

**SMART TOURISM – AN APPROACH ASSOCIATED WITH
TOURISM IN ORDER TO OBTAIN ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR A
REGION**

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***Abstract:** The article deals with the development of approaches to the improvement of digital technology in the tourism sector. It is revealed that the improvement of digital technology in the tourism sector acquires a variety of manifestation forms, which include online purchase of ready-made tours formed by tour operators, as well as the development and implementation of mobile applications, designed, among other things, for tourists, digitalization of self-designed tours through the creation of online schools for novice travelers. It is proved that the digitalization of tourism will be accompanied by a further process of displacement of traditional companies with offline offices from the tourist market, and the development of tours designed according to the parameters individually set by each specific client. Consequently, tourist organizations, which will be able to provide to consumers best customization in the provision of tourist services, will gain competitive advantages.*

***Key words:** Digital marketing, marketing intelligence, digital technology, economic benefits, big data.*

Digitalization has brought about significant transformations in the travel and tourism industry, turning it into a technologically advanced sector often referred to as a 'smart' industry. The research presented in this article aims to contribute to this innovative landscape by developing a solution that enhances the quality of information for implementing automated marketing strategies. This involves interpreting data gathered from various online tourism and hospitality sources,

which are part of the realm of Big Data. The goal is to empower users to execute effective digital marketing campaigns by providing guidance in defining business objectives and designing corresponding campaigns. Additionally, the solution incorporates feedback mechanisms to enhance the stored information, leveraging artificial intelligence algorithms to learn from past campaign outcomes and improve future efforts. Ultimately, the objective is to advertise campaigns across multiple platforms in a user-friendly and immediate manner, aiming to reach a broader audience and drive increased sales.

Digitalization has significantly changed the travel and tourism industry, transforming it into a 'smart' sector, in other words, an innovative and technologically advanced sector that is fully immersed in the paradigm of Industry 4.0. As we head towards Tourism 4.0, therefore, we ask: what lies behind the expression, *smart tourism*? Gretzel et al. (2015a) and Femenia-Serra et al. (2019) underscore how the term 'smart' represents a by-now common buzzword used to describe the technological, economic, and social advances spearheaded by technologies that rely on sensors, Big Data, new forms of connectivity and information exchange (e.g. the IoT, IoS, wireless communication or RFID, and near field communication or NFC), its meaning closely matching the capacity to deduce and reason in an intelligent way. Physical structures such as homes and factories are also given the 'smart' label (smart home and smart factory) to describe the integration between physical and digital worlds. Technological support devices are also becoming 'smart' devices; phones become 'smartphones', credit cards become 'smartcards', a television becomes a 'smart TV' and all share the common features of multi-functionality and the power of connectivity.

Furthermore, the 'smart economy' is that which is supported by technologies that facilitate collaboration and connection between and among people. Lastly, the term 'smart cities' has been used to identify urban contexts that have adopted innovative technology to optimize the use of resources and to favor efficient governance processes that aim for sustainability and high quality of life for the citizenry. In other words, a Smart City is a city that brings together technology,

government and society, including six components: smart economy, smart mobility, smart environment, smart people, smart living and smart governance (Lom et al. [2016](#); Lu [2017b](#)). With reference to tourism, 'smart' is a term used for a variety of initiatives, such as using Big Data to differentiate demand (segmentation), adopting cloud computing as an external memory bank in which to store data and information, or providing access to free wi-fi or sensors strategically placed to let objects and physical, cultural, and service (e.g., transportation) resources connect and communicate with tourists' mobile phones within the territorial context of destinations. This sector lends itself well to the 'smart' designation, as tourism is a sector that features easily digitalized, information-rich value propositions that spotlight the role played by new technologies. Its technological evolution has been constant and significant (Buhalis and Law [2008](#)).

