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LEISURE TIME IN THE ERA OF SMART TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract. *The scientific article aims to examine the impact of smart technology on the use of leisure. The emphasis is placed on the opportunities that trends in the use of leisure time provide to the tourism industry. Special attention is paid to the possibilities of different use of smart technologies in online tourism. The factors that influence the trends for the use of leisure time on the Internet and social networks are pointed. The author defends the thesis that smart technologies` development influences the trends in the utilization of leisure time.*

Keywords: *leisure time, tourism, smart technologies, trends, Internet.*

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Introduction

With the advent of the Internet in people`s daily lives, their way of life has changed radically – how they work, rest, and perform their duties. Moreover, their form of communication has changed. Potential clients in both tourism and almost all other industries are already looking for information online, communicating with other clients of a particular organization, making assessments. The modern tourists do this mainly through their phone or tablet. Smart technologies and applications provide access to online space anytime, anywhere.

The subject of research in this article is leisure time. The object of study is the relationship between trends in leisure and smart technologies.

The scientific article aims to explore and discuss the impact of smart technologies on the use of leisure. To achieve this goal, the author sets the following research tasks:

- review of smart technologies in tourism;
- analyzing the changes in the use of leisure time;
- assessment of the utilization of leisure time through smart technologies in tourism.

Literature Review

The scientific article contains information from selected literature and Internet sources, related to the analysis of leisure time and online tourism. To achieve the goal of research and solve the formulated tasks are used the methods of analysis of scientific concepts on the treated issues in the specialized literature, synthesis of author`s ideas and data, and scientific discussion, in defense of the author`s thesis that trends in the use of leisure are in close connection with the development of smart technologies and their application in tourism.

Methods

The **mass use of smart technologies for Internet access** suggests targeting the tourism business's efforts in this direction. Technological advancement is pushing for the *improvement of online travel platforms* in order to make them easier to use through smartphones and tablets. Various factors determine the changes in the trends for the use of leisure time and directing users to smart devices. The article discusses the main prerequisites and outlines the possibilities associated with these trends.

Results

Smart technologies in tourism

The Internet opens up great opportunities for the development of various **new technologies**. Moreover, the online space encourages **faster technological progress**. All traders' goal is to produce and offer their products more efficiently and at a lower cost.

The tourism industry is no exception. The Internet is gradually becoming a *significant source of information* [4, p. 514]. Some examples are the many advertising sites, platforms for direct booking of accommodation, and online portals containing information about specific destinations, tour operators, travel agents, hotels, airlines, and other various participants in the tourism market.

The Internet is so widespread and used so often that access to it only through the computer at home is no longer sufficient and convenient. The advent of **small and easily portable smart devices** seems like a natural consequence. There are many examples: *tablets, phones, watches, even glasses*. Some of them are more accessible and easier to use; others require more investment and effort. The compact size and the ability to be transported anywhere make it **easier to use and maximize their value**.

The use of smart technologies in tourism can be explored from many perspectives. Figure 1 shows the different aspects of their *usefulness to tourists and the tourism industry at the same time* (see Figure 1). Smart technologies in tourism are **a catalyst for the development of the sector**. They allow for easier access to tourist sites via the Internet. The use of portable smart technologies helps to create **a higher value of tourism products and services**. Tourists can document their experiences and share them with acquaintances or strangers. Moreover, due to most smart devices' compact size, they are easily portable [2, p. 226]. At the time of use of any travel service, every traveler can enjoy the benefits of smart technology and uninterrupted internet connection.

Smart technologies can be used anywhere and anytime. This fact opens up many **opportunities for the tourism industry**. The examples are many, but the most commonly used are Live streaming *on Youtube, Facebook or Instagram*, uploading photos and videos and sharing opinions on social networks (most often *Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter*), online booking of various travel services, translation from one language to another and others.

The online space contributes to **cross-cultural learning** not only through social media interaction. Another form of creating a cultural identity is the formation of new cultural forms, which is valuable for preserving the customs and traditions of people [6, p. 279]. This process is helped by the widespread use of the Internet to explore the culture. By creating the possibility of finding new information, fascinating cultural sites and landmarks, the Internet and smart technologies become an essential part of the transformation of cross-cultural learning. This process helps tourism become more popular and assists tourists in finding more exciting destinations and cultures to visit and explore.

