AN APPARAISAL OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN PROMOTING HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA

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Article history:		Abstract:
		The paper focused on the contribution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in ensuring effective hospitality and tourism operations in Nigeria. The study was able to use a survey research design method where 115 was used as sample size for the study, which was drawn randomly from 6 states representing the 6 regions in Nigeria such as Katsina, Taraba, Plateau, Enugu, Cross River and Lagos respectively. Some of the key objectives of the study established were: 1) To examine the contribution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in ensuring effective hospitality and tourism operations in Nigeria. 2) To identify gaps in the level of usage of ICT in the industry and 3) To suggest some possible measures for improving profitability in the hospitality and tourism industry via the use of ICT. Structured questionnaires were administered to the various states through e-mails and were retrieved and analyzed using SPSS package version 21, based on chi-square statistics in order to find out if a relationship exist between the role ICT plays in the hospitality and tourism industry and the level of effectiveness of job operations that may lead to effective job performance. Results of findings shows that p.value < 0.05 is significant at all levels which is an indication that an increase in the use of ICT in the industry may proportionately leads to increase in the effectiveness of job operations in the industry. The researcher finally recommends that staff should be trained in the use of ICT in the industry, high-speed internet should be provided in the hospitality and tourism organizations, websites should be improved for speedy and effective operations and modern equipment should be installed in place for ensuring effective and efficient services among others.

INTRODUCTION

Effective and high-speed Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure and software applications in the tourism and hospitality industry are crucial for tourism development. ICTs allow customer - management relations and supply chain management to be combined into a single source that facilitates a variety of operations - product selection, ordering, fulfillment, tracking, payment and reporting to be performed with one easy-to use tool. ICTs ultimately cut costs by enabling the provider to be in direct contact with the consumer and also impact employment through the need for

required maintenance of ICT equipment. Management within tourism companies use ICTs to undertake a range of tasks that enhance the efficiency of employees in the workplace, notably online reservations. (Dzhandzhugazova, 2005)

The development of ICTs has also led to changes in demand and supply. A higher demand for flexible, individualized options and quality of information has personalized leisure and tourism behavior, a consequence of increased ICT use. Through new technology and social and economic ratings (such as social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, blogs and so on) customers have the ability to share information and research ratings on destination, quality of service in hotels and restaurants and environmental and social conditions. Number of hotels have strengthened their brand image and communicate directly with their customers by posting links to a press release or promoting new package through Twitter. (ILO. 2010)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher has observed with great dismay that the contemporary trends has influence on hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria, and has revolutionized flexibility in both consumer choice and service delivery processes. Customers have become much more sophisticated and discerning. This is because they have experienced high levels of service and because the standard of living has grown considerably. As a result of the recent trends, tourists have become more demanding, requesting high-quality products and value for their money and, perhaps more importantly, value for time. This reflects people's shortage of time. Having been exposed to several tourism products and destinations, experienced, sophisticated and demanding travelers rely heavily on electronic media to obtain information about destinations, as well as to be able to communicate their needs and wishes to suppliers rapidly. It was on these premise that this study was carried out in order to examine the role of ICTs in tourism, identify the gaps in level of usage of ICT and suggests the possible measures for improvement of the use of ICT in tourism industry.

Aim of the paper

The aim of the paper is to examine the contributions of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Ensuring Effective Hospitality and Tourism Operations in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

1. To examine the contribution of ICT in ensuring effective hospitality and tourism operations in Nigeria.

2. To identify the gaps in level of usage of ICT in hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria.

3. To suggest the possible measures to improve the profitability hospitality and tourism by implementing ICTs operations in the industry.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent can we examine the role of ICT in tourism industry in Nigeria?

