**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is all about conducting an evaluation of the application, importance, opportunities and challenges of ICT use in hospitality and tourism industry. The report is basically conducted into two section namely literature review and case study. In the literature review part, a number of specified issues are discussed with reference to whatever latest is in the literature regarding the subject. The various issues in the literature review part are as following: ICT and the Hospitality and Tourism Industry; Tourism Distribution Channels; ICT in the Hospitality SMEs; ICT in the Hospitality SMEs - Opportunities and Challenges; Internet /Social Media and Hospitality SMEs; and Website to Hospitality SMEs: Importance and Problems. Furthermore, as regards the key themes emerged from the review of the literature, the state of affairs regarding the case study organization is evaluated. The case study organization is the London based small size tour operator Golden Tours. The target of this small size tour operator is to give travelers exceptional feel of touring London city. The focus of the evaluation of case study is the Website of Golden Tours. Finally based on the evaluation concluding remarks and recommendations are made.

The findings of the report conclude that Golden Tours needs to turn its challenges in opportunity through the maximum affordable use of ICTs in the forms of distribution channels such as GDS and CRS. The GDS will help out Golden Tours to compete on an equal footing with its large counterparts in the city of London. Golden Tours is recommended to use twitter for expanding its business and twitter should be used for following purposes customer engagement, customer service, promoting brand identity, and running operations. So far as use of web or website is concerned, Golden Tours appears appealing with its website considering the requirements for a small size tour operator. The website of Golden Tours lacks in accessibility as currently it does have direct link to GDS or CRS. So far as information is concerned, it is of high-quality considering the information share by the website regarding the services offered and the information about the city and accommodation. Credibility too appears of first-rate. E-commerce of the website is as well good considering the availability of transactions through various cards. However, when it comes to immediacy and customer relationship, Golden Tours requires radical improvement.

**INTRODUCTION**

* Golden Tours was established in 1984, and promises to offer an extraordinary range of tours
* Golden Tours’ operational activity is limited to the city of London
* The mission of Golden Tours is to explore London with the tourists
* Golden Tours assures to the world and particularly target customers that Its excursions are entirely escorted by means of **professional guides** and comprise travel by luxury air-conditioned coach
* Golden Tours offers a range of tour products comprising tours and sightseeing, evening entertainment, attractions tickets, theatre tickets, day trips and city brakes, walking and bike tours, transfers and customized private groups

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**ICT and the Hospitality and Tourism Industry**

ICT is defined as a term implying numerous technologies relating to information and communication ranging from easy to multifaceted specifically Cell Phone applications (SMS), Digital Cameras, Internet, Wireless (WiFi), VOIP,GPS, GIS, Convergence (data, voice, media) and Digital radio. ICTs are forming a fresh and innovative worldwide market, which is more competitive (Amor, 2002). In the light of Internet led ICT, technological digital transactions such as electronic business and commerce has had created further openings and potential than ever formerly. The capability to arrive at worldwide addressees, get hold of direct market information and carry out dealings as regards electronic or e-business has improved trade and industry effectiveness and has smoothed the progress of markets for products /services from one part of the world to another part (Kramer and Derick, 2002). The fact is that advancement of ICT has completed altered the present-day business environment, where this advancement has had directed to new-fangled information led industry and commerce which is digital in scenery and evolving continuously with offering fresh tools for marketing and management in different industries, where one notable industry is hospitality and tourism.

ICTs have had been radically altering the global hospitality and tourism industry. The ICT led revolution has had progressively formed an innovative paradigm-shift, transforming the structure of the industry and paving the way for various opportunities and threats. ICTs allows people to recognize, adapt and get hospitality and tourism products/services and props up the industry’s globalization through endowing with tools for extending, managing and distributing hand-outs globally. All the time more, ICT plays a decisive role for competitiveness in hospitality and tourism industry (Buhalis, 2003; Buhalis and O’Connor, 2005). These imply that ICTs are turning out to be a foremost determinant of organizational competitiveness and an extensive variety of advancements in the field of ICT push this fruition. However, winning ICT use will necessitate pioneering managing to continually assessment of advancements and take on appropriate technological solutions for making maximum of organizational competitiveness.

