Table 5.3	Internet Usage Around the World		
World Regions	**Internet Users June 30, 2016**	**Penetration Rate (% of Population)**	**Growth 2000–2016**
Asia	1,846,212,654	45.6%	1,515.2%
Europe	614,979,903	73.9%	485.2%
Latin America/ Caribbean	384,751,302	61.5%	2,029.4%
Africa	340,783,342	28.7%	7,448.8%
North America	320,067,193	89.0%	196.1%
Middle East	141,489,765	57.4%	4,207.4%
Oceania/Australia	27,540,654	73.3%	261.4%
World Total	3,675,824,813	50.1%	918.3%

Source: Adapted from Internet Usage Statistics, The Big Picture, World Internet Users and 2016 Population Statistics. Internet World Stats, http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm. Retrieved (12/2/2016). For more detailed and updated information, please visit www.internetworldstats.com.

France, South Korea, and the United Kingdom, this is already a reality.[6] By 2015, over 3.2 billion Internet users and 7 billion mobile subscriptions were reported. This represents an astounding growth rate of 960% and 660%, respectively, for these forms of digital connectivity from 2000. Market penetration rates of 43% for Internet usage and 97% for mobile availability bode well for electronic connectivity between consumers and tourism suppliers.[7]

Internet and Travel Product Distribution

All travel distribution channels and sectors were fundamentally changed by the advent of the Internet. "Historically, the travel distribution channel was the domain of large suppliers. Reservation systems were complex and unwieldy, requiring significant investments in hardware, software, and connectivity."[8] Airlines had traditionally relied on travel agents to be the primary intermediary in the distribution of their services. The Internet introduced online distribution channels, in effect furthering competition by expanding distribution and bringing transparency to airline inventory and pricing.

Before online distribution channels, consumers bought airline tickets via the airlines call centers and traditional travel agencies. Both points of distribution used mainframe or "green screen"–based reservation systems such as American Airlines' Sabre and United Airlines' Apollo systems. For a number of years, airlines owned these proprietary systems, which listed available air inventories based on schedules with price

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TOURISM IN ACTION

BRINGING MENUS TO LIFE

An interactive tabletop menu is more than just a gimmick; it serves as a means for bringing foods and beverages to life. The touchable tasting menu at New York City's Adour restaurant in the St. Regis Hotel sports an interactive wine bar. Customers can search and display a menu of wines by the glass or bottle, reds or whites, and even a selection of bar foods. After an initial selection, the menu allows users to drill down into wine regions of the world complete with producer information for each selection along with tasting notes.

This user-friendly format, freed from the clunkiness of a mouse or keyboard, brings wine selection down to a personal, even a social, level. The touchable menu provides more involvement than kiosks and simple touch screen interactions. It is like having your own personal sommelier. New applications are sure to follow as technology giants such as Microsoft are bringing similar innovations to market for use in hotels and casino restaurants and lounges.

Source: Spencer, Ante E. (2008, January 25). The touchable tasting menu. *Business Week Online*, p. 13.