International Federation for IT and Travel & Tourism
www.ifitt.org

IFITT President's update June 2011

Time is flying and lots of great things are happening with IFITT. There is a plethora of activities, meetings and agendas that are emerging globally and IFITT is becoming more and more relevant and is reaching for new members. Engage in those events or suggest your own. Look forward to work with you soon to take eTourism forward.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS:

I am particularly proud of the IFITT hosted at the EyeForTravel Distribution Summit in London on 10th May 2011 on **Technology and social media enabled service management in hospitality and tourism.** IFITT administrator and Bournemouth University PhD student organised the meeting and I Chaired it. Speakers were from leading travel and tourism organisations KLM, VisitBritain, Google, TripAdvisor, British Airways, Tnooz.com, BrandKarma, and academia John Kent Institute in Tourism – Bournemouth University. The meeting discussed how recent developments in real-time technologies, social media, context based services and augmented reality impact customer service management and marketing in the tourism industry. See report on p.4 of the IFITT newsletter.

The International Federation of Information Technology for Travel and Tourism IFITT and Journal of Information Technology for Travel and Tourism JITT
CONTEXT BASED SERVICES IN TOURISM WORKSHOP@ Bournemouth University will take place Thursday 7th July and Friday 8th July - Saturday 9th Social Programme.
Context Based Services is emerging as a key research area and a great business opportunity and challenge. This is particularly the case in Tourism where location and context based services will be used for serving the travellers of the future. The aim of this workshop is to bring together industry leaders with scholars and researchers with an interest in the interaction between Context Based Services, Technology and Tourism. The workshop is designed to facilitate the sharing of ideas on all aspects of the topic and to encourage/facilitate innovative and in-depth analysis with a view to downstream practical applications and outcomes. Participants may engage with the workshop in a variety of ways with or without presentation. Register and participate http://www.ifitt.org/home/view/context-based-services and http://ifittcbs.eventbrite.com/.

In Italy Rodolfo has represented IFITT at SITE Emea Forum (Florence, March 19th 2011) http://www.siteglobal.com/Events/EMEAForum.aspx. Whilst we are preparing for a major presence at 1st International Conference on Tourism Management (Rimini, 15-16 Sep. 2011) http://www.secs.unibo.it/SECS/NewsAndEvents/Events/2011/09/1st_International_Conference_on_Tourism_Management_and_Tourism_related_Issues.htm and In November we will run an **IFITTitaly Lab - November Florence in BTO** (Buy Tourism Online)
http://www.buytourismonline.com/

ENTER2012 Call for Research Papers, Destination and Industry Cases

The 19th International Conference on Information Technology and Travel & Tourism **ENTER 2012 'eTourism Present and Future Services and Applications'** will take place on **24th - 27th January 2012** in **Helsingborg, Sweden.**
The conference is the worldwide largest academic forum for scholars from the Computer and Social Science fields to present and critically discuss latest research on the application of information and communication technologies to Travel and Tourism.

The calls for contributions are now available: **Research papers**, **Industry Cases**, **Destination Cases**, **PhD Presentations**.

Time Schedule
• Submission closes
September 6, 2011
• Final acceptance
October 31, 2011
• Registration deadline "early birds"
November 8, 2011

ENTER2012 keynote speaker interview (edited by Rodolfo Baggio, ENTER2012 Chair)

Professor Schahram Dustdar, Vienna University of Technology

Prof. Dustdar (ACM Distinguished Scientist), is Full Professor of Computer Science at the Vienna University of Technology (TU Wien).

His research focuses on Internet Technologies and he is head the Distributed Systems Group. In particular, his interests are in Service-oriented Architectures and Computing, Mobile and Ubiquitous Computing, Complex-, Autonomic-, and Adaptive Systems, and Context-aware Computing including all aspects related to collaborative systems (e.g. workflow technologies).

A more recent thread of research interest concerns data services and novel programming models for Computational Science and Engineering. From 1999 - 2007 he worked as the co-founder and chief scientist of Caramba Labs Software AG in Vienna (acquired by Engineering NetWorld AG), a venture capital co-funded software company dealing with on software for collaborative processes in teams.

He is Editor in Chief of Computing (Springer) and on the editorial board of IEEE Internet Computing, as well as author of some 300 publications.