ICTs have weighty implications for hospitality and tourism industry, where eTourism replicates the digitization of the entire procedures and value chains in the hospitality and tourism industry. Strategically, e-Tourism facilitates firms to control their running and embark on electronic-commerce. Purposefully, e-tourism transforms dealing courses of action, the whole value chain with that of tactical relations with stakeholders. Moreover eTourism settles on the organizations’ competitiveness through taking benefit of intranets for re-organising inner procedures, extranets for extending dealings with relying associates and the Internet for acting together with the entire stakeholders. ICTs advancements create both openings and problems for firms in hospitality and tourism industry and the most noteworthy promising drifts might be studied inside the structure of change (Buhalis 2003). This is shown in the Figure. The notable point is that, as per illustrations the Figure, all the time more, organizations in hospitality and tourism industry necessitate to make use of ICTs to build up strategies in the forms of customer centric, profitability driven and partnership enabled. The model or structure of these strategies will help out organizations in hospitality and tourism industry to concentrate on their customers, organizational requirements and distribution channels in that order.

*Figure : ICT enabled e-Tourism Trends*



Source: Buhalis (2003)

**Tourism Distribution Channels**

Present-day information society has created hospitality and tourism as a very much information-intensive industry, where ICT is found to have a prospective effect on organizations in hospitality and tourism industry. The part of ICTs in the business might not be undervalued and it is decisive dynamic vigor in the present information led social order. ICT has offered fresh tools and has endowed hospitality and tourism organizations with innovative distribution channels, therefore forming a new-fangled business environment (Buhalis, 2003). ICT tools have had smoothed the progress of business deal in the business in the course of setting of connections with business associates, product /services distribution and offering information to customers all through the world. More importantly, customers are as well utilizing online channels to attain information and plan their tour. Hence, ICT has turned out to be a foremost part in hospitality and tourism industry, particularly when it comes to the section distribution.

ICT permeates roughly every single one facet of hospitality and tourism industry, where added information as regards business strategy looking at the association connecting ICT, strategy and organization is as well expressed. In this framework, Buhalis (2003) puts emphasis on strategic management offering a wide-ranging general idea of both operational and strategic management of ICT for hospitality and tourism industry, particularly in relation to distribution. Buhalis and Laws (2001) extends the theoretical premise, implementation and concerns linked to distribution in hospitality and tourism industry. The channels and strategies of tourism from a place perspective is revealed and examined the prospective applications of e-distribution channels in hospitality industry. Buhalis (2003) specifies such distribution channels in the forms of Global Distribution System (GDS) and Centralised Reservation System (CRS). However, these e-distribution channels are found to be a serious challenge for the industry, as it necessitates significant collaboration all through diverse sectors with in hospitality and tourism industry. Sabado (2005) in this context argue that even as organizations in hospitality and tourism industry build up portals of web to deal out information and products/services and network expertise are indispensable in the business as quantity of information necessity to be scrutinized and swapped over each day flanked by customers and organizations. Therefore, organizations in hospitality and tourism industry necessitate professionals who are technically skilled to handle ICT tools for properly running the distribution channels in the forms of GDS and CRS.

**ICT in the Hospitality SMEs**

According to Beckinsale and Ram (2006), SMEs are more prone to practice more than a few ICT approval and execution challenges considering their comparatively small sizes, plain formations, dearth of possessions and need of competence to find ICT advantageously. Such idiosyncratic traits of SMEs might take in additional quite a few dynamics which lean to hinder ICT implementation in SMEs. Nevertheless, there are extended several models and theories so far as ICT application in SMEs sector is concerned (Gibbs, Sequeira and White, 2007).

