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Foreword

“The intellect engages us in the pursuit of Truth. The passions impel us to action.”
(M.Tullius Cicero, De Officiis)

This simple quote from Cicero explains the reason behind this first IFITT Doctoral Summer School. We believe that our efforts in research should be guided by a genuine pursuit of the Truth towards the contribution to knowledge in our community.

It is also the deep passion for our work, together with the possibility of engaging and collaborating with our friends and colleagues from all over the world, in this quest for meaning that has guided us in the organisation of this event.

We have been working hard to deliver this message across the IFITT Doctoral Summer School programme and we hope that this time spent in Bournemouth will allow all of us to generate new contacts, novel ideas and interesting paths feeding this passion towards the pursuit of the Truth.

Dr. Alessandro Inversini
Barbara Neuhofer
Preface

Information and communication technology (ICT) continues to change the nature of contemporary tourism. The globalisation of information, open innovation, better access, collaboration in the generation of information and technological convergence, have all contributed to the design of a new scientific paradigm.

Advances in our knowledge about human activity within the social context attest to the importance of applying state-of-the-art technological solutions. We are on the threshold of a new era of the social science of tourism.

This new social and technological paradigm affects tourism and human mobility in a way that gives the research process unheard-of possibilities. The current level of technological development allows for the construction of objects that are smaller, more intelligent and embedded in the environment. These objects are connected to the Internet and they have computing capabilities. They can also be interconnected and generate large quantities of information (Big Data) to benefit the environment in which they are located and the travellers that pass through them. This gives rise to a new world that is more connected and more intelligent and involves a convergence between what is physical, social and digital.

Within this context, competition has to be grounded on knowledge and its quick transfer to the industry. Thus, relevant academic research is more necessary than ever before in order to explore how IT in tourism can contribute to face the challenges of the travel and tourism industries.

This volume collects the contributions presented at the IFITT Doctoral Summer School 2013. Published abstracts have been selected out a large number of high quality submissions covering a wide spectrum of topics related to information communication technologies and travel and tourism. In particular, the topics highlight the new research opportunities in areas such as, augmented reality, open innovation, social networks, electronic word-of-mouth, eMartking strategies, and mobile and other experience enhancing technologies in the context of travel and tourism.

The quality of the works presented in these proceedings evidences the existence of a critical mass of young researchers that will contribute to increase the existing body of knowledge in the field of IT and Tourism.

Dr Carlos Lamsfus
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The Service of Now: Social Media enabled Real-Time Service Management in Tourism and Hospitality

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Problem Statement

Hospitality and tourism enterprises operate and are competing for customers on a global scale. Given the saturation of tourism demand, increase in customer expectations, and dynamically changing wants and needs of customers; tourism and hospitality business are required to constantly innovate and adapt their products and services in order to gain and maintain their competitiveness.

Strategic marketing management is acknowledged widely as a prime vehicle for achieving sustainable competitive advantages for tourism and hospitality businesses. In this regard, developing and delivering products that fit consumers’ wants and needs and thereby building meaningful customer relationships, have been key to marketing strategies for the past decades. Against this background companies have been innovating constantly to develop ever more effective and efficient processes and tools to increase their customer orientation.

At the same time, the tourism and hospitality industry sector is undergoing a dramatic shift. The wide-scale adoption of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) – in particular mobile, internet and social media enabled technologies – changes the interaction and engagement between travellers and service providers, and ultimately the way how tourism services are consumed. Therefore firms are required to innovate and revise their current set of strategic marketing management tools in order to regain competitive advantages.

The present research project illuminates the challenges and opportunities arising from the outlined social media revolution for achieving strategic competitive advantages.

Methodology

The present research adopts a case study approach. Multiple exploratory case studies will be applied in order to explore the above outlined challenges and opportunities. Unit of analysis for the case studies will be organisations from the tourism and hospitality sector, that actively engage in real-time enabled social media monitoring and response management. Evidence will be collected from a variety of sources, including semi-structured interviews with employees involved in social media (including front-line personnel, mid- and top-level management), internal documents (e.g. social media guidelines, social media marketing plans, etc) and other documents (publications, blogs, videos, etc.).
Expected results

It expects to find that real-time monitoring of social media channels, will enable firms to identify valuable customer information, which in turn enables to deliver meaningful and highly personalised solutions to individual customer problems. Future competitiveness of tourism and hospitality service providers requires dynamic and timely reactions to highly individual customer wants and needs, agility in the design and delivery of service offerings and proactive, instantaneous gratification of customer needs. Real time social media enabled service design, delivery and recovery becomes pivotal for the competitiveness of customer oriented tourism and hospitality service businesses.

Conclusions

This research aims at contributing to the understanding of strategic marketing management theory, by providing a conceptual model of achieving competitive advantage under consideration of real-time enabled social media technologies. It will help managers to better understand the available tools, processes as well as managerial preconditions and underlying philosophy that needs to be acquired in order to remain competitive in the age of the social media revolution.
Towards a psychological model for understanding Active Seniors’ engagement with online media in their holiday purchases.

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Problem Statement

Background - The over 50s population is the fastest growing demographic in the developed World (from 21% in 1950 to 38% by 2010) (UN 2011). Older people, in particular ‘Baby Boomers’ (born mid-1946 – 1964, aged 49 – 67) (US Census Bureau 2010), are healthier, wealthier, benefitting from better healthcare, nutrition, lead more active lifestyles, and have more leisure time than previous generations. They are facing retirement, or have retired from full-time work, a key life-stage event. The main ambition of most people post-retirement is to travel (Blazey 1992; Le Serre and Chevalier 2012). Amadeus (2005) identified ‘Active Seniors’ (physically active Baby Boomers) as one of the four most important ‘Traveller Tribes’ by 2020 contributing to future air travel growth. Active Seniors clearly represent an opportunity for growth for the whole tourism industry.

The digital revolution, particularly since the introduction of tablet PCs (Apple iPad) in 2010, has resulted in 84% of all UK adults accessing the Internet: 96% of under 54s and 61% (growing rapidly) of over 55s (ONS 2012). Overall, 61% of UK adults (77% under 50 and 39% over 50s) use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to communicate with and form social communities with their peers (Opinium 2012). And the percentage of over 55s using online media exclusively to book their holidays (65%) shows no statistically significant difference from younger adults (68%) (Explore 2012). Online booking has become firmly established as the principal sales route for holidays in the UK.

“Customer Engagement” (CE) has attracted considerable attention among services marketing practitioners and academics. The Journal of Service Research ran a special edition on CE in August 2010. Van Doorn et al. (2010) set out a definition of CE listing a range of behavioural manifestations towards a company or brand as a result of motivational drivers (e.g. eWoM including blogging, ‘liking’, reviewing, etc.) that extend “beyond purchase”. The levels of engagement pyramid (Li 2010), suggests five levels of engagement from passively reading (“Watching”) at the lowest level of engagement to actively “Curating” an online community, and this provides a useful framework to assess such CE behaviours. Although many major corporations have made engagement a major marketing objective, there is little agreement on how it might impact profitability and how to employ metrics to measure it. Engagement has eluded conceptualisation but a consensus definition (Brodie et al. 2011) suggests that it “reflects a customer’s particular psychological state... with a focal engagement agent/object (e.g. a brand)” (p. 257). They set CE within the framework of Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008), itself building on the experience economy concept proposed by (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Brodie et al.
(2011) specifically focus on Vargo and Lusch’s (2008) suggestion that the consumer always determines value phenomenologically.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to uncover the perceived added value gains to their overall tourist experience for Active Seniors by engaging with online media during each of the four stages of their holiday journey (researching, booking, on holiday, and post-holiday) and so to extend the conceptualization of engagement beyond simply one brand or one focal agent, to the tourism context of multiple brands and multiple touch points. The technology used to access online media during the holiday journey lies outside the scope of this study.

Methodology

Design/methodology/approach – The approach is interdisciplinary: combining psychological and marketing theory. A sequential mixed methods approach, led by qualitative interviews, guided by hermeneutic phenomenological psychology (Van Manen 1990) to uncover the lived-experiences of Active Seniors as they engage with online media during their holiday journey. This multidimensional (cognitive, affective, conative, social) qualitative phase will both provide depth and rich data as well as inform the development of a subsequent online survey instrument to quantify the levels of Active Seniors’ online engagement behaviours to compare with / adapt Brodie et al.'s (2011) marketing conceptualisation of CE. The results of this subsequent quantitative phase will lead towards a new “psychologically informed” model of Active Seniors’ engagement with online media within a UK tourism context.

