

Application and Best Practices of New Communication Technology: A Case Study of Tourism Malaysia 2014

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ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia has integrated the use of new communication technologies in the department as well as in promoting Visit Malaysia 2014 (VMY2014). The tourism plays an important role in the growth of the economy and putting Malaysia in the world map. In particular, this study measures 1) to explore application and best practices of new communication technologies by Information Management Division in Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2) to examine new communication technologies used by Tourism Malaysia in Promoting "Visit Malaysia 2014" campaign. Case study method was use in the study as it is a systematic gathering of enough information about a particular organization to allow the researcher insight into the life of that organization. This research will contribute to the extension of knowledge in improving application of new communication technologies by Tourism Malaysia. The use of new communication technology in the department has built the bonding between the staff as there are two ways of communication applied. The Information Management Division under the Ministry has equipped the department with the latest hardware and software to the community. Besides that, there is also the increasing number of receipt and tourist coming to Malaysia compared to the year 2013. It shows the successfulness of new communication technology engage by the Tourism Malaysia in attracting people to come to Malaysia.

Keywords: Information Management Division, Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, New communication technologies, Visit Malaysia 2014

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is recognised globally as one of the leading tourism destinations, ranking in the top 10 in arrivals and top 15 in global receipts. The tourism industry is also an important contributor to our economy, generating billions in Malaysia gross national income (GNI). Therefore, this makes tourism the fifth largest industry

in our economy after Oil, Gas and Energy, Financial Services, Wholesale and Retail, and Palm Oil.

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board or Tourism Malaysia is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Malaysia is responsible to promote Malaysia as an outstanding tourist destination and aims to showcase Malaysia's unique wonders, attractions and cultures. Sometimes the brilliance of an advertising and promotional campaign is its inherent simplicity as the entire tourism sector has united behind the marketing message [1]. Tourism industry has become an increasingly popular field of researcher to meet the needs of the tourists, investors and governments. The tourism industry often needs a various range of information to satisfy and attracts its consumers and most of this information is delivered promptly to the customers with the help of the information and communication technologies [2].

The tourism industry represents a very broad domain and could become one of the main sources of economic development and growth for a country. As for Malaysia, tourism related business and activities are growing rapidly. And as result, the global tourism industry is rapidly changing and the information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as the internet is altering the structure of tourism industry and how it market his products and conducts its promotion. When tailing about ICTs, it consist of hardware (self-service terminals), software (front office applications), and telecommunications (broadcast of images, teleconferencing ...), and the groupware (tools for group communications such as email). That is why, more organized and effective strategies using application of new communication technology are needed to ensure that all the tourism products that had been or to be introduced are well- promoted, marketed and handled.

Previous research had been done in discussing tourism industry from many perspectives. However, none of the research focused or study on the application and best practices of new communication technology by Tourism Malaysia. More precisely, there is no such study to date undertaking application of new communication technologies in the government environment.

The originality findings from this study are expected to contribute to the extension of knowledge in improving application new communication technologies by Tourism Malaysia. As knowledge sharing, it will be benefits to provide best practices to be followed by other media and communication industry. In this regards, we believe that the outcomes of the present study is relevant thus significant to provide a wider perspective especially on how Tourism Malaysia implement new communication technologies for ensuring the successful outcomes of Visit Malaysia 2014 campaign. Moreover, recommendation suggested through this study could be shared among Tourism and Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Malaysia as a base for their further development and improvement in many promotional campaigns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is one of the most important economies in the world [3]. Tourism and the advance in the technological progress since the year 1980s undoubtedly changed business practices and strategies plus transforming tourism globally. The energetic growth and development of the industry are perhaps only mirrored by the growth of ICTs [4]. Pesonen [5] added the internet and ICT provide new tools and ways for companies to position themselves and target the right customers and measure the success of these efforts. A wide range of new tools and services have been developed since 2000 in the tourism management. For example, tourism companies have widely adopted Google Analytics and its more expensive competitors to measure website use. On top of that Facebook also has its own tools to measure traffic on a Facebook page [5]. Compared to the previous generations of information technology, ICT and internet creates better opportunities for companies to establish strategic positioning [6] [7].

