

# E-Tourism

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## Contemporary Tourism Reviews

**Series Editor: Chris Cooper**

 Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited,  
Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ

<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com>

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride



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## 1.0. Introduction

The Internet is the most important innovation since the development of the printing press (Hoffman, 2000). There have been significant innovations, such as the railroad, electricity, the telephone, the automobile, the airplane, radio and television, which had widespread impact on both business and everyday life (Barwise, Elberse, & Hammond, 2006). However, the Internet combines many of the features of existing media with new capabilities of interactivity and addressability; thus, it transforms not only the way individuals conduct their business with each other, but also the very essence of what it means to be a human being in society (Barwise et al., 2006). Nowadays, millions of people worldwide rely on the Internet for working, learning, socializing, entertainment, leisure and shopping.

In 2009, worldwide Internet users reached 1.8 billion (27% of the population worldwide) including 360.0 million Internet users in China (27% of its population) and 227.7 million users in the US (74% of its population) ([www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com)). This statistic represents an increase of 399% compared to year 2000. With the continuous growth in Internet penetration, demographic characteristics of online population are getting to resemble the general population. The average age of Internet users is rising in tandem with that of the general population, and racial and ethnic characteristics are more closely mirroring those in the offline population (eMarketer, 2010). More interesting is the fact that over 90% of people between age of five and 17 use the Internet on a regular basis (Turban, King, McKay, Marshall, Lee, & Viehland, 2008). These younger people are more familiar with the Internet than other media such as radio and television. When they grow into the economically active population, the Internet will be the most influential medium in business.

Since the emergence of the Internet, travel planning (e.g., travel information search and booking) has always been one of the main reasons that people use the Internet. The top five most popular online purchases were books (66%), clothes (57%), travel arrangements (57%), gifts (51%) and CDs (45%) in the US in 2007 (Center for the Digital Future, 2008). A study conducted in Britain (Dutton & Helsper, 2007) also found that respondents' most search activity conducted online was making travel plans (84%), followed by getting information about local events (77%), looking for news (69%) and finding information about health or medical care (68%) in 2007. The revolution of the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) has had already profound implications for the tourism industry. A whole system of ICTs and the Internet has been rapidly diffused throughout tourism sectors (Buhalis, 2004; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Poon, 1993; Werthner & Klein, 1999). Subsequently, online travel bookings and associated travel services are recognized as one of the most successful e-commerce implementations, with estimates of sales of \$73.4 billion in 2006 (Turban et al., 2008).

It is evident that e-business is an essential prerequisites for successful organisations in the emerging, globally networked, internet-empowered business environment, especially for the tourism industry. Many tourism-related organisations had to go through a major business processes re-engineering to take advantage of the emerging technologies in order to transform their processes and data handling as well as their ability to operate and to compete in the emerging global marketplace (Laudon & Laudon, 2007).

The purpose of this review is to provide essential knowledge related to ICT developments and main implications of ICT in tourism. It illuminates the complexity of the various types of systems

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