Expected results

Research implications – This research fills a research gap by eliciting the perceived value to the overall tourist experience of Active Seniors’ engagement with online media during their holiday journey. It will contribute towards further conceptualising engagement from Brodie et al.’s (2011) narrow definition.

Practical implications – The research will provide a model to better understand the tourist motivations of the UK Active Senior market and their online engagement in terms of the perceived added value gains this delivers to their overall holiday experience. This is likely to benefit Destination Marketing Organisations.

Conclusions

Originality/value – This research will provide an interdisciplinary approach to the emerging field of engagement, in conjunction with online media within the UK tourism context. It addresses an important growth opportunity market, i.e. the Active Seniors market, for the world’s largest service industry, tourism. The limitations inherent in this study mean that the findings will not be generalizable outside of the UK tourism industry.
Figure 1: Conceptual model of engagement with online media during each of the four stages of the holiday journey

References


Can Hotels Improve e-Marketing Strategies in International Markets with Social Media?

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Research Statement

E-Marketing is crucial for reaching international travelers and markets. Social media offers a wide range of opportunities for E-Marketing and ... in hotels. We use a database of 123 hotels in the province of Tenerife (which includes the islands of Tenerife, La Gomera, El Hierro and La Palma) to analyze hotel’s E-Marketing strategies using Facebook to identify barriers and communication features that preclude successful interaction with users. Hotels are able to reach domestic and national travelers using Spanish as the primary language. However, language is a limiting factor in spreading the message virally to wider and booming international markets such as the British, German, Russian and Nordic Tourism travelers. Indeed, Facebook offers different options to accommodate English and other languages from its support features that can enhance international E-Marketing of hotels (in the Canary Islands). Furthermore, we analyze and qualify other determinant aspects of the communication strategy through social media in other to identify successful approaches.

Methodology

The main objective of our research is to evaluate hotel’s communication strategy using social media in Tenerife hotels. The methodology we use is to analyze the information and data of mass media communication from the Facebook accounts of 123 hotels associated to the Hotel Association (ASHOTEL).

What are the main factors that determine a successful social media strategy? We will identify the main aspects determining hotel’s communication in both national and international markets. We focus on adequate language use as to reach different market segments but also on other aspects that are part of communication: the presence, selected features, quality and volume of the content published, aesthetics and visual quality, the scope, the type of interaction of users. Finally, since the presence of more
than one account is confusing to users, we will consider the number and the language options of the accounts that hotels keep active.

**Expected Results**

We are aware that the current use of social media by hotels, especially Facebook, is still quite ambiguous, especially when there are language barriers. Therefore, it is essential to clarify which factors or aspects determine a successful E-Marketing strategy through social media when there are national or local market segments and international ones with travelers using other language. The methodology and database will allow us to identify the main features of interaction and communication with social media users.

By analyzing data and information of the use of Facebook in 123 hotels in the Canary Islands, we will be able to describe main features, interaction and relationship with users according to the different market segments. We will define successful approaches and define opportunities to take advantage of social media use and option features to reach both national and international markets. Finally, we will assess hotels perception of the effort and costs incurred to develop and keep up their social media accounts and communication.
E-destinations: Global best practice use of technologies and applications.

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Problem Statement

Destinations are using ICTs as an integral part of their digital strategy in order to inform, inspire, facilitate and share and engage potential travellers (Buhalis 1993). So far, only limited research has been conducted in terms of comparing different implementation and execution of technologies and applications by destinations within their website (WTO 2005, WTO 2008). Using comparative analysis tools and latest research on e-tourism technologies and applications can help marketers to evaluate current integration of ICTs and compare that with research conducted on e-technologies. However, being able to identify technologies and applications that destinations should implement and integrate is the primary goal of this abstract as it is very important for the future planning of destinations’ digital strategies. It is crucial for the industry to identify best practice use of technologies and applications in order to be able to draw recommendations regarding the use and implementation of technologies for destinations (Xiang and Gretzel 2010). This research project focuses on identifying technologies and applications of the future and at the same time identify and showcase best practice examples of destinations in order for less technology savvy technologies to learn about a best practice way of integrating technologies and applications of the future. By this means, destinations can become more competitive and learn about the most effective use of tools and technologies within their websites and social media.

Methodology

For this research project, a benchmark analysis was chosen as the best way to compare different destination websites in terms of their current use of technologies and applications (Camp 1989). It is crucial to establish a benchmark framework that can identify best practice technologies and applications and can measure the current performance of e--destinations in terms of their usage and quality of integration (Lennon et al 2006). However, this comparative analysis needs to deliver both quantitative and qualitative results in order to be reliable (Kozak 2004). A 200 factor framework focusing on technology use and implementation in different stages of travel was previously established and will be revised with the help of latest e--tourism literature and getting feedback from leading experts in the field. By this means, recommendations can be drawn and best practice examples can be identified (Lennon et al 2006). A sample of 30 international e--destinations was chosen previously with the objective to rank the top destinations. These need to be reviewed
and might need to be replaced by other top international e-destinations in order to have a strong sample. The objective of this research is to enable researchers to identify different best practice examples of destinations having implemented technologies and applications in a way that exceeds other destinations (McMilland and Weyers 2011).

Results

The results from the comparative benchmark analysis will enable researchers to draw recommendations in terms of the state of e-destinations and their current use of technologies and applications. A ranking will be established in terms of the top 10 destinations due to their use of online technologies and overall performance. It is expected that most destinations within the benchmark will still underutilise the technologies and applications that are available. The gap in research on technologies and applications and the actual implementation is still quite big and destinations worldwide seem to find it difficult to catch up. Differences on an international level will become evident. Their position within the benchmark ranking will depend on the destination and their development in terms of ICT usage and implementation. This will give destinations insights in terms of the implementation of technologies and applications of their competitors and enable them to see what best practice online destinations are doing.

Conclusions

In conclusion, there is the need to continue the research on e-destinations as it is interesting to monitor developments of online destinations in terms of their technology use and adoption. This research is very valuable as it can help destinations worldwide to understand the need and best practice usage of technologies and application. With the growing competition of destinations worldwide, technology can be a tool in order to stay ahead of the competitors. Online destinations should consider the use of technologies to enhance the experience that travellers can have during the different stages of travel both on the website and in the destination. Destination websites can inspire and inform travellers and can also be a platform to engage with the destination. In addition to that, destinations can also use technologies and applications to facilitate travellers stay in the destination and share and engage with travellers even after their holiday in the destination. This continuous interaction between destinations and travellers can build relationships that are becoming increasingly valuable in the tourism industry. Undoubtedly, destinations are different and follow different strategies in terms of destination websites and social media. This study can help develop and understanding of where the industry is heading in terms of using technologies and what travellers might expect of destination websites and social media. Online destinations need to meet these expectations, taking into consideration their own objectives and digital strategies.

References


Technology Enhanced Tourist Experiences

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Problem Statement

Two major changes are challenging the current understanding of the tourism experience. First, the traditional experience economy has been increasingly replaced by the notion of experience co-creation, which recognises active consumers co-creating their experiences in a quest for personal growth and value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In addition to co-creation, a second major factor appears to impact upon experiences, namely technology. The proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has not only had an influence on society and people’s everyday lives, but has caused fundamental impacts by changing the nature of the tourist experience (Crouch & Desforges, 2003; Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). ICTs will support new types of activities that will not only transform existing but eventually lead to new types of tourism experiences (Gretzel & Jamal, 2009). Thus, with the dynamics of empowered consumers and emerging technologies, traditional roles, structures and processes of tourist experiences have changed and traditional conceptualisations, categories and components of the tourist experience do no longer apply with technology in place (Gretzel and Jamal, 2009). While previous studies (e.g. Gretzel et al., 2011, Gretzel and Jamal, 2009, Jansson, 2002, Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009, White and White, 2007) have acknowledged the impact of ICTs on experiences, empirical research exploring this new concept remains limited. Based on the missing understanding of the tourist experience in a technology-mediated environment, this doctoral study thus raises the need to combine this shift and develop a holistic understanding of Technology Enhanced Tourist Experiences.

