

Chapter 9

The Journey of the Tourism Industry From Digital Marketing to Metaverse Network

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ABSTRACT

Metaverse virtual tourism market, which is frequently mentioned as a result of this change, will appear as an alternative tourism type that allows people living in different countries to travel to the same country or different countries in the virtual world. Consequently, it is possible that the Metaverse virtual tourism market will become widespread as an alternative niche market to traditional tourism in the near future. For this reason, it is anticipated that the conceptual framework presented by the department about digital tourism marketing and metaverse network will contribute to the sector and future academic studies.

INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology, health and economic crisis environments that affect the world are changing the functioning of every sector in a fast and dynamic way. On the other hand, as people adapt to the developing technology and digital world, their needs and wants are also changing (Khmiadashvili, 2019). In the digital age, digital transformation has become a necessity for businesses in all industries and for all humanity.

In 1990's digital marketing which first came to the fore with banner advertising and web crawler (spider) has opened new channels for the marketing and sales of all kinds of products, with applications such as social media marketing (SMM) and search engine optimization (SEO) (Kingsnorth, 2017). Therefore, digital marketing offers the opportunity to gain a flexibility that surpasses the brand power by providing the opportunity to reach online or mobile target audiences in the tourism industry, which has a wide range of alternative products and where there is intense competition (Luck & Lancaster, 2003). In this context, tourism businesses have also focused on increasing their profitability by making all their

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marketing processes online. Virtual fairs, online meetings, online forums, online virtual museums, and online tour services are some of the developments that help tourism move into the digital world. Metaverse, which is the reflection of the physical world in the virtual universe, use of technologies such as reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR). In this virtual universe, which will be created with the new consumption types and cultures that emerged as a result of this contain new opportunities within the tourism industry (Cilesiz & Aydın, 2022).

Social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube have become a part of our lives as popular environments used for business networking, targeted marketing, and entertainment, sharing information of users, and enabling them to interact with each other on global. The possibility of sharing personal information, photos, and posts, chatting, and commenting on these sites will create various alternatives for tourism businesses to quickly obtain information about their potential customers and create market niches. While digital platforms will enable us to appeal to large market audiences, they will also allow us to significantly reduce marketing costs. In addition, social media advertisements, where users share their experiences, are more reliable than mass media such as radio, television and newspapers, and appeal to the tourism industry (Batinić, 2015).

Tourism businesses allocate large budgets and conduct R&D studies in order to show a successful performance in the digital platforms they turn to for the main purposes of protecting their business identity and brand value, combating economic and social crises, expanding their market share etc. (Yazdanifard & Yee, 2014). Hotel reservations, flight and bus tickets, visuals, or videos for the region to visit, virtual guides, navigations and virtual reality applications in the digital environment will present the Metaverse virtual tourism market as an alternative tourism market in the near future. For example, a vacationer who wants to go on vacation will be able to contact the avatar sales representative of the vacation destination he wants to buy and make a hotel reservation and have the opportunity to wander around the hotel where he will spend his vacation. People who want to have a holiday will have the opportunity to reach any part of the country or hotel where they will spend their holidays, with their avatars, thanks to the hologram technology. Even tourism fairs, hotels, cruise ships, travel agencies and other tourism businesses will use the Metaverse virtual world to showcase their products. Those who want to travel will have the opportunity to visit two different cities by comparing and examining hotels, museums and historical sites using 3D images and hologram technology, without leaving their homes (Coban, 2021). In the digital era, where individualization and consumer orientation are dominant, potential tourists tend to alternative tourism types rather than mass tourism and give importance to the concept of sustainability. In addition, the desire of individuals to purchase tourism products, which are indicators of their own status and reflect their identities, has increased. Within the scope of all these, one of the biggest innovations in the tourism sector is product diversity. In this context, the metaverse network can be considered as a promising environment for tourism businesses to provide interactive communication to tourists, expand trust and enjoyable consumer experiences (Kozak, Evren, & Çakır, 2013)

In this context, it is possible that the lack of knowledge of tourism businesses on managing digital marketing channels and metaverse marketing may negatively affect the sustainable development of businesses. For this reason, it is foreseen that the department will show the way the sector and future academic studies on the use of digital and metaverse marketing.

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