


Chapter 18

Smart Municipalities in Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a fragmented and information-oriented sector covering tour operators, travel agencies, hotel sales representatives, associations, meeting offices, transportation, car rental, airlines, cruise, souvenirs, restaurants, hotels/motels, and entertainment. In the tourism sector, technology is an important requirement for the interconnection of all these fragmented organizations, activities, and elements, and for the satisfaction of tourists. However, the effective use of technology in a destination requires the leadership of a leader. This chapter approaches the smart municipality applications oriented to tourism sector with the example of Turkey, a well-known destination around the world, from the perspective of municipalities, which is regarded as a democratic leader at local level and provides a general framework regarding the studies on an innovative, environment-friendly, solution-oriented, and more livable urban life. Suggestions are provided for smart technologies to improve the quality of life of local citizens and to the satisfaction of tourists.

INTRODUCTION

Natural, cultural, historical and artificial attractions, societies that protect their authenticity, a tourism consciousness that is a result of the harmony between the local cultural characteristics and the tourism, interest of the national, regional and local authorities in tourism and achievement of the international standards for transportation, accommodation and food and beverage sectors are among the resources of a tourism destination (EC, 1999: 18). The expectation from local authorities regarding the tourism sector include funds for the development of tourism, investments in infrastructure, reconstruction, care and cleaning services for touristic attractions, education of tourism employees and local people and professional support (Wilson et al., 2001: 134). Local governments are highly important for providing rapid

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services in an integrated way. Besides, within the context of the notion of “think global, act locally”, local governments are expected to be responsible for sustainability, support for development, raising awareness and developing local partnership (Leslie and Hughes, 1997: 145).

Among the regional and local authorities, municipalities are the main contact points for the local resident. Municipalities are highly important authorities since their responsibilities and functions of the municipalities significantly influence the daily lives of the inhabitants (Nadaroğlu, 1978: 272-313).

The concept of “smart city”, which have been constructed because of the developments in communication and information technologies, has been considered as an element of the municipalities since the early 2000s. Parallel to this, the concept of “smart tourism destination” has been formed. Smart tourism destination depends on the information and communication technologies of a smart city, including, internet, mobile communication, cloud services, artificial intelligence technologies (Yüzbaşıoğlu et al., 2018: 708). Technologies and databases in a smart destination are used for communication and flow of information between the stakeholders (Başer and Doğan, 2018).

Tourism is a fragmented and information-related sector that is composed of various enterprises, including, tour operators, travel agents, hotel’s sales representatives, unions, transportation firms, car rentals, airlines, cruise, souvenir shops, hotels, restaurants and entertainment firms (Buhalis and Laws 2001). Technology is an important factor that connects these fragmented enterprises in order to provide high-quality experiences for visitors. In addition, technology is an important necessity for tourism destinations to sustain both tourist and destination safety (Koçoğlu and Acar, 2019). So, a leader is required for the effective use of information and communication technologies and a strategic management approach in a tourism destination (Ayaz and Kulualp, 2019).

This study deals with the smart municipality services in Turkey from the perspectives of the municipalities. We review the existing studies in order to provide a general framework to maintain an innovative, environment-friendly, solution-oriented and habitable urban life. In order to improve the quality of life of the local inhabitants and the visitors, we also provide suggestions for the integration of the technologies, systems, services, and capabilities to an organic network, which is open to new developments.

BACKGROUND

Smart Tourism

Smart tourism consists of integrated efforts to collect data from physical infrastructure, social connections, public and private businesses and individuals, and to use innovative technologies to find innovative methods. Smart tourism is based on the ability to intelligently store, process, merge, analyze and use collected data, instead of collecting large amounts of data (Gretzel et al., 2015). In smart tourism, which can be characterized by innovation and facilitation, it is essential to improve the quality of life of local residents and tourists in destinations using high levels of technology and interfaces (Khan, et al., 2017).

In smart cities where natural resources are used more efficiently and wisely, where cost and energy saving practices are present, environmental pollution is low, carbon emission is low, quality of life and participation of people in city decisions are high (Male, 2017: 60). Tourism has emerged as a subset of the smart city concept, which aims to provide tourists with solutions that meet specific travel-related needs (Khan, et al., 2017).

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