The internet provides an alternative distribution channel able to cut out the middleman when it is used as marketing tools [8] [9]. [10] provides further proof that the internet plays a crucial role in determining the success of a destination. The notion that the development of interactive, horizontal networks of communication has induced the rise of a new form of communication, mass self-communication, over the Internet and wireless communication networks [11]. In fact, tourism has been ranked as the number one industry in terms of online transaction volume compared to all other types of booking methods, including phone booking and travel agents [12].

Social media is becoming the important element for travelers as well as for tourism companies [5]. Over the years, online marketing has grown in importance in the tourism industry. This media space offers companies throughout the tourism value system numerous marketing tools, one of the most recent is social media [8]. Besides that, the use of the blog as a mode of marketing communications has also begun to receive attention though little is understood about this new, and flexible, technology [12].

The media representation and images are those actually people consume rather than realities, and through which they understand the world. In tourism, images, expectations, dreams, and fantasies, those media representations and images of tourist destinations play a significant role in influencing people's holiday decision-making process as the basis upon which tourists make choices about where to visit [13]. Therefore, the use of electronic media is essential as to create good images of Malaysia.

In a study conducted by Migiro [14], he concluded that overall, fax was the most widely used type of ICT, closely followed by fixed line telephones and mobile phones. Computers, e-mail and the Internet were most widely used in the tourism

offices. It shows that electronic media plays an important role in the tourism industry. The societies are adopting technology as tools in gathering information.

In an interview conducted by Iwashita [13], a female informant who mentioned the Sherlock Holmes series as the television program which increased her interest in the UK, explained that it was the beauty of the scenery and London streets featured and the story-line that impressed her most and motivated her to visit the UK. It appears the use of direct marketing methods has increased as destinations have turned to the direct mail of destination brochures or visitor guides/magazines, as well as the use of global distribution systems and destination Web pages to facilitate direct communication and bookings [15].

Destination promotion can be conducted in a variety of ways, and most destinations appear to make widespread use of most of the possible forms of promotion [15]. "Malaysia, Truly Asia" captures and defines the essence of the country's unique diversity. It sums up the distinctiveness and allure of Malaysia that make it an exceptional tourist destination. There is no doubt that the Malaysian tourism sector has benefited massively from the brilliant tourism campaign "Malaysia-Truly Asia. Sometimes the brilliance of an advertising campaign is its inherent simplicity as the entire tourism sector has united behind the marketing message.

Dore and Crouch [15] added some promotional tools in order tend to attract more use and attention. Advertising, for example, targeting either travel consumers or alternatively the travel trade, is the most manifest form of promotion. Consumer advertising, particularly using print, television, radio, outdoor and now Internet media, predominates. But trade advertising in travel trade magazines and newspapers, for example, also plays an important role. In certain cases, tourists may not be aware of certain attractions, local restaurants or entertainment activities prior to travelling. In such cases, the purchasing process may be triggered by advertising in local tourist guides, discussion with fellow tourists or recommendations from locals (e.g. receptionists) [7].

METHODOLOGY

The methods used in this research are qualitative method, using case study. The case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as individual, group, institution, or community. The case is bounded, integrated system [16]. Berg [17] added the case method is an extremely useful technique for researching relationships, behaviors, attitudes, motivations, and stressors in organizational settings.

Merriam [16] in case study methodology stated that by concentrating upon a single phenomenon or entity (the case), this approach seeks to describe the phenomenon in depth. The result of case study in an organization will be a thorough understanding about how the agency operates, and how each subunit

fits together and serves the overall objectives of the organization [17]. Information Management Division under The Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia and Communications & Publicity Division of Tourism Malaysia is the sample for the study.

The researchers look at the application of new communication technology in the organization. Different organizations perceive new communication technology differently. In case study of organization, researcher may specialize, during an organizational case study, by placing particular emphasis on a specific area or situation occurring in the organization [17].

The most important choices in the study of organization include: (1) selection of cases; (2) sampling time; (3) choosing business areas, divisions, and sites; and (4) selection of and choices regarding data collection procedures, interviews, documents, and observation [18]. Moreover, case studies can involve single or multiple cases. Quantitative sampling concerns itself with representativeness; qualitative sampling seeks information richness and selects the cases purposefully rather than randomly [18]. He added the concern is when sampling time in a case study, how many times data should be collected and when to enter the organizations should be consider plus to decide whether to collect data on a continuous basis or in distinct periods.