Methodology

Considering the high level of complexity of researching the tourist experience, a consensus of suggested methodological approaches in experience research is missing (Sharpley & Stone, 2010). In order to capture its whole complexity and build an integrated and holistic understanding of Technology Enhanced Tourist Experiences, a qualitative sequential mixed methods design, a methodology proposed by Morse (2010) is adopted. While mixed methods are commonly associated with the combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, Morse (2010, p. 340) claims that this definition is not restricted to a mixture of inquiries but can constitute any research that includes “different types of data, approaches to analysis, or research conducted on two different populations or groups, whether it be qualitative or quantitative”. In line with the advocacy for more imaginative blends of methods in contemporary mixed methods research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012), this study employs a qualitative mixed methods design, comprising an initial qual component to understand the experience basis, followed by two core QUAL phases to understand both company and consumer perspectives of Technology Enhanced Tourist Experiences. This study has started with Phase 1 by employing a content analysis of peer-reviewed full-length journal articles to elicit the core elements of tourist experiences. In Phase 2, a case study approach of leading innovative tourism
companies is adopted with the aim to develop an understanding of how the tourist experience is co-created and enhanced through technology from a company perspective. In Phase 3, semi-structured in-depth interviews with technology-savvy consumers are conducted to explore how experiences can be enhanced and what constitutes a Technology Enhanced Tourist Experience from a consumer perceptive.

**Expected Results**

This doctoral study is expected to generate a valuable contribution on a theoretical level as well as critical implications on a managerial level. This study significantly contributes to the existing theoretical framework of the tourist experience by a) revisiting its traditional understanding, b) amalgamating tourist experience, co-creation and technology theories into one holistic framework and c) developing a holistic theoretical model, which will depict the experience creation processes and core components of Technology Enhanced Tourist Experiences.

**Conclusions**

In revealing these results, this doctoral study will generate valuable knowledge to better understand ICTs as a key instrument, source of innovation and strategic differentiation for the successful creation of contemporary and competitive experiences in the future.

**References**


Location Based Transmedia Storytelling: Enhancing the Tourism Experience

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Problem Statement

We are “addicted to story” (Gottschall, 2011:xiv). Through compelling narratives, we are able to persuade and communicate (Pink, 2006:67). But the way we tell stories is evolving as new tools become available. Consumers now expect entertainment to be interactive and available anytime, in every screen (Walsh, 2009:32). It is no longer sufficient to restrict story to one platform. Story is also a privileged way for companies to distinguish their products (Pink, 2006:107) and create new experiences, which have “always been at heart of entertainment offering” (Pine II & Gilmore, 2011:3).

Transmedia storytelling, considered to be “quickly becoming the new standard for 21st century communication” (Rutledge, 2011), is successfully being implemented in fields like marketing and entertainment. However the impact of transmedia storytelling in tourism remains to be studied. Understanding the benefits and constrains that these techniques bring to the tourism industry is key.

This research aims to understand the impact of the use of location based transmedia storytelling techniques in tourism, particularly the advantages, disadvantages and best practices. It addresses questions such as:

- Can transmedia storytelling transform touristic visits into more engaging experiences?
- How do tourists behave across the different platforms?
- What content do tourists create, share and how frequently?
- Which are the best analytic tools?

Methodology

Transmedia Storytelling is a very broad field. In order to study the impact of transmedia storytelling techniques based on location, we propose a new term – Location Based Transmedia Storytelling – “which is the art of telling stories based on a specific location through multiple-media platforms with audience participation,
where each storyline makes a valuable and distinctive contribution to the story” (Ferreira et al, 2012).

With the objective to examine the results of transmedia storytelling practices in tourism, a qualitative and quantitative data collection, divided in three stages was applied, using a non random, convenience sample.

The objective of the first stage was to describe tourists’ practices, their needs and behaviours. Several qualitative methods were used, namely participant observation, case studies and exploratory interviews. The analysis of this data provided the basis for the construction of TravelPlot Porto.

TravelPlot Porto was launched in Porto, on June 2012. For three months, tourists were invited to find Porto’s hidden treasure. The story was divided into nine historical chapters. The forty-two locations of the story where scattered throughout TravelPlot Porto different platforms such as an iPhone/Android app, a website, a map, live events (gastronomy, wine tasting, Douro cruise and souvenirs) and social networks (Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube and Facebook).

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Platforms</th>
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<td>17 June</td>
<td><strong>App Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;37 locations + Check-in</td>
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<td><strong>Map Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;37 locations + City Atlas</td>
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<td><strong>Website Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;37 locations + St. John</td>
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<td><strong>Experiences</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Souvenir Shop</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location 58 + Buy Souvenirs</td>
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<td><strong>Douro Cruise</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location 59 + River Cruise</td>
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<td><strong>Wine Cellar</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location 40 + Wine Tasting History of Port Wine</td>
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<td><strong>Restaurant</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location 41 + Gastronomy</td>
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<td><strong>Questionnaire</strong>&lt;br&gt;Location 42</td>
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<td>9 Sep</td>
<td><strong>Story Finale</strong>&lt;br&gt;Live Event at Wine Cellar</td>
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<td><strong>Story Resolution</strong>&lt;br&gt;TPP Facebook Page</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Sep</td>
<td><strong>TravelPlot Porto Story</strong></td>
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Fig. 1. TravelPlot Porto story architecture, different platforms and their release date

The second stage of data collection aimed to capture tourists’ behaviours across different platforms and which content they created, shared and how frequently. Three different collection methods were used to gather qualitative data: online questionnaires, interviews to foreign tourists at a Porto hostel and written interviews to Portuguese university students. The quantitative data was obtained through different tools according to each specific platform.
The third stage will consist in the analyses of the primary data created by TravelPlot Porto and the analyses of second data gathered from worldwide case studies in order to identify the practices carried out, taking into consideration the projects’ synopses, story, platforms used, duration of the project, budget, audience engagement and if the project was overall successful according to its goals or not.

Results

From this study, we expect the industry to have some of the best practices examples of location based transmedia storytelling products as well as a technological product that can be adapted to tourism in other parts of the world.

For academics, on the other hand, this study expects to contribute to an emerging theoretical understanding of location based transmedia storytelling techniques, which can support new initiatives in this field of research and add to our understanding of why storytelling will be commercially important to tourism.

Conclusions

One of TravelPlot Porto biggest limitation was the unexpected lack of free Wi-Fi at the tourism offices, which stopped the foreign tourists from downloading the app due to high data roaming costs. Despite the availability of some free hot stops in Porto, tourists are not made aware of them. In a paper recently submitted to a conference we address several possible solutions to this problem. Even with this and other limitations, TravelPlot Porto was able to gain online presence, and considerable data was collected and is currently being analysed.

At the end of our research, we expect to demonstrate the appetite amongst tourists for local based transmedia storytelling products, which would directly increase the engagement and visibility of local brands, historical monuments and tourist dependent industries – increasing revenue and adding value.

References


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Augmented Reality Gaming – A New Paradigm for Tourist Experience?

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Problem statement

The development of powerful and affordable smartphones and new technologies have paved the way for mobile gaming which became recently available for a large consumer range enabling gameplay everywhere and anytime. Games are the most used mobile applications and possess the power to immerse whole generations into virtual and augmented worlds throughout storytelling, fantasy and challenges (Ballagas et al. 2008; Bryan 2011; Carrigy et al. 2010; Takatalo et al. 2011).

Young travellers are the catalyst of games as they are playing in any situation of life for the maximisation of fun, excitement, and social interaction (Isbister 2011; Takatalo et al. 2010). These ‘digital natives’ (Prensky 2001) will particularly demand new media applications involving mobile devices for the mediation of tourism attractions and cultural heritage sites. With the application of Augmented Reality (AR) Games, tourists will experience a new way of playing within the real environment of a tourist destination. Mobile augmented reality (AR) enables users to interactively experience the real world with virtual 3D objects visualised on the player’s smartphone (Azuma et al. 2001). These projections are contextualised to the current location of the player and create a fantasy-enhanced experience within the real world combined with gaming. Playing outdoors is not only a matter of location, but on the player’s motivation and enthusiasm of social interaction with other players meeting in gameplay (Lankoski 2011; Larsen and Luniewski 2009).

