ENTER 2016 PhD Workshop
Research Proposals

PhD Workshop Chairs and eBook Editors
Brigitte Stangl (University of Surrey)
Sofia Reino (University of Bedfordshire)
Dan Wang (The Hong Kong Politechnic University)
Yulan Yuan (Jiwen University of Science and Technology)
List of Contents

Smartphone and Augmented Reality

The Development of a Business Model for the Implementation of Augmented Reality in Cultural Heritage Tourism: The case of Geevor Tin Mine Museum ................................................................. 4
   Ella Cranmer

Can collaborative use and Smart(er) Mobile Platforms develop better Experiences of Tourism Events? ................................................................. 12
   John Bustard

Recommendation of Tourism Resources Supported by Crowdsourcing................................................................. 18
   Fátima Leal, Benedita Malheiro and Juan Carlos Burguillo

Will Uses and Gratifications Theory help us understand e-Tourists’ use of Smartphones? ................................................................. 26
   Jang-Won Moon and Sheila J. Backman

Changes in the Tourism Information Search Process due Smartphone usage ................................................................. 35
   Robert Eller

Technological Approach to Sustainable Development and Community Empowerment in Itatiaia National Park, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
   Grislayne Guedes Lopes da Silva................................................................. 37

Information Search and Decision Making

Horizontal Loyalty and New Trends in Information Search .............. 43
   Arminda Almeida Santana and Sergio Moreno Gil

Application of Geographical Information Systems in Climate Change for Sustainable Tourism Development in Mount Kenya Tourist Circuit
   David Kamau Karienyе................................................................. 48

A Journey across the Digital Frontier: Investigating the Evolution of Travel Texts ................................................................. 53
   Michelangelo Magasic
Destination Marketing

Humour in Customer Engagement on Chinese Social Media – A Rhetorical Perspective ................................................................. 62
   Jing Ge
Marketing the Smart Destination ........................................................................................................... 68
   Myrta Zemp
Influence of online Consumer-generated Contents and e-WOM in Safari DMO’s online Marketing Strategies ........................................ 73
   Peter J. Mkumbo
Collective Destination Brand Image Formation through Agenda Setting Theory and Social Media Communication ......................... 78
   Zeynep Pala Gedikoglu

ICT Adoption and business performance

Proposing a Strategic Roadmap to improve Effective Decision-making toward IT Adoption in Hotels, using Business Model Canvas .......... 84
   Mohsen Zamani
Social Media Technology Affordances for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Tourism Industry ............................................. 91
   Ping Wang
The Diffusion of New Technology amongst Small-and-Medium-Sized Hotels (SMHs) in Malaysia ..................................................... 100
   Faizal Ayob
E-Distribution Channels as Instruments of Hotel Performance: A Case of European Business Perspective ........................................ 106
   Miha Bratec

Human Resources

Trends in Travel Agencies’ e-Business: Perspectives of Human Resource Sector ................................................................. 112
   Ivana Mišković
The Effects of Hotels Engagement with Daily Deal Websites on Employment Patterns and Employee Wellbeing ......................... 119
   Katarzyna Minor
The Development of a Business Model for the Implementation of Augmented Reality in Cultural Heritage Tourism: The Case of Geevor Tin Mine Museum

Ella Cranmer
Department of Food and Tourism Management,
Manchester Metropolitan University
eleanor.e.cranmer@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Abstract
Information Communication Technologies have had a profound effect on the tourism industry, transforming the way tourists explore environments and access information, thus the use of modern technologies is now recognised as necessary for tourism organisations to remain competitive. Augmented Reality (AR) has emerged as a valuable tool in cultural heritage tourism to deliver enhanced experiences, offering different versions of knowledge. However a research gap exists identifying Business Models (BMs) to guide tourism organisations in the adoption, implementation and exploration of ARs full potential. The V4BM, one of the most comprehensive existing BMs, although not developed for specific application of AR is used as a framework to guide research questions. A mixed methods approach is adopted combining interview and questionnaire data to develop then validate an AR BM. Geevor Tin Mine Museum is studied as a revelatory case, with the purpose of contributing theoretically and practically developing a BM for the implementation of AR in cultural heritage tourism. Thus also bridging the gap between the potential of AR and actual value adding benefits.

Keywords: Augmented Reality, Business Models, Cultural Heritage Tourism

1 Problem Definition
Deregulation, globalisation and technological advancements have increased competitiveness (Casadesus-Masanell and Ricart, 2010; Teece, 2010), fuelling an innovation culture and increasing interest in BMs (Magretta, 2002). BMs are recognised as powerful tools because “business is fundamentally concerned with creating value and capturing returns from that value, a model is simply a representation of this in reality” (Shafer et al., 2005, p. 202). Technology has now become a part of our everyday lives (Palumbo et al., 2013), therefore it is increasingly necessary for many tourism organisations in order to stay competitive and attractive to tourists (Han et al., 2014).

AR is an emerging technology, with an increasing presence (Van Krevelen and Poelman, 2010; Yuen et al., 2011), recognised for its ability to spread and enhance the value of cultural heritage tourism (Chung et al., 2015; Fino et al., 2013) and educational abilities (Lee, 2012; Wu et al., 2013). Importantly, AR possesses the potential to enhance visitor experiences, increase visitor numbers and revenues (Hume and Mills, 2011; Palumbo et al., 2013).

Despite the newness of the field, research widely acknowledges the opportunities, benefits and solutions AR offers to cultural heritage tourism (Fino et al., 2013; Garcia-Crespo et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2013). Yet it remains unclear how to implement and capitalise upon this potential. A gap exists in research identifying BMs as effective tools to explore the benefits AR presents technologically and in terms of creating value, increasing competitiveness, visitor numbers, and profits. As highlighted by
Chesbrough (2007), a better business model beats a better idea or technology, which reinforces the need to develop a BM ensuring cultural heritage tourism attractions do not lose out on the potential AR offers in capturing the attention of the modern tourist (Weber, 2014). In turn, it would also be more likely to increase competitiveness, long-term sustainability and profitability.

UNESCO recognised and popular cultural heritage attraction, Geevor Tin Mine Museum, Cornwall, is used as a case study. Like many cultural heritage attractions, Geevor is a publicly funded organisation and faces growing pressure to explore new ways to boost visitor numbers, provide a source of supplementary income and remain attractive to the modern tourist. Introducing AR would offer interactivity and entertainment, enhancing the visitor experience. Yet, AR also has the potential to overcome challenges such as the use of AR signage to avoid degradation in protected cultural heritage sites. Despite this, presently few cultural heritage attractions are exploiting the full potential of AR for a variety of reasons, from funding limitations or uncertainty toward new technologies. An AR BM would help realise the potential of AR to cultural heritage organisations prior to implementation by identifying its potential value and benefits. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to bridge the gap between the potential AR presents to cultural heritage tourism attractions and actual value adding benefits. The study will make both a theoretical and practical contribution by developing a BM to implement AR in cultural heritage tourism, creating new knowledge and guiding practitioners in the adoption of new technologies.

2 Literature Review

Modern technologies and the rise of the Internet have forced organisations to find new ways of doing business (Al-Debei et al., 2008). This has had a profound effect on the tourism industry, altering traditional distribution channels and value networks (Buhalis, 2003; Livi, 2008), transforming the dissemination and retrieval of information (Hjalager, 2015). Competition among tourism organisations has intensified as a result, leading to the emergence of a new type of empowered ‘modern’ tourist (Jung et al., 2015), increasing the demand for tailored personalised information, available anytime, anywhere (Holmner, 2011; Kounavis et al., 2012). As a result, increasingly it is being recognised that utilising modern technology is a necessity for tourism organisations to remain competitive and continue attracting visitors (Han et al., 2014).

AR technology “represents a system where a view of a live real physical environment is supplemented by computer-generated elements such as sound, video, graphic or location data” (Taqvi, 2013, p.11). It immerses its users in a virtually enhanced world (Di Serio et al., 2013), improving their perception of, or interaction with, the real world (Roesner et al., 2014). Based upon these characteristics, it is widely praised for its educational and entertainment potential (Wu et al., 2013), creating new possibilities to deliver richer, more immersive content (Leue et al., 2014), changing the users’ view of their immediate surroundings (Wasko, 2013).

Only in the past few years have devices become smaller, cheaper, more powerful and able to efficiently run AR applications (Salmon and Nyhan, 2013). Coupled with the practical ability of AR to allow tourists with limited knowledge of an area to naturally and realistically experience it, AR has become a widely accepted and valuable technological tool in tourism (Chung et al., 2015). Within the industry, there is a predominant focus on the use of AR in cultural heritage attractions, because of its ability to add elements and offer different versions of knowledge (Fino et al., 2013). AR is cited as the perfect complement to cultural heritage by linking authentic content...
to a user’s immediate surroundings to enhance their experience (Fritz et al., 2005; Lee et al., 2015). Attractions are beginning to explore the creation of ‘info-cultural-tainment’ experiences combining leisure, entertainment, cultural, educational and social experiences (Palumbo et al., 2013). For example, ArcheoGuide was developed in Olympia Greece to bridge the gap between recreation, education and scientific research. The app uses AR techniques to enhance information, presentation, reconstruct ruined sites and simulate ancient life (Vlahakis et al., 2002).

However, contrary to expectations, AR is still not being widely and actively used, adoption has been slower than anticipated (Chung et al., 2015). A contributing reason for this could be that organisations are unsure how to adopt and implement AR into their tourist offering to create value adding benefits. Nonetheless, tourism is in need of new technologies to continue attracting tourists (Han et al., 2014), therefore it is important organisations do not lose out on the potential AR offers (Palumbo et al., 2013; Weber, 2014). It remains unclear to many organisations how to approach the task of implementing AR at cultural heritage attraction therefore a BM is required in order to fully realise the benefits of AR and its commercial viability at cultural heritage tourism attractions.

A gap exists in literature identifying AR BMs as frameworks to guide organisations in the implementation of AR as an effective tool to explore its technical potential and in terms of value creation, increasing competitiveness, visitor numbers and profits. Developing an AR BM would move AR toward meaningful implementation in tourism (Jung et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2015) allowing its full potential to be explored. BMs are suggested to be fundamental to any business (Al-Debei and Avison, 2010; Magretta, 2002), because all businesses are founded on the need to create value and capture returns from that value. A BM is simply a representation of this in reality (Shafer et al., 2005). In the context of tourism, complex value networks with numerous stakeholders collaborate to produce the end-product. BMs are essential tools to align functions (Al-Debei and Avison, 2010), synchronise and understand the relationships between stakeholders (Livi, 2008), encouraging organisations to adopt a holistic outlook (Gleeson, 2013). AR is still an evolving technology and its implementation is relatively new in the context of tourism. A BM approach will help close the gap between the technical potential of AR and its real economic, value adding benefits.

In the context of AR applications, Kleef et al. (2010) found usability, usefulness, fun and productivity are key elements necessary to provide genuine value to users. Likewise, cultural heritage attractions have to offer value-added services using technology to be competitive and differentiate (Garcia-Crespo et al., 2009). Despite some evidence of innovative technologies being used in cultural heritage tourism (Salmon and Nyhan, 2013), implementation strategies, potentials and uses remain to be fully explored (Cranmer and Jung, 2014). To achieve this a BM is required to ensure technical innovations, such as AR are implemented effectively at tourist attraction, to offer value to all stakeholders in the value network, whilst also providing authentic, value-added experiences.

A critical review of existing BM literature reveals a range of existing BMs (e.g. Osterwalder BM canvas, ETM and STOF), but confirms the absence of an AR BM. Although not developed specifically for the application of AR, the V4BM developed by Al-Debei and Avison (2010) (see Figure 1) emerged as the most relevant to provide a theoretical framework to guide research questions. V4BM was developed based on the foundations that technology does not exceed by itself, but consistent and effective
organisational settings are necessary in addition to the technical architecture, to provided value to intended users (Al-Debei and Avison, 2010).

Figure 1. The V4BM

3 Conceptual Development

In comparison to other BMs, the V4BM emphasises the relatedness and interconnected nature between its four elements (value network, value position, value finance, value architecture), which is important in the complex context of tourism value networks. Another strength is identified in its development process which involved a comprehensive and extensive review of existing BM literature (e.g. eBusiness, Information Systems, Mobile Business) and combined findings to create a unified model. Therefore, this process of development encapsulates “the complex nature of businesses today” (Al-Debei and Avison, 2010, p. 359). This is relevant and especially important to the study because of the complexity of BM design and equally the interrelatedness of tourism value networks.

Due to the evolving and emerging nature of AR in cultural heritage tourism it is most appropriate to adopt a case study approach for conceptual development of an AR BM. Geevor Tin Mine Museum was selected as a revelatory and unique case, with the purpose of contributing to theory (Yin, 2009). Geevor faces an increasing pressure to explore new ways to boost visitor numbers, provide a source of supplementary income and remain attractive to the modern tourist, AR is recognised as a method to achieve this. For Geevor adopting AR would ensure every effort is made to secure its future success, sustainability and economic viability. However, few BMs are successfully exploiting AR technology (Kleef et al., 2010), AR remains underutilised in the field of tourism, and even more so in cultural heritage tourism given the benefits and potential it presents. Therefore, it is imperative a BM is developed prior to the implementation of AR in cultural heritage tourism to bridge the gap between its potential and providing genuine added value, both economically and through enhancing the existing tourist experience.

4 Proposed Methodology
Data collection is still in the early stage so far only phase one, of three, is complete. The epistemological view of interpretivism is assumed. Prevalent in many exploratory studies is interpretivism using mixed-methodologies with inductive approaches to explore phenomenon to build theories (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Geevor has a small staff base, therefore phase one, involved nine internal stakeholder interviews, using a semi-structured approach to promote greater discussion, with the ability to add-to and extend questions (Saunders et al., 2012). The selected respondents’ are considered the most knowledgably people in the organisation able to provide the richest data. The small organisational scope of Geevor is beneficial; having a small staff base it was possible to gain insight from a variety of perspectives to generate a more complete overview involving the entirety of the organisation. Questions were structured relating to the four key elements outlined in the V4BM. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and data was analysed using content analysis. Results demonstrate positive support among internal stakeholders who recognise the need to modernise and improve the visitor experience at Geevor using AR. Respondents also acknowledged the potential of using AR to the preserve knowledge and personal experiences offered by staff who once worked in the mine for when they are no longer there. The value of education was also identified as a key theme during interviews and highlighted the need to extend interviews to include external stakeholders (e.g. visitors, local businesses, educational group leaders, governing bodies) to get a more complete understanding of the research problem. Phase two external stakeholder interviews will also be semi-structured and analysed using content analysis.

After phase two, a BM will be developed combining phase one and two results with literature. Qualitative interview results will be used to inform the AR BM design and add greater breadth and depth (Gray, 2014). Developing an AR BM is a complex undertaking, entailing the comprehensive examination of many aspects (Panagiotopoulous et al., 2012). The proposed BM will then be validated through a third phase of quantitative questionnaires. The mixed-method approach used helps to overcome challenges and limitations associated with qualitative or quantitative studies alone, thereby developing richer results that are more robust. Thus, a theoretical understanding is established from interviews, then developed to produce an AR BM, to be tested through questionnaire surveys during phase three. It is proposed phase three surveys will be analysed using the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) a proven multi-criteria decision making method which provides a way to organise criteria into an intuitive hierarchy and then prioritise those criteria (Ahmad and Lapante, 2006). This form of analysis will produce a strong proof of concept (Saunders et al., 2012) and an effective BM to implement AR in cultural heritage tourism.

5 Anticipated Results

The aim of the PhD study is to bridge the gap between the potential of AR in cultural heritage tourism and implementing AR to create actual value adding benefits. Through not only developing, but more importantly validating the effectiveness of an AR BM this will make a significant contribution both theoretically and practically by providing a framework for cultural heritage tourism organisations to successfully implement AR. This would also extend current understanding in the areas of cultural heritage tourism, BMs and AR BMs.

6 Discussion
Since the PhD is in the beginning stage, the discussion at this stage is limited. Phase one interviews indicate strong and positive support from internal stakeholders towards the implementation of AR at Geevor. Stakeholders recognise and understand the need to introduce new technologies such as AR to modernise Geevor’s visitor offering, attracting increased visitors, enhancing their experience and generating additional income. Interviews also revealed the need to further educate stakeholders fully about the benefits, barriers and potential of AR to ensure their full understanding and outline any additional responsibilities AR implementation will introduce. At present AR BMs are scarce and mostly adaptations of existing models, therefore do not consider the complexity of implementing a new technology. Even more limited are studies exploring BMs for the implementation of AR in the context of cultural heritage tourism. The benefits and potential AR presents to cultural heritage tourism is widely acknowledged, but currently a lack of BM or framework for organisations to guide the implementation process is delaying AR’s full potential from being explored. Developing an AR BM will contribute both theoretically and managerially, connecting the gap in existing literature and aiding future implementations. The BM will be developed to be flexible and respond to market changes, with the purpose of adaptability to suit a variety of different tourism attractions.

References


Can Collaborative Use and Smart(er) Mobile Platforms develop Better Experiences of Tourism Events?

John Bustard
Ulster University, United Kingdom
bustard-j@email.ulster.ac.uk

Abstract
The emergence of a more ‘intelligent web’ and the initiation of ‘smart tourism’ technologies are changing the experience journey. The aim of this research is to examine the impact of a ‘smarter’ application of mobile technology by stakeholders, through collaborative use in an event context, focusing on better experiential outcomes for participants. A longitudinal study will analyse mobile app data as well as survey event participants to examine their cognition in relation to proactive information systems. An exploration of stakeholder impact on visitor use of smartphones on their en route and on-site decision-making process will identify, through case studies, a successful framework for how this knowledge can be effectively harnessed to improve experiential tourism delivery in a Smart(er) technological era.

Keywords: Mobile app, Proactivity, Smart push, User innovation, Psychometric scale

1 Problem Definition
The Internet has fundamentally reshaped the way tourism-related information is distributed and the way people plan for and consume travel (Buhalis & Law, 2008). However, research related to how mobile devices (i.e. smartphones, tablets) are used by international tourists while experiencing a destination is still in its infancy (Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2013). With powerful and efficient processors, modern operating systems, broadband internet access, and user-friendly interfaces as well as productivity enhancing apps, the smartphone offers a wide range of possibilities supporting travellers (Gretzel, 2010).

With momentum growing toward proactive or ‘smart push’ solutions, studies such as Sabic and Zanker (2015) are rightly focusing on the evaluation of ‘users’ attitudes related to different aspects of proactive systems such as privacy concerns, trust or their willingness-to-pay for such services.” This rapid pace of technological change, increasing user sophistication and collaborative consumption propensity mean that “more and more users will have more and more opportunities to innovate or contribute to producer innovations” (Bogers, 2010). As such, this constitutes a great opportunity for the study of user and producer innovation in an event context focusing on mobile. Studies such as Wang et al (2014) provide an excellent model of smartphone use in travel but there is limited study of the ‘unlocking’ of the trip (Gretzel, et al 2006) in relation to use cases by specific demographics (e.g. International visitors). Consequently, this paper investigates user and producer innovation within a mobile platform or app framework in an eTourism (sporting) event context by:

1. Examining the literatures in relation to the context and usage of an app on user pre-trip, en route and on-site activities around a tourism event.
2. Identifying proactive information (push) with the potential of influencing ‘memorable’ outcomes positively levering event information needs.
3. Investigating open innovation through a feedback loop and resultant data gathered by a mobile app, as input to decision makers as a means of optimising delivery and user outcomes around the event experience.

2 Literature Review

Much of the focus of regional tourism bodies is around stimulating and enhancing member innovativeness, as this is believed to provide cumulative growth at specific locations where preconditions are particularly favourable (Hjalager, 2010). Policy makers often find it indispensable - for the benefit of tourism innovation – to expose the sector to an open information flow and to stimulate internal knowledge creation (Shaw and Williams 2009; Hjalager 2012). One strong methodology adapted for use in increasing information flow is clustering. In 1990, Porter proposed the concept of “industrial clusters” – these being ‘geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (universities, standards agencies, and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also cooperate’ … . Such a definition could be used also to describe a destination (or event) (Jackson and Murphy 2006).

