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How does Digitalization Affect Lifelong Learning?

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Abstract

Applying knowledge actively and continuously is necessary for lifelong learning. A lifelong learner is one who adds new knowledge, modifies existing knowledge, and gains the necessary knowledge to solve challenges. As a result, lifelong learning now requires technological literacy, or the capacity to access and use information using technology. Individual technical aptitudes and talents are crucial in this situation. In order for lifelong learning to be sustained, people must be proficient in using technology and have access to relevant information. Especially the lifelong learning processes of tourism industry employees, which is a labor-intensive sector, are important for tourism enterprises and provide competitive advantage. The aim of this research is to examine the impact of digitalization within the scope of lifelong learning in terms of tourism industry. The findings obtained by examining the literature in line with the keywords determined in the research conducted by document analysis technique are presented. In the research, it was concluded that tourism employees, which is a constantly developing industry, should be continuous learners and that digitalization provides convenience and easy access in the context of lifelong education.

Keywords: Digitalization, lifelong learning, education, tourism industry

1. Introduction

While this age of constant change is called the information age, societies that adapt to this change are called information societies. This renewal has made it imperative for individuals and societies to adapt to these changing conditions through continuous development. In our age where knowledge is differentiated every day, learning should not only be seen as an activity that contributes to the professional development of individuals, starting from childhood and including the youth period (Drude et al., 2019). In this context, the key to adapting to this rapid transformation of knowledge is possible through learning independent of time and space at all levels of life. The general characteristic of societies where this awareness is widespread is that they see learning as a lifelong process that takes place outside of institutions and organizations and is applied in different time periods (Carr et al., 2020).

The continuity and sustainability of learning is ensured only by developing lifelong learning skills to facilitate the individual's adaptation to the renewed age. Lifelong learning is defined as all of the educational activities that an individual addresses within the scope of individual, social or professional development in order to improve his/her knowledge and skills throughout his/her life (Allmendinger et al., 2019). At the same time, lifelong learning is a process in which individuals ensure the continuity of the education process in all social environments and in all parts of life without covering certain time intervals (Nygren et al., 2019). In other words, lifelong learning is the learning process that individuals develop throughout their lives based on their needs and skills.

Today, due to the rapid transformation and changes in economic, political, technological, cultural and social fields, people's education and training needs have also increased. In order for individuals to maintain their competitiveness in changing market conditions and to maintain their material position as it is, they need to have the qualifications to be employed and to maintain, renew and improve these qualifications. These variables, which last throughout the lives of individuals, and the requirements that become more important as time and development progress, lead to the emergence and proliferation of the phenomenon of "lifelong learning" (Korpi and Tahlin, 2021).

Lifelong learning refers to the learner's continuous exposure to new knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as the ability to build new structures by combining existing knowledge and skills with newly acquired knowledge and skills (Akhmedov, 2022). In other words, it is a lifelong learning habit and behavior (Endres, 2021). The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of digitalization on tourism in the context of lifelong learning.

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1.1 The Need of the Study

The fact that the employees of the tourism industry, which is a labor-intensive sector, have lifelong learning behaviors provides a competitive advantage especially for businesses in this constantly developing industry. Digitalization for lifelong learning offers tourism employees the opportunity to improve themselves without time and space limitations. The research contributes to the literature in this direction by focusing on the role and benefits of digitalization practices for lifelong learning in tourism. The research contributes to the discussion of lifelong learning within the scope of inclusive vocational education for the training of tourism employees with the knowledge and skills needed by businesses in the tourism industry in a competitive environment. In addition, the research puts forward suggestions in the light of the data obtained.

1.2 Lifelong Learning

Education has maintained its importance in every period from past to present. What individuals learn at school may be sufficient to sustain their lives, but they also need to fill the gap that occurs over time in some way. The concept that emerged in order to fill this gap in individuals with the developing world is called lifelong learning (Gouthro, 2022). Lifelong learning is the education provided to individuals throughout their lives. Lifelong learning is defined as the voluntary self-change and development of individuals for personal or professional reasons (de Lima Flauzino et al., 2022). Lifelong learning is the purposeful learning activities that an individual receives in formal, non-formal and natural ways and develops himself/herself in terms of skills and knowledge in personal, cognitive, social and business life (Güleç et al., 2012).

Education is an effective element for both individuals and society. In an age that changes day by day, it should be the only indispensable element. Major countries that are aware of the rapid change are realizing that in order to increase competition and get ahead, it is necessary to leave the traditional education system and that the individual should learn lifelong learning in order to move forward and adapt to life more easily outside of formal education. The education process has come to be seen as a lifelong system that can be given and received regardless of age, language, religion, race and time (Gouthro, 2022).

1.3 Digitalization in Lifelong Learning

In today's digital or information age, it is necessary to use information and communication technologies together with the right methods to create learning processes that meet the needs of the age (Garzón Artacho et al., 2020). Since students are in a digital world in this age, it is emphasized that schools should be compatible with this process. It is stated that the use of technology in lessons will facilitate the lesson and support the success of the educational process and the use of new materials. In this context, the use of technology in education and the determination of this self-efficacy play an important role in the individual's lifelong learning skills (Garzón Artacho et al., 2021).