However, the concept of immersion as we experience it from virtual online games and introduced by Douglas and Hargadon (2001), Emri and Mäyrä (2005) and Calleja (2007), is with the arriving of mobile devices transported into the real environment. Hence, it needs to be redefined in the context of location-based mobile AR games as the immersion experience can be harmed by external influences such as traffic noise, passers-by and crowded playing areas intervening into the experience (Ballagas et al. 2008; Carrigy et al. 2010; Engl and Nacke 2012).

Currently, tourism is missing an opportunity to create immersive experiences by transferring information in a fun, engaging and interactive manner to young travellers (Carrigy et al. 2010; Engl and Nacke 2012; Takatalo et al. 2010). Engaging tourists into context-aware experiences can be crucial when it comes to the creation of memorable (Kim 2012; Tung and Ritchie 2011) and meaningful (Pattakos 2010) tourist experiences.

The aim of the doctoral research is to critically explore the application of experience theory in Game Design to identify factors contributing to immersion in the context of location-based mobile Augmented Reality Gaming for tourism environments. Therefore, a user-centred design (UCD) approach is applied in order to identify
factors contributing to immersive experiences and therewith support the design of location-based mobile AR Games.

**Methodology**

An approach from Information System Design Theory (ISDT) is used to identify disciplines and theories which are involved in the experience design of location-based mobile AR Games to create immersive experiences (Eyles and Eglin 2008; Hevner et al. 2004). As game design is grounded in Human Computer Interaction (HCI) theory (Xinyuan 2009), the evaluation of user requirements will follow a bottom-up approach using participatory design methods based on a UCD process (Chen and Su 2010). The testing will take place with an iPhone-based AR Game app which is implemented in Berlin providing an investigative gameplay with an historical background of the Berlin Wall. The game will be tested throughout a UCD to identify user requirements applying observations, semi-structured interviews and think aloud methods for a further improvement of usability and game design (Desurvire and Wiberg 2009; Hoonhout 2008; Hung et al. 2012).

**Expected Results**

The research project will contribute to the following fields:

The theoretical contribution is twofold and will first contribute to the experience theory in Game Design by identifying factors leading to immersion in the context of location-based mobile AR Gaming. As Game Theory is part of the greater field of Information System Design Theory (ISDT), the findings will contribute to this theory especially to the usability and HCI. In addition, the study will provide a conceptual framework elaborating the dimensions of immersion based on the identified factors and requirements of designing location-based AR Games.

In practice, the study will provide design guidelines for tourism decision makers and game developers for location-based mobile Augmented Reality Games in the tourism context for a better design of these games leading to a better immersive experience for tourists.

**Conclusions**

Although location-based mobile AR Games are an emerging topic in academia and practice, little is known how to design these artefacts applied for tourism purposes. Current game design is based on past-experiences, thus game design heuristics and guidelines are emerging. This study will combine experience theory from tourism and game design to inform ISDT regarding usability, playability and design elements for location-based AR Games. The results of the formative evaluations will inform the design of future AR Games.

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User-Centred Design of Smartphone Augmented Reality Used in Urban Tourism Destinations

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Problem Statement

The beginning of this century witnessed the emergence of a new breed of MobiISs, collectively termed smartphone Augmented Reality (AR). Context-aware smartphone AR Information Systems (ISs) have considerable potential for city visitors since they are able to provide relevant information where tourists need it the most: in their immediate field of view (Azuma et al., 2001). Despite its popularity, several recent studies confirm that smartphone AR is still clumsy and difficult to use (Olsson et al., 2009; Olsson & Salo, 2011; Linaza et al., 2012). This is partially due to the novelty of the medium and the associated technical challenges intrinsic to mobile devices (Gorlenko & Merrik, 2003). In addition, one of the core problems causing user dissatisfaction is the delivery of a large amount of irrelevant information that is inappropriately displayed on the smartphone screen. Such problems can be resolved through identification of user requirements and appropriate design that satisfies them. Existing design knowledge, however, relates to head-mounted AR displays (Feiner et al., 1997; Tokusho & Feiner, 2009) or standard text-based context-aware tourism services (Lamsfus et al., 2011). There is a lack of design knowledge of effectively communicating information on AR smartphone displays in unfamiliar environments. Addressing this gap, this study aims to improve the usability of context-aware smartphone AR ISs in order to help tourists to gain knowledge about unfamiliar urban environments. The objectives are: (1) to elicit user requirements towards effective information delivery on smartphone AR displays used in urban tourism contexts; (2) to propose design solutions that satisfy the identified user requirements; (3) to evaluate the proposed design solutions; and (4) to develop a framework that captures and synthesizes design guidelines and principles for usable and useful context-aware smartphone AR ISs.

Methodology

An User-Centred Design (UCD) (Abras et al., 2004) allows for iterative user requirements identification and, therefore, is considered the most suitable methodology for improving the usability of (geospatial) visual displays (Haklay and Nivala, 2010). Having in mind that the aim of this study is to improve the usability of smartphone Augmented Reality browsers for tourists, a UCD was adopted, whereby the research activities were divided in four main stages: (1) Theoretical stage; (2) Empirical Data Collection; (3) Design; and (4) Evaluation. The first stage involved identification of potential design problems with smartphone AR and theories that could help in proposing new design solutions. The second stage was to perform empirical observation and document the problems that tourists experience while trying to acquire knowledge about unfamiliar urban environments through several existing smartphone AR design solutions. These data were gathered through a mobile field-based quasi experiment (Oulasvirta, 2011). The experiment was carried out...
outdoors in the city centre of Bournemouth. In total, 14 tourists (unfamiliar with Bournemouth) carried out four different types of tasks (matching, reverse, reverse overview and decision tasks) with a smartphone AR browser. This amounted to 17 tasks per participant carried out on a pre-defined route. Each experiment lasted for 1.30 h. The participants were encouraged to think aloud and carried a special mobile field testing mini-camera system, developed and described by Delikostidis & van Elzakker (2012). This consisted of three cameras, video signal from the mobile phone and audio signal. A quad unit synchronized the incoming video/audio recording. The collected data were enhanced by contextual inquiries (Holtzblatt et al., 2005). The outcomes of the quasi experiment and the contextual inquires will be converted into a set of user requirements and used during the third stage of research. In the third research stage, several design alternatives (prototypes) of context-aware smartphone AR annotations will be developed. Concerned mainly with display and content, rather than functionality, low-fidelity prototypes (augmented photos) were considered suitable for the purpose of this research. Augmented photos and videos have been used extensively in traditional AR literature to test AR visualization (e.g. Leykin & Tuceryan, 2009). In the fourth stage, the design alternatives will be tested with several groups of representative users in controlled laboratory settings. The collected data will be compared to the results of the first quasi-experiment in order to determine whether the proposed design solutions meet the identified user requirements and solve effectively the observed usability problems. Triangulation and synthesis will form the basis of a conceptual framework that captures design guidelines and principles for design of smartphone AR ISs used in tourism context.

**Anticipated Results**

The proposed research is geared to advance understanding and development concepts related to the design and realization of context-aware smartphone AR user interfaces used in tourism context. Therefore, the study aims to make a contribution to Information Systems design and development theory through innovation in the overall design process of smartphone AR information systems for tourism. The specific tangible results from this research include: (1) identification of user requirements based on actual (observed) user behaviour; (2) identification of design principles for smartphone AR. The result of this study will have broad implications within the tourism destinations marketing and management disciplines that should be addressed by further research. In addition, the generated knowledge about user requirements will ultimately be translated in design guidelines that provide tangible help to designers not familiar with the mobile AR or context of use and its implications for effective information delivery within the tourism domain.

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Tourism and Social Networks: Sicily brand image diffusion through electronic word of mouth (EWOM) on Facebook.

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Problem Statement

Over the last few years, the vast development of the Internet and ICT have quickly changed tourist communication, linking web users throughout the world and allowing them to share their personal experience about holidays, trips, travels and visited tourist destinations. This phenomenon took place in specific tourist and travel online platforms, but also in generic social network sites (SNS) where friends can freely share their own touristic experiences with each other with posts, comments, photos and videos and also join specific fan pages about this subject.