Cooperation of local entities, irrespective of their motives will significantly contribute to the creation of an integrated and innovative tourism region (Kachniewska, 2013). Hjalager (2008) adds that policy should focus on indirect inducement in order to boost successful industry clusters and innovation within them. It is more likely to be facilitated where there is a congruence of innovation system requirements such as those outlined by Lundvall (2007) which include, processes, dynamics, linkages, product/service technology innovativeness and focus. Thus, the mediating role of technology (particularly the smartphone) in the tourist experience (Wang, 2012) and indeed, in the co-creation of experiences (Campos et al 2015; Neuhofer et al 2014) will continue to present as a significant research opportunity. In their findings, Wang and Tussyadiah (2014) highlight that while smartphones have a mediating role in the tourism experience, a paradox exists in which tourists recognize an enhancement in certain aspects of a travel experience and a reduction in others. Furner et al (2014) add that the limited display capabilities of smartphones transform the heuristics that consumers use to take decisions regarding using an app as well as using the app for various functions.

Understanding tourists’ attitudes toward smartphone use in pre-trip, en route and on-site decision making will inform tourist destinations in formulating strategies to map the patterns of tourist mobility with the aim of creating advantage for localised tourism stakeholders. This behavioural mapping is particularly important given that one of the key considerations of industry is how the emergence of social media and mobile technology drives an emphasis in real-time integration of tourist insights and behaviours into strategic destination marketing efforts (Mistilis, Buhalis, and Gretzel, 2014). Furner et al (2014) feel a focus on investigating consumers’ decision making strategies given the limited nature of apps is one important topic that provides avenues for further research.

In an events context, this research opportunity is more apparent when we consider how open innovation utilising technology can impact tourism business clusters. Bogers & West (2014) suggest a broader open innovation research opportunity of how firms leverage external innovations: what happens to innovations once they come into the firm? Decades of new product development research have examined what
happens to product ideas as they work their way through the pipeline, but such research has only just begun for open innovation.

3 Conceptual Development

Based on the review of key literature, the following conceptual propositions have been identified:

3.1 Proactive (push) information has the potential of influencing ‘memorable’ outcomes by positively leveraging a user’s event information needs (IN). In a tourism and travel context, Wang et al. (2012) identified fourteen different impacts of smartphone use on problem solving, information search, flexibility of the trip, emotions, experience sharing, and storing memories. Cognisance of the above study combined with research by Sabic and Zanker (2015) focused on an assessment of user needs will be carried out as part of an open innovation process (feedback loop). Initial impact will be sought through serving a cross platform ‘call’ for innovation input from users – such information additionally being valuable input for e-CRM at tourism destinations (from Vogt, cited in Kola & Hopken, 2015). The process will be reviewed with additional attention paid to event demographics (such as international visitors) assessing differences and commonalities.

3.2 Open innovation through tourism clustering can be accelerated by using a third party (platform or application) to increase cluster innovativeness through the potential of creating value which supports ‘memorable’ event outcomes. Bogers & West (2014) suggest a broader open innovation research opportunity of how firms leverage external innovations: what happens to innovations once they come into the firm? Several qualitative measures will be utilised to assess cluster preparedness benchmarked against an international standard.

3.3 ‘MOBILe’ conceptual model. Can use of the ‘MOBILe’ conceptual model direct firms to assess their innovation processes in relation to platform appropriateness and selection, particularly those mediated through smartphone technology? MOBILe is a conceptual framework based around the acronym covering the following elements. ‘M’ is for mediating role and utilises the experience framework and hierarchy of Neuhofer et al (2014) underpinned by user information needs (IN) to establish current and future objectives of a chosen platform. ‘O’ represents Operational Impacts and is focused on resources, skills and strategic implications of particular platform strategies. ‘B’ relates to behavioural impacts, i.e. what platform functions can provide meaningful and memorable outcomes of a given platform (e.g. storing and sharing memories through photos). ‘I’ is Insights and analytics and recognises both user needs and feedback loops for faster product/service iteration and to provide strategic insight. Finally ‘e’ represents the overall ‘eTourism fit’ of the strategy from an organisational and sectoral perspective but also boundary spanning into the technological domain.

4 Proposed Methodology

The chosen methodology for research will be a mixed methods approach. Firstly a longitudinal study of historic app usage from data supplied by event partners. The potential sample size of participant use of mobile apps at NI events is growing. Access to events and data through intimate knowledge provides a significant opportunity to
study the breadth of this proposal. Below is a snapshot of a recent NI International (sporting) event of which there is potential to focus this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Apple iOS native app</th>
<th>Android OS native app</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-trip downloads (1 month)</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event downloads (1 week)</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Device:</td>
<td>95% iPhone &amp; 5% iPad</td>
<td>88% phone 12% tablet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Apple and Android Statistics from 2015 Event (providing scale)

Secondly an online survey of event participants (both users and non-users of the event app) which will provide psychometric data (as a means of evaluating propensity to ‘smart push’, self-efficacy as a determinant) as well as perceived pre and on-trip data needs. This data will contribute further to knowledge (See Fig. 1 below) providing “practical system experience of participants in order to include questions on perceptions of a proactive systems utility” (Sabic & Zanker 2015). Additionally a multiple case study approach will be carried out to determine more qualitative insights into innovation propensity of cluster members and whether the addition of the ‘MOBILE’ framework would assist in assessing the impacts of platforms and applications in the innovation process.

Recruitment of study participants will be from current cluster businesses partnering the sporting event which range mainly from the private sector and are providers of attractions, accommodations, access, amenities, ancillary services and available packages. Additional cluster elements considered are approximation to servicing gateways, venue locations, tourist flows, transport management and potential displacement of other activities (Getz, 2012).

The aim is to advance understanding in the similarities and differences between each case study and will require an overarching framework as an explorative case study. As Yin (2003) states, the exploratory type of case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. This will allow more flexibility around studying the data through the propositions. In order to explore mobile technology platforms as a tool of measurement and as a basis for theoretical development, it is necessary to approach the subject using these research methods.
Anticipated Results

A 2 year longitudinal study of a specific national sporting event will provide a combination of quantitative and qualitative insights into how clusters can impact user experiences in their platform use in pre and on-site event experiences. The development of case studies related to cluster member’s development through application of the MOBILE conceptual framework (See Fig. 2 below) will also add knowledge in the study of open innovation. Through mining both Google Play analytics and the new analytics provided through Apple to quantify impacts of various ‘smart push’ simulations which provides originality in this research context. Research will enhance the examination and impact of ‘smarter’ applications of mobile technology in the event context focusing on stakeholders and ‘smart tourists’.

References


Recommendation of Tourism Resources Supported by Crowdsourcing

Fátima Leal1,3, Benedita Malheiro2,3 and Juan Carlos Burguillo1
1School of Telecommunications Engineering, University of Vigo, Spain
E-mail: fatimaleal2@gmail.com and J.C.Burguillo@uvigo.es
2School of Engineering, Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal
3INESC TEC, Porto, Portugal
E-mail: mbm@isep.ipp.pt

Abstract
Context-aware recommendation of personalised tourism resources is possible because of personal mobile devices and powerful data filtering algorithms. The devices contribute with computing capabilities, on board sensors, ubiquitous Internet access and continuous user monitoring, whereas the filtering algorithms provide the ability to match the profile (interests and the context) of the tourist against a large knowledge bases of tourism resources. While, in terms of technology, personal mobile devices can gather user-related information, including the user context and access multiple data sources, the creation and maintenance of an updated knowledge base of tourism-related resources requires a collaborative approach due to the heterogeneity, volume and dynamic nature of the resources. The current PhD thesis aims to contribute to the solution of this problem by adopting a Crowdsourcing approach for the collaborative maintenance of the knowledge base of resources, Trust and Reputation for the validation of uploaded resources as well as publishers, Big Data for user profiling and context-aware filtering algorithms for the personalised recommendation of tourism resources.

Keywords: Crowdsourcing, Big Data, Trust and Reputation, Recommendation

1 Problem Definition

Tourism is an enriching activity which promotes relaxation and well-being. When faced with the prospect of a travel, a tourist searches for a solution compatible with his tastes, interests and context, including time and money constraints. However, tourism resources are highly heterogeneous and are interdependent such as transportation, food, accommodation and attractions. This scenario comprises the modelling of users and resources - Profiling - and the matching of resources to users - Recommendation.

Travelling changed dramatically with mobile devices. These devices contribute with computing capabilities, on board sensors, ubiquitous Internet access, continuous user monitoring, collecting large volumes of tourist-related data (personal, context-aware and online-shared data). These features support the enrichment of the tourist experience during travelling and allow sharing relevant data in near real time. In this scenario, the Big Data concept emerges, encompassing both user modelling – the building of the user profiles from the gathered user-related information (personal, context-aware and online-shared data) – and tourism resources modelling (data regarding points of interests, restaurants, accommodation, etc.).
The research problem is focused on the heterogeneity of tourism resource, regarding its nature (different categories), lifespan (ephemeral or long lasting) and number. Ephemeral resources, e.g., seasonal offers, are dynamic and new resources are constantly emerging. To allow the continuous building, updating and refinement of the tourism resource knowledge base, the system relies on stakeholder (end-users and businesses) inputs. This Crowdsourcing of tourism-related data, which takes advantage of the current data sharing trend on social networks, relies on Trust and Reputation models of the publishers for content validation. While, in terms of technology, personal mobile devices can gather user-related information, including the user context and access multiple data sources, the creation and maintenance of an updated knowledge base of tourism-related resources requires a collaborative approach due to the heterogeneity, volume and dynamic nature of the resources.

Finally, the matching of tourism resources according to the tourist profile is a complex challenge due to the size of the resource search space and of the tourist-related data.

We intend to address the problem by designing a Tourism Recommendation System supported by Crowdsourcing. The system includes a Profiler, a Crowdsourcer with Content Validation and a Recommender and adopts, in terms of implementation, cloud and agent-based computing paradigms. Thus, the current PhD thesis aims to contribute to the: (i) collaborative maintenance of the tourism resource knowledge base through Crowdsourcing; (ii) the validation of uploaded resources through the creation of Trust and Reputation models of publishers; (iii) the construction of user profiles supported by Big Data techniques; and (iv) Personalised Context-aware tourism resource Recommendation.

2 Literature Review

For countries, tourism is a source of revenues and contributes to the development of the local economy. Tourism, as a business, targets multiple segments of the public, offering specialised packages, and ranges an endless variety of resources and offers. Technology introduced a remarkable change in the tourism business model since, nowadays, people tend to rely more on Web resources than on standard travel agencies to obtain information, plan and book travels. However, the diversity, amount, dependency and volatility of tourism-related offers, the complexity of the task and the time required to find a solution, satisfying the context, interests and constraints of the potential tourist, makes this problem unmanageable for humans. In this scenario and taking into account the research problem of this PhD thesis, it is important to survey four different areas: Big Data, Crowdsourcing, Trust and Reputation and Context-aware Recommendation Systems.

2.1 Big Data

The concept of Big Data refers to the processing of large amounts of data stored disorderly over time. The volume of information nowadays available regarding tourism resources and tourist experiences, due to continuous data sharing, falls into the Big Data category. Akerkar, R. (2012) states that Big Data allows companies to create better products and services by gathering information from numerous external sources, e.g., travel agency portals, carriers or social networks.

Chareyron et al. (2014) and Akerkar (2012) identify Big Data as a new challenge for tourism. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) & Future Foundation (2014) discuss
the effects of Big Data in the travel industry, including the perils and advantages of using Big Data. In terms of user profiling, we intend, like Pan, B., & Yang, Y. (2015), to combine multiple data sources through Big Data to improve the accuracy of recommendations. Other examples of tourism applications supported by Big Data include Chareyron et al. (2014) and Fuchs et al. (2014). While the first application analyses and detects typical and atypical tourist behaviour in heterogeneous social networks so that economic stakeholders can address the needs of tourists, the latter, which regards a Swedish touristic destination, performs Big Data analytics on a knowledge infrastructure framework gathered from different sources.

2.2 Crowdsourcing

The Crowdsourcing concept was introduced in 2006 by Jeff Howe (Howe, 2006). In general, Crowdsourcing is a process of getting work done by a crowd of people, i.e., it corresponds to any collective and collaborative activity performed by a large number of volunteers via information and communication technologies. Few Crowdsourcing based approaches are found in the technology enhanced tourism domain literature. Within the present PhD thesis, Crowdsourcing is intended to perform the collaborative updating of the tourism resources knowledge base, using as workers the tourists and tourism businesses. In our perspective, Crowdsourcing can be explored using the main tourism stakeholders: businesses and tourists. According to Sigala (2015), tourism businesses regard the tourist crowd know-how as a valuable contribution for personalised marketing. In addition, Crowdsourcing, while a continuous source of tourist-generated, tourist-shared and tourist-updated data, promotes intangible tourism experiences (Sigala & Gretzel, 2014). The reunion of all tourism stakeholders in a single Crowdsourcing system promotes the gathering and updating of tourism knowledge. On the one hand, businesses will be able to define and recommend new packages based on the discovery of new tourism trends and resources and, on the other hand, the tourists will receive a wider and updated range of personalised relevant recommendations, contributing to improved travelling experiences.

Crowdsourcing in Tourism Systems: Web-based tourism Crowdsourcing typically takes the form of collaborative maps, e.g. OpenStreetMap, wikis, e.g. Wikivoyage, or is incorporated in dedicated Web applications. OpenStreetMap (www.openstreetmap.org [Nov. 23, 2015]) is a map built by volunteers who collect and share map data such as streets, forests, rivers, lakes, etc. Wikivoyage (www.wikivoyage.org [Nov. 23, 2015]) is a collaborative wiki, similar to Wikipedia, dedicated solely to tourism. The Personalised Travel System based on Crowdsourcing by Zhuang et al. (2014) and TagTagCity (www.tagtagcity.com [Nov. 23, 2015]) are instances of tourism Web applications supported by Crowdsourcing. While in the first users search, recommend and update existing travel-related contents, TagTagCity, which is a Belgium Web-based system, using a map-based search engine to crowd-source data regarding a location.

Mobile tourism applications rely on Crowdsourcing to collect data for future and improved recommendations. Tiwari & Kaushik (2014, 2015) present a mobile location-aware tourism recommendation system enriched by Crowdsourcing. The crowd-sourced information is obtained through location-related questionnaires and is used to enrich the recommendations. Kamino (www.gokamino.com [Nov. 23, 2015]) is a location-based mobile application which offers crowd-sourced city guides, including attractions,
restaurants, shops and other relevant complimentary information, while the user is walking around the city. Stereopublic (www.stereopublic.net [Nov. 23, 2015]) is a mobile Crowdsourcing application which gathers and shares data regarding quiet public spaces. The crowd adds and shares places on social networks together with audio clips and images. Identically, we intend to develop a mobile application to gather automatically context-aware data and crowd-source new resource data, enriching the system’s knowledge base.

Crowd-sourced approaches have also been adopted by travel companies in order to find improved solution for individuals and groups of tourists. The HolidayCheck (www.holidaycheck.com [Nov. 23, 2015]) travel platform, which works with several well-known tour operators, relies on the crowd to rate hotels, share photos, videos and travel experiences. Rating, sharing and posting correspond to the type of user feedback and crowd-sourced data we are considering.

In terms of back-end systems, Vohnout et al. (2014) present SmartTouristData, a proposal for the integration of open linked tourism data sources. In this case, the Crowd-sourced data is provided by Linked Open Data (LOD) repositories such as OpenStreetMap, Open Weather Map or Wikitravel. Similarly, we intend to use Wikivoyage as a repository of crowd-sourced information. Finally, Bachrach et al. (2014) propose Crowdsourcing as a means to generate the initial data set for a personalised tourist attraction recommendation system. In the first stage, they generate a catalog of potential attractions in a target destination, where each entry is tagged with the attraction features, and, then, in the second stage, they use the Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) Crowdsourcing platform to ask users to validate and tag entries with the attraction features. If we do not find an appropriate data set for evaluation, we may adopt an identical approach to build our initial data set.

2.3 Trust and Reputation

Trust and Reputation systems represent a significant trend in decision support when choosing tourism resources. Trust and Reputation are distinct, but intrinsically linked concepts, e.g., “I trust that hotel because it has good reputation”. Jøsang et al. (2007) identify the different interpretations of Trust and Reputation, depending on the situation. In context of this PhD thesis, Trust defines the reliability of workers and resources based on direct experience, while Reputation is based on third party experiences, e.g., the crowd. Regarding the building and application of Trust and Reputation models of the users to validate crowd-sourced tourism information, Marchiori et al. (2010) present a destination reputation model based on the RepTrak model. RepTrak is a corporate reputation model designed by the Reputation Institute (www.reputationinstitute.com [Nov. 23, 2015]) to measure and track general public and multi-stakeholder perceptions about companies.

2.4 Mobile Context-aware Recommendation Systems

Recommendation Systems are tools which produce personalised recommendations before a large variety of choices taking into account the current user behaviour. There are three generic recommendation methodologies: (i) Content-based; (ii) Collaborative; and (iii) Hybrid. In our case, we intent to develop a context-aware hybrid approach.
In the context-aware tourism mobile applications literature, Borràs et al. (2014) present a survey on tourist applications (mobile and Web-based) grouping the different technologies. Gavalas et al. (2014) detail the functions commonly offered by existing mobile tourism Recommender Systems (RS) prototypes. In turn, Luz et al. (2010) and Chen & Kotz (2000) focus on older applications.

3 Conceptual Development

The literature review on information and communication technologies (ICT) in tourism domain identifies important challenges to be explored in order to improve the tourist experience and the tourism business. In the context of this research, the users include tourism operators, such as travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, etc., and tourists. A user can play the role of a worker, when he publishes or classifies contents, and of a tourist, when they receive and explore recommendations. Workers can upload, classify and share content, building a shared and crowd-sourced repository of tourist resources. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework illustrating the data flows between users and system components.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

In traveller mode, the mobile tourism application provides the tourist context and personal data, receives personalised resource recommendations and reports all feedback (clicks, rates and likes). In worker mode, the mobile tourism application facilitates the submission of the tourist and/or tourism business (context, personal/institutional) data as well as of the crowd-sourced (posts, shares and comments) resource data. The Profiler builds user profiles based on the context, personal data and perceived Trust and Reputation. The Recommendation System matches traveller profiles with existing resources, taking into account the context, type, rating and credibility of the resources, i.e., the trust and reputation of the publishers/workers.

4 Proposed Methodology
This PhD research is focused on Big Data, Recommendation and Crowdsourcing as well as on the exploration of Trust and Reputation mechanisms for content validation and publisher/worker modelling.

In the tourism domain it is fundamental to know the actual behaviour of tourists, including the information and communication technologies that they use before, during and after travelling. This study can be done through surveys which gather relevant information about tourist’s behaviour and opinions. We created and distributed a questionnaire among tourism teachers, students and researchers, travel agencies and tourism enthusiasts (the general public). The results of this tourism survey will influence the selection of the information sources to use in the following PhD tasks, namely, in building and modelling of the user profile and the tourism resources.

The definition and building of the models of users (profiling) and the resources (recommendation) will be based on the crowd-sourced data as well as on the user data collected by mobile devices. This task involves Big Data and Recommendation techniques. In terms of tourism businesses, the Big Data approach will help to discover important travel patterns and trends, empowering them with the ability to enhance and improve the travel experiences of customers.

Similarly, the Crowdsourcing will support the maintenance of the system’s knowledge base enriching both tourist and business activities. We plan to explore this topic with the adoption of WikiVoyage - the Wikipedia for tourism.

Trust and Reputation models of the workers will be built to validate the crowd-sourced content and, thus, improve recommendations. The trustworthiness and reputation of a worker depends on the quality of the volunteered contents and feedback. While trust is a direct relationship between users, reputation is based on the community perspective. A prolific worker with widely accepted and rated contributions will have a high reputation within the community. A user, which accepts and rates highly recommendations regarding resources uploaded by a given worker, establishes a strong trust relationship with the worker. This PhD thesis aims to design new or improved Trust and Reputation algorithms to explore these relationships in order to validate the crowd-sourced content.

The platform execution and the persistent data storage will rely on cloud computing resources. The resulting prototype system, which encompasses the different research topics, should be based on open source technologies.

5 Anticipated Results

The current PhD thesis aims to enrich the traveller experience by supporting the creation of a collaborative knowledge base of tourism resources and providing improved context-aware personalised suggestions. In terms of contributions, we intend to apply: (i) Trust and Reputation to validate crowd-sourced data regarding tourism resources as well as to model publishers; (ii) improve Big Data filtering algorithms for user (tourist and tourism business) profiling; and (iii) personalised context-aware resource Recommendation. As far as we know, this combination of information Crowdsourcing (validated by Trust and Reputation), Profiling (supported by Big Data algorithms) and Recommendation (assisted by Trust and Reputation) is a novel approach for mobile tourism applications.
We anticipate improvements on the personalised context-aware recommendations provided to tourists because: (i) user profiles will encompass both worker and tourist behaviours; (ii) the influence of irrelevant, incorrect or outdated resources as well as biased publishers will be reduced by the application of the Trust and Reputation models; and (iii) the knowledge base will be continuously updated.

