Evaluation of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) culture applied to the webpages of the hotel industry in the Tarahumara Sierra, Chihuahua, Mexico

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Abstract | Tourism is a fundamental sector of services that seeks to satisfy the wants and needs of local population and tourists. Even though Mexico is positively affected by this activity with its sea and sun proposal, the ecotourism in the Tarahumara Sierra of Chihuahua, Mexico, yields poor results that must be analyzed. The following research pretends to illustrate the lack of ICT culture in the hotel of such region. For instance, from 126 hotels, exclusively 26 have a website allowing the analysis of scientific content. For the purposes of this study and the problems detected, the current methodology reviews existing hotels’ models, in keeping with the requirements as set out by experts of digital media (Christou & Sigala, 2006; Luna, 2012; Garrido & Padilla, 2011) and allows the appropriate selection of pillars from the Webqual model (Loiacano, Watson & Goodhue, 2007). Further interviews with local experts permit the authors to reduce these pillars and to analyze the relevant webpages’ content. The findings identify the limitations of the hotels and the urgent necessity to redesign their web pages to attract tourism. Finally, the following paper intends to help hoteliers to elaborate a policy on digital promotion which is expected to increase tourism and through this, to improve the socioeconomic development of the local community.

Keywords | Internet, New technologies, Hotels, Chihuahua, Mexico

Resumo | O turismo é um sector fundamental ao nível dos serviços, o qual procura satisfazer as necessidades da população local, assim como as dos turistas. Ainda que o México seja positivamente afetado por esta atividade devido à...
Tourism is a key service sector for many economies, especially for the emerging ones which face difficult needs. Even when in 2012, México was ranked 10th as regard the reception of international tourists, it ranked only 24th as regards tourists’ spending displaying a failure. Furthermore, Chihuahua in Northern Mexico and its Tarahumara Sierra, rich in ecotourism and ethnical culture has a strong touristic potential but not the expected success. The rudimentary use of quality websites in the region may lie at the heart of the problem factors such as web design, comprehensive information, payment security measures, effective communication between user and page are positively correlated with customer satisfaction (Lim, Cheong, Ding, Loo & Teh, 2012).

Finally, satisfaction is closely related to repurchase, a requirement for a business to be profitable. The use of ICT has an important impact on tourism, and, according to experts, its implementation is one of the larger issues in global tourism megatrends. By using in-depth interviews with experts and web contents analysis, this research aims to demonstrate from the consumers perspective the problem resulting from a rudimentary use of the internet websites by the hotels in the Tarahumara Sierra to meet the demand. Hotels must seek solutions to increase the low demand, and the new ICT can provide an upgraded solution in hotel management and service (Camacho, 2012). To contribute positively to the socioeconomic and sustainable development of the country, tourism requires strategic and operational decisions based on the match between the requirements of potential tourists and the available supply. The use of ICT has redefined the roles of the business actors and has integrated new business practices.

2. Research objectives

According to Desplas (2010), the state of Chihuahua faces (i) an asymmetry in supply, (ii) an inadequate use of the websites for promotion, (iii) high prices of domestic air flights, and (iv) low quality service.

The present research focuses on the second area mentioned above namely inadequate promotion, i.e. limited use of websites for national and international promotion. The primary objective of this study is to propose solutions and illustrate the lack of culture at the level of Information and Communication Technologies (ITC) in the hotels of this region. Namely, in a universe of 126 hotels, only 26 have a website, allowing scientific analysis. For the purpose of analysis and the problems detected, this methodology reviews existing hotel models in digital media (Christou & Sigala, 2006; Luna, 2012; Garrido & Padilla, 2011) and allows the selection of the dimensions from the WebQual model (Loiacano, Watson & Goodhue, 2007). Additional interviews with local experts allowed the reduction of these dimensions, allowing the development of content analysis of webpages. The results identify the limitations of these hotels and the urgent need to redesign their webpages to attract tourism. Finally, this article has the purpose of supporting hoteliers and the Government in the elaboration of digital promotion plans, promoting an increase in tourism and improving the socioeconomic development of the local community.

Palavras-chave | Internet, New technologies, Hotels, Chihuahua, Mexico