2. To what extent can we identify the gaps in level of usage of ICT in tourism industry in Nigeria?

3. To what extent can we suggest the possible measures to improve the profitability by implementing ICTs in Tourism in Nigeria?.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hospitality and tourism industry belongs to the service industry and consists of number of fields such as restaurants, lodging, theme parks, transportation, event planning and various other fields within the tourism industry. (Zaitseva, N.A. 2013). The hospitality industry always depend upon two main factors: one is the availability of leisure time and the other is the disposable income. Hospitality industries is one of the world's largest and most permeate industries, the industry has exposed itself to the forces of change, especially by the ongoing developments in ICTs. (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert, and Wanhill, 2005). E-commerce has been negatively influenced by few factors such as the current political developments and the slowing economy, but it is still booming in the hospitality industry. In the hospitality industry, the internet is not only used for gathering information, but it is also being used for acceptance of ordering services over the internet. (Ilyenkova, Kuznetsov, 2009).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Hospitality and Tourism are two of the most dynamic drivers of our global economy. In the case of hospitality industry, many authors have claimed that tourism must be treated as an information-intensive industry (Poon 1993; Sheldon 1997; Inkpen 1998), whereas, travel and tourism can be defined as an information business. Hospitality industry is a business

that is related to information in all the ways, because information is one of the most important quality parameters to support actions for the tourism area as a service industry. (Romanova, & Chernova, 2015).

Information is also used in various means in the hospitality and tourism industry, mainly they are observed in areas where gathering of information, generation, application, processing, application and communication of information is as important for day-to-day operation. Hospitality industry is also considered as a hybrid industry because more than any other services, they are more dominated by information. In the whole tourism sector, hospitality and tourism industry is considered as the forefront and it is always sensitive to the competitive pressure which keeps increasing constantly. The industry is also sensitive to the operational needs that are effective and control tools which are always the growing need. (Buhalis, D. and Costa, C. 2003). In order to overcome all the competitive pressure and to be effective, the use of ICTs will be the only solution as it is capable of bringing in new business opportunities as well as help in the overall business development. (Joseph, Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

Fig. 1: e-Tourism, IT for Strategic Tourism Management
Source: Buhalis, (2003)
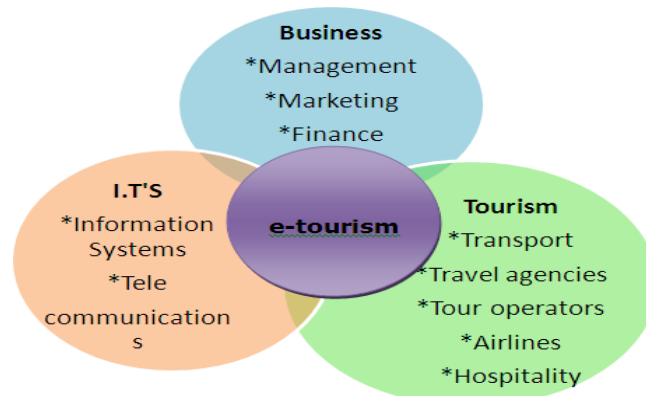
Role of ICT in Ensuring Effective Hospitality and Tourism Operations.

1. E-Tourism Impacts on Marketing Mix

ICTs provide unique opportunities for innovative organizations to redesign tourism products to address individual needs and to satisfy consumer wants. ICTs have also become part of the core product, especially for business travelers who now expect certain facilities to be available during their trip. The internet and the World Wide Web have revolutionized the promotion and communication functions of tourism. ICTs can reduce commission costs. Expedia, eBookers, to emerge and gain a significant market share, propelling a reintermediation in the distribution channel. (Buhalis, and Costa, 2006).

2. E-Airlines

In 1962, American Airlines introduced its SABRE Computerized Reservations Systems (CRS) to in the place of manual reservations on display boards where passengers were listed and travel agencies had to locate the best routes and fares for their customers in a manual and then telephone for availability, reservation and confirmation before issuing a ticket manually.

3. E- Lodging

The lodging industry is the most under- automated segment of the international travel industry. Property Management Systems (PMSs) were introduced to facilitate the front office, sales, planning and operation functions. This was achieved by administering a database with all reservations, rates, occupancy and cancellations, thus managing the hotel inventory. Hospitality organizations increasingly use computerized systems to improve their inventory management, communicate with their interaction with consumers and reduce some of their operational costs.