More info on his homepage: www.infosys.tuwien.ac.at/Staff/sd

Chairing an ENTERconference is always a very demanding task, and given the very successful past editions, the expectations for the next edition are very high. The whole team is already at work to ensure the success of the event and, as the readers of this newsletter know, some indications for the program are already online on the Enter website (www.enter2012.org).

One of the strong points of the conference has always been the presentations given by distinguished keynote speakers. Some of them have already committed, and for this newsletter I have interviewed one of them: professor Schahram Dustdar of the Vienna University of Technology.

RB: What are the main areas you are presently working on?

SD: There are 3 threads of research questions we are working on, which can be relevant to eTourism: a) Context-aware Computing; b) Sustainable Computing, and c) Social Computing.

In Context-aware Computing we are investigating novel algorithms and systems supporting humans as well as systems with relevant context information, e.g., which activities users are working on up to predicting future interactions of stakeholders in interactions.

In the area of Sustainable Computing we investigate how energy efficient computing can be developed primarily in Cloud Computing scenarios integrating sensor networks.

In Social Computing we investigate how humans can also provide their skills as services to other humans but also to software services thus enabling the establishment of complex networks composed of humans and software services.

RB: Even if you are not directly involved in eTourism, what do you think are can be the main actual and future trends for its development?

SD: Well, I hope along the lines of the three areas above. They have a very broad interest and for some of them the tourism industry has already shown a good attention.

RB: How do you value the involvement of tourism companies/destination organizations with technology?

SD: In my view it is of paramount importance that organizations such as tourism companies realize new business opportunities enabled by new technologies in the area of context-aware and social computing.

RB: What do you think is "missing" and how do you think academics can help tourism industry in this field?

SD: In my view academics can develop novel ideas and build prototypes to showcase their ideas. Hopefully, businesses pay attention to the developments in academia so they can utilize the results and uptake them for their own products.

Needless to say, prof. Dustdar is preparing a very interesting and exciting keynote speech on which we do not give any anticipation. You will listen to him in Helsigborg.

Travel Agents and Destination Management Organizations: does eLearning matter?

In the last years technology has had a significant impact on the travel experience and the evolution of professional travel agencies. Travel agents nowadays feel to be managed by technology, same time they are frightened by it. They are terrified by the idea of how they can make their business survive while struggling from a strong competition of online booking sites, which have decreased significantly the popularity of travel agencies. As a result travel agent industry continue to feel a strong challenge with low level of annual incomes and very few young people joining the industry segment.

The pendulum between disintermediation and re-intermediation has not reached a stable position. Due to raising complexity of the tourism context – e.g.: available options, natural disasters and political revolutions – as well as to so-called information overload – so many actors trying to attract the attention of prospect travellers – travel agents are given new chances to be in the game again.

A recent study by Forrester Research has showed that 28% of leisure tourists in 2010 expressed an interest in working with a traditional travel agent (5% increase from 2008).

Travel agents' knowledge of the product, experience, as well as the ability to sell the right destination to the right people, together with one-to-one relationship with their clients are starting to become again their greatest assets.

Though in order to stay on the edge, current travel agents should benefit from designed especially for them IT tools that do support their sales actives, they also should continually improve their product knowledge; trying to specialize, instead of being "generalist travel agents. According to Tony Gonchar, chief executive of ASTA, "Consumers are looking for specialists. Nowadays they want a destination wedding specialist, an Africa Specialist, a Puerto Rico specialist".

Since 2006 Destination Management Organizations worldwide have started to offer eLearning platforms that train travel agents about the destination itself, hence being able better serve their clients/tourists when presenting it. The eLearning platforms are designed mainly to provide travel agents and distributors with the knowledge and skills to sell the destination effectively.

IFITT currently supports a scientific research run by webatelier.net to understand the impact of online trainings offered by Destination Management Organizations onto travel agents: Are travel agents aware of those offers? Do they feel destination eLearning courses useful for them? How much useful? To reach which goals? What is the actual impact on their business?

Travel agents can participate in this research by filling in a 5 minutes questionnaire or find more info here: www.elearning4tourism.com

IFITT President's update June 2011 (cont.)