The opportunities offered by digital technologies in the context of lifelong learning are summarized as providing multimedia opportunities, facilitating lesson preparation and processing, making abstract concepts concrete, motivating students, educational management, providing audio-visual environments, saving time, providing ready-made materials, attracting students' attention, and keeping and accessing information about students (Eynon and Malmberg, 2021). Özgüven (2019) stated that digital technologies have an important role in the development of information literacy skills. Information technology use competencies, self-efficacy and the level of utilization of these technologies are important for increasing lifelong learning attitudes. Focusing on the development of children's ICT competencies provides opportunities to develop lifelong learning skills and not to be considered in the context of adult education.

2. Method

This paper presents a critical reflection on the literature on digitalization for lifelong learning in the tourism industry. In this context, documentary analysis was applied to reveal the main arguments of the research focus. In the research, literature review was conducted within the scope of the keywords determined for the research purpose. The keywords identified for the research purpose are digitalisation, lifelong learning and tourism industry.

3. Results

3.1 Impact of Digitalization on Lifelong Learning in Tourism Industry

In order to be successful in economic life in any field and at any level, people must be well trained in production and working life. It is an important responsibility of vocational education to train individuals who can adapt to the conditions of economic life. Vocational education is an education process that provides the individual with knowledge, skills, work habits and work responsibilities related to a certain profession in

business life and enables the development of the individual's abilities. The main purpose of vocational education is to provide the individual with certain qualifications in order to provide a good earning and to realise these qualifications in a way to keep up with the changes. The second is to ensure that the country's manpower needs are met efficiently. The fear of the 21st century people is to lose their jobs, to be unemployed without finding a job. In order not to lose the existing job, the best way to fight unemployment is to gain new skills and competence. For this, individuals should acquire continuous learning skills, and they should see learning not as a certain period of their lives, but as a lifelong process that is life itself (Albrecht et al., 2022).

In the tourism industry, digitalization has had a big impact on lifelong learning. Technology advancements have completely changed the way the tourist sector functions, requiring organizations to change and adjust to the new digital landscape. The following are some effects of digitalization on lifelong learning in the tourism industry: (Marx et al., 2021):

1. Access to online courses and resources: People can now more easily access online courses and instructional materials about the tourism sector thanks to digitalization. With the abundance of courses available on online platforms covering subjects like hotel management, tourism marketing, and sustainable tourism, students may expand their knowledge and skill set without being constrained by time or location.
2. Mobile learning: With the widespread use of mobile devices, digitalization has made learning more accessible and flexible. Mobile learning applications provide individuals with the opportunity to learn on the go, accessing educational materials, language learning resources and cultural information relevant to the tourism industry. This allows individuals to continue learning regardless of their location.
3. Virtual reality training: Digitalization has introduced virtual reality technology to the tourism industry, offering comprehensive learning experiences. Virtual reality allows individuals to experience real-life scenarios such as customer interactions or travel destinations, providing a more engaging and effective training method for roles in the tourism industry.
4. Social media and knowledge sharing: The widespread use of social media platforms has facilitated information sharing and networking in the tourism industry. Individuals can connect with travel influencers, industry experts and other participants to exchange ideas, stay up-to-date on industry trends and learn from each other's experiences. Social media platforms offer an effective source of information for lifelong learners in the tourism industry.

In the tourism sector, employees who fulfil the needs and wishes of tourists are an important part of the sector. Tourism employees are of great importance both on behalf of their country and the organisation they work for. The knowledge and skills of tourism employees are very effective in the formation of positive or negative opinions towards the country and its people. Therefore, tourism employees should eliminate the uneasiness of tourists with their knowledge and skills and their attitude towards people and send them off in a satisfied manner. In this context, tourism employees should be continuous learners (Buselic and Banko, 2021). The fact that tourism employees have the tendency and competence to learn throughout their lives contributes to the competitiveness of businesses in tourism, which is a labour-intensive sector (Morozov and Morozova, 2020). The key factors that constitute the lifelong learning tendencies and lifelong learning competences of tourism employees, which are formed by their desire to access information, continuous learning and openness to development, are important.

4. Conclusion

The development of information and communication technologies is affected by many factors. One of these is the tourism industry. In the information society, people's ability to be independent, proactive and lifelong learners directly affects the businesses and industries they work in. Due to the rapidity of change, the knowledge and skills acquired in a short time become insufficient or ineffective. Therefore, individuals with lifelong learning skills not only improve themselves but also contribute to the development of the industry.

Today, individuals must adopt lifelong learning to sustain personal and professional growth. In this context, the need for skills to track developments in their area of expertise, obtain and adapt information is crucial. Tourism employees are in constant interaction with guests. It is thought that tourism employees should have lifelong learning tendencies and competences in order to increase the quality of the service provided in the resulting interaction. This situation may make it possible for tourism workers to be an intercultural mediator in providing positive development in tourism and creating a positive image in the eyes of tourists.

As a result of the research, it is recommended that lifelong learning should become a way of life and be supported by trainings to increase awareness of its importance for career, and necessary studies should be carried out from an early age for the development of technology use in this direction.

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