4. E-Hospitality

ICTs have penetrated hospitality management at a fast pace, integrating the hotel operations, reshaping the marketing function, improving total efficiency, providing tools for marketing research and partnership building, and enhancing customer services, while also providing strategic opportunities. In addition, consumers increasingly expect ICT facilities in their rooms; internet access via the television set and data ports have become standard for higher hotel categories. The Internet has improved the hotel representation and reservation processes dramatically. Bookings

through the web is particularly convenient for customers who frequent the hotel as that provides an efficient and effective communication mechanism. The greater the capacity, number of departments, transactions, arrivals, departures and reservations, the greater the need for technologies to facilitate the processes. Further integration between PMSs and Hotel CRSs can improve efficiency, facilitate control, reduce personnel and minimize the response time to both customers and management requests. (Mobile Marketer. 2016).

5. E-Tour Operators

Tour operators need constantly to interact with all their partners, including accommodation and transportation principals, ICTs are also critical for the distribution of tour operators' packages. The introduction of the Internet, Intranets and Extranets as strategic tools has as strategic tool has a number of benefits for tour operators. The co-ordination and exchange of timely information is important because it allows tour operators to co-ordinate activities, to resolve potential problems and to ensure that customer requirements are communicated to all principals delivering the tourism product. Strategically, ICTs play a critical role for tour operators. However, it is quite evident that tour operators will need to shift their focus from the information provision and the reservation mechanism to a strategic role of adding value to the product and the process. Tour operators will therefore need to re-assess their core values and identify specific market segments that they can satisfy in the future.

6. E-Travel agencies

ICTs have introduced major improvements in the internal organization of travel agencies. By integrating their back-office (e.g., accounting, commission monitoring, and personnel) and front Office (customers' history, itinerary development, ticketing and communication with suppliers) functions, travel agencies have achieved significant synergies, efficiencies and cost savings. As transactions made in branch offices can automatically be reported back to the head office, tighter financial control can be achieved.

In addition, transactions provide invaluable marketing research data, which can almost instantly report market movements and aid tactical decisions. At the individual level, CRM systems support agencies in tracking the activity of their efficiency, control and competitiveness. Storing information in data warehouse can also help them to develop proactive marketing tools in order to target individual customers with specialized products, thereby increasing the value

added services offered to each customer, and to defend themselves against disintermediation. (Poon 1993; Sheldon 1997; and Inkpen 1998).

7. E-Destinations

Destination management System (DMS) have been used to integrate the entire tourism supply at the destination. Their contribution to strategic management and marketing is demonstrated by their ability to integrate all stakeholders at destinations and to reach global market.DMS offering innovative information and sometimes facilitating reservations. Destination Integrated Computerized Information Reservation Management Systems (DICIRMS) address entire range of needs and services required by both tourism enterprise and consumers for specific destinations. DICRIMS provide the infostructure for communications and business processes between all stake holders, including consumers, principals, distributors and destination marketing organizations. (Orlova, 2014).

Contributions of the ICT index in the hospitality industry for various operations.

1. Electronic Data Processing (EDP)

Electronic Data Processing is usually referred to the use of automated methods to process data. The technology adoption increased before many years but it was basically limited to only the operational and administrative areas. Most of the organisation does not utilize the information that is available in the information system in order to use them in their ``strategic planning and decision making processes. (Mobile Marketer. 2016).

2. Property Management System (PMS)

In the hospitality industry, ICTs are mainly used in booking systems which is considered as an internal technology. Property Management System acts as a central point that coordinates both the technology and hospitality operations. The main purpose of property management system is to manage room inventory, produce billing information and also to record the details of the guests or the customers. In order to integrate the billing and management reports, it often creates a interface with various other systems such as telephone system and food and beverages point of sales terminal. (Pender, and Sharpley, 2005).

3. Central Reservation System (CRS)

Central Reservation System is a computerised system that helps to store and distribute information. When an organisation has a chain or belongs to any franchise group, Central Reservation System always helps in various ways. The system helps to book between all the organisations in the chain and would also accept direct booking from the central reservation office. The systems always have a direct access into property

management system which would automatically update information to the front office. (Orlova, 2014).