In this research, real time data collection basis is applied. Appointment is made with Mr. Mohd. Harris Abdul Rahim, Manager of Information Management Division under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia and Mr. RazaidiAbd. Rahim, Senior Assistant Director, Communications & Publicity Division of Tourism Malaysia according to interviewee flexibility. Later, the researchers make selection of and choices regarding data collection procedures, interviews, documents, and observation. Interview procedure was with the respective division mentioned earlier. The interview was recorded and permission to audio-record was obtained prior to the start of the data collection. It is because for some interviewee, they become shy or hesitant when they know they are being electronically recorded.

On top of that, the research is supported by secondary data which is the journal and articles from books, websites and others. Observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account obtained in an interview [16]. Therefore, in supporting the use of new communication technology, the researcher went through the Tourism Malaysia policy, report and others.

The data collected through interview was arranged in order to answer the research questions. Meyer [18] stated that before starting to write up the cases, the researcher scanned the information on each theme, built up the facts and filled in with perceptions and reactions that were illustrative and representative

of the data. The documents were primarily useful in establishing the facts, but it also provided the researcher with some perceptions and reactions that were validated in the interviews. The process of peer checkers review involves at least one other suitably experienced researcher independently reviewing and exploring interview transcripts, data analysis and emerging themes. It is to prevent against the potential for lone researcher bias and help to provide additional insights into theme and theory development.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Information Management Division, Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia

The Tourism industry in Malaysia had really gained from the evolution of information technology with the emergence of computerized networks that change the whole stage of the distribution and marketing of tourism products. In terms of application new communication technologies internally, Information Management Division, Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia are focusing on 'humanware' which consist of skilled people that responsible for the ICT maintenance and programming. Information, and communication technology (ICT) can contribute immensely to the tourism business especially the Internet and social media network (SNS).

Therefore, the top management those in charge as the Head of Department are equipped with iPad Air to make sure they can communicate and get latest information instantly. Moreover, their ICT Training Room is also equipped with 40 Units of Lenovo All-in-One Desktops PC for better performance and productivity.

One of the respondents mentioned,

“Here, in Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, we engage in technology as to gain and distribute instant information in our organization itself and if there are new tourism products introduced. Therefore, in achieving our goal, training is given to ensure all staff.”

Since ICT enables direct communication within organizations and improves efficiency and effectiveness of tourism service, with improved telecommunications infrastructure and skilled of human resources, it can also be transformed into a powerful promotional marketing tool. Staffs in this division are required to attend seven days of trainings per year to improve their knowledge and ICT skills.

One of the respondents added,

“The training given is not just training. The Ministry ensures that each of the staff required seven days of training per year. And yes, ICT is one of the training they need to attend and skilled.”

The Information Management Divisions are responsible to develop strategic ICT framework to enhance staff productivity and promote the development of ICT based knowledge. Besides that, the ICT policy under the division outlines appropriate use of the information management division, communication and technology resources. On top of that, the division has provides a policy to assist Ministry of Culture and Tourism community to develop agreements with staffs as to what constitute acceptable use of internet, desktop, laptop, and other online digital technologies within the organizations. This policy applies to all staff at Ministry of Culture and Tourism Malaysia.

The respondent stated that,

“The staff here is also responsible to follow the policy to avoid misused of technology in workplace. It is a guideline. It is compulsory for the staff to understand and apply it during working hours. The misused of technology in workplace will lead to the termination of position.”

In order to protect responsible users, electronic matters will be used to help prevent access to unsuitable material. Any uses of the ICT application including the contents are protected using McAfee Antivirus Solutions which integrates real-time threat protection with automation and comprehensive features. The division also reserve the rights to access all material stored on its ICT system, including that held in personal areas of staff, including email mailboxes, for purposes of ensuring ICT polices regarding appropriate use, data protection, computer misuse, staff, and organization protection safety.

Among the functions and responsibilities of the divisions are identify potential users of information technology and to promote the adoption of suitable up-to-date information technologies, to enhance skills and knowledge in the use of information technology through information technology courses, workshops and seminars, to govern data and information to ensure the integrity and security of the division at all times in accordance with the latest technology.