In terms of evaluation, we intend to perform both offline and online assessment. For the offline tests, we are currently looking for an appropriate data set. Then, we intend to explore and use online Wikivoyage as Crowdsourcerer together with the Trust and Reputation modelling. In the end, we plan to create and distribute a questionnaire among users (including the ones that participated in the initial questionnaire) and, thus, collect the users opinion.

References


Acknowledgements

This work was partially funded by: (i) the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the COMPETE Programme (operational programme for competitiveness) and by National Funds through the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT) – Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology – within project «POCI-01-0145-FEDER-006961»; and (ii) the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Galician Regional Government under agreement for funding the Atlantic Research Center for Information and Communication Technologies (AtlantTIC).
Will Uses and Gratifications Theory help us Understand e-Tourists’ use of Smartphones?

Jang-Won Moon and Sheila J. Backman
Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism Management
Clemson University, USA
{jangwom; back}@clemson.edu

Abstract
Despite the previous smartphone research in the context of tourism, there is limited research based on a strong theoretical background that seeks to understand how tourists are motivated and gratified via smartphone. This paper extends previous studies by synthesizing them, systematically investigating and quantitatively measuring how and to what extent tourists are gratified by the use of smartphones during their trips based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory. This paper investigates four constructs in terms of antecedents (i.e., tourists’ motivations for using Smartphone) and consequences (i.e., tourists’ satisfaction). This study adopts Uses and Gratifications Theory as a theoretical framework to explore the use of Smartphone by e-Tourists and to measure quantitatively their touristic satisfactions. Four constructs and hypotheses are developed. To test the model for the study, data will be collected from 200 undergraduate students as the pilot study. The results will determine the reliability and validity of the proposed model. Multilevel Linear Modelling is employed in this paper. The results of this study provide practical and theoretical implications for e-Tourism communication and tourism marketing.

Keywords: Uses and Gratifications Theory, e-Tourists, Touristic Satisfaction, Smartphone, Multilevel Linear Modelling

1 Problem Definition
Recent tourism studies have found that tourists used smartphones technology in several ways, the primary one being to search for information about particular destinations both before and during trips (Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaire 2014; Wang & Fesenmaire 2013). Smartphones have been found to provide a convenient and effective aid for tourists in decision-making (Lamsfus, Xiang, Alzua-Sorzabal & Martin 2013) and there is a growing body of evidence focused on the motivation for their use.

In this sense, the smartphone has become a new medium of communication, enhancing touristic experiences (Lamsfus et al. 2013). For example, tourists can easily check updated tourist information via the smartphone while on the move, making travel easier and enjoyable because it provides them with instant gratifications. The research proposed here adopts Buhalis’s e-Tourism concept by defining e-Tourists as those who use ICT or smartphones to fulfil their needs characterized by the following four dimensions of motivations: information, convenience, social interaction, and entertainment. According to Uses and Gratification Theory, individuals choose a media platform with the anticipation that it will aid them in realizing a specific intention, the satisfaction of this need being referred to as gratification (Green, 2014). This theory assumes that audiences are actively engaged in media use and are highly goal-directed (Larose et al. 2001), that
is, motivated to obtain gratification from a specific media consumption or multiple media sources. According to Browning & Sanderson (2012), because the Uses and Gratifications Theory has been widely employed in traditional media communication, more contemporary types such as social media and the Internet allow us to extend our application of it further to include such technology as smartphones.

Uses and Gratifications Theory has been used to guide tourism communication. For example, Filho, Correa & Manguira (2015) examined online travel review by using this theory. They concluded that U & G theory was an appropriate perspective in mobile application. The primary goal of this study is to develop a conceptual framework and to investigate why tourist used smartphones from a Uses and Gratification theory view. This theory serves as the theoretical framework for this study because of its importance in representing human behavioural dimensions related to mediated communication (Lin, 1996; Ruggiero, 2000; Ko, Cho, & Roberts 2005). As such, Uses and Gratifications Theory may offer tourism researchers an insightful lens into tourist behaviour, although few studies have applied it in this context. Specifically, this paper will address the following research questions: (1) What are the most common smartphone functions used by tourists? (2) What are the gratifications sought from those functions? (3) Which functions contribute most to touristic experiences? (4) Based on the results from the first three questions, what are the most critical of the four constructs? (5) How can measurement items for variables of the changes in touristic experiences due to the Smartphone use be developed and tested? These data will be obtained through a questionnaire using a 7-point Likert scale to measure the four constructs of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Given the growing importance of smartphones and the increasing reliance of tourists on them, it is critical for tourism marketers, researchers, and suppliers to understand the Uses and Gratifications tourists receive from using smartphones.

2 Literature Review

Tourists are engaged in a multidimensional experience because they are reflective and inherently personal (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Wang et al., 2012). Urry (1990) suggested that every tourist has a different experience, interpreting subjectively the destination he or she visits, a conclusion further explained by Botterill & Crompton (1996), who maintained that the touristic experience needs to be understood in terms of the psychological processes as well as the emotional states of tourists. Supporting this perspective, Uriely (2005) asserts that the diversity of tourist motivations results in a variety of touristic experiences, and more recently Jennings & Weiler (2006) point out that tourists appreciate travel experiences through a comprehensive understanding and feeling of the destinations visited.

The adoption of mobile technology has further enhanced the decision-making and planning capabilities of travellers (Ling, 2004). According to Wi-Fi Alliances (2007), 70 % of mobile technology users bring their phones on their trips. In other words, mass media and mobile technology have significantly affected the tourist experience and travel activities (Gretzel, Fesenmaire, Lee, & Tussyadiah, 2011). Recent advances in mobile technologies have further increased the number of mobile media users among tourists, mediating the touristic experience (Kim, Park, & Morrison 2008; Katsura & Sheldon, 2008; Oh et al.,
This use of mobile technology has impacted the tourism industry in several ways, the primary one being that users can easily access large amounts of destination-related information (Katsura & Sheldon, 2008; Zhu & Morosan, 2014; Im & Hancer, 2014). For example, travellers use mobile technology to obtain information on-site for attractions or locations they wish to visit, to interact with other tourists, and to share experiences regardless of time and location (Im & Hancer, 2014). As a result, travellers can manage and make decisions throughout the trip, changing their agenda based on real-time information. Wang et al. (2012) also maintain that mobile technologies offer highly interactive and personalized services, a situation has been further impacted by the advent and popularity of smartphones.

For example, smartphones offer information services to enhance sophisticated information searches as well as basic travel activities, mediating touristic experiences in terms of behavioural and psychological aspects (Wang et al., 2012). Moreover, smartphones have aided tourists in maintaining social interactions with others, facilitating reflection and integrating new interpretations of travel experiences (Wang & Fesenmaire 2013). Of particular interest to the research proposed here is the extended access it offers (Business Week, 2010; Dickinson, Ghali, Cherrett, Speed, Davies & Norgate, 2014).

Some researchers such as Lee, Lee & Ham (2014) have investigated the relationship between tourists and the concept of presence in the context of smartphones, concluding that social presence has an impact on the entertainment and escape experiences. They also reported a relationship between the levels of satisfaction of tourists and their touristic experiences accessed via a smartphone. However, as they concluded, smartphone research in tourism is in its introductory stage, and much more is needed to fully understand this phenomenon and its impact on the tourism domain. Wang (2013) pointed out that more attention on smartphone and tourism research need to be paid to quantitatively measure every construct and tourism experience with a theoretical framework. To address this need, the research proposed here uses the Uses and Gratifications approach to explore the motivations and needs for utilizing a smartphone.

3 Conceptual Development

In this study the focus is on determining how useful Uses and Gratifications Theory is understanding relationships between motivations and tourist satisfaction and quality of the tourist experience. As new media and information technology have advanced and mediated communication has expanded, the Uses and Gratifications Theory has become increasingly more crucial for laying a robust foundation in this area (Foregger 2008). In contrast to other mass communication approaches which regard audiences as passive receivers of information, the Uses and Gratifications Theory views them as active media users. While traditional media theories emphasize “what media do to people,” assuming that the users are homogeneous, the Uses and Gratifications Theory focuses on “what people do with media” (Katz, 1959). This approach analyses how audiences intentionally select media, which will satisfy their needs (Severin & Tankard 1997; McQuail, 2010), meaning that it centers on individual use and choice asserting that disparate audiences can employ the same media for different goals (Severin & Tankard, 1997). More specifically,
the primary purpose of this approach was to identify the psychological needs explaining which media people used in their daily lives and how and why they actively sought specific ones to satisfy their intrinsic needs (Rubin, 1994; Lin, 1999a).

Furthermore, this theory assumes that users actively participate in the media environment; that they are goal-directed, purposive, and motivated; and that they highly interact with communication media. More importantly, users recognize their needs and choose the appropriate media to gratify them. In other words, they take the initiative in choosing and utilizing communication vehicles to satisfy their specific needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). The application of this theory to new computer-mediated communication is possible because it is based on an active audience (Foregger 2008; Logan 2014). As Ruggerio (2000) pointed out, as mobile technology is interactive in nature, the boundary between sender and receiver has been blurred, especially in the case of the smartphone, as the two interact with each other.

Interactivity substantially reinforces the core Uses and Gratification concept of active users since it has been defined as “the degree to which participants in the communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in their mutual discourse” (Williams, Rice, & Rogers, 1988, p.10; Ruggiero 2009). In the context of travel and tourism domain, interactivity can be described as sharing tourism experiences, providing comments and feedback, and/or tourism information to other travellers, through an online forum (Ko et al, 2005; Ruggiero 2009; Wang & Fesenmaire 2013; Xiang & Fesenmaire 2014; Dickinson et al, 2014). Therefore, interactivity may provide media users with the means to enhance new ways of communication and significantly increase their activity (Ruggiero 2009), information and feedback that can be both provided and accessed fairly immediately (Park 2004). Based on the concept of interactivity, the media experience via smartphone will benefit the experience and satisfaction of tourists.

While communication and tourism researchers have studied the motivations for the use of smartphones, the application of Uses and Gratifications Approach have been limited (Logan 2014). However, Logan (2014) asserts that Uses and Gratifications Theory has the potential to enhance the understanding of the specific intrinsic needs.

![Figure 1. A hypothesized interactive model of tourism communication](image-url)
Four dimensions of motivations as described in Uses and Gratifications Theory include Information, Convenience, Social Interaction, and Entertainment. Each of the four dimensions of motivations are positively related to the quality of the tourist experience.

3.1 Information

The information construct represents the extent to which media offers user convenient and resourceful information unrelated to space and time via the Internet and mobile technology (Chen & Wells 1999; Ducoff, 1995; Luo, 2002). Smartphone apps can provide instant and insightful information from multiple sources. (Dickinson et al 2014), offering travellers real-time updates and customized information (MacKay & Vogt 2012).

H1: The use of smartphone for information will have a positive increase in e-Tourists’ satisfaction.

3.2 Convenience

According to Gehrt & Yale (1993), convenience consists of the three levels of effort, time, and space. The concept of convenience in relation to smartphones in the current literature is defined as the ease or the facilitation of their use without the limitation of time and space (Yu, Zo, Choi, & Ciganek, 2013; Ha et al. 2015). As a result, tourists can quickly readjust their travel plans, transforming the traditional understanding of travel and tourism by creating a new paradigm and offering enhanced flexibility to travellers (Dickenson et al. 2014). This convenience is possible because smartphones are small and portable. Thus, tourists can easily check for updated tourist information while on the move. It makes travel easier and enjoyable because it requires little effort and transcend time and space.

H2: The use of smartphone for convenience will have a positive increase in e-Tourists’ satisfaction.

3.3 Social Interaction

Social interaction is defined as the extent to which people feel connected and comfortable when involved in interpersonal communication activities (Ha, Kim, Libaque-Saenz, Chang & Park, 2015). Wei & Lo (2006) classified the two forms of social interaction through mobile phones as instrumental (i.e. safety and security) and expressive (i.e. self-presentation), suggesting that mobile phones help people maintain “psychological neighbourhoods” as well as represent a symbolic community via immediate interaction. The feeling of social exclusion motivates tourists to socially affiliate or connect with friends, colleagues, and others (Green, 2014). Smartphones are postulated to give tourists a feeling of security as well as a sense of social inclusion (Wang, 2013; Green, 2014).

H3: The use of smartphone for social interaction will have a positive increase in e-Tourists’ satisfaction.
3.4 Entertainment

The entertainment construct of Uses and Gratifications Theory has been defined in general by past research as the extent media are enjoyable and fun for users (Eighmey, 1997; Eighmey & McCord, 1998; Luo, 2002). More specifically, according to McQuail (1983), entertainment allows media users to fulfil their needs for emotional release, intrinsic or aesthetic enjoyment, relaxation and escape from their problems. As Bryant & Zillmann (1984) suggested, individuals seek these pleasant affective states, choosing specific media to attain one or more to relieve stress or to distract from its source. People who are involved in stressful situations can use media to escape from its source, choosing intentionally stimulating media content or they can choose something soothing to relieve the stress. Green (2014) argued that individuals used media to relieve not only stress but also boredom. Previous research indicates that higher entertainment value provides more valuable experiences for media users, motivating them to use these media frequently (Stern & Zaichowsky, 1991).

H4: The use of smartphone for entertainment will have a positive increase in e-Tourists’ satisfaction.

4 Proposed Methodology

The sample population for this study will be composed of tourists who will visit specific festivals in Greenville, South Carolina. The survey will be conducted over a four week period. Respondents will be asked to complete a 4 page survey instrument. The data will be collected from a total of 400 tourists with travel experience and exposure of smartphone use. Multilevel Linear Modeling will be employed to test the hypotheses.

Multilevel Linear Modeling is the most appropriate method for analyzing the data of this study because primary goal of this paper is to measure the quality of tourist experience of groups as a whole and because the impact of each individual of the groups needs to be considered.

5 Anticipated Results

It is expected that smartphone usage is related to satisfaction and the quality of the tourist experience. More specifically, tourist satisfaction and tourist experience are influenced by Information, Convenience, Social Interaction, and Entertainment.

6 Discussion

Based on application of Uses and Gratifications Theory, this study demonstrates ways in which the relationship between four motives for smartphone uses and gratifications that can be theoretically and practically clarified. This study also offers broad perspectives on tourism marketing and social media. Smartphones can push travelers to develop specific preferences and tourism behaviors. It is critical for tourism marketers and communicators to get a better understanding of behaviors by using smartphone.
References


Green, J.D. (2014). Investigation uses and gratification motivations, individual differences, and psychological outcomes associated with media multitasking during TV-viewing contexts (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation), Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, USA.


Park, I.K. (2004). Internet usage of Korean and American students: A uses and gratifications approach, University of Southern Mississippi, MS, USA.


Changes in the Tourism Information Search Process due to Smartphone Usage

Robert Eller
University of Innsbruck, Austria
robert.eller@student.uibk.ac.at

Abstract
The raise of smartphones and the ability to be always connected to the Internet allows users to pull information at any time at any place. This research propose an information search model based on existing literature. The relations between the different variables will be tested with hypothesis. It is assumed that smartphones have an influence on the search behaviour of tourists compared to traditional models.

Keywords: Smartphone, Search, e-tourism, Consumer behaviour, Decision set

1 Problem Definition
A report by TripAdvisor.com reveals that 42% of travellers use smartphones to plan or book their vacation (TripAdvisor, 2015). The Nielson Company (2014) reveals a report arguing 65% of American households own a smartphone and consumers spend on average 34 hours a month using their smartphone. The raise of mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, changed our everyday behaviour. Moutinho (1987) proposed a behaviour model to explain the decision-making process of tourists. The process is split into three parts, where the first part is dedicated to the pre-decision and decision process where information seeking is performed. Figure 1 show the first part of the search process.

![Figure 1: Part I - Pre-decision and decision process (Moutinho, 1987, p.40)](image-url)
Information seeking is done before a decision is made (Moutinho, 1987). Later research examined the online search behaviour on Internet (Fodness & Murray, 1999; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006). Xiang & Gretzel (2010) examined the role of social media in the information search process. Ho & Yuan (2015) examined information search strategies on smartphones. Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier (2014) examined the usage of smartphones in travel context and proposed a model to explain tourist behaviour. This research indicates that information search especially in the age of Internet, might be changing. Wang et al. (2014) show that tourists use the smartphones in an everyday context and changes in the tourist experience occur. These changes assume also an influence in the information search behaviour. This research will examine changes in the information search process. Do smartphones change the information search behaviour of tourists?

2 Literature Review

Swarbrooke & Horner (2008) adopted various consumer behaviour models to explain consumer behaviour in the area of the tourism decision making process. The decision process to purchase a tourism product is a complex process (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2008). Factors which influence the decision making process are separated into external factors and internal factors (Horner & Swarbrooke, 1996). Internal factors are personal motivation, personality, disposable income, health, family commitments, work commitments (Horner & Swarbrooke, 1996). External factors are word-of-mouth recommendations, political restrictions on travel, climate / destination of region, suitable products, advice from travel agents and information obtained from destinations, tourism organisations and the travel media (Horner & Swarbrooke, 1996). Cohen et al. (2014) analysed all studies found in the three leading major tourism journals (Annals of Tourism Research, Tourism Management and the Journal of Travel Research) on consumer behaviour from 2000 to 2012 and organized the studies in different areas depending on the key concepts. A total of 29 studies where found about how technology influences consumer behaviour (Cohen et al., 2014). Also Buhalis & Law (2008) found that the interaction with technology will change the travel industry and consumer behaviour (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Nowadays consumers are able to access information about destinations via mobile devices, TV and computers very easily. The Internet is used to gather information about destinations, travel offers and to interact with communities.

Social media is present on mobile devices as well as on desktop computers. Companies like Facebook, Twitter, Tripadvisor provide apps for mobile devices to share and communicate with family and friends. Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou (2013) found that social media influences the decision of youth in the information and decision process when searching for a trip (Bizirgianni & Dionysopoulou, 2013). Also Chung & Koo (2015) found that use of social media has more value for social media users when they plan a trip (Chung & Koo, 2015). Fotis, Buhalis & Rossides (2012) found that social media is used moreover after the vacation to share experiences (Fotis et al., 2012).

Consumers get information from other consumers and what they have shared from their previous vacations (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Consumers trust more user-generated content, then information provided from travel agents, official tourist operation websites or ads from mass media advertising (Fotis et al., 2012). Zehrer, Crotts & Magnini, (2011) state that blogs, especially comments on blogs from users, influence the decision making process of consumers. Consumers find comments on
hotels and destinations helpful, also when there are not only positive comments (Zehrer et al., 2011).

These possibilities on choices and information may lead to confusion instead of clarity. Park & Jang (2013) argue that too many choices of tourist products let consumers take no choice instead to choose one selection (Park & Jang, 2013). Furthermore, consumers may also visit retail offices to gain additional information. Ho, Lin & Chen (2012) examined information search behaviour when combined online and offline tourism search. Ho et al. (2012) claim that user turn to offline search (visiting a retail office), if they could not find all information online. Lu et al. (2011) examined the factors when consumers are willing to switch from offline to online, if offline and online offer the same services. A positive effect to switch from online to offline, is the offline habitual situation (Lu et al., 2011). On the other side, to switch from offline to online, is new technology usage and a relative benefit for consumers (Lu et al., 2011). Interestingly smartphones have not been considered in the information search process. Studies like Ho et al. (2012), Fotis et al. (2012) use desktop computers to access the Internet (Fotis et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2012). Desktop computers are also used to evaluate websites (Dion & Woodside, 2010; Lu et al., 2011; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Understandably older studies, before the raise of smartphones and tablets, could not consider mobile devices. This missing consideration and how consumers use smartphones in search process, is also indicated by Cohen et al. (2014).

3 Conceptual Development

Due the difference in the search behaviour models it is necessary to review the different behaviour models to gain a common understanding. A common understanding of a search behaviour model is needed to deviate the different determinates which influence the search behaviour. The aim of this research is to propose a search behaviour model based on the latest literature and extended with context of smartphones usage. This proposed model consists of dependent and independent variables which influence the search behaviour. From this proposed model will be hypothesis deviated and tested with qualitative methods.