Gibbs et al (2007) establish that the procedure of extending an integrative theoretical structure integrating ICT implementation features in SMEs is yet continuing The foremost aspects noted down by the authors so far take account of government, environmental factors, possessor/ managerial factors, organisational aspects, implementation features and societal networks. In this framework, the current models of ICT implementation require to be distinguished and built up if they are to be functional to SMEs (Beckinsale and Ram, 2006). Furthermore, as per Howell and Terziovski (2005), weaker SMEs are in need of intrusion and hold up for ICT implementation and advancement of Internet oriented business and marketing might designate that decision makers play additionally of a part of leadership while strapping requirements for hold up and ICTs accessibility might point to that decision makers part may well be further smoothed. Supposedly there is a strapping requirements of ICTs in any specified business upbringing such as hospitality and tourism industry, SMEs are expected to take on ICT as openers and champions of transformation. These suggest that for organizations in hospitality and tourism industry, a strapping inclination to take up ICT in SMEs if owner, managerial people and staff have ICT literacy, skills and know-how. Apart from these, access to inner and outer prop up and drive from ICT experts is decisive for ICT implementation and e-business triumph.

**ICT in the Hospitality SMEs : Opportunities and Challenges**

ICT has enabled a range of transformations in diverse industries and therefore a foremost SMEs challenges have had been the blowing up progression and the always rising ICT advanced over the years. In recent times, a big number of SMEs have had obtained straight approaching to computers or additional sorts of technologies in the Internet age, first and foremost for particular mission progress. The advancements in the costs and competences of ICTs are transforming the modes in which definite sorts of communications and adroitness might take place (Summut-Bonnii and McGee, 2002).

ICTs have a precious prospect for building up SMEs all the way through more effectual utilisation and superior incorporation of ICTs in business procedures whilst helping out them to create more competent resolutions pertinent to their performance. ICTs have the competence to create a pace transformation in the midst of SMEs and put together them more competitive, ground-breaking and create progress. In view of the fact that SMEs play a part of rising significance in the market particularly whilst it comes to social-economic growth of the community where SMEs are situated, it is subsequently sought-after that SMEs are stirred into taking on innovative technologies added fast, and producing pioneering products/services more competitively (Javalgi and Ramsey, 2001). For SMEs in hospitality and tourism industry, it is desirable in the given environment of opportunities and challenges that they should prosper with a skilled workforce of ICTs implementation.

**Internet /Social Media and Hospitality SMEs**

WWW has deeply transformed the creation, distribution and utilization of hospitality and tourism products/services, and establish that ICTs are most likely the strapping stirring factor for transformations in the hospitality and tourism business, and the foremost giver to the attainment of competitive benefit. In this context, it is demonstrated that the implementation of ICT has controlled the usefulness and competence of the hospitality and tourism business, therefore facilitating it to attain sustainable competitive benefit (Dodds, et al., 2010). Papathanassis and Buhalis (2007) put that Internet-oriented and social media led ICTs have changed the hospitality and tourism business into a truthfully Internet led marketing and management, and that e-Tourism has developed from a know-how drift to a typical commerce realism, presenting chances of growth with that of intricacies for both researchers and practitioners in the vicinity. Furthermore, Xiang, et al. (2009) contend that the implementation of internet-oriented distribution and social media use specifically and ICT generally plays a foremost part in adding to the image of the hospitality and tourism organizations in the midst of their clients. They demonstrate that clients who distinguish the organizations as ICT-linked be apt to concern them positively, therefore thinning out affirmative word-of-mouth communications as regards them.

The coming on the Internet, social media and the advantages of ICTs have presented this likely provided that other hindrances outlined by Buhalis (2003), and Papathanassis and Buhalis (2007) are triumphed over. In current environment of global business where the internet and social media has developed into a truth and an effectual business catalyst at more or less least price, SMEs in the hospitality and tourism business ought to standby no minute in using its wonderful promises for the progression of their commerce. In this framework, Chhabra (2009) contend that hospitality and tourism SMEs are all set to obtain the fruits of the internet and social media as soon as they integrate the internet and social media with additional marketing techniques and strategies, where the control of the internet and social media tend to be really wonderful. Even though SMEs fail to have an recognized position in the Internet market or the world of social media, nevertheless a few of them are creating fast paces to develop into an essential fraction of electronic business and marketing setting in the hospitality and tourism business (Anandkumar, 2008). Moreover, as per Yi-Ling, et al. (2010), for hospitality and tourism SMEs, ICTs have emerged as a good thing given that it has formed a business upbringing where creativeness thrives and outlay cutting turn out to be promising, not to refer to the part of ICT in shifting the SMEs organizational structure from the conventional sort to a flat one, forming them better outfitted to hand out their customers resourcefully and successfully through Internet led channels and social media.