4. Global Distribution System (GDS)

Global Distribution System is also a computerised system which will include hotels, airlines, car rental and also other travel resources and they are most commonly used by travel agents. Global Distribution System is actually an operation in the computer reservation system and helps to book and sell tickets to multiple airlines. The system is not always connected to the main system and information will not be updated automatically, which means the information has to be updated manually.

5. Yield Management (YM)

Yield Management which is also known as revenue management is a process in which the consumer behaviour is understood, anticipated and also influenced. It will result in maximizing the revenue as well as the profit from the resources. In the hospitality industry, yield management is used widely and largely in the same way. Using yield management, the rates, rooms and restrictions on sales are calculated in order to maximize the return of the business. The revenue managers in the hospitality industry have acquired over the last few years and in such a global economy the right distribution channel, correct controlling costs and the right marketing mix plays a vital role in yield management. The services are sold to the right people, at the right time and at the right place. (Orekhov, 2014).

Gaps Identified in ICTs I in Tourism, Travel and Hospitality Industry in Nigeria. Buhalis, (2003)

1. Most Nigerian tourism, travel and hospitality websites are not mobile ready;
2. Top level managements are not aware of updated ICTs and innovation in the industry.
3. ICTs employees are not trained in usage of ICT.
4. Many of the hospitality and tourism enterprises are operating with the traditional tools;
5. Majority of hospitality and tourism enterprises are not integrated with the updated ICTs.
6. Most of enterprises are not utilizing social media for business development purpose.
7. The internet connectivity is not available everywhere across the country.

Suggested Strategies for Improvement of ICTs in Tourism, Travel and Hospitality industry in Nigeria. (Poon, 1993; Sheldon, 1997; and Inkpen, 1998).

1. The hospitality and tourism Enterprises websites should be upgraded and updated with the latest technologies to increase the business potentiality.
2. The governments and hospitality and tourism business enterprises should encourage and train the industry staff in terms of utilizing the social media.
3 . The governments should see that the high speed Internet availability and affordability to reach common man and prices of the computer systems should go down further.
4 . The awareness for the stakeholders in hospitality and tourism industry towards Google search should be provided and be well encouraged.
5. Hospitality and Tourism Enterprises should integrate all departments through ICT.
6. High-speed internet facilities should be provided by the government and power failures should be avoided.
7. The government should encourage the development of mobile commerce (such as promotion, payments, billings and so on) and should be integrated within the hospitality and tourism industry.

METHODOLOGY
Sample and procedures

To achieve the objectives of the study, the research has been focused on the contribution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Ensuring Effective Hospitality and Tourism Operations in Nigeria. To identify the gaps in the levels of usage of ICTs in hospitality and tourism industry and to analyze the opinion of the managers and to suggest the measures, a five point scale questionnaire has been prepared by understanding the industry literature, observing, understanding and consulting industry experts and professors. The stusy adopted a descriptive-survey design method. 115 professionals responded across the six geopolitical regions of Nigeria where one state was selected to represent each of the region and the responses have been recorded online and offline using a structured questionnaire. The responses are being represented using SPSS package version 21. This inferential statistics was chosen in order to be able to test the stated research questions based on 5% and 10% level of significance. Among 115 respondents, 41% are from tourism organizations, 22% of the respondents are from the Airlines, travel and tour operations, and 37% are from hospitality industry. The average experience of the respondents is 8.4 years in the industry, ranging from 1-35 years. The respondents are located in different parts of the country. The primary data

was collected during the months of June-August, 2021. Detailed of the selection of respondents is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Table of selection of respondents

S/No	Hospitality & Tourism Organizations	Operational Staff	States	Regions
1	A	20	Katsina State	North West
2	B	20	Plateau State	North Central
3	C	20	Taraba State	North East
4	C	20	Enugu State	South East
5	D	20	Lagos State	South West
6	E	15	Cross River State	South South
TOTAL		115		

Source: Field Survey (2021).

RESULTS
Question One
To what extent can we examine the contribution of ICT in hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria?