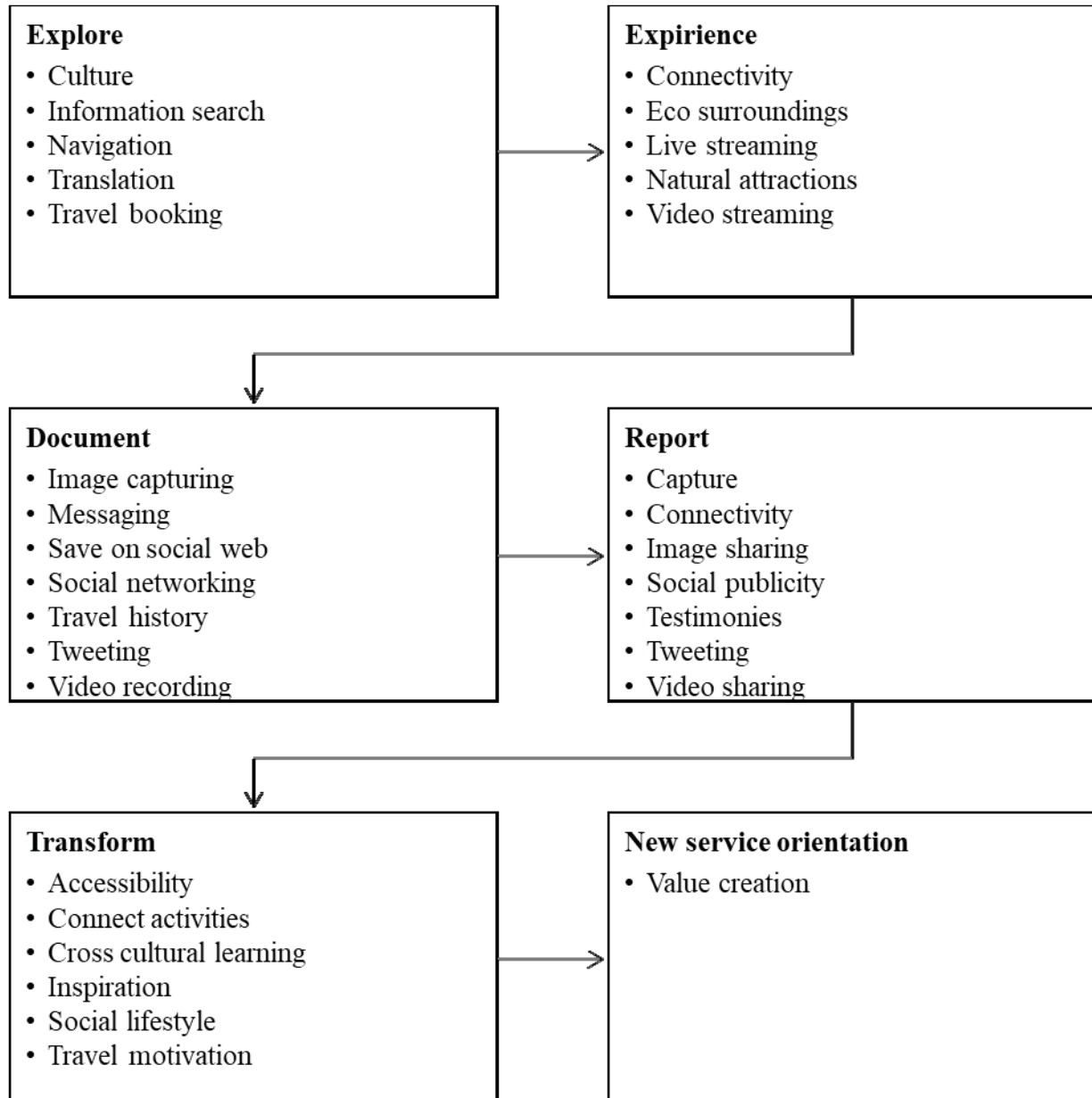


Figure 1. Use of smart technologies in tourism

Source: Systematization of the author from Atembe, R., *The Use of Smart Technology in Tourism: Evidence From Wearable Devices*, *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Elsevier, 2015, Vol. 3, No. 11-12, p. 226.

Table 1 shows a comparison of **Live streaming** with the standard capture of a photo or video published on social networks, online booking portals or the websites of various travel companies (Table 1). The live broadcast allows for a **more authentic presentation of tourist products**. There is no ability to edit and distort reality, which attracts the audience and creates a **sense of security and trust**.