One of the platforms where these mechanisms can be registered is Facebook, currently the most populated SNS in the world, constituting 33% of registered social media users (source: vincos.it), where numerous fan pages are dedicated to tourism, leisure, trips and vacations. Starting from these pages, content about a city, a region or a country can freely flow; thereby creating large EWOM networks between users linked through common friends and greatly influencing the touristic destination image of a specific place. Some researchers, looking at the touristic investigation of online platforms, have recently focused their attention on this type of EWOM on Facebook, analysing in particular: the use of this social network in travel planning (Parra et al. 2010, Fotis, Buhalis, and Rossides 2012, Enter and Michopoulou 2013), or in the promotion of hospitality services (Leivadiotou and Markopoulos 2010); its impact on the promotion of tourism websites (Milano et al. 2011) or its ability to generate travel ideas between friends through shared photos (White 2010). However, an investigation focused on the content related to touristic destinations posted in this social network, as well as those made in others platforms such as Tweeter (Barbagallo et al. 2011), and on their sharing mechanism in large EWOM networks, seems to be currently missing.

To address this problem, by focusing on the content posted on single Facebook fan pages about a specific touristic place and on the diffusion mechanisms for that content, the aim of this work is to give a methodological contribution to the field by showing, on one hand, the way in which content freely flows on this platform, creating different EWOM networks, and recording, on the other hand, the personal opinions about each content that the users in different nodes of these networks share, thereby implementing the diffusion of every single network. The starting idea is that different topics can generate specific kinds of networks, linking different users with particular common characteristics.
**Methodology**

The specific destination of the Island of Sicily will be analysed to test the starting hypothesis. In particular, one of the various dedicated fan pages, created by users with the aim of spontaneously advertising the region, will be examined. The focus of the analysis will be the contents shared from this starting page to all of the various inter-related platforms, with the aim of answering the following research questions:

- “What kinds of EWOM networks does content about specific aspects of a destination create?”
- “What user’s content freely flows in these networks?”

In order to give a response to the first question, a combination of Social Network Analysis (SNA) and graph theory, will be used to investigate the networks as a means to share knowledge and information. The method proposed by Milgram 1967, will be adopted. To respond to the second question, a Statistical Content Analysis (Bolasco 1997, Lebart and Salem, 1988), will be used.

In detail, the focus of the study will be on the content that emphasizes different attributes of the destination’s brand image. The performance of the related “like” and “sharing” mechanisms in creating networks will be monitored as well as the different “comment actions” that the users located in different nodes of these EWOM networks perform, adding to and transforming the original message with their personal opinions.

**Results**

The expected result of this study is an analytical observation of similar networks generated from content about the same particular attributes of the destination’s image, such as, for example, landscape or nature, and the differences in networks generated by content about other elements, such as accommodations or transportations and so on, in term of connections, numbers, characteristics and expressed opinions of linked users. The related hypothesis, in fact, is that stereotyped and positive content can be registered in the central nodes of each network, which represent the starting posts shared by Sicily’s fans on the fan page selected as our case study, and in the recent ones, while no stereotyped or negative user’s comments can be registered in the more peripheral posts.

**Conclusions**

The final purpose of this research project is to better investigate, on Facebook, the spontaneous EWOM’s ability to share tourist information and to capture new target audiences. At the same time, looking at the selected destination of Sicily and at the shared users’ opinions about it, the study hopes to show the capacity of this observed online communication mechanism to record the principal attributes and elements of the destination brand image that users are talking about, capture its strengths and weakness, and obtain valid implications for destination management, similar to the method proposed by Inversini et al. 2010.
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Web sites
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The advent of the internet and the proliferation of Web 2.0 have profoundly shaped the operational system of many industries, and the tourism sector is no exception. Internet has become one of the major drivers to market tourism destination worldwide (Inversini and Buhalis 2009). Nowadays, due to Social Media, which comprehend a vast number of communication channels, including blogs, social networks, review websites etc, consumers are acquiring a fundamental role in the tourism industry and they are increasingly modifying the way marketing is conducted and information is delivered. With Web 2.0 publishing on the web has become accessible to everybody, end-users are no longer just information consumers, but they have become information players and providers (Nicholas et al. 2007). The easy accessibility to the internet and its increasing proliferation have severely revolutionised some traditional marketing constructs such as branding, image and reputation. The tourism product is an experience good, and the final product is a composite of services and experiences which are hard to be assessed prior to purchase (Pan et al. 2007). Due to the intangibility of the tourism services, advices from other consumers (Word of mouth), who have prior experienced the products, are considered as one of the most reliable as well as influential sources of pre-purchase information. With Web 2.0 word of mouth (WOM) has become E- word of mouth (EWOM) which is considered even more influential than the traditional one as it is accessible to anyone and it can be diffused quicker. The aggregation of the entire range of online representations and online WOM creates the online reputation (Inversini and Cantoni 2011). Due to the inseparable and heterogeneous nature of the tourism products, customers are keener to select tourism service providers based upon their reputation (Dowling 2001). In fact as Marchiori et al.(2013) argued “the tourism industry is intrinsically a reputation dependent domain”. Therefore, it becomes obvious that the diffusion of EWOM and the consequent creation of online reputation, can have dramatic impacts for the success of a tourism destination as it can shape its image.

This research paper aims at providing an extended analysis of the impacts online reputation is having on the perceived image of a tourism destination. In order to do so, it will assess the online discourses around Sicily, an Italian tourism destination, and it will evaluate to what extent what is discussed on the internet is having an impact on its image. This research will be carried out with the intention of increasing the awareness about the importance of E-reputation and therefore encouraging DMOs to carefully manage and control their online reputation. Taking into consideration the theoretical motivations, although several studies have been carried out regarding the impacts of EWOM on the travel and tourism industry, a few have analysed how the proliferation of Web 2.0 has profoundly influenced important marketing constructs such as branding and image. Therefore, the research paper aims at filling this gap in the literature, analysing how social media have shaped the connection between branding, image and reputation within the tourism industry.

In order to meet the aims mentioned above, and since all the information will be retrieved from the internet, the research will be conducted using webnography. This is
a new typology of research methodology which uses online conversations as source of consumer insight (Puri 2009). This method looks for consumer insights arising from the online natural conversations among them and it analyses forums such as blogs, newsgroups, social networking services, consumer review forums etc. Webnography allows market researches to add speed and efficiency as well as a sense of “currentness” when accessing consumer insights, it allows access to spontaneous consumer talk which is more natural and real than traditional interviews or focused groups and finally it allows an access to real time trends created by involved consumers (Kozinets 2002). Through an extensive literature review it will be possible to ascertain what are the major factors and agents which determine and have an impact on the formation of destination image. Once these agents will be established and the online conversations about Sicily analysed through webnography, the author will assess the online discourses in relation to the influential agents ascertained. This will allow to evaluate to what extent the online reputation of the destination has an impact on its image.

At the end of the research it is expected to demonstrate the influential role that e-reputation plays in the tourism industry, highlighting the extent to which the online representations and online discourses around a destination are able to shape and its image and consequently affect its success. Once this concept will be demonstrated, several recommendations will be provided in order to mobilise the awareness of DMOs and tourism organisations about this essential issue.
A critical analysis into the role of social media and eWoM in shaping hotel online reputation: a corporate perspective

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Problem statement

A growing body of research demonstrates that a firm’s soft assets (i.e. identity and reputation), represent a competitive advantage that is hard to imitate and can contribute to superior profits (e.g. Yoon et al., 1993; Gardberg and Fombrun, 2002; Gotsi and Wilson, 2001; Groenland, 2002; Whetten and Mackey, 2002). According to Fombrun, Gardberg, and Sever (1999:242), corporate reputation is ‘a collective assessment of a company’s ability to provide valued outcomes to a representative group of stakeholders’. However, the understanding of corporate reputation is becoming more complex if the role of media, in particular the online conversation over social media, is taken into consideration (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2012). The growing availability and popularity of social media have transformed the way people communicate, make decisions, socialise, learn, and interact with each other (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008). Predominantly, with the interactive power of social media, assessment and evaluation by consumers of a product’s or a company’s performance or perceived position, is now not simply formed on the basis of mass media information monopolies, but increasingly through consumer online conversation (Horster and Gottschalk, 2012). The aggregation of these consumer online conversation, i.e. representing electronic Word of Mouth (eWoM) communication, strongly contribute to the building of online reputation (Marchiori et al. 2011) and potentially posing challenges to reputation management and brand management.