4 Proposed Methodology

To measure dependent and independent variables a qualitative approach will be selected. A questionnaire should be deployed to gather data from participants. The participants must own at least one year a smartphone to attend the study. The quantitative approach (questionnaire) is used to link findings with existing models and results to uncover existing human behaviour laws. To predict future consumers behaviour the positivism paradigm will be selected (Neuman, 2000). The positivism approach is used to discover natural laws to predict people’s future behaviour (Neuman, 2000). This also allows to compare and find differences about statistical proved models in consumer behaviour, like in Steinbauer & Werthner (2007).

5 Anticipated Results

The anticipated results could show an influence coming from smartphones usage affecting the user in the information search process. The opportunity to be always connected and have the information on fingertips, may change the consumer’s decision set. The anticipated results should extend existing consumer behaviour
models and uncover new research gaps. Considering the impact what social media networks have on consumer decisions, it is assumed that the decision set will change and influence from smartphone use (Chung & Koo, 2015; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

6 Discussion

This research work is at the beginning. This research work assumes an impact on consumer behaviour in the tourism decision making process resulting from anywhere at any time available information thru usage of smartphones. This study should be beneficial for managers to support decisions where to invest and how to improve existing products to support consumers in the search process and help to find the right tourism service. Hopefully consumers will benefit from that study as managers should develop valuable services for them. Furthermore, this study should gain a better understanding of smartphone usage and the impact on consumer behaviour. This research work conducts a better understanding of technology acceptance and consumer behaviour on smartphones.

References


Technological Approach to Sustainable Development and Community Empowerment in Itatiaia National Park, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Grislayne Guedes Lopes da Silva
School of Arts, Sciences and Humanities
University of São Paulo, Brazil
grislayne.silva@usp.br

Abstract
Geospatial technologies and information and communication technology (ICT) are essential tools to support sustainable development in national parks. The goal of this study is to identify the key technologies that contribute to sustainable development of tourism activities in the Itatiaia National Park, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. As a research method, it is based on literature review, field data collection and creating application for mobile devices to provide information about the park. As a result, it is expected the research can help the integration between local agents and tourists, enlarging tourism experiences.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Geospatial Technologies, ICT, Itatiaia National Park, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

1 Introduction
Geospatial technologies, as well as information and communication technology (ICT), have emerged as important tools to support the development of sustainable tourism (Ali & Frew, 2014). There are tourists who are increasingly interested in obtaining information about the geographical space to maximise their tourism experiences such as in national parks (Atembe & Akbar, 2014). Likewise, managers and local community can benefit from geospatial technologies and ICT in the planning and management of these areas, focusing on the development of tourism in a sustainable manner (Ali & Frew, 2014). With the advent of new technologies, the decision to travel to a particular destination has become dependent on the quality of access to information. Tourists are increasingly looking for a comprehensive view of the geographical area and offered tourist attractions. Therefore, geospatial technologies and ICT can be helpful for travel planning. The appropriate use of technologies should increase the numbers of visitors and promote the growth of local development, generating income for communities. Regarding visitors, geospatial technologies associated with ICT can contribute to a better tourist experience (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ali & Frew, 2014). At the same time, support managers and communities in decision-making for the proper development of destinations, such as the national parks and around it.

Based on this scenario, a survey in progress is presented with the aim of identifying the main geospatial technologies and ICT able to assist in the sustainable development of tourism activities. The study emphasises national parks to encourage tourist visits, however, in a conscious and controlled mode. The research focuses on Itatiaia National Park, located in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It is a pioneer park in the country in the implementation of some technologies to contribute to the sustainable development. It is intended to support the local through the collaborative mapping of the park, with the participation of managers, guides and visitors, as well as the development of an application containing the main tourist information for visitors.
2 Problem Definition

New technologies have produced major changes in the development of tourist activities, but its uses are still scarce in certain segments and tourist destinations, as the Brazilian national parks. These localities do not have adequate websites or informational materials for download, not even mobile applications that provide appropriate and qualified information to visitors. Then geospatial technologies and ICT are support tools in this innovation process of national parks. Besides, can contribute to the local sustainable development and increase attractiveness for potential visitors.

3 Literature review

3.1 National Parks in Brazil

According to Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio, 2015), Brazil, currently, has 71 national parks. These are part of a system titled National Protected Areas System (SNUC), made up of 12 categories of units of conservation (UC) named by the SNUC as natural areas for protection. It was created to accommodate the varying habitats and ecosystems in the country (Brazil, 2000). National parks are UC of Integral Protection category and managed by the ICMBio, which is under the Ministry of Environment (MMA) and part of the National Environmental System (SISNAMA). The first territory instituted, as a park in Brazil, was the Itatiaia National Park (PNI), created in 1937, in Rio de Janeiro. When was prioritised the protection of natural and valued areas to the use of space for leisure and tourism, with trails and scenic landscapes for contemplation (Santos & Hermman, 2000). Ecotourism can be considered one of the main types of sustainable tourism in national parks, in which it is given ample importance to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources for tourism (Swarbrooke, 2000). Since the beginning of the conceptual discussions on ecotourism and sustainability issues were addressed on the importance of this sector for tourism and for local development (Zambrano, Broadbent, & Durham, 2010).

As Lindberg and Hawkins (2005), tourists are becoming more adventurous, dynamic and willing to connect with nature. They want to visit parks and reserves around the world to know and admire the natural environment. So the tourist visits should take place in a structured way. In the case of Brazilian parks, there are management plans that aim to define the areas of visitation and guidelines for orderly activity. Public use areas are intended for the leisure and tourism, predetermined zoning of the park, part of management plans. The public-use trails can be treated as tourist attractions, which are both part of the geographical territory of natural areas such as tourism and leisure spaces. They can also be used for analysis in tourism planning (Andrés & Encabo, 2008). Thus are considered tourism and leisure facilitators in parks (Marion & Leung, 2001), these activities end up bringing economic and social benefits for protected and community areas, and contribute to a greater appreciation of natural and cultural heritage (Bushell & Eagles, 2007). Also integrated planning and management of the park to traditional communities can further reduce environmental impacts and social conflicts, promoting the better use of trails by guest users, and people living around (Lechner, 2006).
In general, parks provide new experiences to visitors and are the ideal places for physical and mental restoration. However, visitors must rely on the presence of facilities and services such as transportation, accommodation, food, recreation, and safety information to be accommodated comfortably (Eagles & McCool, 2002). Given this scenario, national parks need to ensure the safety of visitors and at the same time take care of the management and handling of the trails. By the use of geospatial technologies, it is possible to supply maps to the public describing attractions and trails. Especially hiking, with the proper guidance on the extent paths, altitude, duration and difficulty of the trails.

### 3.2 Geospatial Technologies

Geospatial Technologies (GST) or geographic information technologies are specialised in dealing with geo-referenced data. Data acquisition serves for storage and manipulation of data, data analysis to display and output, and is applied in various areas (DiBiase et al., 2006), including tourism. GST provide access to geospatial information through digital representations, as maps, and tools for interacting with these representations (Favier & Schee, 2014). The most common types of spatial technologies are GPS (Global Positioning System), GIS (Geographic Information System) and web-based geographic information systems (WebGIS) applications. As examples of WebGIS, there are websites to display interactive map, digital globes such as Google Earth, the remote sensing (RS) and other geospatial information (Chang & Caneday, 2011; Favier & Schee, 2014; Baker et al., 2015).

GST is part of everyday life via mobile devices, so people can access information on maps with navigation and guidance services. And also the Internet has become accessible to large consumers searching for tourism information (Chang & Caneday, 2011). The geospatial technologies allow the handling of a large amount of spatial data. In the field of tourism, there are already several studies addressing technologies as GPS and GIS to analyse the spatiotemporal behaviour of tourists (Grinberger, Shoval & McKercher, 2014). Another application is related to market and tourist demand (Supak et al. 2015), also RS and GIS use in impacts of tourism on the land cover of local communities (Boori et al., 2015).

In national parks, the use of these technologies can contribute to decision-making by managers and local communities in the face of market analysis and visitation frequency (Supak et al., 2015). According to Eagles and McCool (2002), the outdoor experience or outdoor recreation in parks has occasionally been at the forefront of social change, and recreation means a sporting event with considerable physical activity. In this scenario, trails aim to provide a pleasant, safe and enjoyable experience for visitors (Snyder et al., 2008). Trails are still used to manage outdoors recreation and to ensure that activities are conducted in harmony with the environment (NTO, 2012). Thereby, it is crucial the trails are planned (Xiang, 1996) and maps produced with information about them as mentioned. For maps with information and guidance, GIS can be an interesting tool to generate databases and integrate information for the park management controls over its attractions. The GIS method can improve the practice of hiking trail alignment planning (Xiang, 1996). Therefore, it is vital to reflect on the tools that can be used in the trail management.

New spatial technologies, favoured by innovative computer programs, become excellent mapping tools (Sayre et al., 2003). It also serves to various spatial analyses, contributing to parks management objectives. GIS consists of a set of computer systems designed to store and process geographic information. There are various utilities as the organisation of information in databases, processing of this information
4 Conceptual Development

According to the literature review, technological advances allow the tourism to use new technologies for the sustainable development of the tourist activities (Ali & Frew, 2014; Neuhofer, 2014) and the creation of meaningful tourist experience (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Neuhofer, 2014). Thinking about geospatial technologies as part of the ICT-based tools (Neuhofer, 2014) it is possible to discuss the theoretical framework of this research as the importance of using these new technologies for planning, management and administration of tourism activities in the Brazilian national parks. In this context, ICT is presented as a field that can be selected for this study location based services (from a mobile device), virtual tourism (the internet), GIS and GPS (Ali & Frew, 2014). Based on some conceptual models, which analyse co-creation of tourism experience on destinations and value in the market (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Atembe & Akbar, 2014), this study intends to emphasise in a model the geospatial technologies, mobile applications and devices as tools that can be used by researchers, community, managers and park guides through collaborative mapping to empower the local agents and increase the experience of tourists. Considering technological tools for geospatial applications: GPS and GIS for mapping attractions and organizing the spatial data, and applications for mobile devices which are rapidly increasing (Atembe & Akbar, 2014). Also, the Internet being an element with the actors involved in tourism, and, as the embodiment of ICT, an application for mobile devices referring to the park under study. The reason of this process is to make these technologies and generated products recovered and used by the local community, park managers and visitors, encouraging the empowerment of parks by acting subjects in the region, in order to maintain the sustainable development of tourism and active social participation.

5 Proposed Methodology

This paper presents a study in progress that proposes as a methodological process four stages of work. First of all, a literature review about geospatial technologies and ICT in national parks is being conducted, which can contribute to new approaches to tourism and sustainable development of the activity. On a second stage, the development of a collaborative mapping of trails and infrastructure at Itatiaia National Park will be initiated by collecting the data, in the field, encouraging the voluntary participation of managers and park guides in the mapping process. Field visits will be made to map the hiking trails, record others tourist attractions and infrastructure of the park, as well as existing services in surroundings through GPS receiver, notebook and digital camera. At the same time, the organised data will be entered into the Open Street Map, a virtual database, creating collaborative web maps with general information about the park. On the third stage of the study, the collected data will be
imported into the ArcGIS (ArcMap), a GIS, to be managed, processed, analysed and edited to create thematic maps of the attractions. The process to analyse the data can be conducted by cartographic modelling techniques (or map algebra) in GIS, proposed by Dana Tomlin in 1990 (Longley et al., 2011). Algebraic operations on map layers can be combined with algorithms to produce new maps (raster layers). Likewise, map overlays can combine the geographic features and attribute tables of both inputs into a single new output. On the fourth phase, an application will be created for Android and iOS mobile operating system to run on mobile devices. It will contain the main tourist information collected in the region of the park, taking as models two applications for mobile devices: Essential New Zealand Travel Guide and Kakadu National Park. It will be like a visitor guide containing maps, things to do, rules and safety, accessibility, nearby accommodations, contacts etc.

6 Anticipated Results

This research is at the end of the first phase, devoted to the literature review, emphasising the importance of geospatial technologies for the Brazilian national parks. Geospatial technologies and ICT can provide support for the planning and management of the Brazilian national parks to contribute to sustainable development and community empowerment. And the introduction of new technologies contributes to income generation, conflict management, reducing social inequalities and the integration of surrounding communities. This research expects to contribute to the area of ICT and geospatial technologies. It aims to provide to tourism academics new insights about the importance of using geospatial technologies as modern tools in nature-based tourism development and ICT to improve the tourist’s experience. It also supports local decisions by managers and community in developing sustainable activities in the national parks. New technologies such as mobile devices with touristic information around destinations as national parks are essential. Use of ICT is needed for tourism practitioners to provide more and better information based on spaces of nature. On the possible application of geospatial technologies for the Itatiaia National Park, the use of GPS is considered for mapping sights and infrastructure of the park and use GIS for data processing. The second stage of the research, to be initiated, seeks to map collaboratively, being the Internet and geospatial tools necessary and extremely important. In this process, the goal is that managers and guides participate in the mapping, feeding a map with tourist information. As a final result, it is expected the followed methodological path can help the integration between local agents and tourists while visitors have access to information about the Itatiaia National Park through an application for mobile devices.

Acknowledgements

The author greatly appreciates the support and encouragement in the continuing development of this research from Professor Cynthia Corrêa, coordinator of Knowledge, Management and Innovation Research Group linked to the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development-Brazil.

References


Horizontal Loyalty and New Trends in Information Search

Arminda Almeida Santana  
PhD. Candidate  
arminda.almeida@ulpgc.es  
Instituto Universitario de Turismo y Desarrollo Económico Sostenible (Tides)  
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria  
España

Sergio Moreno Gil  
Profesor Titular de la Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), doctor por la misma universidad. Co-Director de la Cátedra UNESCO de Turismo y Desarrollo Sostenible de la ULPGC  
smoreno@dede.ulpgc.es  
Instituto Universitario de Turismo y Desarrollo Económico Sostenible (Tides)  
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria  
España

Abstract

Tourists can visit different destinations and they can be loyal to multiple destinations at the same time (horizontal loyalty). Tourists seek information to choose a destination using different information sources. In recent years, these sources have evolved. Advances in the Internet and social media are changing the way that information about leisure travel and its experiences are disseminated. The main goal of this study is to explain the relationship between information sources and loyalty, paying attention to horizontal loyalty. These results are useful for making decisions in tourism policy on loyalty programs for tourist destinations.

Keywords: Horizontal Loyalty, Information Sources, Social Networks, Destinations

1 Problem Definition

Web 2.0 has transformed tourism methods of communication, interaction with social media, and overall tourist behavior concerning information sources. Increasingly DMOs are engaging with consumers through digital media, communicating with them in a long-term relationship. Numerous studies have shown that social media influence the intentions of travelers to visit a destination. However, the literature has given little attention to the relationship between information-seeking behavior and the development of destination loyalty. In that sense, the academic literature has shown that tourists are not only sharing more digital information, but they are also sharing their time within several specific social media, and their holiday time within a few destinations, becoming more loyal to multiple destinations at the same time (horizontal loyalty). However, this topic has not been stressed in the tourism context. Thus, the aim of this study is twofold: 1) to analyze the use of information sources used by loyal tourists; and 2) to explore the relationship between tourists’ information-seeking behavior and subsequent loyalty. Thus, a segmentation of tourists according to the way in which they express their loyalty to tourist destinations is performed. Two groups were identified: tourists “loyal to a single destination (DL)” (Tourists are showing repeated visits to a single destination not having visited any other destination of a same set competitor) and tourists “horizontal loyal (HL)” (Share
your visits between various destinations in the same set competitor, showing repeated visits to multiple destinations at the same time). To achieve those goals, a wide survey with 6,964 questionnaires was developed, considering tourists from 17 European countries.

2 Literature Review

Previous studies have tried to understand how visitors use the Internet to gather information and the way in which the best tourism providers can leverage these channels (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Ho et al, 2012; Papathanassis and Knolle, 2011; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Much research has focused on analyzing the impact of the Internet on corporate brands (Ind and Riondino, 2001). However, it has omitted the study of the influence of Internet use, particularly the media and social networks, in the development of loyalty.

Earlier literature on loyalty has shown that customers can be loyal to a multiple brands, (Oliver, 1999; Olson and Jacoby, 1974; Brown, 1953; Sharp and Sharp, 1997; Yim and Kannan, 1999; Cunningham, 1956; and Dowling and Uncles, 1997). This fact has not been extensively studied in tourism, where tourists for example, can be loyal to different destinations at the same time, what has been called horizontal loyalty (McKercher et al., 2012).

Previous literature highlights many factors that lead individuals to revisit a destination. These include demographic characteristics and destination image (Assaker, Vinzi, and O’Connor, 2011; McDowall, 2010). Moreover, according to Oliver (1999), conative loyalty, defined as the intention and commitment to repurchase the brand (Harris and Goode, 2004), is the prior stage to behavioral loyalty. Recently, Sun, Chi, and Xu (2013) present a summary of the literature that has studied destination loyalty: motivations, image and behavior information search. However, the latter has not been paid special attention. Previous studies have not properly analyzed the relationship between using certain information sources and the development of loyalty. Far less, previous literature has not tried to understand what is the relationship between information sources and horizontal loyalty.

3 Conceptual Development

The research hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Information sources used by DL visitors are different from those used by HL

Hypothesis 2: Social networks used by DL visitors are different from those used by HL

Hypothesis 3: Information sources that determine DL are the same as those that determine HL.

Hypothesis 4: Social networks that determine DL are the same as those that determine HL.

4 Proposed Methodology

The data set were collected in January 2011 and consists of potential tourists to the Canary Islands, aged 16 years and older, from 17 European countries; Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Europe is the world’s largest emitter region, a region which generates more than half of international arrivals, 52.1% in 2013 (UNWTO, 2014). The participants were 6,964
tourists. Stratified random sampling guaranteed proportional representation according to nationality, age, and gender. The work was conducted through online surveys (CAWI), a database of panellists in each country was used.

5 Anticipated Results

This study first explores the relationship between travellers’ loyal behaviours and information-seeking behaviours. Table 1 shows the results. The Chi-Square statistical analysis showed that the use of Tour operator’s brochures, the official website of the destinations and Friends and families were different in both cases. There were significant differences in terms of how these two groups seek travel information. However, there were not differences in the use of social media between both groups.

Table 1. Information Sources and Social Networks; Differences between HL and DL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>DL%</th>
<th>HL%</th>
<th>Chi-2</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator’s brochures</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>31.32</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist leaflets</td>
<td>13.47</td>
<td>15.01</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday guide books</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>15.81</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News, articles, reports ...</td>
<td>16.73</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet via the official website</td>
<td>15.92</td>
<td>22.96</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet, other sources</td>
<td>26.12</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel agents</td>
<td>13.88</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and families</td>
<td>19.18</td>
<td>24.87</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TripAdvisor</td>
<td>14.69</td>
<td>15.31</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>25.71</td>
<td>23.26</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myspace</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkedin</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xing</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td>13.47</td>
<td>13.09</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panoramio</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikipedia</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>23.16</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 summarizes the results of the estimation of the two proposed models. It was founded that there are variables that determine the HL and the DL and others that only determine either the HL or the DL. In the case of the information sources, they all have a direct influence on the HL. However, only three of them affect the DL (Tour operator’s brochures, News, articles, reports ..., Travel agents). Moreover, with regard to social media, a direct and positive relationship between TripAdvisor and HL and a negative relationship between YouTube and HL were founded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categoria</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>DL β</th>
<th>DL e</th>
<th>HL β</th>
<th>HL e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks</td>
<td>Tripadvisor</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youtube</td>
<td>-0.366</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tour operator’s brochures</td>
<td>0.466</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>1.165</td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holiday guide books</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>0.197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Sources</td>
<td>News, articles, reports ...</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>0.950</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The official website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel agents</td>
<td>0.653</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.403</td>
<td>0.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends and families</td>
<td>1.015</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive image</td>
<td>Sun, beach and lifestyle</td>
<td>-0.270</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>-0.224</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations</td>
<td>Relax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.101</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-0.211</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>-0.143</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interact with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.098</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Image</td>
<td>Healthy and sustainable lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociodemographic</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Number of holidays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likelihood future visit</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Image</td>
<td>General Image</td>
<td>0.215</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Application of Geographical Information Systems in Climate Change for Sustainable Tourism Development in Mount Kenya Tourist Circuit

David Kamau Karienye
School of Arts and Social Sciences
Department of Geography
Garissa University College
dkarienye@gmail.com

Abstract
Geographical Information Systems (GIS) is recognized widely as valuable tool for data manipulation and analysis that can aid in decision making and planning tourist activities. Tourism is an activity that is dependent on spatial and temporal environmental conditions. It is understood that GIS can assist in better understanding of the geographic conditions at tourist destinations and offers ways to mitigate and deal with the consequences of climate change so it would support efforts toward sustainability.