Table 1. Comparison of visual media in tourism

	Photography	Videography	Live-streaming
Presence	Low	Medium	High
Time	Pre-recorded	Pre-recorded	Real-time/archived
Space	Virtual	Virtual	Blended
Performance	Raw/Edited	Edited	Unedited
Authenticity	Contrived	Contrived	Staged authenticity
Storytelling	Static	Scripted	Spontaneous
Social interaction	Asynchronous	Asynchronous	Synchronous

Source: Systematization of the author from Deng, Z., Blended Tourism Experiencescape: A Conceptualisation of Live-Streaming Tourism, Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2019, Springer, 2019, p. 214.

Another essential advantage of Live streaming, provided by smart technologies, is the possibility of a **more saturated online presence**. This activity does not involve additional costs and does not require a highly professional qualifications.

Uploading photos and videos to social networks and Internet portals, in turn, also brings some *significant benefits*. Tourist brands in practice have an **unfair advantage** over other brands in terms of images. People like to watch photos and videos of the places they want to visit [11]. Capturing high-quality images of a landscape or cultural activity is more accessible with modern *smartphones and tablets*. What's more, the current trend is to **tag and hashtag** every time a photo, video, or post is posted. In this way, online users can see **more visual information** about a specific destination, landmark, or travel product.

Last but not least, smart devices provide quick and easy access to online booking platforms. Tourists can plan their trips not only from home. In practice, they **make changes while traveling** [10]. Nowadays, travel tickets by various means of transport or visiting tourist attractions are not issued on paper. Travelers have tickets for their trip **saved in smart apps or as a photo on their phone**. They don't need to print anything but instead have to open their smart device and show it at the airport or in the museum.

Changes in the use of leisure time

Life is continually changing. This is due not only to the introduction of new technologies but also to many other factors. The time in which a person can rest or do something pleasant becomes more and more limited with age and increasing

commitments. Free time is also determined by what a person does, whether they have children or other obligations take up part of their day.

As shown in Figure 2, **modern societies appreciate the need for free time** for enjoyable and beneficial activities (Figure 2). Travel is becoming more affordable in terms of finances and the ability to leave the city or country.