Specifically to reputation research, several researchers have noted that the role of recommendation from several second-hand sources act as reputation mediators, and can have a potentially crucial effect in a traveller’s decision – making process (Passow et al, 2005; Fesenmaier, et al, 2006; Yang et al., 2008). In particular, in the online environment, Word of Mouth (WoM) found in social media websites can be considered as proxies of a dominant public opinion (reputation) as well as that of the reader (perceived reputation) (Marchiori et al., 2013). Studying eWoM via social media websites is likely to provide insights into the meaning of online corporate reputation with particular regard to brand management. In addition, while there are numerous studies regarding eWoM, most of the studies are related to its impact on sales of travel products and services, while some others refer to online retailers (Ghose and Iperiotis, 2006; Chevlier and Mayzlin, 2006; Ye et al, 2009a, 2009b; Hills and Cairncross, 2011). Studies into using eWoM for understanding online corporate reputation, still remain limited.

Identity and image could be serving as crucial components in reputation studies (Fombrun, 1996; Reino et al., 2012). Research in understanding the relationships between corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation is considered as insufficient, with much left to be investigated into the related concepts (Balmer, 2001;
Dacin and Brown, 2002; Balmer and Greyser, 2006; Walsh et al., 2009; Money et al., 2010). Corporate communication plays a crucial role in studying the three constructs. As argued by Gray and Balmer (1998: 696), “Corporate communication is a critical link between the corporate identity and the corporate image and reputation”. With the widespread and interactive power of social media and therefore eWoM communication, social media and eWoM communication would pose challenge to corporate communication and therefore online branding strategy. As such, the proposed study will provide a comprehensive revision of the interactions between corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation, with specific reference to eWoM communication within the social media arena. In addition, a study of corporate image and corporate reputation is likely to create an identity dialogue that provides the foundation for brand management (Schulz et al., 2000). More contemporary insight will be provided to potentially give better understanding for online corporate reputation, what may be required for online branding strategy and thereby reputation management.

Therefore, the aim of the research is to:

Critically explore the role of social media and eWoM on reputation management and branding within the hospitality industry.

**Methodology**

Qualitative approach will be adopted in the research, notably, social media and semi-structured individual interviews. The combination of these qualitative methods will serve as a basis for triangulating data about corporate identity, corporate image and online corporate reputation. Specifically, content analysis is to be adopted in this research to support the identification of the multidimensional opinions and perceptions of corporate identity, corporate image and online corporate reputation.

**Expected results**

In terms of contribution to knowledge, it is anticipated that the research will provide insights of how generic brand management and generic reputation management is changing as a result of technology and social media. In terms of managerial implications, the research would increase managers’ ability to take advantage the “social intelligence” via this in depth study of social media and managing their brand’s online reputation. Best practice will be recommended, enabling any ‘corporate identity/image/reputation’ gap to be closed. In addition, hotel management will benefit from this research.

**Conclusion**

The research aims to critically analyse the role of social media and eWoM in shaping online corporate reputation within the hotel sector. Theoretical frameworks of corporate identity, image and reputation, and eWoM communication within the social media arena will be explored. The research will also provide an insight into how generic brand management and generic reputation management needs to and is changing as a result of contemporary and continuously evolving technology.
Reference


Roles of innovations, applications of ICT and E-commerce in sustainable tourism: Developing a framework for a Sustainable Oriented Destination Management System of Vietnam

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Problem Statement

Tourism is considered by a number of institutional stakeholders, as a major contributor to poverty alleviation (WTO). Tourism can contribute to the well-being of the poor through generation of jobs, income-earning opportunities, and indirectly by infrastructure developments, opportunities to interact with cultures, gain access to new markets, and encouraging conservation of natural and cultural assets. By enhancing local livelihood, tourism can enable communities to survive rather than seeing the out-migration of their youngest and brightest citizens (Scheyvens, 2009). However, tourism in another side, has the negative impact to the environment and socio-cultural like the pollution of water bodies, irreversibly altered indigenous cultures, and decimated untold acres of forest to produce billions of maps, brochures and fliers that have been used to market travel. There have, however, been significant changes in the past years. The environmental consequences of tourism can be considered as the social costs that are imposed by this sector. Consider these matters, the tourism actors have responded to these challenges by applying the concept of sustainable development to tourism policy and planning i.e. Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) (M Mowforth and I Munt, 1998; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). STD is a new integrated approach to tourism development, which involves resource management and working together with stakeholders for the long-term viability and quality of the social, economic and environmental resources (Miller & Twining-Ward, 2005). Middleton and Hawkins (1998,p.8) state that “a marketing perspective is essentially an overall management orientation reflecting corporate attitudes that, in the case of travel and tourism, must balance the interests of shareholders/owners with the long-run environmental interests of a destination and at the same time meet the demands and expectations of customers”.

The heterogeneous, intangible and perishable nature of tourism products distinguishes them from other industrial sectors and explains the importance of information in this industry and the relevance of ICTs. The international dimensions of tourism and the fact that tourism is a service industry also contribute to the central role of information in the tourism industry. The growth of tourist flows, and the variety of consumers’ motivations and requirements, lead destinations to organize their tourism industry to better respond to consumers’ expectations.

Destination Management Systems (DMS) can be described as the IT infrastructure of the DMO (Sheldon, 1997). DMS should be able to act as an enabling mechanism to integrate the different services and products from the tourism industry. DMS may also create more efficient internal and external networks, which can have long-term positive effects on the local economy in achieving competitive advantage (Fischer,
1998; WTO, 2001). DMOs can also support the wide distribution of destination information online.

Small businesses such as hotels in developing countries have often been excluded from global tourism distribution channels. DMS are strategic ICT tools that can help DMOs and tourism enterprises in developing countries, like in Vietnam, integrate, promote and distribute tourism products and services. More and more destination management organizations (DMOs) in developing countries are using the Internet to market their tourism offerings (UNCTAD 2005).

This research addressed the concerns about how local individual organisations can utilise the advantages offered by today’s Information and Communication Technology (ICT), particularly DMS, to better compete for incoming tourism and improve its profitability and effectiveness. Considering an effective DMS as a practical, new and innovative approach to sustainable tourism development, the study aims to develop an empirically validated framework of a DMS adequate with the sustainable demand of the tourism industry.

**Methodology**

The Aims of this research are to:
- Generate a comprehensive set of effectiveness dimensions of a Web based DMS,
- Generate a comprehensive set of effectiveness criteria of a Web based DMS,
- Incorporate these dimensions and criteria into a comprehensive framework in particular with the sustainable tourism,
- Assess this framework using an appropriate DMS based website
- The Objectives of this research are to:
- Construct a methodology of the effectiveness of a DMS as a channel of distribution,
- Identify stakeholder views on channel effectiveness criteria from a number of different perspectives, weight the dimension / criteria identified,
- Designing the functionality and services of DMS for supporting the sustainable management of destination
- Construct a DMS based website prototype using the dimension and criteria identified.

The study examines the alignment between tourism development plans and practical implementation for what regards ICTs, particularly the DMS of the local authorities and policy makers in tourism destinations (DMO) in order to promote sustainable tourism in Vietnam.

Focused on the DMOs, and as information management and tourist satisfaction are the very important factors (Ali 2009), the research aims at evaluating the online presence destination management organizations (DMOs) by assessing the quality of their websites using methods of website evaluation.

To understand the need and objectives of the stakeholders and to comprehend the context, objectives and impact of an DMS to the STD, the surveys administered to destination managers and semi-structured interviews with the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism managers will employed.
Anticipated Results

**Contribution to the local:** The results of this research will be used to the recommendations of an Sustainable oriented Destination management system to be applied by the industry and the government in Vietnam

**Contribution to Theory:** Conceptual framework for the implementation of an effective sustainable oriented DMS.

Conclusions

The establishment of a DMS depends on the costs involved and the capacity of DMOs to run different functionalities, depending on the technological, human and financial resources available, and the capacity of the various stakeholders. Success in the development of a DMS is mainly associated with its organizational structure and the cooperation mechanisms established between the Government and the private sector. A clear and well defined strategy of sustainable tourism benefiting the advantages of ICT is also accounted.
“Touristification” of the capital of RN with the Viva & Conheça Natal

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“Touristification” was a term created by the members of this research group from the idea of join the word tourism with the action of transform any locality in a really tourist locality. This new world follows the idea of “gamification” in the world of games, which, in a simplest definition, means to use the games mechanic in processes that are not games.