Keywords: Climate Change, Sustainable Tourism, Geographical Information System

1 Problem Definition
Tourism represents one of the major national development sectors contributing 12.1% of GDP and 10.6% of total employment in 2013 and a key driver for Vision 2030 in Kenya. Effort have continued to market Kenya as a leading destination of choice by tourists all over the world offering diverse and distinctive visitors experience. Nevertheless changing climatic conditions scenarios globally has enormous local impacts in tourism industry in Kenya and specifically Mt. Kenya region. Climate change affects a wide range of environmental resources that are critical for tourists. Environmental conditions and incidents can deter tourism. The effects of climate change will change the travel calender, destinations as well as the tourism sites due to lack of planning. The distribution and abundance of biodiversity will also be a threat to tourism sectors. In addition, environmental conditions such as pollution can also deter sustainability at the destinations. Geographic Information System (GIS) can therefore provide solution to sustainable tourism development through provision of geographic conditions of destinations. A lot of study has been done on GIS and tourism but the component of temperature and precipitation on mountain ecosystem and sustainable tourism in Mount Kenya has not been captured therefore the dire need of this study. A lot of uncertainties have been experienced which require appropriate management to ensure that tourism industry does not decline. In contribution to this effort appropriate planning of tourism activities is required in the application of GIS. Application of GIS in tourism will help destination managers to monitor visitors flow management (to identify principal tourist activities within a destination or among destinations). GIS will help in facility inventory and resources use (to identify issues of environmental justice, to identify conflicts, complementary land uses, tourist activities, natural resources, pollutions) and assess impacts of tourism development (to demonstrate tourism impacts on its surrounding). Sustainable tourism will foster economic development and cultural diversity among the rural community since Mount Kenya has been one of the preffered tourist destination in Kenya due to its
diversity. Integrating GIS in tourism development will offer sustainability in the destinations.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Climate change and environmental pollution presents a new and real threat to natural resources. The effects of climate change will have impact on economic activities such as tourism industry. Tourism is closely interlinked with climate change both as culprit and as a victim (Matasci et al., 2008). The tourism industry is particularly affected by climate change, being climate and weather dependent. The IPCC, 2007 defines climate change as any change in climate over time generally more than 40 years, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity. Studies have shown that about 90% of all natural disasters afflicting the world are related to severe weather and extreme climate change events (NCCRS, 2010).

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts addressing the needs of tourists, the industry, the environment and the host communities”. The natural environment and the local communities should benefit from tourism, both economically and culturally. Sustainability implies that tourism resources and attractions should be utilised in such a way that their subsequent use by future generations is not compromised.

Africa has some of the major tourist destinations in the world, Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Rift Valley of Eastern and Southern Africa, Great Zimbabwe, Mountain in South Africa, Mount Kenya in Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania are some of the major attractions. Mountains, wildlife, wetlands and coastal areas are also major tourist attractions (Region et al., 2005).

The tourism sector is a component of the Kenyan economy having experienced steady growth over a decade (GOK, 2013). Tourism contributes approximately 12.1% of GDP and 10.6% of total employment in 2013 (Impact, 2014), meaning it is the third from agriculture and manufacturing. It is also primary source of foreign exchange earnings, as well as source of employment. The National Climate Change Action Plan into the Tourism Sector, (2011) identifies wildlife and Mt. Kenya’s glaciers as some of the country top tourist destinations.

2.2 Impacts of climate change on sustainable tourism development

Destinations in poor countries, especially those that depend on tourism as economic drivers and have least resources to buy their way out of unhealthy environments might suffer more from the impacts climate change. This concurs with the UNWTO Davos Declaration that the sector is highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change and global warming (October, 2007). In order to do so, it is important to define which areas will face challenges related to climate change and to recognize the vulnerability.

Global warming is likely to disrupt and even destroy some of the tourist sites such as the snow-caps of Mt. Kenya, the coastal rainforests, and the marine parks (NCCRS, 2010). Rising temperatures with changing weather and vegetation patterns across the globe, will force animal species to migrate to new areas in order to survive. Environmentalists predict that one-fourth of the Earth’s plant and animal species will be headed for extinction by 2050 if the warming trend continues (NCCRS, 2010). This
will be accelerated by land-use changes due to agricultural expansion hence subsequent destruction of habitat together with pollution, poaching, high population growth and the introduction of exotic species. Pollution in destination sites will make tourist attraction unattractive (Frenken, Marengo, & Valente, 1999).

The challenge of this sector lies on the impacts of climate change. Impacts of climate change as identified in Kenya’s National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) include extreme events, especially more frequent droughts, negatively impacts on wildlife and biodiversity, can lead to fewer opportunities for tourism. Gradual changes in temperature and precipitation prompt species to migrate to more favourable habitats and negatively impact certain locations for wildlife based tourism. Changing environmental conditions caused by climate change can deter tourists. Extreme weather events can reduce access to tourist destinations due to damage to road infrastructure.

2.3 Role of GIS as a source of information to tourism sector

The major challenge on tourism planning in Kenya is perhaps the lack of sufficient and reliable disaggregated data and information of destinations. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) are computer-based systems that enable users to collect, store, process, analyse and present spatial data (Prakash & Technology, n.d.). GIS can be used for managing a variety of information needed, estimating indicators, and generally assisting decision making in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the hospitality and tourism industry.

Use of GIS technology for tourism planning offers a group of advantages in data documentation and processing. It can therefore be used in generating maps and other products of immediate use to planners, managers, and to different resource user. It can be used to generate vulnerability maps of the mountain Kenya circuit for the consequences of climate change such as the drought, glacier retreat and environmental pollution. Simulation can be done on the effects/damages of these disasters/phenomena under various environmental scenarios and aid in future decision making and planning (Shah, n.d.). With its capabilities for business mapping, geospatial analysis and its contribution to decision making, GIS is a valuable tool applicable in the discipline of tourism that can aid better understanding of geographic conditions of the destination sites. GIS and tourism share a common characteristic that is, both cut cross the boundaries of disciplines and application areas (Abomeh, Nuga, & C, 2013).

Tourism management can be enhanced by GIS technology. GIS can provide a toolbox of techniques and technologies of wide applicability for the achievement of sustainable tourism management. Attribute information on the various tourism facilities collected from different sources can be linked to their respective spatial features. According to Caldera de Ugarte et al, (1997), GIS can be applied for both the public and the management domains. Tourism information through the use of web based interactive map where destination managers can have access to view location of tourism site, environmental conditions roads networks, and other ancillary tourism facilities like hospital, police station (Abomeh et al., 2013). GIS can be used as a means of consolidating geographical information in order to inform, analysis and provide development in the tourism sector (Bahaire & Elliott-white, 2010). Application of GIS can be used by the destinations managers to find geographic information about sites. On the other hand GIS can be useful to individual operators, a tourism group, or by the local municipality.
According to Protection (2003) Mt. Kenya National Park and the surrounding natural forests in the Forest Reserve was described as a World Natural Heritage site in 1997. Since then Mt Kenya has attracted a lot of interest from World Heritage monitoring mission between UNESCO and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

3 Conceptual Development

The study will be guided by the conceptual framework as illustrated in Fig 1. The impact of climate change will be global though changes in temperature and precipitation will be manifested at local scale. The application of GIS framework will help analyse the data and generate interactive maps that will provide information on the environmental status of the destinations and best ways to sustain those resources. The information provided in the web based platform will help destination managers to make decision on destinations.

4 Proposed Methodology

The study will use both qualitative and quantitative methods of data acquisition and analysis. Qualitative data will explain the quantitative data from focus groups discussions which will validate the data and information about destinations.

Quantitative methods will include the use of structured questionnaires. Secondary data of tourist arrivals in various destinations will be acquired from documented tourist data from region tourist board. Temperature and precipitation will be obtained from the Kenya Meteorological Department. Photographs and field observations will be used to enrich the primary data.

Remote sensed data and aerial photographs will be analysed and geo referenced to produce spatial referenced data set that would be further used in modelling climate change scenarios.

Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyse the data. Trend analysis will be used to present rainfall and temperature data and also the number of tourists’ arrivals. ArcGIS software version 10 will be used to manipulate and generate web based maps.

5 Anticipated Results

After integrating GIS in analysing climate change and tourism pattern globally and locally a model of climate change trends and tourism flow in and around Mt Kenya region will be developed. Based on this model it is hoped that appropriate decision
concerning marketing, planning for tourist arrivals, resources, security and health will be realised. Map generated will assist the destination managers to get information of the geographical conditions of the destinations during different seasons and avoid stressing the resources. This will help the destination managers to make decision on sites based on the information on interactive web.

References
Shah, C. (n.d.). *Application of Remote sensing and GIS in creating a “sustainable tourism development plan” for the island of Fiji*. 
A Journey across the Digital Frontier: Investigating the Evolution of Travel Texts

Michelangelo Magasic
Curtin University
m.magasic@postgrad.curtin.edu.au

Abstract
This project’s focus is positioning online travel writing as a textual genre. Online travel writing has stolen the spotlight from its analogue predecessor because it has increased the output and visibility of travel narratives and diversified the types of content which may be included. This project will use a multi-sited ethnographic methodology in order to probe whether travel blogs are a continuation, adaptation or radical break from offline travel writing. This is in order to produce a better understanding of the form and function of online travel narratives and their intersection with changing travel practices.

Keywords: Travel blog, Tourism social media, Online travel narrative, Travel writing, Tourist gaze

1 Problem Definition
While there are a significant number of scholarly articles examining online travel media (See, Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014 for a summary of these), and a smaller body examining the connection of online travel media with offline travel literature, there is no working explanation of how online travel narratives relate to offline travel writing. Recent academic anthologies on travel writing such as those by Thompson (2011) and Youngs (2013) provide extensive descriptions on the history and progression of travel narratives but offer a minimum of pages to the subject of blogs and do little to colour the relationship between these two forms. Perspectives by theorists within tourism studies are split: Choudry and Ramen (2014) relate that blogs represents a departure from the travel writing genre, however, Lee and Gretzel (2014) count blogging in as a form of travel writing. Calzati (2014) examines the subject from a literary theory perspective, going as far as to differentiate the two genres on account of singular and cooperative authorship, but makes no definitive comment regarding the ongoing interworkings between the two forms. Considering perspectives from the authors of travel narratives themselves, established travel writers like Rolf Potts and Paul Theroux, criticize travel blogs for their “chatty” (Potts, 2011), “epistolary” (Gibson, n.d) narratives yet at the same time note the proclivity for some authors to switch between on and offline media formats.

The lack of a definitive positioning of travel blogs relative to offline travel writing leaves many questions for those attempting to analyze their content: Is the intent of online travel stories akin to offline travel writing which attempts to familiarise their reader with unknown lands and add explanation to different cultural and social traditions? Or, are travel blogs recreational accounts of the author’s life intended mainly for a familiar audience like the ‘life-casting’ which is common to many social
media platforms? Are they a hybrid? This project intends to probe the relationship between online and offline travel writing. To do which it is necessary to examine the function each genre fulfils for its author including the motivation for writing and how travel is recorded within (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), as well as the personal process involved in textual production and how these are informed by, and conversant with, the media in which the writing occurs.

The purpose of investigating the relationship between online and offline travel writing is to better understand the experience of digitally connected tourists. Rather than just embodying a change in medial format, the migration of travel narratives online can be seen to also represent radically changing conceptualisations of travel. Here, Munar (2013) states, “Similar to the difference between oral and written communication, the digitization of tourists’ narratives and word-of-mouth involves a relative canonization of tourism communicative practices” (p.49). While analyses of blog content may be used to shed light on the changing practices of digitally connected tourists, these investigations must first, however, have the methodological tools for understanding what is written in online travel narratives. Without knowing the trajectory behind travel blogs and the implicit value judgements this creates (i.e. the generic framework in which the author operates), it will remain difficult to effectively understand blog narratives and what their author is expressing about their travel experience. Here, Banyai and Havitz (2013) explain that, “travel blog researchers and destination marketers need to have an understanding of how tourists construct their travel experience, how they create meanings based on both objective and subjective components of their realities” (p.234). An improved understanding of the positioning of online travel writing and the personal processes through which writing occurs will thus allow improved qualitative analysis of online travel texts. This study is important from a managerial perspective as it allows tourist businesses to better understand the needs and preferences of digitally connected tourists. Indeed, this issue takes sharp focus given the recent antagonistic relations between some tourist destinations and social media using tourists regarding the use of ‘selfie sticks’.

2 Literature Review

Although a notoriously difficult genre to define given its broad variety of content, travel writing has broadly circumscribed by Youngs (2013) as writing which “consists of predominantly factual, first-person prose accounts of travels that have been undertaken by the author-narrator.” (p.3). At its outset, travel writing reflected exploratory journeys which were initiated at the behest of governments or wealthy benefactors. As transport technologies improved and leisure travel as an industry developed, travel writers began to write instructionally for a new tourist class (Youngs, 2013). These narratives were published as non-fiction travel books or guidebooks, and, later, as the audience continued to grow, in newspapers, magazines and on television (Hanusch, 2012). Strict narrative veracity is not a primary concern of travel narratives (Holland & Huggan, 2000) and travel writing has been extensively critiqued for its perpetuation of colonial rhetoric (Clifford, 1997; Pratt, 1992; Santos, 2006; Spurr,1993). Within the 20th Century social theorists such as Boorstin (1964), Cohen (1979), MacCannell (1976) and Urry (1992) explained travel as a socially constructed leisure activity which highlighted the individual’s belonging to particular social, cultural and/or national groups. More recently, travel is being theorised as a near
inexorable activity ingrained within the liquid information age (Bauman, 2000; Urry 2007).

Travel blogs first appeared around the turn of the millennium as an off-shoot of the online diary format of the ‘web-log’ or ‘blog’ (Akehurst, 2009; Duffy, 2014). Like offline travel writing, online travel blogs were used to describe an author’s first hand experiences with movement and cultural difference via an auto-diegetic authorial voice (Banyai, 2012). The online format allows the travel blogger to include hyperlinked and multimedia content, as well as providing a space for reader comments, author bio, and other contextual information such as a blog-roll alongside the main text (Azariah, 2012; Wenger, 2008). Scholarly reviews on the genre of travel blogs have focused on a business perspective (Munar, 2013), assessing blog narratives as a place where destination marketers might gain data about tourist preferences (Akehurst, 2008; Lin & Huang, 2006; Hsiao et al., 2013; Mansson, 2011; Wang, 2012; Wegner, 2008). However, more recently, academic literature has begun to take an interest in the way online travel narratives interface with the travel experience. The increasing normalisation of social media applications that intersect with, support, or augment the process of journeying is being investigated under the phrase ‘social media tourism’ (Munar, Gyimothy, Cai, 2013). While there is an increasing spectrum of different online travel texts in existence (such as social network content, online reviews and image platforms), given that existing research focuses largely on travel blogs, in this project the genre is used heuristically as a metonym to refer to all types of online travel writing or the activity of recounting travel online.

3 Conceptual Development

In recent years social media usage has grown rapidly and has become imbricated with the tourist experience. It is no surprise then to see that Cohen et al. (2014) and Paris (2012) contend that internet-enabled devices have become a normal part of tourist experience. Travellers are now situated in a landscape in which conceptions of time and space have been dramatically shortened and in which a connection to home space is but a button press away (Magasic, 2014; Molz & Paris, 2015; White & White, 2005). This means that the behaviours and texts of modern tourists need to be read in the light of new technological and social conditions (Miller, 2013). While previous views of travel stressed the isolation of the individual in patterns of self-searching and self-growth (MacCannell, 1976), travel within the internet age may be read through the frame of connectivity. Here, this project presents two conceptual frames for understanding the digitally connected tourist. These frames combine existing tourism theory with concepts from social media study such as Goffmanian theories of performance and “presentation of self” (Goffman, 1959; Papacharissi, 2012) and are intended to work in tandem. Firstly, the “selfie gaze” is introduced as a paradigm for describing the mental frame governing the use of social media within travel, while, secondly, the idea of “social media pilgrimage” explores the specific set of behaviours employed by the connected tourist during routines of net use and the recording of travel events.

This project is still within its introductory stages and can’t yet report on the application and development of these frames within the project framework. Ideally, these conceptual frames shall be deployed throughout the author’s performative research as a lens for investigating the personal processes involved in the creation of online travel texts.
4 Proposed Methodology

This project will implement a multi-sited ethnographic methodology. This choice is influenced by a recent trend toward qualitative research which pays attention to the emotional experience of tourists (Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015). Multi-sited ethnography involves the accumulation of data from a network of interrelated sites in order to shed light on a particular social practice (Marcus, 1995). As distinguished from comparative ethnographic studies, within multi-sited ethnography the relationships between research sites are seen as important as the relationships within them (Hannerz, 2003). In particular, the use of multi-sited ethnography complements the study of the mobile and fluid assemblages of modern global society (Buscher & Urry, 2009). The methods of data collection used within this study will include auto-ethnographic fieldwork, the performative creation of an online travel text, and the textual analysis of online and offline travel texts. Online and offline travel texts will be compared in order to compare the specific values and practices espoused by each. Here, particular attention will be paid to the way experiences are shared within online travel texts given Munar and Jacobsen's (2014) assertion that, "In social media, tourists share not only knowledge, they typically also share experiences" (p.47).

5 Anticipated Results

This project intends to establish the hitherto unqualified relationship between travel writing and travel blogging. Given the relatedness of content and context shared by online and offline travel narratives, these two genres are viewed as existing in a filial relationship. The metaphor of evolution is thus mobilised as a fruitful way of hypothesising the relationship between, and future trajectories of, these entities. The choices provided in biological literature are convergent, divergent and parallel evolution. The identification of one of the above will be valuable for understanding the narratological mindset employed in the transcription of travel experience into blog content and will allow more nuanced readings of online travel content.

References


Humour in Customer Engagement on Chinese Social Media
– A Rhetorical Perspective

Jing Ge
The University of Queensland
j.ge@business.uq.edu.au

Abstract

Using humour on social media has created a new way for tourism marketers to initiate customer engagement through two-way conversations. Focusing on the context of Chinese social media, this study aims to propose a conceptual framework and develop a taxonomy to identify firm-customer conversations involving humour. The findings will provide insights into formulating humour strategies on social media and will offer fundamental rules of customer engagement in social media marketing.

Keywords: Tourism, Social media, Customer engagement, Humour, China

1 Problem Definition

This dissertation investigates how tourism marketers use humour, defined as a rhetorical device constructed in a message to persuade the audience through creating unification (Lynch, 2002), to engage customers on Chinese social media. The radically different technological basis of social media requires marketing approaches that depart from those used for traditional media. On social media, information is interactively created, circulated and used by consumers and firms (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). In traditional relationship marketing, customer engagement is firm-focused – firms deliver marketing messages to trigger customer engagement behaviors (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Moreover, customers play a passive role since their inputs are only taken as reference to firms’ marketing strategies (Solis, 2010). In sharp contrast, customer engagement on social media is customer-focused; customers play an active role as they are equal partners. As a result, this new marketing paradigm requires firms to develop methods to strategically enable and shape conversations with customers (Gretzel & Yoo, 2013).

To engage customers through a two-way conversation, firms should treat themselves as invited guests, “bring wine” and talk about relevant and interesting things (Russell, 2009, p. 9). Within this conversational context, it has been found that humour plays an important role. Customers are more likely to respond to firm-initiated online activities involving humour (Nielsen, 2013). This phenomenon also suggests the advent of social media is changing the way firms use humour – from a peripheral appeal to influence customers in traditional media – to a way of encouraging customers to enter a conversation. Humour on social media is not a simple message cue but, rather, is co-constructed through a firm’s initiation of a conversation and customers’ responses to it.

The changed structure of customer engagement in these new media, along with the changing nature of using humour to influence customers, raises the question of how such humour co-construction happens. Yet this important topic has so far been neglected by research on social media marketing. Thus, the objective of this research is to investigate the use of humour for customer engagement on social media. The central focus is to look at the use of humour for engagement from a firm’s perceptive
and through a persuasion principle. This research aims to develop a taxonomy of humour co-construction by identifying firm-initiated humour strategies and respective customer responses. The research questions are:

1) What humour strategies are used by firms to initiate customer engagement through conversations?