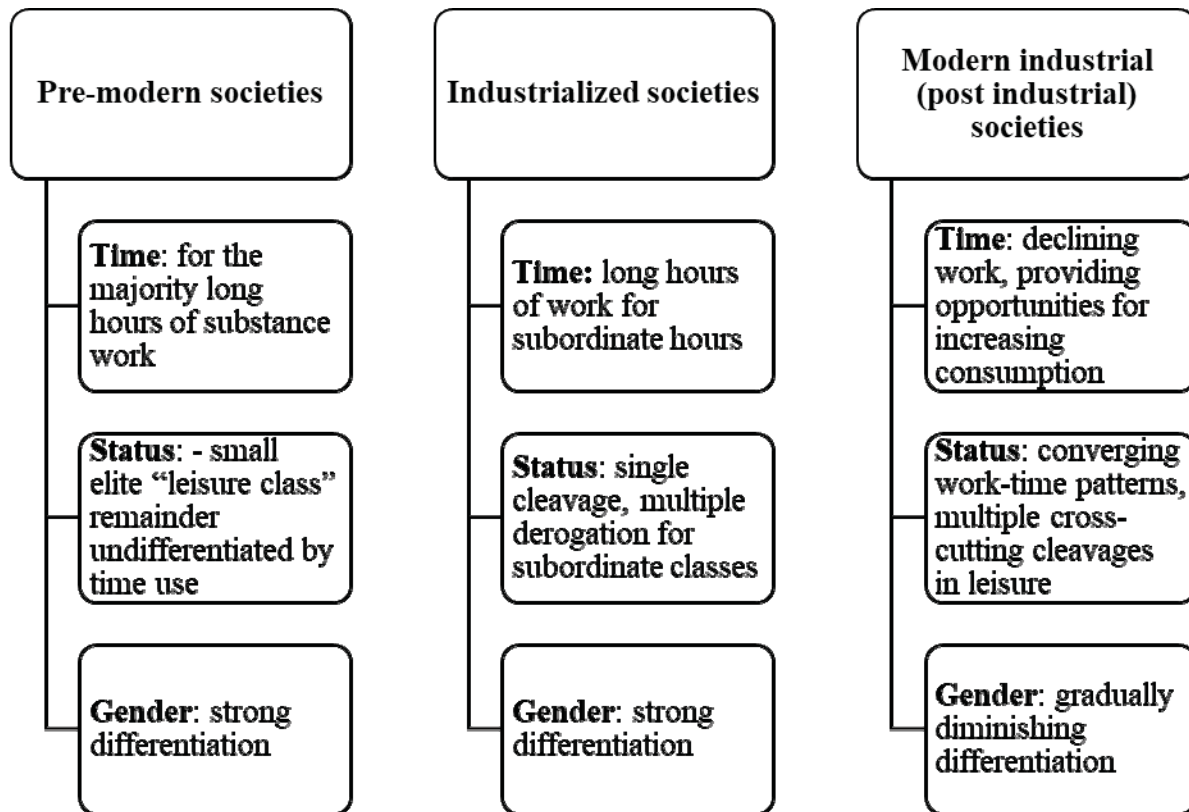


Figure 2. Typology of development in the use of leisure time

Source: Systematization of the author from Roberts K., *Leisure and the contemporary society*, Cabi Publishing, 2006, p. 57.

The work is becoming more automated, and the implementation of computer technology and the Internet allow most activities to be performed faster, smoother, and more efficiently. On the other hand, there is a feeling that there is not enough time for everything. The constant rush leads to the so-called "**time deepening**".

Time deepening is the change from thinking in terms of "either, or", exercising one activity or another, to **doing several things at once**. It manifests itself in *four ways*:

- attempt to complete a specific activity faster;
- replace some pleasant activity related to rest and recreation, which requires more time, with another similar one, which happens more quickly;
- performing more than one action at a time – multitasking, primarily through digital technologies;
- activities related to rest and recreation are carried out on a strict schedule that does not allow waste of unnecessary time [8, p. 41].

This need to save time is reflected in the use of the Internet to organize travel. People spend most of their time in front of a computer or other device that uses the Internet. As of April 2020, there are 4.57 billion active Internet users worldwide. Unique phone profiles on the Internet are 4.2 billion, and almost everyone who uses social media (3.81 billion) does so via a smartphone (3.76 billion) [12]. This data in itself suggests that **a large part of their free time people spend online, on social networks, through their smartphones**. That is why the tourist enterprises' tendency to focus on *offering their products and services on the Internet* remains.

Utilization of leisure time through smart technologies in tourism

Smart technologies in tourism are used in two main directions – **from the business' side**, to reach potential tourists and **from consumers' side**– to access information about destinations, hotels, and various tourist services. Travel businesses use the Internet and smart technologies as they realize over time the broad “audience” they can reach through them. On the other hand, these same technologies make the tourism business processes more simple and more comfortable – *less paperwork, more efficient communication, mobility, and ability to work outside the office*: from home, while on the move, or even when on holiday.

All these possibilities are a reality since people spend most of their time online and mainly through smartphones and tablets. It turns out that this works: in 2017, in Spain, the most clicks from smart devices were realized for ads related to travel and tourism (38%), restaurants are in third place with 33% [13]. This data shows that **consumers are mainly interested in tourism activities when it comes to their free time**.

Discussion

The main focus of online business in the short term is the sale of tourist products and services, ticket booking, accommodation [1, p. 58]. The Internet's current opportunities allow travel companies **to pay attention to customer preferences** and understand which sites they favor. Only the information that is needed to make a purchase decision is provided, without unnecessary details. Smart devices allow data to be **presented in the most exciting way possible**. The aim is to attract the attention of potential tourists. They can **use their free time to travel** instead of some other activity.

Every trip has **five main stages**: *dreaming (choice), planning, booking, experiences, and sharing* [9]. Smart technologies are at the heart of much of people's daily lives. For this reason, **the smartphone and tablet are usually an indispensable assistant in planning any trip**. Travelers have **all the information they need, gathered in one place, accessible from a device that fits their pocket**. In this way, they save part of their free time, effort, and expenses.

Consumers of travel services can make reservations from their smartphones, which saves them time. Also, one of the threats to online tourism is **the danger of fraud**. Smart applications and technologies allow tourists to check the reviews of a hotel or restaurant at any time. In case they travel, and one of their reservations is

canceled, they can quickly and easily make another. It would save them a waste of time searching for a hotel on arrival.

Conclusion

Smart technologies are a catalyst for the development of the tourism industry. Businesses that realize the importance of the Internet in people's daily lives focus on online supply and services consumption. Smart devices provide quick and easy access to travel sites. Thus, various market participants are striving to improve their platforms to be accessible through smartphones and tablets.

Trends in the use of leisure time are a prerequisite for the development of the tourism industry and the generation of more revenue and profits [5, p. 218]. The mass penetration of social networks encourages users to increasingly use their smart devices when surfing the Internet. They are more compact and easily portable. The development of intelligent technologies influences trends in the utilization of leisure time. They are one of the main reasons why consumers spend even more time online.

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