This group also defines an another new term “living a locality”, whose the definition is: the process of knowing a locality through its more profound characteristics, trying to understand the culture, the history, the language, the religiousness, the customs, the people and their heritage. Because of this, the process of “living a locality” is a huge challenge, a challenge for the natives and a much greater challenge for the tourists. This work proposes the use of a set of modern technologies of information (ICT) and communication to create a process of personal immersion that provides an enjoyable way of “living a locality”. A process like this could be used both for education and for providing more interesting information for tourists.

Viva & Conheça Natal is a software platform planned to be used in mobile devices (smartphones Android and iOS) synchronized with a web site. The software used in the smartphone provides the same kind of interaction of the web site. This platform was designed to work in two different ways: 1) as Role Playing Game (RPG) where the player is invited to explore all the characteristics of the city of Natal; and 2) as a “gamefied” (uses games mechanic) Digital Touristic Assistant (DTA) that provides all the information needed by the tourist for “living a locality”. In both ways, the use of game mechanics allows an enjoyable environment where tourists and the natives, specially the high school students, can achieve information and knowledge about history, culture, language, religiousness and touristic attractions of the Potiguar capital, Natal (Brazil). Furthermore, the platform can be associated with various tours appliances like hotels, bars, restaurants and other touristic services for offering, to the winners of certain game levels, goods and promotions. To provide the immersion, a set of ICTs as augmented reality, QR codes, geo-references, check-ins, web sockets synchronization and others are used. Because of this, the platform used as a game or as a DTA creates an interaction between the digital world and the real one.
The RPG game and the DTA will work based on tourist routes defined in the four main regions of the city: north, south, east and west). These routes will be the result of a research of the tourism specialists of our research group that are working in how to show Natal in a deep and pleasurable manner with a process of digital immersion. These routes will be generated considering a thematic approach as: gastronomy, history, cultural, sun & sea, panoramic and rank based. The routes generation will result in a centralized database with a large amount of information that today is scattered in various places.

The DTA (and also the game) was planned to be social allowing the user to share his comments, suggestions and rank the attractions and services used/visited (this information will define the rank based routes). This social information will be used to help others users in their decisions and as a real time response for the institutions and organizations responsible for managing the tourism in Natal. Beyond the definition of the best routes, another research topic is how this real-time feedback can actually be used to improve the city and how those responsible for tourism in the Natal will work with it. The overall social impact over the touristic activity is another topic to be addressed.

The other research topics to be worked in this project are relative to computer science as user interface, profiling the user to suggest data and synchronization between the mobile and the web platform. The user interface will be an interesting challenge because there is the issue to produce an interface to be self-adjusting to fits properly to a smartphone, tablet or a PC and besides, can be used both as a game as a DTA. The user profile will be used for adopt some characteristics of the interface to create a better user experience and to produce better suggestion of data. This process will be performed by a multiagent simulation framework that uses agents with affective attention focus developed by some researchers of this group (Signoretti, 2011)(Signoretti, 2011a). This multiagent system will be implemented as the proposed in the work of Junior (Xavier, 2011). Finally, the synchronization will be implemented using web sockets, but the V&C platform must be prepared to work with inconstant coverage of both the internet as the 3G, which is an important issue to be considered in the project.

The methodology to be employed in this development fits in an exploratory and experimental research through a multidisciplinary team. Therefore, the classical approach of developing simulation models will be used. This is a cyclical and iterative process, where several prototype architectures will be developed progressively exploring possible ways of interaction between parts of the system and between the system and the user. The prototypes are then validated by comparing results of simulations and scenarios commonly encountered. Finally, the prototypes are adjusted for the rights and wrongs of the comparisons and a new cycle of modeling, execution and validation is initiated.

Following the methodology, this group already has its first mobile application for tourist currently deployed in Android Smartphones. The app Rapt Tour (Cunha, 2013) uses augmented reality and is integrated with Google Maps and Street View to provide additional information on certain touristic sights of Natal. In a new modeling, execution and validation cycle, a “gamification” process will be added to this app and
new tests will be performed. The next steps will be the development of the web site and the synchronization between the Rapt Tour and the web site.

The expectation is to obtain a playful and fun tool that can bring knowledge and information to both natives and tourists interested in "living the locality" Natal. Being a mobile app synchronized with a web site, the game and the DTA could be used almost anywhere. It is expected that the playful aspect and the challenges offered by the game and DTA, can increase the curiosity and interest of tourists and natives throughout the ecosystem of Natal. In addition to the benefits of social sharing of information in real time are expected benefits to improve the commercial and tourist infrastructure of the region.

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A Quantitative Network Analysis of the Sibiu County Tourism Destination

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Problem Statement

Networks are increasingly becoming a competitive advantage and differentiating factor for tourism destinations. In a complex and dynamic environment, which is characteristic for the tourism sector, the change of competitive conditions triggered by increasingly sophisticated needs of guests poses new challenges for tourism destinations. The tourism product is very complex and involves a large number of stakeholders. Therefore a well developed, strong network between the different organisations is needed in order to assure the coordination of production processes and to profit from these changes to achieve efficiency, effectiveness and innovation benefits.

This research examines the structural characteristics of the tourism network formed by the stakeholders in the tourism destination Sibiu County. Quantitative network analysis is being used as a method for detecting and researching the structures. This thesis provides an evaluation of the extent of cooperation and collaboration between the stakeholders in the tourism destination based on network analysis metrics. The results are intended to contribute to the current state of research, as well as to provide the Sibiu County tourism management organization with an analysis that can be used to guide some of their future activities.

The contribution of network analysis to the understanding of tourism destinations is a relatively new approach in the tourism literature (Scott/Baggio/Cooper 2008). The number of previous studies dealing with quantitative network analysis in order to describe the structure of tourism destinations is therefore quite limited. The present study consists in the re-contextualisation of existing techniques: by using the quantitative network to describe the structure of a new tourism destination, the applicability of this approach is being showed in a new situation.

The main research question that this thesis addresses is: What is the structure of the tourism destination network in the Sibiu County and according to which network metrics can it be described?

Methodology

The main objective of the study is to characterise the structure of the tourism destination network of the Sibiu County by using the quantitative network analysis as a method.

Data collection is one of the essential steps of the research path and as discussed in literature, it is a process difficult to execute (Baggio 2008). An exhaustive survey based on the lists published by the Tourism Board of the Sibiu County will provide
the basis for my research. This primary source will be analysed: data collection is performed by identifying and surveying the possible types of relationships among the tourism organisations acting in this tourism destination. Different sources will be used as complementary methods in order to obtain reliable data: information from the exhaustive survey will be combined with that from the different websites of the stakeholders, with the data obtained by conducting interviews and by analysing the tourism brochures and prospects.

Once network information is collected, the analysis of the inter-organisational relationships based on the use of quantitative network analysis metrics will provide useful information about the structure of the destination, the exchange of information between the tourism actors and the degree of collaboration and cooperation in the destination. The findings from the static analysis of the network will provide the topological characteristics of the network.

The methods chosen to carry out this study have been discussed in several publications dealing with the contribution of quantitative network analysis to the understanding of tourism destinations (Baggio/Scott/Wang 2007; Scott/Baggio/Cooper 2008; Baggio 2008; Cooper, Scott, March, Wilkinson, Pför, Thompson 2006; Baggio 2011). Based on the most important literature dealing with the analysis of tourism destinations by studying the network structures from a quantitative point of view, the described methodology is regarded as appropriate to answer the research question stated in the first part of the present work.

Expected Results

It is most probably to find a low network density of the tourism network of the Sibiu County, which is strongly connected to the fragmentation of the tourism sector.

It is also expected to obtain different connectivity results for the categories of tourism actors formed by separating them according to the field of activity and their geographical location. Some groups of stakeholders will be probably more connected than others. The connectivity degree will probably differ when comparing actors from the cities with the ones from the countryside.

Another hypothesis concerns the composition of the different clusters: it is expected to identify clusters formed by organisations belonging to different types of businesses. A big variety of the organisation types in the different clusters would show the tendency of self-organisation in the region.