**Website to Hospitality SMEs: Importance and Problems**

Website is a medium where both customers and organizations might intermingle and endow with substance to the website. The Web props up dissemination means organizations are proficient to target particular customers or niche markets, which may well be utilized to high-quality result in direct marketing. As a result, the Website of the organization facilitates augmented personalisation and customisation guaranteeing marketing practitioners deeper insights into customer profiles. In this context, Nassar (2003) extends a further discerning and investigative means for assessing websites and target customers with reference to the hospitality and tourism business sector specifically which codifies existing high-quality implementation and performance necessities for organisations’ websites to meet up customer necessities. Nassar (2003) has extended of pyramid of contemplations in which twenty eight user-pertinent attributes are systematized into a chain of command focusing on how a website might prop up a model of brand-building suitable for SMEs in hospitality and tourism business and facilitating relative investigation, not just of technological facets of organisations’ websites but as well of additional aspects in relation to the requirements of clients and regarding their building brand competence. Nassar’s twenty eight aspects are systamatised beneath six contemplations namely accessibility, information, credibility, e-commerce, immediacy and customer relationship. As regards these, it is notable that the lower in the chain of command the contemplation is, the further basic it is. For this reason, accessibility is an added basic aspect in relation to customer relationship, and there is not a great deal position concentrating on facets of customer relationship if accessibility is suboptimal. These aspects might be evaluated as regards the website of a hotel or tour operator from the evaluating criteria namely good, satisfactory and sub-optimal.

**CASE STUDY DISCUSSION**

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The literature reviewed suggest that ICT has enabled a range of transformations in diverse industries and therefore a foremost intricacies for SMEs have had been the blowing up progression and the ever-rising ICT advanced over the years. Furthermore, recently, a big number of SMEs have had obtained straight accessibility to computers or additional sorts of technologies related to Internet environment, first and foremost for particular mission progress. The advancements in the outlays and competences of ICTs are transforming the modes in which definite sorts of communications and adroitness might take place (Summut-Bonnii and McGee, 2002). So far as the case of Golden Tours is concerned, despite being small in operation and as well the operation limited to the London City, the tourism organization understands the capabilities of ICTs, and that is why market its products /service through online channels. However, its use of online channels cannot be termed as standard, and this is nothing surprising considering its small size and operation. However, considering the rising competition in the segment, Golden Tours needs to turn its challenges in opportunity through the maximum affordable use of ICTs in the forms of distribution channels such as GDS and CRS. As Sabado (2005) contend that even as organizations in hospitality and tourism industry build up internet portals to distribute information and products, where such organisations necessitate professionals who are technically skilled to handle ICT tools for properly running the distribution channels in the forms of GDS and CRS.

The GDS will help out Golden Tours to compete on an equal footing with its large counterparts in the city of London. This online distribution channel will not only help Golden Tours to compete with its large counterparts but as well expand the business for enhancing the revenue and profitability considering the future growth and survival. As ICTs have offered fresh tools and has endowed hospitality and tourism organizations with innovative distribution channels, therefore forming a new-fangled business environment. ICT tools have had smoothed the progress of business deal in the business in the course of setting of connections with business partners, distribution of product /services and offering information to customers all through the world (Buhalis, 2003). Golden Tours is recommended to form partnership with RezLive.com (RezLive, 2013), a B2B system empowering travel partners with connectivity to book rooms in more than 1,25,000+ International Hotels and Apartments rooms at wholesale Rates. This global distribution channel has numerous exchange options and a with dynamism well-run arrangement that facilitate travel associates to book and voucher their reservations with just one click.