IFITT@ World Travel Market 2011 http://www.wtmlondon.com/
WORKSHOP: Using Technology and Social Networking for Real Time Services
Monday 7th November 2011 Platinum Suite 1 from 11.00 - 13.00
Followed by events by our partners the TTI and Open Travel conference starting at 13.30 - 17.00 in Platinum Suite 1. Technology drinks reception from 17.00 - 18.00 on the exhibition floor in the Technology region. More details on programme and registration process will follow http://www.ifitt.org/home/view/IFITT@WTM

ENTER2012: eTourism Present and Future Services and Applications - Helsingborg Sweden 24th to 27th of January 2012. www.enter2012.org is developing fantastically through the hard work of Malin and her team as well as the ENTER2012 team. We have excellent keynotes confirmed as well as a very dynamic program. I have just met the team in Copenhagen earlier this week and we are preparing for a super event. See updates on www.enter2012.org

ENTER2013 We also starting the process to select the ENTER2013 location and organiser. We recognise that organisation circle. We will invite the partners that expressed interest for ENTER2012 to consider 2013 Please let us know if you are interested in hosting ENTER2013 and start putting a bid together. See the requirements on http://www.ifitt.org/home/view/ENTERrequirements The deadline for proposals is the 15th June 2011 and we will aim to select a destination in the early part of autumn.

NEW IDEAS we are very open to new ideas and suggestions for IFITT activities. Things that you feel that IFITT should be doing. Please send me an email with initiatives that you would like IFITT to take in the future.

Yours Truly
Dimitrios Buhalis
IFITT President

IFITT@EyeForTravel - "Technology and social media enabled service management in hospitality and tourism".

IFITT hosted at the EyeForTravel Distribution Summit in London on 10th May 2011 a workshop about "Technology and social media enabled service management in hospitality and tourism". Moderated by IFITT president Prof. Dimitrios Buhalis, representatives from leading travel and tourism organisations (KLM, VisitBritain, Google, TripAdvisor, British Airways, Tnooz.com, BrandKarma) and academia (John Kent Institute in Tourism – Bournemouth University) discussed how recent developments in real-time technologies, social media, context based services and augmented reality impact customer service management and marketing in the tourism industry.

Throughout the presentations and the panel discussion some major themes, trends and developments in the area of real-time enabled social media emerged:

"I experience, I report…" (Don Birch, BrandKarma)

Social media information is becoming more dynamic. This means it is shifting from user generated content in forums and blogs, towards sharing live opinions about real-world events through dynamic channels such as micro-blogging, location-based-services (LBS) and status-updates in social networks. The rise of mobile Internet devices allows tourists to report travel impressions and opinions through social media 'on the go'. Therefore sharing live opinions is becoming progressively part of the tourist experiences. Social media monitoring provides a great tool for tourism and hospitality businesses to identify conversations about their brand in almost real-time. Especially LBS can help to link comments on social media to specific companies and services.

"The Service of Now" (Nicolas Gregori and Prof. Dimitrios Buhalis, John Kent Institute in Tourism)

The possibility to obtain opinions and feedback from consumers in near real-time offers vast opportunities for designing and delivering services that are flexible and agile towards the dynamically changing needs of today's traveller. Retrieving immediate customer feedback through monitoring conversation by consumers about your brand at the point of consumption, opens up new opportunities for pro-active service recovery. Anna Ketting (KLM) stated that through monitoring Twitter and Facebook "we have lots of little feedback loops, on a daily basis."

"The consumer leads the way" (Nate Bucholz, Google)

Companies engaged in real-time enabled social media for service management and tourism marketing have to ensure: support for a wide variety of social media channels and gadgets, as the consumer decides which channel is the most relevant to him/her flexibility and short-term planning in their social media strategies, as technology in this sector is developing at a fast pace relevancy of the disseminated content. Anna Ketting (KLM): "We ensure that every tweet and post is worth following us" alignment of social media engagement and service operations, as any gap between what is communicated to consumers and actual service delivery has negative impacts on tourists experiences.

"When we talk about social media and real-time, we talk about mobile" (Justin Reid and Adriana Conte, VisitBritain)

Social media in real-time takes place increasingly on mobile internet devices. Especially LBS and augmented reality applications bear great potential to enhance the consumption and experience of tourism products. As shown by Helena Egan (TripAdivsor) recommendations and reviews from social medial platforms become part of the real-time experience of tourists through applications such as the recently launched augmented reality enabled smartphone application by trip advisor. In this regard Zornitza Yovcheva (John Kent Institute in Tourism) explains that "Real-time information through augmented reality is not only provided when it is needed, but also exactly **where it is** needed, in fact in the immediate field of view of the user".

Professor Buhalis said this seminar organized by IFITT demonstrates cutting edge developments in eTourism which will shape the future of the industry through innovation.