Table 2: Cross tabulation on the contribution of ICT in hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria

		Contribution of ICT in Hospitality and Tourism industry in Nigeria.						χ^2 Value	p. value
		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total		
ICT plays a vital role in Hospitality & Tourism Industry	SA	20(13.1)	13(12.7)	3(5.2)	4(6.4)	3(5.6)	43(43)	38.767	0.001
	A	12(8.2)	9(8)	2(3.3)	2(4)	2(3.5)	27(27)		
	U	1(4.3)	5(4.1)	0(1.7)	4(2.1)	4(1.8)	14(14)		
	D	2(5.8)	4(5.6)	4(2.3)	5(2.8)	4(2.5)	19(19)		
	SD	0(3.7)	3(3.5)	5(1.5)	2(1.8)	2(1.6)	12(12)		
Total		35(35)	34(34)	14(14)	17(17)	15(15)	115(115)		

Authors Compilation from SPSS; Freq. (Expected count): P.value < 0.05 is sig, r =0.795

It is significant that majority of the respondents using ICTs in their hospitality and tourism operations have high perception on employees' effective job performance in the industry. The chi square shows that there is significant influence of ICT on Hospitality and Tourism Industry operations in Nigeria ($\chi2=38.767$; df=16; p=0.001).The correlation coefficient for effective hospitality and tourism operations as a result of ICT was 0.795, relationship is positive, which means that when the score on the level of usage of ICT increases, the score of effective hospitality and tourism operations increases which leads to better performance in the industry. This relationship was found statistically significant at $P < 0.05$. This implied that the level of ICT usage increases the score of operations and effective performance in the industry.

Question Two
To what extent can we identify the gaps in level of usage of ICT in tourism industry in Nigeria?

Table 3: Cross tabulation on identified gaps in the level of usage of ICT in hospitality and tourism industry in Nigeria.

		Identified gaps in the level of usage of ICT in hospitality and tourism in Nigeria.						χ^2 Value	p. value
		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total		
Gaps identified in level of usage of ICT in Hospitality & Tourism.	SA	4(6.7)	15(11.3)	3(4.9)	3(4)	4(2.6)	29(29)	31.711	0.011
	A	15(9.4)	17(16)	2(6.9)	5(5.7)	2(3.6)	41(41)		
	U	1(2.8)	5(4.7)	6(2)	2(1.9)	0(1.1)	14(14)		
	D	4(3.7)	3(6.2)	4(2.7)	4(2)	1(1.4)	16(16)		
	SD	2(3.5)	4(5.8)	4(2.5)	2(2.1)	3(1.3)	15(15)		
Total		26(26)	44(44)	19(19)	16(16)	10(10)	115(115)		

Authors Compilation from SPSS; Freq. (Expected count): P.value < 0.05 is sig, r =-0.475

The finding from the above Table 2 identified the gaps in the level of usage of ICT in the hospitality and tourism industry. Thus, the result depicts that there is significant relationship between ICT level of usage in the hospitality and tourism industry and the level of effectives of work operations or job performance in the industry in Nigeria ($\chi2$=31.711; df=16; p=0.011). Also the correlation coefficient r (-0.475) indicated that the gap identified in respect to the level of usage of ICT is negatively correlated with effectiveness of job operations in the industry. This relationship was found significant with p<0.05. Thus, this finding implies that the gaps identified and the level of effective operations in the hospitality and tourism industry has significant negative impact on job performance in the industry.

Question Four
To what extent can we suggest the possible measures to improve the profitability by implementing ICTs in Tourism in Nigeria?.

Table 4: Cross tabulation of possible measures to improve the profitability by implementing ICTs in Tourism in Nigeria.

		Possible measures to improve the profitability by implementing ICTs in Hospitality and Tourism in Nigeria.						χ^2 Value	p. value
		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total		
Measures to improve the profitability by implementing ICTs in Tourism	SA	13(9.7)	14(13.5)	3(4.8)	4(5.8)	3(3.2)	37(37)	29.628	0.020
	A	8(8.6)	19(12.1)	2(4.3)	2(5.2)	2(2.9)	33(33)		
	U	5(4.2)	0(5.8)	4(2.1)	6(2.5)	1(1.4)	16(16)		
	D	4(4.7)	5(6.6)	4(2.3)	3(2.8)	2(1.6)	18(18)		
	SD	0(2.9)	4(4)	2(1.4)	3(1.7)	2(1)	11(11)		
Total		30(30)	42(42)	15(15)	18(18)	10(10)	115(115)		