Besides that, they provide ICT tools according to the current needs, provide network service that is efficient, stable and secure at all times, provide technical support service for breakdown complaints within one day of the time of receipt of complains, provide technical support service for breakdown complaints which involve hardware and software within five to ten working days, update and maintain information in Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia websites from time to time and most important provide ICT software and hardware according to the current needs.

Moreover, in protecting the use of ICT, staff that is found not to be acting responsibly in this way will be takes action. Irresponsible users will be denied access to the ICT facilities. ICT division will act strongly against anyone who use of ICT risks bringing the organization into disrepute or risks the proper work of other users. Persistent of offenders will be denied access to the ICT facilities-on a permanent basis [19].The division expects all ICT users to take responsibility in the violent, criminal, terrorist activity and content, racist or design to incite racial hatred or extreme political opinion, pornographic or with otherwise unsuitable sexual content, crude, profane or with otherwise unsuitable language, blasphemous or mocking of religious, moral beliefs, values and sensitivity, in bridge of the law, including copyright law, data protection, and computer misuse belong to other users of ICT systems and which they do not have explicit permission to use.

On top of that the users should not to download or even try to download any software without the explicit permission of the ICT system support department “unauthorized and unlicensed software”, to be extremely cautious about revealing any Ministry and Tourism staff personal details (e.g. home address, mobile telephone number) on social networking site or email to strangers (Personal Data Protection Act, 2010), not to interfere with or cause malicious damage to the ICT resources and facilities and must report any breech (deliberate or accidental) of this policy to the ICT officer immediately.

Visit Malaysia 2014 Campaign

Tourism Malaysia has engaged various media in promoting Visit Malaysia 2014. Any of ICT application used in Tourism Malaysia is strategically develop for a better management of operation and communication between stakeholders. Applications of ICT used in Tourism Malaysia and Malaysia Truly Asia 2014 campaigns are using media integration strategy in terms of promotional and advertising campaign using various medium as stated in table 1.

Table 1: Media Integration by Tourism Malaysia in Promoting Visit Malaysia 2014

Media Integration Strategy	Methods
Printed Media	Flyers, brochure, banner, bunting, billboards, newspaper, magazines and the government publications
Electronic Media	Collaboration with international media such as International Broadcasting with global theme advertisement. (e.g.: CNN, BBC, Discovery Channel, etc)
Internet TV Portal	Truly Asia TV & My Tourism TV (MYTTV)
Online and Digital Media	Malaysia - http://www.tourism.gov.my/ Australia - http://www.tourismmalaysia.com.au/ USA - http://www.tourismmalaysiausa.com/
Social Media	Facebook -1,966,128 likes(updated 14 th May 2014) Twitter - 185,522 followers (updated 14 th May 2014) Youtube - 3,945,503 viewers (updated 14 th May 2014)
Mobile Applications	Malaysia Maps, Food Xpress, BigSale , Malaysia, Malaysia - Travel Guide and Malaysia Trip Planner that is available at App Store & Google Play
E-Marketing Unit, Tourism Malaysia	Electronic publications such as E-Brochure E-Magazine E-Newsletter and E-Training.
Public Relations & Events	International Mega events such as World Travel Markets London, Malaysia Pavilion World Expo Shanghai China, International Tourism Bourse Berlin Germany.

From table 1, 6 out of 8 Visit Malaysia 2014 campaign engage in media integration strategy especially on new media approaches because there is still a deficiency relevant on outreach their tourist globally. The use of various types of electronic and online content is increasingly relevant as tourism practices, because of the ICT transformation itself. We can see the trend with the rise of websites and social media, people especially generation X and generation Y are increasingly heading online to get tips on how to have a great tourist destination to remember.

Different websites had been created by Tourism Malaysia. Therefore, in order to boots up Malaysia Truly Asia 2014 campaign, Tourism Malaysia also had established their local and international websites in order to attract local and international tourist to visit Malaysia (see Table 1). At the websites main page there are also a countdown (days, hours, minutes, seconds) as interactive webpage tools to increase the excitements to visit Malaysia.

