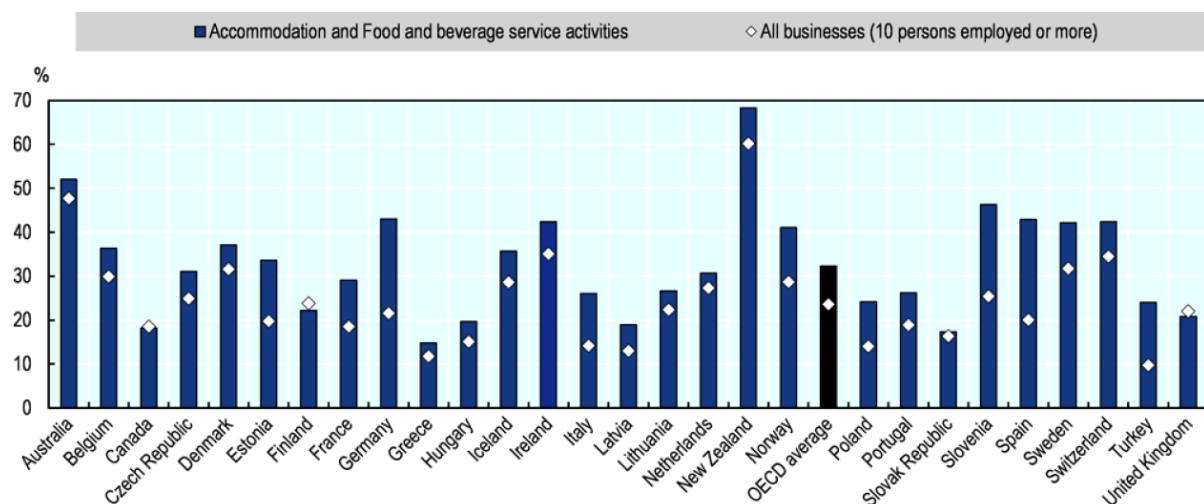
With the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions, severely affecting the tourism industry, the use of virtual reality for tourism activities will be a great means to help the industry survive and thrive.

DIGITAL IS THE FUTURE

Industries are coming to the realization that the digital world is the future world and the best way to approach the future is to stay open minded to the solutions of technological innovation. For those who work in the tourism industry, a structure of the hybrid workplace must be put in place for their benefit. From the growth technology has witnessed over the years, there is not stopping at all for the world of digital. Thoughts of how a travel experience can be brought to the interested tourists without them having to physically travel should be considered more. Technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality can make this possible. To build domestic tourism, the industry can be strategic about employing the tool of digital marketing. Digital marketing provides businesses with a wide array of tools that can help them scale across to a wider range of audience. This can be specifically beneficial for tourism enthusiasts who have the intention of starting a facility of their own. Promoting domestic tourism may be a great way to start as it would bring on the vibe of novelty (Huyen & Nghi, 2019). People have the natural tendency of being attracted to something new that seems attractive. For the individual, it poses a means of ground-breaking achievement to help promote the domestic tourism of a nation. Also, employing the digital space to promote awareness will help to ensure that the information gets to the right people. Tailoring information to the right audience is made possible by the power of internet algorithms. The implication of the internet algorithm is that the right answers are made available to intended tourists under the great content available on the internet (Mele et al., 2021). The good part is that the industry is just one click away from those with questions about how to embark on their travel journey (Majeed et al., 2020). In the case of the European Union, an Electronic Commerce report says that around 70 percent of internet users made at least one online purchase out of which 54% purchased travel and holiday accommodation. 57 percent of the electronic shoppers in the age group of 25 to 54 are purchasers of travel and holidays. The countrywide break up can be seen in the figure given below.

The importance of digitalization of tourism can be seen from the statistics available.

Figure 1.
Source: OECD (2019)



Adobe Digital Insights (ADI) has found that out of the 321 million social engagements, by at least eight of the largest hotels have tested some kind of virtual reality (VR) experience during the past six months. Most of these experiences were programmes that paired VR devices with consumers' mobile devices. They have also found that Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality related experiences increased by 13% on a year over year. The travel related wearable also increased by 44%. Further ADI forecast growth of online revenue for the travel industry for 2020 to hit \$98.02 billion. Huff Post reports that over 95% tourists read at least seven reviews before booking their holidays. It is interesting to note that in the US, 43% of the business trips are "bleisure" (business leisure). According to Nielsen Research "travellers spent an average of 53 days visiting 28 different websites over a period of 76 online sessions, with more than 50% of travellers checking social media for travel tips. Over the next 10 years, travel industry experts predict that the digital travel space worldwide will expand at an annual rate of 3.8% to reach \$11.4 trillion."

CONCLUSION

From all that has been considered so far, it is obvious that the tourism industry is a vital one to the economy of every nation. Surely, more can be done to build a more resilient and formidable tourism experience both for the industry and for the sake of those who love the experience. Growth in tourism would automatically mean more possibilities for all, as there would be more wealth creation, job creation, environmental awareness and avenues for recreation. All these are possible if the industry is ready to improve and take full advantage to leverage digital transformation by making digital excellence a goal through the excellent digital presence and digital hygiene. Digital excellence must be a collective effort between tourism operators and destination marketing organizations. This will only be the beginning of other innovations.

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