Authors Compilation from SPSS; Freq. (Expected count): P.value < 0.05 is sig; r = 0.341)

The finding was able to suggest the possible measures to improve the profitability by implementing ICTs in Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Nigeria. Thus, the result shows that there is significant relationship between measures to improve the profitability and effective implementation of ICTs in Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Nigeria ($\chi2$=29.628; df=16; p=0.020). Also the correlation coefficient r (0.341) indicated that there is significant relationship between measures to improve the profitability and effective implementation of ICTs in Hospitality and Tourism Industry, the correlation depicts that is significant with p<0.05.

DISCUSSION

The findings in table 2 shows that the correlation coefficient for effective hospitality and tourism operations as a result of ICT was 0.795, relationship is positive, which means that when the score on the level of usage of ICT increases, the score of effective hospitality and tourism operations increases. This has aligned with the work of Ilyenkova, & Kuznetsov (2009), who opined that in the hospitality industry, the internet is not only used for gathering information, but it is also being used for acceptance of ordering services over the internet.

The finding from table 3 identified the gaps in the level of usage of ICT in the hospitality and tourism industry. Thus, the result depicts that there is significant relationship between ICT level of usage in the hospitality and tourism industry and the level of effectives of work operations or job performance in the industry. This has coincide with the contribution of Buhalis (2003) which outlined some of the gaps identified in ICTs as: most Nigerian tourism, travel and hospitality websites are not mobile ready; top level managements are not aware of updated ICTs and innovation in the industry, ICTs employees are not trained in usage of ICT, many of the hospitality and tourism enterprises are operating with the traditional tools, majority of hospitality and tourism enterprises are not integrated with the updated ICTs, most of enterprises are not utilizing social media for business development purpose and the internet connectivity is not available everywhere across the country.

The finding in table 4 was able to suggest the possible measures to improve the profitability by implementing ICTs in Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Nigeria. Thus, the result shows that there is significant relationship between measures to improve the profitability and effective implementation of ICTs. This has agreed with the work of Poon (1993; Sheldon (1997) and Inkpen (1998) who was of the opinion that measures that can improve profitability in the hospitality and tourism industry include; the hospitality and tourism enterprises websites should be upgraded and updated with the latest technologies to increase the business potentiality, the governments and hospitality and tourism business enterprises should encourage and train the industry staff in terms of utilizing the social media, the governments should see that the high speed Internet availability and affordability to reach common man and prices of the computer systems should go down further, the awareness for the stakeholders in hospitality and tourism industry towards Google search should be provided and be

well encouraged and that the hospitality and Tourism Enterprises should integrate all departments through ICT.

CONCLUSION

The hospitality industry has started realizing gradually that the revolution of ICT has changed all the operational practices and various paradigms; it has also altered the competitiveness of all the major hospitality actors in the market. Because of which, all the organisation in the hospitality industry are focusing more on knowledge-based competition and are in the need for continuous innovation. The management are also under pressure and are forced to stay abreast on all the developments that occur in the market. Therefore, thereis need for improvement in ICT usage in the hospitality industry so as to facilitate its day-to-day operations.

It is essential that the current information and communications technologies should be updated, upgraded and seamless integration both internally and externally should be done to improve the tourism business operations. The integration of ICT in tourism would benefit both, service providers and customers bringing together other stakeholders as well, on a common platform.

The selection of right information communications technology tool is crucial to match the customer requirements with service dimensions. The proliferation of technology throughout tourism distribution channels and professionals use the new tools in order to retrieve information, identify suitable products and perform reservations. ICTs integration provides a powerful tool that brings advantage in promoting and strengthening the hospitality and tourism industry.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The government together with the hospitality and tourism industry service providers should intensify its effort in training its personnel in the area of ICT utilization in the industry so as to ensure effective industry operations.
2. More effort should be made by the stakeholders involved in ensuring that internetworking gadgets are effective and efficient for services to customers, as well as website are ready.
3. The hospitality and tourism industry should always be ready to meet challenges and to cope with the current trends in ICTs and other innovations in the industry.

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