Additionally, smart tourism is characterized by scientific and technological advancement that prioritize people-centric and sustainable approaches, enhancing service quality and tourism experiences through the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). These aspects serve as crucial prerequisites for the establishment of digital tourism, with its effectiveness contingent upon factors such as interoperability and the presence of skilled social and human capital.

In the tourism context, this entails the ability of diverse organizations and individuals to interact, share mutually beneficial objectives, and exchange information and knowledge using common communication standards. Fundamentally, Tourism 4.0 and smart tourism are centered around emerging digital technologies, serving as the technical foundation that enables their convergence. Both concepts originate from the backdrop of the fourth industrial revolution and are grounded in elements like the Internet of Things, connectivity, digitalization processes, augmented reality, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and digital presence.

However, there are distinct characteristics that differentiate the two concepts. While Tourism 4.0 primarily encompasses the hardware and software advancements of technologies, "smart tourism" embodies a sustainability-oriented approach to

utilizing the Internet and ICT. It aims to integrate technological, human, and social resources to uphold sustainability principles, thereby enhancing people's quality of life and enriching tourists' experiences. Smart tourism emphasizes sustainable mobility, social cohesion, privacy protection, and optimizing waste management, as well as water and energy consumption in tourist destinations (Figure 1.).

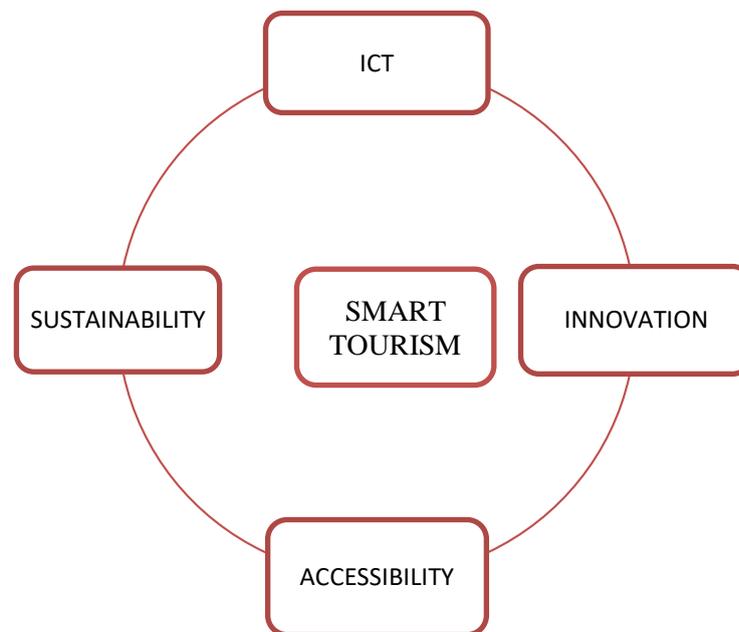


Figure 1. Dimensions of the smart tourism destinations

In our interconnected world, devices constantly communicate with each other to make our experience with them better, i.e. seamless, and smoother. Internet of Things (IoT) refers to a vast network of smart objects which work together in collecting and analyzing data and autonomously performing actions. Advancements in communications and data analytics technologies, as well as the growing prevalence of connected devices in our everyday life, have made IoT a trend to stay. Italian organizations and consumers are also playing a part in this game of connectedness, contributing to the growth of the Italian IoT market, which reached over eight billion euros in 2022.

Major IoT segments in the Italian market include smart metering, smart asset management, smart home, and smart city. The influence of the Internet of Things is evident in other markets as well, such as agriculture, the automotive industry, and

telecommunications, with the new 5G connection allowing IoT devices to communicate and share data faster than ever. Smart cities utilize information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure and applications to provide smart services to residents that lead to a more convenient way of life. In Italy, Florence is generally the highest-rated city in terms of smartness, although Cremona is ranked first in terms of online services. Tourism, security, waste collection, and environmental monitoring are also areas that municipalities hope to improve with smart solutions, notably by developing apps related to these sectors.

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