

Chapter 21: Disintermediate: Digital media can disintermediate relationships in tourism at heritage destinations

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Abstract

Over the recent decades, Information Communication Technologies have transformed all spheres of the tourism industry, altering the industry structure and developing a whole range of opportunities and threats. This has seen ICTs become an indispensable source of competitiveness for both industry and destinations. One major result of this ICTs-led evolution has been the continued disintermediation of hitherto indispensable travel and tourism intermediaries. This has resulted in a number of benefits to the tourism supply and demand sides as power shifts away from the intermediaries thus providing tourism suppliers access to consumers and their information. Nonetheless, removing an intermediary from the distribution system often means that tourism suppliers have to reproduce the functionality of the intermediary's core competence, but more importantly, replicate the flow of information, materials, knowledge as well as the cash flows resulting from that particular node. In the case of cultural and heritage tourism enterprises (CHTEs), the fundamental question remains to what extent suppliers would take advantage of ICTs-enabled business competitiveness, and to what extent in the process, intermediaries will be eliminated from the value system. This paper models a conceptual framework for enhancing benefits resulting from ICTs-mediated disintermediation to the cultural and heritage tourism enterprises.