2) How do customers react to these firm-initiated persuasive conversation involving humour?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Customer Engagement

Customer engagement in traditional relationship marketing, defined as "a customer’s behavioral manifestations that have a firm focus, beyond purchase and as a result of motivational drivers" (Van Doorn et al., 2010, p. 254), is not able to address the radical change of engagement afforded by social media. Customer engagement is traditionally conceptualized as a form firm-centric activity with a passive role for customers. To achieve its marketing goals, a firm initiates engagement to trigger customer behaviors (e.g. referrals, web postings) through one-way communications, and customers are not expected to voice their opinions. This firm-controlled engagement paradigm is completely changed due to the complex and dynamic conversational architecture afforded by social media. Customers can respond to firm-initiated short-scaled posts through commenting, replying, tagging and liking – all of these interactions occur in a visible and highly networked conversation space (Boyd, 2010).

Customer engagement in the context of social media marketing, defined as a firm's marketing efforts to encourage customers’ interest and participation in all marketing activities which are beyond the immediate sales transaction by building on the unique affordances of social media platforms (Solis, 2010), occurs in multidirectional and interconnected social networks (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). The extent literature identifies firm-to-customer interactions, customer-to-firm interactions and customer-to-customer interactions in a separate way and therefore is too limited to inform the complex and dynamic two-way conversations on social media. Given this, the present research defines customer engagement as conversations between firms and customers, which include a range of informational exchanges. In these two-way conversations, firm-to-customer interactions take place through firm-initiated engagement strategies; customer-to-firm interactions occur through customer responses.

2.2 Persuasion

The use of persuasion as a principle helps a firm to engage customers in this dynamic and highly networked conversation space (Chaffey, 2007) – it can be examined from either a cognitive perspective or a rhetorical perspective. The extant marketing literature almost exclusively focuses on persuasion from a cognitive perspective, which is too limited to inform the reciprocity required in persuading customers entering a firm-customer conversation. Persuasion from a rhetorical perspective underscores the use of language to induce actions from the audience (Burke, 1969) and therefore is more appropriate for the two-way conversation paradigm fostered by social media.
Rhetoric, encompassing the whole area of language usage to induce audience cooperation, underlines persuasion as a reciprocal action (Burke, 1969). Rhetorical appeals relate to the use of humour to engage customers. *Ethos* (appeals hinting at a persuader’s character and credibility), *pathos* (emotional appeals) and *logos* (appeals stressing purpose and reason) are the three possible types of rhetorical appeals that assist a persuader to receive support, to form solidarities and to reveal likeability (Killingsworth & Gilbertson, 1992). Closely related to connecting and forming solidarities with the audiences (i.e. customers) is the use of pathos as positive emotional appeals to not only please customers but also build a rapport (Killingsworth & Gilbertson, 1992).

### 2.3 Humour

Humour – defined as a rhetorical device constructed in a message to persuade the audience through creating unification – allows a speaker to initiate greater interaction with audiences (Lynch, 2002). However, types of humour structured on social media differ from that in traditional media with respect to communication morphology and humour techniques (Shifman, 2007). Despite of such distinctiveness, current literature merely focuses on the use of different types of humour in traditional media such as pun, irony, satire, comparison and silliness (e.g. Catanescu & Tom, 2001). Social media-afforded multimodality accommodates textual, visual and audio morphologies of humour, which are impossible to achieve through TV, print advertising and radio. This advanced technological basis foregrounds the idea that social media may not only carry old types of humour but also generate new ones (Shifman, 2007).

The use of humour for customer engagement has become an emerging phenomenon on China’s social media platforms. From ancient times to modern China, Chinese people have been using a variety of humour through manipulating font and word meaning and through homophonic wordplay in a range of interactive competition games, including drinking and singing games, and social celebrations such as weddings and birthdays (Xue, 1989).

### 3 Conceptual Development

![Figure 1. A proposed conceptual framework](image)

This conceptual framework comprises speech acts (Searle, 1969), Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals and types of humour (Berger, 1995) and (Xue, 1989). This research defines
“move” as a single action or a composite action aimed at soliciting, structuring, maintaining or ending a conversation on social media. Moves are further divided as initiating moves and responding moves. An initiating move refers to a firm-initiated verbal action that is achieved through a series of speech acts. Rhetorical appeals – ethos (i.e. credibility), pathos (emotional appeal) and logos (rational appeal) – are specific content in an initiating move and span different speech acts. A certain type of humour is a means of conveying the content relating to logos, pathos and ethos in an initiating move. DMOs may use impersonation as humour to recommend destinations. It may relate to ethos when DMOs claim themselves as an expert or relate to pathos when they create affection. With respect to a responding move, it refers to the totality of customer responses – it comprises verbal actions, customer sentiment expressed through these verbal actions and social media-afforded actions (i.e. liking, reposting, tagging). More specifically, verbal actions are realized through a series of speech acts, and customer sentiment is expressed through these speech acts. On social media, moreover, verbal actions containing a series of speech acts entail multimodality, including a text, images, emoticons and non-standard orthography.

4 Proposed Methodology

Focusing on Sina Weibo and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) in China, this research will adopt rhetorical analysis to examine the use of humour strategy to initiate conversations. A rhetorical analysis views persuasion as a rhetorical triangle, addressing interactions between an author (i.e. a firm), a text (i.e. humour strategies) and an audience (i.e. customer) (Burke, 1969). Relating to the conceptual framework, motivation of the firm can be derived from the specific categories of firm-initiated moves. Textual strategies involving rhetorical appeals can be derived from speech acts in combination with rhetorical appeals and humour types. The effect on the audiences can be derived from social media-afforded actions and speech acts in combination with sentiment and humour in customer responses.

This research will use the taxonomy development method to unpack the firm-initiated conversations through humour by identifying: (1) types of firm-initiated moves; (2) types of humour on social media; and (3) types of customer-responses strategies. Taxonomy is the classification scheme or system – it provides a structure and an organization to the knowledge of a field; moreover, it aims to identify a set of dimensions each containing a set of characteristics that describes the objects in a particular domain (Nickerson, Varshney, & Muntermann, 2013). Specifically, this research will use a mixed approach: a conceptual to empirical approach will apply the proposed conceptual framework including speech acts, rhetorical appeals and types of humour; an empirical to conceptual approach aims to expand the conceptual framework.

The initial corpus consists of posts involving humour published by Chinese DMOs on Sina Weibo and the customer responses to these posts that took place in one month. As Bauer and Gaskell (2000) suggest, corpus design for research adopting a rhetorical approach should follow a cyclical process: (1) selecting a small size of data according to the conceptual framework and research questions; (2) analyzing collected data; and (3) extending the corpus of data if necessary. The specific data collection process includes: (1) collecting all firm-initiated posts and the first ten customer responses; and (2) selecting firm-initiated posts involving humour based on the humour literature.

This research adopts pre-coding and two-cycle coding strategy with the method of structural coding and elaborative coding (Saldana, 2012). Pre-coding was conducted
to select firm-initiated posts involving humour. In the first-cycle coding phase, a structural coding method is used to initially categorize the data corpus – it is appropriate for applying the conceptual/theoretical framework (Saldana, 2012). In the second-cycle coding phase, this research will use elaborative coding method to refine theoretical constructs, to support, strengthen, modify, or disconfirm the findings from the previous research (Saldana, 2012).

5 Anticipated Results

This research will develop a humour co-construction taxonomy that systematically classifies and maps firm-initiated humour strategies and customer responses. Theoretical contributions include: (1) advancing the Western humour theory through examining Chinese humour; and (2) advancing persuasion theory by applying it in the social media marketing context. Methodological contributions consist of: (1) examining humour structure on social media and its usage for persuasion by analyzing it through a rhetorical lens; and (2) developing a methodological approach to analyze across languages. In terms of practical contributions, this research focuses on using humour to initiate two-way conversation and therefore can inform firms about not only what types of humour are available in initiating customer engagement, but also what types of customer responses may receive. By doing so, firms will be able to design and implement appropriate humour strategies to enable and shape customer engagement through two-way conversations.

References

Gretzel, U., & Yoo, K.-H. (2013). Premises and promises of social media marketing in tourism. The scope and coverage of contemporary marketing issues with different perspectives makes the Handbook
Nielsen (2013). GLOBAL TRUST IN ADVERTISING AND BRAND MESSAGES.
Marketing the Smart Destination

Myrta Zemp
The Faculty of Communication Sciences
University of Lugano, Switzerland
myrta.zemp@usi.ch

Abstract
To market the competitive destination of the future has increased in complexity since technologies play a crucial role in destination marketing. A potential research design is presented, aimed at understanding the digital customer behaviour through a touch point analysis and developing appropriate segmenting and targeting strategies tested through experimental campaigns. Anticipated results include theoretical contributions in the fields of data-based campaigns and managerial implications on the digital marketing strategies of destinations.

Keywords: Smart tourism destinations, Data-based marketing, Digital customer behaviour, Digital touch-point, Targeting strategies

1 Problem Definition
The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has had a fundamental impact on the tourism industry that results in tourism businesses being forced to transform their business models fundamentally (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, & Koo, 2015). Even though the tourism industry is known as being a forerunner in adopting new technologies and taking advantage of technological achievements (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2012), the increased complexity resulting from the numerous possibilities derived from technological advancements makes the implementation of ICT a major challenge of tourism destinations today. As an example, the Internet of Things (IoT) creates new possibilities for destinations as it enables technology being omnipresent and therefore helping collect massive amount of data, be it digital traces of customers or stakeholders. Using these different knowledge resources claim to remain largely unused (Fuchs, Höpken, & Lexhagen, 2014, p. 198). Embedding technologies and using the derived data for building destination knowledge therefore is one of the most relevant issues in practice. Be it the lack of human resources or the new value proposition processes (Neuhofer et al., 2012; Pike & Page, 2014; Gretzel, Sigala, et al., 2015), the tourism industry is increasingly facing issues related to the digital transformation.

The approach of Smart Tourism Destinations, a concept being derived from the Smart City initiative by the European Commission (Manville et al., 2014), perfectly represents the manifold challenges of tourism destinations by not only addressing the technological aspect, but also taking socially related issues into consideration (Boes, Buhalis, & Inversini, 2015). The authors state that tourism destinations become smart by ‘aligning the key dimensions leadership, social capital, innovation and human capital while using ICTs as the infrastructure to facilitate for co-creation/experiences for their visitors’ (Boes et al., 2015, p. 400). The smart tourism approach plays an important role in this problem definition, as the use of ICT as well as (big) data analytics play an essential role in ‘processing, modelling and visualizing data so that it can be used to inform operational decisions’ (Gretzel, Werthner, Koo, & Lamsfus, 2015, p. 560).
The implementation of smartness within a destination in the field of tourism needs further considerations from an organizational and managerial perspective, as the digitalization has impact on all levels of tourism management (Gretzel, Sigala, et al., 2015). This study addresses the research problem of contemporary challenges of tourism destinations such as the digital consumer behaviour as well as relevant touchpoints along all travel stages. Furthermore, the data-based approach for segmenting and targeting strategies is to be observed better, as the theory does not present valuable research upon this topic. Lastly, different kinds of online campaigns are to be tested, as there are no common key performance indicators of effective and successful data-based campaigns.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Smart Tourism Destinations

The term ‘destination’ is in this paper understood as a physical space, where a broad range of tourism products (e.g. support services) and experiences are offered under a common brand. It includes various stakeholders that are ‘linked horizontally, vertically or diagonally along the value-chain’ (UNWTO, 2002).

A smart tourism destination can be defined as a tourism destination using a state-of-the-art technology infrastructure in order to guarantee a sustainable development, to increase the visitor’s interaction, and therefore to increase the experience at the destination (Lopez de Avila, 2015). A Smart Destination implies furthermore an interconnecting platform amongst stakeholders with the goal to improve the resource management and to maximise the destination’s competitiveness as well as the customer satisfaction (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2013). This can be achieved through collecting and aggregating data that is derived from the physical infrastructure and other touchpoints, and that is transformed into business value-propositions with focus on ‘efficiency, sustainability and experience enrichment’ (Gretzel, et al., 2015, p. 181).

It can be concluded that smart tourism destinations focus on technological advancements as data in order to improve managerial processes in order to increase the customer’s experience and therefore the destination’s competitiveness. The main focus of smart tourism has been put on the on-site travel phase so far (Gretzel, Sigala, et al., 2015, p. 182). However, it is suggested by this proposal that the smart tourism approach may also be extended to the pre- & post-travel phases in terms of marketing processes.

2.2 Tourism Data Sources

ICT has enabled destination marketing organizations and its partners (e.g. service suppliers) to enhance their competitiveness by increasing their efficiency (Buhalis, 2000) and constantly adapting their business functions and processes. Possible data resources that can be used for marketing purposes are derived from the knowledge destination framework proposed as following:
2.3 Data Based Marketing

Data-driven marketing refers to marketing decisions that are derived from customer-based knowledge about the consumer behaviour (Toubia, 2015). Destinations therefore need to gain deep insights in how the digital tourist behaves during all travel stages. Becoming a smart destination therefore not only requires implementing a state-of-the-art ICT infrastructure that collects, integrates and exploits data, as in the context of smart cities (Koo, Gretzel, Hunter, & Chung, 2015), but also understanding the customer journey, the relevant touchpoints as well as other wants and needs. Digital customer behaviour has already been addressed in the intelligence-based destination management information system, where customer-based data (e.g. search, booking or feedback behaviour) are used for measuring performance (Fuchs et al., 2014, p. 201).

As technology has a major impact on the consumers, the process of value creation has changed fundamentally: consumers are no longer passively consuming experiences, but are actively engaging in the co-creation process of experiences. Understanding ICT as a facilitator, tourism organizations are able to extend their operation from physical to a “virtual experience co-creation space” (Neuhof er et al., 2012, p. 43). It therefore unlocks new potential in all travel stages, where all actors within a destination interact: physically, as well as virtually (Neuhofer et al., 2012). Therefore, to know how customers behave in the digital context (e.g. search or booking behaviour) by examining the digital touchpoints along the customer journey is crucial for effective marketing campaigns.

3 Conceptual Development

The ultimate aim of the research is to contribute theoretical knowledge in the field of data-based marketing campaigns as well as developing managerial implications on how to execute successful digital campaigns in the context of tourism destinations.

The digital customer journey along the travel stages therefore needs to be examined in order to gain knowledge about relevant touchpoints along the travel phases. Special focus is put on customer behaviour on the customer side. Furthermore, the digital segmenting and targeting strategies of destinations will be examined and evaluated. The aim of this first part is to understand the behaviour of the digital tourist along the
travel phases and to evaluate aligned segmenting and targeting strategies for each stage of the customer journey.

Furthermore, appropriate online marketing campaign types are developed. The aim of the campaign is to fully exploit the digital customer’s behaviour by addressing the right target groups, with the right content, through the right channels, at the right time. Data derived from the touchpoint analysis as well as from the segmenting and targeting strategies of the destinations build the basis for the planned campaigns.

As the author is involved in an applied research project with a mountain destination at the moment, where data-based digital marketing campaigns are developed, this research steps proposed will take place in the context of alpine destinations.

4 Proposed Methodology

Firstly, a touchpoint-analysis will be conducted in order to learn more about the digital customer behaviour. Therefore, data collection is planned be done through software tools analysing digital touchpoints. As a result, the digital customer journey is mapped out from the touchpoint analysis and summarized in persona profiles. Persona represent fictional characters representing real customer types that might choose the product (Lidwell, Holden, & Butler, 2010), or in this context choose the destination.

Based on the findings about the customer journey and the creation of persona, appropriate segmenting and targeting strategies are developed. Therefore, an extensive literature research about data-based segmenting and targeting strategies is conducted, which then will be complemented with qualitative research methods (e.g. focus group interviews with destination marketing’s representatives).

Following, different types of data-based marketing campaigns are created and tested in experiments. The goal of these experiments is to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaigns. Ultimate goal of this research methodology is to work out key drivers of successful online marketing campaigns as well as using the data as learnings for following campaigns.

5 Anticipated Results

The research is expected to contribute to theoretical findings, as well as to managerial implications. In terms of theoretical contribution, this study is about gaining new knowledge in the era of digital customer journey as well as the digital consumer behaviour. The digital customer journey is aimed to discover the new value creation processes through online marketing campaigns in the era of smart tourism, where technology is embedded for improving marketing campaigning of destinations in the future. Furthermore, the findings about the campaign testing will contribute to effective marketing campaign processes.

In terms of managerial implications, the study is aimed to develop hands-on implications in terms of data-based marketing campaigns for increasing a destination’s competitiveness in the future.

References

Technologies in Tourism (pp. 391–403).
Influence of online Consumer-generated Contents and e-WOM in Safari DMO’s online Marketing Strategies

Peter J. Mkumbo
Clemson University
pmkumbo@g.clemson.edu

Abstract
This research intends to evaluate the performance of Safari Destinations in marketing themselves in online platforms. It will specifically; investigate the online presence of Destination Tanzania; Analyse consumer generated contents about the destination in online platforms for the last decade; Contents developed by the DMO and its affiliates; will also evaluate visitor satisfaction, behavioural-intentions and motivation in online platforms post-trip; asses the influence of online consumer-generated contents in DMO’s marketing strategies, effectiveness and efficiency of the strategies in destination marketing in online platforms specifically websites and social media platforms. Depending on availability of resources it is expected to develop knowledge on safari tourism marketing metrics which will be important in safari marketing dashboards.

Keywords: Safari, Online Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Social Media, Destination Marketing

1 Problem Definition
ICT related studies in Safari Destinations (Sub-Saharan Destinations) have been largely ignored. It is not well known what kind of online information a safari consumer needs at different phases of their holidays (Pre-trip, on trip and post trip) when visiting these destinations. It is also true that many DMOs in safari destinations are using ICT to market destinations they manage, it is largely unknown how ICT improves their marketing strategies. While Safari Destinations are becoming increasingly popular around the world, very little is known about them, let alone the way ICT is being applied in marketing these destinations. While one would argue consumer behaviour might be the same across different destinations, any of such arguments is baseless unless supported by empirical studies. There is a clear gap or fragmentation, if you like, of literature and knowledge about online contents, marketing metrics and analytics in Safari Destinations.

While this research will seek to investigate the breadth of online contents related to Destination Tanzania it will attention will also be paid on tourism online marketing metrics and analytics in particular social media metrics. It will contribute on the framework of social media metrics developed by Peters et al., (2013) that calls for further research “on adequate organizational structures and processes that guide organizations in their change process toward seamless dialogue interfaces with social media. Metrics and dashboards are a start, but how can they successfully implement the organizational changes affecting all other aspects of marketing beyond brand communications?”

2 Literature Review
ICT advances has influenced changes in conditions for competition in marketplace and so it has affected the five forces in Porter’s model. Internet in particular has made it easier for consumers to virtually assess the products before they actually purchase. Internet has facilitated online payments and so it has lubricated the use of online credit cards in many destinations and markets. Advances in ICT have greatly improved efficiencies and effectiveness in tourism and hospitality industry (Liu, Pennington-Gray & Klemmer, 2015; Kim & Lee, 2015; Zhao, Wang, Guo & Law, 2015). Organizations that lag behind in adopting new advances in information technologies run the risk of being out competed in the businesses by rivals. Innovations in ICT technologies support interoperability, personalization and constant networking within and outside the industry.

Notable large volume of literature on ICT in tourism industry started just two decades ago (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Reviews in this area have been conducted by a number of authors like Frew (2000); O’Connor & Murphy (2004), Leung & Law (2007) and Buhalis & Law (2008).

Tourism being an information intense industry, it benefits significantly from the internet as the technologies enable rapid transmission of information in massive quantities within a fraction of time. The industry has been observed to lead in eCommerce applications (Reino, Frew & Mitsche, 2014; Werthner & Ricci, 2004). Internet makes easy accessibility of consumer choices in different packages online an improvement compared to older days where such choices could only be accessed physically in their immediate vicinity (Kim & Lee, 2015; Buhalis & Law, 2008). The availability of recommender systems enhances the easy accessibility of particular online searched information.

ICT advances has influenced many changes and will continue to be a leading force of change in the tourism industry (Fesenmaier, 2014). ICT has been observed to significantly influencing consumer behaviour in a broad spectrum of marketing across different sectors (Tobias & Wolfgang, 2010). It is clear that information technology plays a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour and is likely to change the current marketing model of informing, persuading and reminding to demonstrating, involving and empowering. Change in consumer behaviour has impact on the way suppliers market their services and products (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2015). Businesses and DMOs have moved most of their marketing strategies from offline to online platforms in a wide spectrum of channels (Peters et al., 2013). One could argue that consumers are increasingly becoming new invisible CEOs of organizations, strongly influencing marketing decisions in organizations and companies. As mentioned earlier, it is largely unknown, in particular with Safari Destinations, how online consumer-generated contents have influenced marketing strategies for Safari DMOs and whether any of such influence in the marketing strategies has resulted in positive results or not at all specifically in effectiveness and efficiencies. There are no even Safari online marketing benchmarks for which Safari DMOs could use them as reference points for online marketing.