The current level of Internet and social media use by Golden Tours is not first-rate and necessitates revolutionary shift considering the advancements taking in the field of Internet and social media, particularly from the perspective of hospitality and tourism organisations. However, Golden Tours can no longer afford to survive in the current environment with the current negligible use of Internet and social media. As Chhabra (2009) contend that hospitality and tourism SMEs are all set to obtain the fruits of the internet and social media as soon as they integrate the internet and social media with additional marketing techniques and strategies, where the control of the internet and social media tend to be really wonderful. Furthermore Anandkumar (2008) note down that even though SMEs do not have an recognized position in the Internet economy or the world of social media, nevertheless a few of them are creating fast paces to develop into an essential fraction of e-business and marketing setting in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Golden Tours is recommended to use twitter for expanding its business and twitter should be used for following purposes (Rezdy, 2013): customer engagement; customer service; promoting brand identity; and running operations.



So far as use of web or website is concerned, Golden Tours appears appealing with its website considering the requirements for a small size tour operator having limited operations to a particular city namely London. From this perspective we find Golden Tours understands the need of website, but that is not enough. There is need to evaluate the website of Golden Tours from the perspective of Nassar’s(2003) twenty eight aspects are systematized beneath six contemplations namely accessibility, information, credibility, e-commerce, immediacy and customer relationship. As Nassar (2003) extends a more discerning and investigative means for assessing websites and target customers with reference to the hospitality and tourism industry sector specifically which codifies existing high-quality implementation and performance necessities for hotel/tour operator websites to meet up clients necessities. The website of Golden Tours <http://www.goldentours.com> lacks in accessibility as currently it does have direct link to GDS or CRS. So far as information is concerned, it is of high-quality considering the information share by the website regarding the services offered and the information about the city and accommodation. Credibility too appears of first-rate. E-commerce of the website is as well good considering the availability of transactions through various cards. However, when it comes to immediacy and customer relationship, Golden Tours requires radical improvement. A logo is recommended for Golden Tours for expanding business in global hospitality and tourism market.



**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Despite being small in operation and as well the operation limited to the London City, Golden Tours understands the capabilities of ICTs, and that is why market its products /service through online channels. However, its use of online channels cannot be termed as standard, and this is nothing surprising considering its small size and operation. However, considering the rising competition in the segment, Golden Tours needs to turn its challenges in opportunity through the maximum affordable use of ICTs in the forms of distribution channels such as GDS and CRS. The GDS will help out Golden Tours to compete on an equal footing with its large counterparts in the city of London. This online distribution channel will not only help Golden Tours to compete with its large counterparts but as well expand the business for enhancing the revenue and profitability considering the future growth and survival. Golden Tours is recommended to form partnership with RezLive.com, a B2B system empowering travel associates with connectivity to book rooms in a big number of International Hotels and Apartments rooms at wholesale Rates. This global distribution channel has numerous exchange choices and a with dynamism well-run arrangement that facilitate travel partners to book and voucher their reservations with single click. The current level of Internet and social media use by Golden Tours is not first-rate and necessitates revolutionary shift considering the advancements taking in the field of Internet and social media, particularly from the perspective of hospitality and tourism organisations. However, Golden Tours can no longer afford to survive in the current environment with the current negligible use of Internet and social media. Golden Tours is recommended to use twitter for expanding its business and twitter should be used for following purposes customer engagement, customer service, promoting brand identity, and running operations. So far as use of web or website is concerned, Golden Tours appears appealing with its website considering the requirements for a small size tour operator having limited operations to a particular city that is to say London. From this perspective we find Golden Tours understands the need of website, but that is not enough. The website of Golden Tours lacks in accessibility as currently it does have direct link to GDS or CRS. So far as information is concerned, it is of high-quality considering the information share by the website regarding the services offered and the information about the city and accommodation. Credibility too appears of first-rate. E-commerce of the website is as well good considering the availability of transactions through various cards. However, when it comes to immediacy and customer relationship, Golden Tours requires radical improvement. There is recommended to Golden Tours a website logo for expanding business in global hospitality and tourism market.

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