

PRESS RELEASE

Tourism in a Digital Era

Significant conclusions and data regarding tourism in a digital era emerged from the presentations given today at an informative event held by Larnaka Tourism Board (LTB) and MMC (Mediterranean Management Centre) in cooperation with the university UCLan Cyprus.

The event was held to present the ‘Digital Tourism Adviser - ISO 17024’ certification scheme; part of the ‘dTour’ project funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

In his welcome address, president of LTB, Mr Dinos Lefkaritis, underlined the project’s aims – to promote digital tourism skills for tourism and hospitality SMEs – and stressed the significance of this role for the modern tourism sector given that 95% of travellers within the European Union use digital media during their travels. He further noted the role of the Digital Tourism Advisor: "to use these skills and digital tools and be able to advise and promote digital solutions to business within the hospitality and tourism sector so that they can maximise the opportunities that digital technologies have to offer". He further added that this will level the playing field and allow smaller businesses to enter the new digital era of tourism with ease, stressing that “with our collective efforts, we can ensure that the island’s tourism industry remains firmly at the forefront of global innovation.”

The online marketing strategy of the Deputy Ministry of Tourism was presented by Mr Michalis Poulos; First Tourism Officer, who stated that the emphasis for advertising is now focused on digital marketing, which provides a myriad of opportunities to promote our destination. He also emphasised the necessity to promote appropriate creative content that showcases the selling points of Cyprus in the most opportune way, demonstrating the successful implementation of digital tools through statistics for key target markets, whilst also presenting the elements of the island’s specialist tourism that are actively promoted.

Dr Aspasia Simillidou, UCLan Lecturer in Hospitality and Tourism, gave a presentation on the topic of technology, and in particular, that of artificial intelligence and its future implementations. The aim of her presentation was to open up a debate on the development of technology within the tourism and hospitality sector and its impact on both customers and employees. Dr Simillidou reviewed today's data, and specifically, where the industry is already using robotics. The discussion then focused on the human impact this has. Participants had the opportunity to express their own opinions and experiences - both as professionals and as customers - through a coordinated workshop. As a result of the open discussion opinions were heard on the future of the industry within this area.

Useful information on how businesses can improve their online presence, along with practical solutions, were provided by Mr Alex Constanti, Business Development of ideaseven Digital. Mr Constanti offered advice on what to avoid, and emphasised best practises in order to optimise online presence and increase interaction with potential customers. He also outlined the most popular, current digital trends, including the use of QR codes, mobile apps and augmented reality technology.

Cyprus ranks very low among EU countries in terms of the number of businesses using artificial intelligence, at just 3%, whilst Cyprus businesses connected to the 'internet of things' stands at 33% according to Eurostat data presented by Ms Sofia Constantinou of MMC. In her presentation, Ms Constantinou also provided details of the certification programme; the pilot for which is fully funded by the Erasmus+ programme and is aimed at tourism and hotel staff, business consultants and other professionals wishing to acquire modern digital skills and obtain the 'Digital Tourism Adviser - ISO 17024'. Holders of the certification will then be able to assist tourism SMEs in strengthening their digital presence.

The 'Digital Tourism Adviser' pilot training is part of the 'dTour' project (Introducing Digitalisation for Boosting SMEs in Tourism and Hospitality) of the Erasmus+ programme. Further information on the project can be found here <https://dtourlms.projectlibrary.eu/>. Eight partners from Greece, Sweden UK, Spain and Cyprus are participating, with LTB and MMC as Cyprus partners.

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