Conclusions

The work presented here focuses on the analysis of the tourism destination network in the Sibiu County. By describing the parameters of the quantitative network analysis and representing the outcomes in a graph composed of nodes connected by links, the characterisation of the topology and the behaviour of the destination system is provided. The quantitative metrics are used in order to determine the extent of collaboration and cooperation between the stakeholders, which is a crucial competitive advantage and differentiating factor for tourism destinations.
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Consumer behaviour and the decision making process: from lookers to bookers, factors for conversion

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Problem Statement

Tourism, as an information intensive business, has been greatly affected by recent advancements in information communication technologies. The resulting changes in the behaviour of contemporary travellers thus raise the need to better characterize customers' information needs, perceptions and behaviours in e-tourism environments. The goal of the current study was therefore to provide a comprehensive model to better understand the complexity of tourism-related decision making processes in the Internet within traditional consumer behavior theories. To this end, we explored a wide variety of factors which may affect the conversion of potential consumers from 'Lookers' to 'Bookers'. This was accomplished in a process-focused manner, namely through different key phases along the decision making process of potential e-tourism consumers, under the theoretical framework of the Technology Adoption Model (TAM).

Methodology

To better explain the complexity of consumers’ behaviour and specifically address the users’ attitude towards e-shopping acceptance in the online travelling environment, four multifactorial dimensions (behavioural, affective, cognitive and conative) were added to the TAM. Each factor within these dimensions, as well as several personal factors, was evaluated during each key phase along the decision making process (the search for information and the choice of using e-tourism; the evaluation of alternatives; and purchasing of the tourism product) using multifactorial qualitative and quantitative analyses performed on large samples of Internet users. During the first exploratory phase of the study, in-depth interviews were performed with 70 Internet users regarding the use of e-tourism, and 12 users then participated in a hands-on and 'think aloud' online trip-planning simulation. During the second phase of the study, predominantly closed-ended questionnaires concerning the use of e-tourism were completed by 356 Internet users and the data was analysed with multivariate regression and correlation models.

Results

Based on the qualitative and quantitative data, we constructed a comprehensive multifactorial model for spiral multidirectional decision making to explain the behaviour of potential customers in e-tourism environments. Our main findings demonstrate that many of the factors added to the TAM to assess the attitude of users towards the e-tourism experience considerably affect decision making, and therefore the level of technology adoption and purchase probability. These factors are, however, different during different phases of the decision making process. For
instance, although e-tourism sites are generally perceived as useful and easy to use, the first phase of the decision making process (the search for information) is generally perceived to have a high flow experience and as the most useful, playful and easy to use. Accordingly, emotional factors play a major role in shaping the user’s attitude towards the e-tourism experience during this phase. In contrast, users perceive the second phase of the process (the evaluation of alternatives) as considerably more risky and less useful, playful and easy to use, and report a poor flow experience and being overwhelmed with information that is ill-presented and confusing. The user’s attitude during this phase is influenced predominantly by cognitive factors, and the decrease in enjoyment and flow experience may lead to the decreased levels of technology adoption and purchase probability observed during this stage. Gender also affects decision making in the e-tourism environment, with women generally more influenced by emotional factors (e.g., enjoyment, flow experience and playfulness) than men, and men more likely to perform a purchase than women. More frequent travellers perceive e-tourism as less risky and more useful, and a linear and goal-directed search for information encourages a more rapid and purchase-focused decision making process, both leading to increased adoption of the technology and to increased purchase probability.

**Conclusions**

Our model describes how a wide spectrum of users’ perceptions and personal factors may explain the complex process of decision making along key phases of the e-tourism experience. We show that different phases of the decision making process are differentially affected by different attitude- and user experience-related factors, which in turn affect the level of technological adoption and purchase probability. In addition, the model highlights the relatively high importance of flow experience and the relatively low importance of the ease of use in the prediction of consumption, thereby offering several applicative insights for the construction of e-tourism environments and a better understanding of consumer behaviour. Taken together, our findings suggest that the TAM should be modified to better describe contemporary e-shopping decision making processes, at least in e-tourism related environments.
Electronic public relations in tourism  
Case study: Algerian government tourism agencies

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Introduction

The public relations plays a significant role in the action of a company; they have become an integral part in the function of the company since the success of several companies and organizations is related to the administration force of public relations as well as its organization and its effectiveness.

Moreover, the extraordinary progress of the new technology of information and communication has changed much of our life and our companies, the winds of changes did not exclude the administration of the public relation since this fast development has changed our strategies of public relations in all the companies being either governmental or private.

Digital technology has contributed in the reinforcement of the company’s capacity in supplying information to its public and before that it allowed the obtaining of necessary information to make good decisions. Furthermore, technology has reinforced the company’s capacity in the execution of its public relations in order to influence the contents of the mass media concerning the business of the company. The electronic public relations have also contributed in increasing the company’s capacity to build good public relations with its different public as well as the realization of an interactive homogeneous communication between the company and its public. The electronic public relations require the design of communication programs more effective than the old ones.

If the winds of change do not exclude administration of public relations in various companies, the public relations administration in government agencies will undergoes changes in its structures, its functionality and also its programs. Since we live the electronic era which imposes a transparency and a great confidence between the citizen and the government agencies, the discussion today concerns the electronic government. Since the government agencies in Algeria are not separated from the world scene, we thus try to prospect an administration model for the electronic public relations in Algeria, through particularly world experiments in that field.

Problem

Algeria sees deep changes in all the fields, which implies new challenges on all fronts and among which, the challenge of the establishment of trust and comprehension between the authority and the citizen which is mainly at the top of concerns of the person charged with the public relations on the level of the governmental bodies.
These government agencies which accompanied the current changes, passing from the unique to the multipartite system in the political field and from social model to that of the market economy in the economic field, these changes impose on the government agencies the design of good image of themselves as well as the challenges and what follows them like role changes, obliging these government agencies to consolidate the trust of these various publics, and that the essential role of the public relations in adding traditional roles which consist of the administration and strategic planning.

However, the main part of changes is that of the form and structures of public relations administration, particularly with the astonishing progress of the new technology of communication that have proved its effectiveness at the time of the information society from which we find several effective practices in which we are trying to prospect particularly in the government tourism agencies in different countries from which we are trying to draw some benefits from their experiments in order to work out an administration model of the electronic public relations a tour own organizations.

The fundamental problematic is as follows

Which perception is proposed for the mechanisms of development of electronic public relations in the Algerian tourism agencies in the light of some recent world experiences and experiments?

Questions

What is the position of the electronic public relations at the Algerian tourism agencies?

1- What is the site and the extent of the electronic public relations at the Algerian tourism agencies?
2- What are the attributions and the functions that are given to the administration of the electronic public relations in the Algerian tourism agencies?
3- What role plays the administration of the electronic public relations at the Algerian tourism agencies?

What are the mechanisms of the use of digital technologies in the public relations management?

4- What opportunities are provided by digital technologies in the public relations administration?
5- What are the challenges imposed by digital technologies in the public relations administration?

What are the practical administration models of the electronic public relations according to some world experiments?

6- What is the current situation of the public relations administration in the world experiments?
7- What is the future of the public relations administration?

What are the success elements and the world experiments’ limits of the administration of the public relations in the government tourism agencies?
By which mechanisms will Algeria profit from the world experiments in the administration of the public relations in government tourism agencies?

**Reasons for the choice of this subject**

- An attempt to know the world experiments in the administration of the public relations and secrets of success of some experiments as well as the weak points of the other experiments.
- A new subject that has never been treated, especially knowledge that concerns electronic public relations at the Algerian government tourism agencies.
- An attempt to put in practice the knowledge in order to find solutions to the problems which the administration of the electronic public relations at the Algerian government tourism agencies faces and to propose a new concept for management of the electronic relations at the Algerian government tourism agencies.

**Definitions of the Concepts**

**Public relations**: the definition are numerous but we will insist on the fact that the public relations in the science and the art of the installation and consolidation on confidence and comprehension between a company and its different publics, starting with the knowledge and the estimation of the orientations publics in order to support the making of a healthy decision in the company and also to arrive at the planning and the realization of the effective communication programs.

**The Electronic relations**: it is a developed form of the public relations carried out by the installation of the complex public relations, being based primarily on the new technology of information and communication especially the Net.

**Government agencies**: the definition are different from a searcher to another, but what gathers them all, is that the governmental system is related to the public utility, thus our definition is that the governmental system is the whole of ministries and public administrations as well as the local government of tourism.

**Methods and tools of the study**

The study is based on a comparative method, which consists in addition to comparing world experiments in the electronic public relations, the method to traverse these world experiments as well as a method of current study in order to study the state of the Algerian tourism government agencies. This study is based on all the possible tools, from the formulas to the comparison passing through the observation and also the content analysis.