3 Conceptual Development

This project will mainly be based on two group of theoretical paradigms, satisfaction theories and word of mouth theories. Several theories that explain the nature and the development of consumer’s satisfaction from various perspectives fall under Expectation Disconfirmation Paradigm. Satisfaction with a product/service is a concept of customer’s evaluation of post-purchase performance of the product/service Figure 1. It is essentially an experience as an outcome between
expectation in pre-purchase and post-purchase performance of the service/product. It located in the user’s mind and is different from observable behaviours such as product choice, complaining, and repurchase. Satisfaction commonly has thresholds at both a lower level, under fulfilment and an upper level, over-fulfilment. This means that a consumer’s satisfaction may drop if they “gets too much of a good thing”. Outcomes of satisfaction feelings may involve intention or decision to repurchase, word-of-mouth through various channels of communication and complaints (Hom, 2000).

A number of theoretical approaches have been used to explain the relationship between disconfirmation and dissatisfaction (Anderson, 1973). These theoretical approaches focus on the nature of the process of comparing the consumer’s post-usage evaluations and behaviour. The theory of assimilation states that the consumer makes a sort of cognitive comparison between the expectations regarding the product and the product’s perceived performance. If there is a discrepancy between expectations and the product’s perceived performance, the dissonance will not fail to appear (Festinger, 1957). Theory of contrast presents an alternative approach to the evaluation of post-usage process that was presented in assimilation theory, in that post-usage evaluations lead to results in opposite predictions for the effects of expectations on satisfaction (Hovland, Harvey & Sherif, 1957). The assimilation-contrast theory was suggested as another way of explaining the relationships between variables within the disconfirmation model. This theory suggests that satisfaction is a function of the gap between expected and perceived performance (Hovland, Harvey and Sherif, 1957). Theory of negativity suggests that any discrepancy of performance from expectations will disrupt the individual, producing ‘negative energy” Carlsmith and Aronson (1963). When the expectations are strongly sustained, the consumers will negatively answer any information (Peyton, Pitts & Kamery, 2003). Dissatisfaction will happen if the perceived performance falls beneath expectations, or if the perceived performance goes beyond the expectations (Anderson, 1973).

Engaging in world of mouth whether in online platforms or verbally is largely a function of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction among other variables.

4 Proposed Methodology

A mixed methods research approach is expected to be used. Qualitative approach will be used first where content analysis of online contents will be conducted. Results from content analysis, will inform the design and focus of the next phase of qualitative approach the in-depth interviews. DMO marketing officials will be interviewed to explore the depth of marketing decisions made by the DMO, justifications and internal evaluation of marketing effectiveness and efficiencies. Visitor surveys will form the
quantitative part of the research approach. The design and focus of survey will largely depend on the results of content analysis and in-depth interviews with DMO marketing officials. Although it is not yet decided how the survey will be but, among other things, it will focus on their motivation, satisfaction and any motives of sharing experiences in online platforms.

5 Anticipated Results

Results in this project are expected to add knowledge in the literature of ICT applications in tourism and travel industry in particular behaviour of consumers of safari destinations in online platforms. It will also help develop guidelines for online marketing strategies that could help DMOs in safari destinations to formulate informed and better online marketing strategies that are effective and efficiency for the sustainability of tourism in their destinations. Findings from this research will also be important in developing safari marketing dashboards.

References


Collective Destination Brand Image Formation through Agenda Setting Theory and Social Media Communication

Zeynep Pala Gedikoglu
Clemson University, USA
zgediko@clemson.edu

Abstract
Globally Social Media had impacted inter-personal and mass communication. Information shared through Social Media is becoming a source to alter perceptions such as tourism destination brand image. The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate how visual and textual Social Media communication illustrates what a destination image is. Tourism science has long been in search for understanding tourist’s behaviours. On the contrary, the approach of this study will be to explore destination brand images by analysing online social media public communication data. Methodology will be sequential mixed methods approach. The chosen methods to analyse data are qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The data will be extracted through Radian 6 software, which has been developed to achieve online data. The results of different descriptive statistics and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, will indicate that different websites, reflecting user-generated content, exert important influences and combine to form an information source construct.

Keywords: Social media, Brand image, Destination, Communication, Agenda setting

1 Problem Definition
Destination branding is important for all tourism destinations because it is intended to identify and differentiate one from the others. Destinations compete through the images held in the minds of potential tourists (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Destination branding is being applied around the world and most studies concentrate on tourists’ perceptions (Gras, 2008; Zehrer, 2007). While there is research on the development of branding destinations, there is little research done online on the process of brand image development concept. The aim of this study is to explore the process of development of a destination brand image on social media based on a case study of Turkey as the chosen tourism destination.

Scholars have explored the question of power redistribution, examining the influence of blogs in the media cycle or the dissolving of traditional media “gatekeepers” (Meraz, 2009). However, within the existing research of tourism destination image, very little empirical evidence exists about the drivers of destination image on Social Media. The purpose of having an exploratory approach to this study is to understand and deconstruct the formation of place image by an applied and experimental research. The study proposes to use qualitative and quantitative data mining through social media as it is focused on the factors, agents and characteristics that lead to change or creation of the non-stable realities of destination images.

While the literature recognized the recent impact of technology on tourism experiences, empirical theoretical exploration remains scarce about how communication online shapes perceptions. Agenda-setting research focuses on not just how important is an issue, but how the issue is framed and which issue attributes are emphasized (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993). In this research, Agenda
Setting Theory is used to develop codes about existing algorithms on the online communication data that will reveal destination brand images.

This research will incorporate a new conceptual approach to understand the destination brand image, which is social media communication. The assumption is that social media is constructing majority of the communication in public sphere. Mass media has been the source of tourist destination perceptions (Harrill & Peterson, 2012). However, as tourists become more spatial globally, representation of a place is being effected by the fast dominance of information sharing through texts in social media (Graham, Hogan, Straumann, & Medhat, 2014). Thus, the problem this research focuses on is that, social media is the new generation mass media (Hudson, Roth & Madden, 2015) and it is the new place to explore brand images.

2 Literature Review

Marketers and tourism professionals define a tourism destination as a geopolitical system with its own destination management organization. Sociologists and cultural geographers perceive a tourism destination as a socio-cultural construction. Some treat a destination as a set of experiences and others treat it as a set of cultural and symbolic meanings and contested ‘realities’ (Saarinen, 2004).

Destination image has a critical influence on travellers’ destination choice processes (Cai, 2002). In the absence of previous visits, destination images are formed mainly through induced agents (such as paid promotion, advertising, and information delivered by different tourism organizations (Gartner, 1993; Gunn, 1972). Both travel magazines and travel guidebooks represent publishers’ vision on the destination. (Liang, Soojin, Morrison & Lehto, 2009). However, these are the exemplar of images for the tourism product supplier. This research assumes that a destination image is created by visual, textual and intra-personal communication by the visitors before, during and after they travel. Tourists will share information through communicating with their networks. Social media is the only platform where people share information globally and through a net of networks. Since, tourism is a leisure experience subjective social realities experienced by tourists will develop the image of a destination.

Destination image is commonly recognized as an important aspect of successful tourism development and tourism destination marketing due to its effect on both push and pull factors of decision making process (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Destination image has been examined as a pull factor, because understanding how images are formed is critical to developing the pull potential of a destination (Gartner, 1994).

Traditionally, information gained from newspapers, and/or magazines or any kind of media agency are considered as pull factors. Communication channels such as broadcast media and print media were more recent tools, which marketers used to set an image for a destination. Traditional communication channels only provide unilateral exposure to travellers. According to the Agenda Setting Theory; traditional media tells public what they should be thinking about and the ideas and opinions they should inevitably be conceiving (Stephens, 2011). That is why traditionally the concept of destination image was well established among both tourism marketers and travellers (Pike, 2002).

Various contemporary scholars have documented the importance of the Web for the tourism industry (Buhalis & Egger, 2008). They have illustrated the need for developing and applying technological solutions for achieving strategic benefits from Web data. Social media has forever changed the way tourism is consumed as a service
product. Social Media marketing is the act of leveraging specific social media platforms (places where people connect and communicate) to promote a product or a service to increase sales (Kabani, 2013). However, currently social media is being used as a unilateral communication tool.

Agenda-setting theory describes the ability, extent and effect of the mass media to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda (Cohen, 1963). In other words, Agenda Setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the media. If an item is covered frequently and prominently the audience will regard the issue as more important. The agenda-setting effect is not the result of receiving one or a few messages but is due to the aggregate impact of a very large number of messages, each of which have a different content but all of which deal with the same general issue.

3 Conceptual Development

Despite the significance of destination branding in both academia and industry, literature on its conceptual development is limited. Previous studies argue that brand identity and brand image is critical ingredients for a successful destination brand (Cai, 2002). Identity is created by the sender whereas image is perceived by the receiver (Kapferer, 1997). Brand image can be defined as consumer perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer’s memory (Keller, 2008). Therefore, the information share through social media may be regarded as individual destination images.

Agenda Setting Theory looks at repetitions, sentiments and representations to understand the effects of mass media. In this research Agenda Setting Theory will be used to conceptualize a code list. Codes will be gathered through content analysis to define what texts may constitute as citations of brand images.

In the branding literature, brand associations are classified into three major categories: attributes, benefits, and attitudes (Keller, 1993, 1998). In other words, an attribute is what a consumer thinks the brand is or has to offer and what is involved with its purchase or consumption. The benefits that may occur are the personal value consumers associate with the brand attributes in the form of functional, symbolic, experiential attachments. That is, what consumers think the brand can do for them. Brand attitudes are consumers’ overall evaluations of the brand and are the basis for consumer behavior.

Tourism has been a primary part of gross domestic product for Turkey. Turkey is a good case study to explore brand image formation through social media communication because the area represents almost every type of tourism activity. As well, this area is never stable and the brand image as a destination is dependent on social and cultural changes.

4 Proposed Methodology

Based on the gaps in the literature review, the research questions that this study aims to answer are; what are the characteristics of social media users that post about a destination; such as age, gender, location? How does the characteristics relate to image formation? How does gender, age and spatiality of gatekeepers are related to image formation? The aim is not just to understand what tourists associate the
destination with. It is also to define a relationship between the characteristics of users and destination image formation. The purpose of this study is to advance agenda-setting theory as it relates to aggregate online communication behavior, while contributing to the debate on the future of media effects online. In sum, this study is looking for empirical evidence about the characteristics of agenda setters on social media.

The prolonged social media and public interest in exchanging information about tourism provides a unique setting for enhancing our understanding of online agenda setting in tourism studies. This study will use a sample of web sites based on rankings of social media sites (Curve, 2009;) and will examine content of the sites through Radian 6 data mining software. To answer research questions this study will use quantitative empirical approach. Data mining from Radian 6 software will provide secondary data that is going to be used. The research populations will be social media users posting about a certain tourism destination who post between pre-determined dates. The dates for data collection will be purposely selected due to technological limitations of collecting data via software Radian 6 for a specific destination. Specifically, the study will examine the temporal process in the relationship between communication content and volume on Social Media and in destination image formation.

The sampling for social media data mining will focus on tourism related sites. Image formation on the web becomes more composite with a large variety of information sources and channels (Choi et al., 2007). When choosing which social media platforms to analyse for this study, Twitter and Facebook and Blogs were selected because they have millions of users, a strong participation from companies and organizations, and differ widely in services, reach, and usage. Texts will be gathered to induce data to SPSS. The data will also represent major social media outlets in communication, and blogs (e.g., Lonely Planet, Travel Advisor). The aggregated data and then will be transferred to SPSS.

Agenda Setting Theory will be used to figure out codes. Agenda Setting Theory illustrates powerfully the influence of the mass media on telling people what to think and how to think about those issues. It looks at repetitions, sentiments, framing and representations. Thus the data will be analysed to create a code sheet, which will define codes and assign them to specific brand images. The quantitative analysis on SPSS will be prediction for identifying groups through Factor analysis and cluster analysis (two-step, K-means, hierarchical, multi-regression).

5 Anticipated Results

Some thematic conclusions related to tourist-generated content will be achieved in order to understand the general characteristic variables of that contribute to image formation. The assumption is that what are the underlying gatekeepers and their characteristics that lead to destination image formation in Social Media. The major anticipated result would be to achieve a multidimensional analysis of the information sources construct and its relevance for destination image formation.

Reality is a construct for a destination image through meaning making. Reality for a tourism destination is time and context bound and this research are directed on aspects of social reality. What is anticipated that multiple constructed realities exist within the social contexts that create them. Tourism destinations’ images are bound to the social context they are placed in which it provides experience to travellers. The
aim is understand existing tourism destination reality for the co-actors. This research will be a representative case to study Agenda Setting Theory and its subtle existence in public opinion formation in Social Media and divergence of public opinion form traditional branding tools.

The anticipated results will yield the weight that different information sources exert in defining the overall information source construct. This study adopts unlike prior research, the combined weight of various web platforms for determining the images of tourist destinations. Thus, in this study adds web platform factors to explain the image formation and thereby moves beyond the influences of traditional, offline sources of information. The results of different descriptive statistics and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, will indicate that different websites, reflecting user-generated content, exert important influences and combine to form an information source construct. These findings in turn should offer several managerial recommendations as well.

References


Proposing a strategic Roadmap to improve Effective Decision-making toward IT Adoption in Hotels, using Business Model Canvas

Mohsen Zamani
PhD Candidate at Department of Economics and Business Administration,
University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain
E-mail: mohsen.zamani101@alu.ulpgc.es

Abstract
Usually making decision for adopting new information technology (IT) applications is a challenging task for hoteliers, as they would like to ensure effectiveness of their investment. By taking advantage of “Business Model Canvas” (BMC) methodology, this study aims to propose a strategic roadmap to improve decision-making process for IT adoption in hotels. The BMC is a popular strategic management tool for developing business strategies. This study firstly designs a BMC for hotel business; secondly, examines the impact of IT applications on improving the hotel performance and finally, by using achieved results, proposes a roadmap.

Keywords: Information Technology adoption, competitiveness, Business Model Canvas, hotels

1 Problem Definition
In spite of the crucial importance of being innovative and developing new services, the awareness about how to achieve success is limited (Johne & Storey, 1998). Current economy urges hotels, alongside with other businesses, to use resources so as to maximize the efficiency and productivity in the production and delivery of services (Sullivan, 2003). If service firms such as hotels are to significantly improve their level of competitiveness, they need to acquire knowledge and strategies to adopt innovations that suits their conditions and actual needs (Jacob & Groizard, 2007; Cobanoglu et al. 2009; Martinez-Ros & Orfila-Sintes, 2009; Ottenbacher, Shaw & Lockwood, 2006). Among many forms of innovations and technologies to be used in hotels, IT applications are demonstrated to have high capacity to reduce the traditional factors of labour capital, materials and energy.

IT investment have notably increased over last decade (Law & Jogaratnam, 2005; Piccoli, 2008). Selecting and deploying suitable information technologies, which strategically meet the hotel’s requirements, is a complicated procedure and most of the time confusing for hoteliers. Lack of adequate IT competence and strategies regarding various technological solutions are one of the reasons has caused many hotel managers to have doubts about the value of investing in IT. In many cases, absence of strategies to choose suitable IT applications that address the investment to cover the hotel’s real needs led the adoption of IT applications to be not successful.

In order to ensure designing a reliable approach to adopt IT applications, on one hand, it is necessary to consider the impact of each IT application on overall performance of the hotel, such as enhancing customer experience, improving operations, generating more revenue and reducing costs (Huo, 1998; Siguaw, Enz, & Namasivayam, 2000;
Sweat & Hibbard, 1999). Similarly, according to BMC methodology (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010), the influences of new changes like introducing new IT applications on firm’s value creation, cost reduction and sales performance should be analysed. Hotels, as they are very customer-oriented business, constantly create values to satisfy their customers. Thus, assessing customer feedback and level of their satisfaction, as major indicator of hotel success on value creation, is inevitable (Cobanoglu, Berezina, Kasavana, & Erdem, 2011; Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Ladhari, 2009; Li, Ye, & Law, 2013; Oh, 1999). Therefor, in this study, customer satisfaction, labour productivity, operational cost reduction and sales performance will be considered as major indicators to reveal the impact of adopted IT applications on hotel performance.

On the other hand, it is essential to assess each hotel’s performance to spot the areas of weakness, as well as its characteristics such as service level, size, rating, clientele and long-term visions. Hence, proposing a strategic framework to take these factors into the account and facilitate the process of IT adoption would be valuable.

2 Literature Review

New global provisions compel the tourism industry to transform and look for novel organizational and decision-making values as well as ways of improving quality, customization, innovation, flexibility and environmental sustainability. According to Poon (1993), a new tourism is emerging, driven by new consumers, new technologies, new production practices, new management techniques, and changes in the industry’s frame conditions. New service products are crucial to the growth and long lasting of an entity (De Brentani & Cooper, 1992).

Plenty of studies have found a positive relationship between technological investment and organizational performance (Byrd & Turner, 2001; Huo, 1998; Powell & Dent-Micalef, 1997; Rai, Patnayakuni, & Patnayakuni, 1997), and the essential role of information technologies in refining customer service (Sweat & Hibbard, 1999) to enhance hotel competitiveness (Namasivayam, Enz, & Siguaw, 2000; Olsen, 2000). Use of IT can place knowledge and information at the core of a hospitality organization’s competitive profile.

Many hotels have increased their investment in technological developments to increase level of their hotel’s competitiveness, such as improving operational efficiency, labour productivity, service quality, customer satisfaction and sustainability. Over the last few years, hospitality industry has experienced a variety of technologies being deployed. According to Siguaw, et al. (2000) new innovations and technological advancements have to continue to emerge in order to see the growth in lodging sector. Frew, (2000) emphasized that technology will bring about a major revolution in the hospitality industry. Considering rapid lodging sector transformation and constantly increasing customer expectations, as well as intensive competitive market, effective implementation of service innovation and technological advancement are vital to keep or increase hotel’s competitiveness (Ham, Gon Kim, & Jeong, 2005; Kim, Lee, & Law, 2008; Lam, Cho, & Qu, 2007; Ottenbacher et al., 2006).

Everyday technological advancements reshape the travel industry (Buhalis, 1998). Many organizations constantly take advantage of these flexible and easily upgradable ITs to maximize their profit, but seems selecting, employment and updating of the information technologies in hospitality industry lags behind the other industries Gamble (1988). Unfortunately, many empirical findings indicated that hotel decision makers are not fully aware of the importance of IT for the purpose of developing
hotel’s competitiveness, therefore, caused such a slow response to technological adoption (Law & Jogaratnam, 2005). Even though there are positive effects and benefits, there are barriers of external factors influencing the acceptance of technology adoption (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992). Majority of hotel managers strongly agreed with the fact that technology has a positive impact on the efficiency of the organization and productivity of the employees (Cobanoglu, Demirer, Kepeci, & Sipahioglu, 2006; Siguaw et al., 2000). However, there were some barriers to adopting IT applications in their hotels. Most hotel managers did not receive adequate training in IT; for this reason, their technical knowledge is fairly limited (Borsenik, 1993). Lack of sufficient knowledge about benefits of IT, inevitably causes them to be reluctant to accept implementation of new technologies (Law, Leung, & Buhalis, 2009), they may fear that these technologies might affect their role of providing personalized services to hotel guests (Law & Jogaratnam, 2005). Other factors that would discourage hotel decision makers to delay or not to adopt information technologies are the cost and lack of appropriate strategies. However, they were many cases that the IT did not help hotels to enhance their performance or competitiveness as it was expected. According to a study conducted by Roach (1991), even though service industries were investing more on IT, but productivity levels happened to be less than other industries. Many hotels have spent heavily on adopting information systems but they have not always enhanced productivity from all those expenditures (David, Grabski, & Kasavana, 1996). Sometimes economical benefits of IT adoption in hotel are not measurable (Ham et al., 2005). Knowing about this and the risks associated with investment on technologies, which are not guaranteed to improve the performances, makes hotel managers to be cautious and slow about IT adoption.

In order to ensure successful IT adoption, verity of factors such as targeted customer segment, hotel’s service level, size of the hotel, the hotel brand affiliation and hotel type should be considered (J. A. Siguaw, C. A. Enz, & K. Namasivayam, 2000). As well, having reliable strategic plan to examine feasibility of adopting these technologies is crucial (Beritelli & Schuppisser, 2006). Some studies attempted to propose models to show investment in IT can lead to competitive advantage (Bilgihan, Okumus, Nusair, & Kwun, 2011; Chathoth, 2007; Sigala, Airey, Jones, & Lockwood, 2004). However, yet existing literature on this topic do not provide comprehensive practical framework to assist hoteliers in process of decision-making for IT adoption.