As part to with the development of smart phones user, Tourism Malaysia under Malaysia Truly Asia 2014 Campaign had also developed mobile application that can downloaded. This application will allow their user to get latest information and latest tourism events happening in Malaysia.

For instance, the mobile applications, Food Xpress introduced will comprehensive provides information hub for looking for favorite, restaurants, bars, clubs, café, hawkers and many more. On top of that, the tourist will enjoy photos, reviews and ratings before deciding and with easy to use navigation using your built-in GPS. In overcoming dilemmas face by the tourist in deciding when should travel to Malaysia, which cities are must-sees for the first travelers and how can they get close distance to the 100% Malaysia cultures, Malaysia - Travel Guide applications will provide all the information that is needed.

In the world of tourism there are two major benefits from uses of social media. Tourism's and travel's customers have created social media networks in which they share reviews of hotels, restaurants and/or tourists attractions. Moreover, the use of the social media can help tourism entity to enhance its image, reputation and create credibility at a low or no cost to the media provider.

The traditional mass media has at least three important roles to play: to inform, to educate and to influence opinion. Now, fast developing of information communication technology especially the new media is fuelling an information revolution globally. These distinctive features of traditional media have been challenged by new media, which is changing the participation habits of the customers. Although in this new era, information can be easily found in the internet, Tourism Malaysia still engages and relies in printed media because people still rely on traditional media as their main source of information, and a reliable source of information.

On top of that, printed media can be easily being carried as compared to new media where users need to have connection in order to access the internet. Therefore, the media integration strategy by Tourism Malaysia is a successful effort in influencing and bringing tourist to come to Malaysia. Besides that, as at May, 2014, the number of receipt and tourist coming to Malaysia are increasing. The best application by Tourism Malaysia in promoting Malaysia shows the effort by the Ministry in putting Malaysia in the world map as one of the key destination for a diverse ethnic and cultural experience.

Above all, The Hettema Group located at Pasadena CA, US, was selected as the designer and the project manager for the Malaysia Truly Asia Center (MTAC) to attract international tourists to Malaysia.

For the public relations and events, mutual understanding and co-operation between Tourism Malaysia and other supporting industry (hotel, resorts, shopping mall, F&B, etc) has agreed to boost up Malaysia Truly Asia 2014 campaign. Tourism agency offered special incentives of giving discounts and promotional price to attract domestic and international tourist. Malaysia citizens have their own responsibility as part of the VMY 2014 campaign. 1 Malaysia citizens is

expected to bring 1 international tourist to visit Malaysia. Tourism Malaysia had also carried out 200 International Mega events such as World Travel Markets London, Malaysia Pavilion World Expo Shanghai China, International Tourism Bourse Berlin Germany. Moreover, since 1980s, Tourism Malaysia had located strategically their Tourism Promotion Board all over the world. Their main objective is to make sure that tourist will get latest and updates information from all over international representatives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Tourism as an industry requires a diverse range of information and lends itself well to the support offered by developing multimedia, communication technologies and information system. Although the use of ICT especially e-tourism among the Malaysian tourist industry is still in its early stages and the rate of adoption is slow, information communication technologies (ICT) has changed the global tourism industry rapidly. The coverage of this paper is a report on the initial stage of the study. Further extension of different research design can be pursued further to deepen the consideration of varied factors dealing with how the effects of the changing type of new communication technologies effect tourist pattern and trends.

Integrated efforts and initiatives made by Tourism Malaysia shown the increase number of tourists visiting Malaysia. A favorable destination image should be created through appropriate promotional strategy to be done jointly by the state governments, NGOs, the private sector and the local communities. The application of new communication technology by Tourism Malaysia in Visit Malaysia 2014 campaign is important to put Malaysia in the eyes of the world.

The implication of the Internet and other growing interactive multimedia platforms for tourism are far reaching and alter the structure of the industry. Most of international tourists were satisfied with the cultural sites/attractions and think Malaysia is a reasonably good cultural destination [20]. Integrated efforts and initiatives made by Tourism Malaysia shown the increase number of tourists visiting Malaysia. Moreover, tourism must keep updated with the new technologies to ensure that all the tourism products that had been or to be introduced are well- promoted, marketed and handled. In other words, need to be leveraged to engage effectively with the consumer base.

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