3 Conceptual Development

This study proposes a framework to improve the effective decision-making toward adopting information technologies in hotels. In this regard, it is necessary to assess effectiveness of IT applications in enhancing the hotel performance, including the effectiveness of each of them on improving creation of values, reducing costs and generating revenue. This study focuses on relationship between IT applications (as independent variables) and the hotel performance indicators (as dependent variables). And as Ham et al. (2005) in their study recommended, hotel characteristics such as geographic, service level, size, rating, affiliation and clientele as independent variable will be considered.

4 Proposed Methodology
The basic methodology to be applied in this research involves the Business Model Ontology (BMO). It includes the definition of business models as a basic axis for the design and strategy formation. The general theoretical model that has great acceptance in the literature, proposed by Osterwalder (2004). The BMC (which is the result of BMO) is a comprehensive business model template that aims to be useful in the preparation of business models, strategic maps or business strategies. It is a foundation for describing and representing subsequent concepts. It has been tested around the world and is already used in organizations such as IBM, Ericsson and Deloitte. Popularity, comprehensiveness and easy to understand nature of BMC led the author to choose it for developing the strategic framework in this study.

Firstly, in order to understand the hotel’s business model and to design a BMC for hotel business, an extensive literature reviews on business model canvas and hotel organization will be undertaken. Figure 1, shows an incomplete version of proposed BMC for hotels.

Secondly, in order to investigate the effectiveness of the IT applications on hotel performance, from the review of academic and professional literature, a list of available information technologies for the hotels will be created. Then, a quantitative analysis through administering questionnaires will be conducted. Questionnaires will be sent to 1000 four and five stars urban hotel managers located in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Madrid, Berlin, Rome, Milan and Munich, which include almost all four and five stars hotels in thses cities. The questionnaires ought to investigate the effectiveness (x) of the IT applications on the labour productivity, sales, costs and customer satisfaction. Since, budget and economy segment have invested in fewer IT strategies compare to upscale hotels, therefore, four and five stars hotel targeted for this study. (1 ≤ x ≤ 5, 1=Not at all effective, 2=Not so effective, 3=Somewhat effective, 4=Very effective, 5=Extremely effective)
Finally, by considering the results of analysis on the effectiveness of each IT application on improving the hotels performance, a strategic roadmap will be created. This strategic roadmap takes the result of performed analysis as well as the current performance of the hotels to determine suitable IT applications for a specific hotel.

![The Business Model Canvas](image)

**Figure 2.** Example of illustration of IT application’s effectiveness using BMC

5 Anticipated Results

The outcome of the study will be a strategic framework/roadmap that assists upscale hotel managers for selection and deployment of the IT applications in their hotels. The roadmap would recommend hoteliers to direct their investments on selecting IT applications that have been demonstrated are able to achieve desired improvements in their hotels, which suggests level ups in hotel performance.

The roadmap includes a Business Model Canvas consist of top beneficial technologies to be used in upscale hotels regarding to their conditions and needs. Each of these technologies will be ranked according to their effectiveness and their impact on hotel’s value creation, cost reduction and revenue generation. The final roadmap will act as a problem solving tool or technological development guidance for upscale hotel decision makers. Hoteliers will be able to direct their investment to deploy most suitable information technologies, which would be most effective to improve their hotel’s competitiveness. They can take advantage of the roadmap to address their current and future needs, such as enhancing revenue generation, decreasing operational costs and improving guest experience. By using the roadmap they will be able to trade-off between the sizes of their assigned budget and best IT application they can afford.

References


Social Media Technology Affordances for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Tourism Industry

Ping Wang
Informaiton systems science, Turku School of Economics, University of Turku, 20500, Turku, Finland
ping.wang@utu.fi

Abstract
Social media technology developed over the recent decade has fundamentally transformed business and the way we communicate. The objective of this research is to give strategic insight into how social media technology affordance can be leveraged by enterprises in tourism industry from value co-creation lens. The research logic and a conceptual framework are presented. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research method will be adopted. Expected results will contribute to understand how social media can be leveraged to enhance the firm’s value co-creation capability, and offer deeper understanding of the factors attracting participation and sustain customer engagement with social media in the value co-creation process.

Keywords: Social media, Technology affordances. Value co-creation, e-tourism

1 Problem Definition
The popularity and importance of social media developed over the recent decade has fundamentally changed the way we communicate, collaborate, and interact. Social media (SM), which enables the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC), is creating a new world of possibilities and challenges for all aspects of enterprises, customers and other stakeholders (Aral et al., 2013). Social media provides the opportunity for consumers to engage in companies co-creation process (Di Gangi and Wasko, 2009, Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004b). However, a comprehensive social media strategy for SMEs is still missing. The practical implementation of SM in organizations is merely aimed at becoming part of the SM
stream rather than with a clear idea about the benefits and challenges coming with it (Lattemann et al., 2014).

The premier object of this research is to give strategic insight into how social media technology affordance can be leveraged by enterprises in tourism industry from value co-creation lens; and to provide deeper understanding of the factors attracting participation and sustain customer engagement in the value co-creation process through social media platforms. The research is contextualized in the tourism industry in that: Firstly, tourism has become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world, accounting for 9% of world GDP (UNWTO, 2014). Secondly, as an information-intensive industry and with the nature of intangible and experiential, tourism is deeply influenced by information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially social media applications nowadays (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014, Korstanje, 2014, Chung and Koo, 2015).

Despite the popularity of social media among individual and business use, the affordances of social media and their impact on the collaboration and communication enabled by social media are still under investigated. With an initial effort to bridge the existing knowledge gap in the literature, the current study is focusing on the following research questions: RQ1. How social media technology affordances can be used for business value co-creation in the context of online tourism? RQ2. How to engage customers in value co-creation activities via social media? 2.1 What are the factors motivate customers’ engagement in value co-creation process? 2.2 What are the factors influencing customers’ satisfaction of co-creation experience through social media platforms?

2 Literature Review

With instinct properties, the problems in social media adoption have attracted lots of concentration from both academic and practical world in recent years. Some scholars focused on exploring the practical social media technology application in enterprises. Enterprises can take advantage of the adoption of social media tools to improve the communication and cooperation with stakeholders, i.e. customers, suppliers, and partners etc. (Trainor et al., 2014). Social media can also be used for the management of corporate reputation (Dijkmans et al., 2015), brand and customer loyalty management (Smith et al., 2012, Laroche et al., 2013), and especially for marketing, which generates the concept of ‘social commerce’ (Berthon et al., 2012, Huang and Benyoucef, 2013).

Value co-creation via social media. Certain studies suggested that social media technologies can facilitate communication practice that differs from the traditional computer-mediated communication (see Steinbüser et al., 2011). Equipped with innovative information and communication technologies, customers now seek to exercise their influence in every part of the business system and want to interact with companies and thereby ‘co-create’ value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004a). Many companies and online retailers use social media tools to support the customer co-creation practice to improve customer co-creation experience (Yan, 2013, Dijkmans et al., 2015). Researchers also explored the antecedents motivating customers to participate voluntarily in value co-creation activities in virtual customer environments (VCE) (e.g. Nambisan and Baron, 2009, Halale et al., 2015).

Social media in Tourism and hospitality. While realized the opportunities and challenges taken by social media, social media phenomenon has attracted academic concentration from both tourism and hospitality and information systems (IS). Researchers from tourism explored the social media influence in tourism and
hospitality industry. For instance, those from both consumers’ perspective discussed social media’s influence during travellers’ whole travel process (Hudson and Thal, 2013, Munar and Jacobsen, 2014, Kang and Schuett, 2013). The others’ from suppliers’ perspectives explored the social media application in promotion, product distribution, and communication etc. (Leung et al., 2013, Hays et al., 2013, Dijkmans et al., 2015).

Social media in Information Systems research. Meanwhile, scholars from the discipline of information systems (IS) tried to investigate social media technology from a plurality of perspectives. Some of them from the technology architecture perspective, i.e. viewing social media per se as a technology platform, and explored the development of social networks in technology platforms (Gonzalez-Bailon et al., 2010, Chen et al., 2011). Kietzmann et al. (2011) presented social media framework using seven functional building blocks consisting of identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups, and explained the implications of each block for social media engagement in firms, and suggested strategies for monitoring, understanding and responding to different social media activities. On the other hand, lots of concentration has been attracted on the impact of social media on individuals or organizations adapting theories from psychology or social psychology or sociological, for instance, the impact of social media on users’ attitudes, trust, and knowledge sharing behavior (Beck et al., 2014, Claussen et al., 2013, Leonardi, 2014), and the impact of social media on organization’s performance (Busquets, 2010, Kanawattanachai and Yoo, 2007, Subramaniam et al., 2013).

3 Conceptual Development

In this study, the social media technology is explored from the technology affordance perspective. The notion of affordance is formulated by perceptual psychologist Gibson (Gibson, 1978), and later scholars adapt this concept for better design (Gaver, 1996), and there are also researchers adopt affordance in exploring the dynamics of technological occasioned social change (Majchrzak and Markus, 2012, Treem and Leonardi, 2012). Technology affordance refers “to an action potential, that is, to what an individual or organization with a particular purpose can do with a technology or information system” (Majchrzak and Markus, 2012). Affordance focuses on the intersection of two entities given their respective characteristics (Cabiddu et al., 2014). Researchers have increasingly referred to the technology affordance perspective to explore information technology and social media adoption in organizations (Leonardi et al., 2013, Majchrzak et al., 2013, Evans et al., 2014). To conceptualize and deeper understand the potential of social media technology for value co-creation, this research is theoretically based on technology affordance and the most appreciated value co-creation DART model comprised of building blocks co-creation interactions proposed by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004c). Thus the research logic is:

![Figure 1: Research logic](image)

This research is based on theories from multidiscipline. Stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) from environmental psychology proposed by (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) was selected as a general theoretical foundation to explain the Internet-based interactive communication through social media. For travellers, the virtual consume
environment provided by social media platforms is the environment stimuli for customer value co-creation response. Technology affordances and value co-creation are the theoretical foundation in the first stage. The identified affordances of social media will mapped to the co-creation interactions during the explanatory exploration stage to answer RQ1. “How social media technology affordances can be used for business value co-creation in the context of online tourism?”

With the objective to answer the RQ2. “How to attract participation and sustain customer engagement in value co-creation process via social media?” The motivation for customer participation should be studied. Thus, the media use theory Uses and Gratifications (U&G) framework is also referred to as a theoretical foundation. The perceived gratification gained in the virtual environment act as mediating role between the virtual environment and customer’s value co-creation behavior. The specific gratifications depend on the context (Stafford et al., 2004). In this research, electronic tourism is settled as research context. Thus, the four types of gratifications can be interpreted as follows.

**Cognitive gratification** reflects travel products related information transparency, that is, tourists have better knowledge about travel related products, e.g. destination, hotel etc. In the electronic tourism environment, social media tools and applications enable collective knowledge on the travel product which is generated and shared through customer interactions.

The social context in electronic tourism, social context is defined by the customers and members from travel e-service providers. **Social integrative gratification** is derived from the social and relational ties developed among the participating entities in social media platforms. This social relationship provide customer with enhanced sense of social identity or belongingness.

Personal integrative gratification relate to the benefits of reputation or status and the achievement of self-efficacy. By contributing to the online travel community, like sharing travel experience or generate online reviews for hotels, customers can enhance their virtual reputation among peer customers as well as service providers (Harhoff et al., 2003).

Participation in the virtual tourism community might also be interesting and pleasurable experience for tourists. Tourists can communicate with others through social media platforms about their travel experience. As proved in the studies on brand communities, customers derive considerable pleasure from conversing with one another about the product (Muniz Jr and O’guinn, 2001). In addition, influencing other tourists or even travel service providers by generate content on social media platforms could also be a source of hedonic gratification.

The preliminary research framework is theoretically based on these selected theories. Information adoption and co-creation participation behaviours are the dependent variables. Four control variables are listed for moderation effect analysis. See Figure2.
4 Proposed Methodology

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used (see Table 1). To answer the first research question, an in-depth and overall investigation on how social media affordances can be applied to value co-creation is needed. Therefore, case study method is used to answer research question 1 as it is proved to be suitable to answer “how” or “why” questions, and especially when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2013). Online travel agency which is actively using social media technology will be our case company.

Survey research method will be used to study what are the factors influencing customer participation and engagement behavior in value co-creation process via social media. To answer Research Question 2: “How to attract participation and sustain customer engagement in value co-creation process via social media?” two sub-questions are posed in this research, as listed in Table 1. According to (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993), survey research is especially well-suited for answering questions about what, how much and how many. Newsted et al. (1998) indicated that survey research can be used to predict behavior, and permit theoretical propositions to be tested in an objective fashion, and help confirm and quantify the findings of qualitative research. The expected respondents will be the customers of our case company, and those who participated in the co-creation activities organized by travel firms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Questions to be solved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative research</td>
<td><strong>RQ1.</strong> How social media technology affordances can be used for business value co-creation in the context of online tourism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative research</td>
<td><strong>RQ2.</strong> How to engage customers in value co-creation activities via social media?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1 What are the factors motivate customers’ engagement in value co-creation process?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Research Framework
2.2 What are the factors influencing customers’ satisfaction of co-creation experience through social media platforms?

5 Anticipated Results

Possible results

a) to give strategic insight into how social media can be leveraged by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enhance the value co-creation capability;

b) to provide deeper understanding of the factors attracting participation and sustain customer engagement in the value co-creation process through social media platforms;

c) to contribute theoretically to adopt Social Technologies for innovative service.

Theoretical contribution Theorizing social media as a communication technology is an important concern for IS research. The advent of social media technologies has altered the traditional persuasion communication between companies and customers by enabling a high degree of two-way dialogue, as well as by providing a mechanism for customers to collaborate among themselves. This study will contribute to the literatures aiming at leveraging IS/IT in value co-creation experience. This information technology-enabled phenomenon changes the nature of traditional relationships in an organizational context, a transformation that organizations must address in order to fully compete with rivals in an era of widespread social media communication.

Practical contribution This study will make great sense in understanding the unique characteristics of social technology and their application in organizations especially in the context of tourism industry. For companies, though they show positive attitude towards social media, the way how they are different from pre-existing computer mediated communication technologies. This study will propose an in-depth understanding of how social media technology can be used to enhance their value co-creation capability. What’s more, as the current study is conducted in the context of small and medium-sized enterprises, the research outcome will also help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to achieve competitive advantage by solving the insufficient IT/IS knowledge within the organization regarding the value co-creation experience with customers.

Additionally, understanding the factors influencing customer’s value co-creation behavior on social media platforms will contribute practically to organizations who want to take advantage of social media. The results will give deeper insights into how social media can be leveraged by SMEs. What’s more, this study will identify the distinctive characters of social media, and offer strategic guidance for tourism companies that want to take advantage of social media for the new value creation space.
References


Lattemann, C., Pollock, A. & Beinhold, F. (2014). Drivers and Obviations for using Social Media in companies–Insights from an online-survey on Firms in German-speaking Countries.


The Diffusion of New Technology amongst Small-and-Medium-Sized Hotels (SMHs) in Malaysia

Faizal Ayob
School of Business
Western Sydney University, Australia
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith NSW 2751, Australia
F.Ayob@westernsydney.edu.au

Abstract
This study aims to explore the adoption and implementation of new technology amongst SMHs in Malaysia. The Multiple-case study will be employed as a research methodology and six SMHs have been selected. The findings will benefit the Malaysian hotel industry by providing critical information to SMHs to decide whether they should strategically invest to adopt and implement the new technology. The study, thus makes a contribution to the theory development and practices within the diffusion of technology and provide the future research directions.

Keywords: Diffusion, New Technology, Small-and-Medium-Sized Hotels (SMHs), Malaysian Hotel Industry.

1 Problem Definition
The impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) give competitive advantages to all businesses including the hotel industry. Wymer & Regan (2013) urge that despite the potential benefits of adoption and implement of technology by SMHs has been slow, most of the large and chain hotels have already adopted and implemented technology in their operations, but in SMHs there is a growing trend to adopt and implement new technology since identifying barriers to entry. The impact and importance of technology in the hotel industry has had solid strategic implications for industry leaders. Thus, SMHs in Malaysia should be adopting and implementing new technology since it will have a significant impact on hotel performance. To understand the diffusion of new technology amongst SMHs in Malaysia, this study addresses three issues: (1) what are the factors influencing hotel owners and managers of SMHs to adopt and implement new technology? (2) What are the current stages of diffusion of new technology amongst SMHs in Malaysia? (3) How the diffusion of new technology will affect hotel performance amongst SMHs in Malaysia?

2 Literature Review
2.1 Overview of Small-and-Medium-Sized-Hotels (SMHs) in Malaysia
In the Malaysian hotel industry, SMHs have been defined as hotels with ratings three stars and below. The hotel industry in Malaysia is expecting better business for one star, two star and three star hotels as tourists are expected to downgrade themselves to lower star and cheaper hotels (Jaafar & Zaleha 2011). SMHs are often located in peripheral regions, where the technology revolution is limited and slow compared to the urban area. Hence, the perceived barriers to an effective use of the technology are likely to be even higher peripheral than for urban SMHs (Anckar & Walden 2001). SMHs are under pressure to continue to perform well or even survive as the world’s largest hotel groups consolidate and benefit from economies of scale, scope and concentrated resources for acquiring the new technology and expertise in order to
build strong brands and more sophisticated and demanding customers (Sonja & Frédéric 2006).

2.2 Trends and New Technology in Small-and-Medium-Sized-Hotels (SMHs)

According to the research by 4Hoteliers the potential of technology has no boundaries (May, J. 2014). The proliferation of mobile devices in the enterprise was identified as the top technology trend that will have an impact on corporate competitiveness, according to a recent survey of 400 business and IT executives by IBM (2013). The rapid development of mobile technologies has made it possible to deliver content, transfer data, and make payment on cell phones, PDAs, wireless Internet-enabled laptops, and other mobile devices (Wang, S., & Cheung, W 2004). Mobile Hotel Reservation (MHR) is being offered especially in large chain hotels to stay competitive and increase their revenue. MHR is a location based online distribution information system that is designed to provide hotel reservation support for portable devices such as iPhone and Android (Wang, H. Y., & Wang, S. H. 2010). At least, 65 percent of hotel reservations are made from smartphones and it is very important for hotels to have mobile friendly applications and cloud-based systems that can be easily updated in real time (Mo Kwon, J. et. al.2013). Meanwhile, social networks are reaching into every facet of modern existence. As social media is playing an increasingly important role to all businesses (Medina, I. G., & Pereira, P. A. C. 2012) including the hotel industry (Sigala, M. et.al. 2012). Social media marketing has changed the way for hotel practitioners to promote their facilities to customers (Leung, D. et. al. 2013). Although it has only been in existence for a short while, social media is a phenomenon that is evolving into an important part of all businesses’ marketing and client base development strategies. SMHs in Malaysia should know how to rightly use social media marketing since the increasing use of social media in the hotel industry has resulted in electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) reviews having a strong influence in consumer decision-making (Blal & Sturman, 2014).

2.3 Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory

Rogers (2003) describes the diffusion as the innovation adoption and implementation processes at both the individual and organisational levels. Adoption refers to acquiring the innovation and developing capabilities for using the innovation. Adoption stage research often investigates factors related to the adoption decision (Fichman, 2000). After adoption, implementation relates to innovation use and organizational performance. In this study, the new technology implementation may have an affect on hotel performance amongst SMHs in Malaysia.

3 Proposed Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 will be used in this study to examine the diffusion of new technology amongst SMHs in Malaysia. Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory by Rogers (2003) and the Technological Organizational (TOE) Framework by Tornatzky & Fleischer (1990) had been adopted for this study. An earlier study by (Hashim, N.H., et.al. 2010) investigated on the website and email adoption in Malaysian Hotels. The results showed the large, high rated and affiliated hotels had a higher email and website presence and adopted these technologies significantly earlier than did the small, low rated and non-affiliated hotels.
Thus, this study will investigate whether the SMHs’ characteristics such as the size, the ownership structure, the star rating and the locations will influence the diffusion of the new technology amongst SMHs in Malaysia. Furthermore, the Internet technologies have been shown to have a positive effect on hotel performance, perhaps via improved marketing and distribution. An analysis of 147 Valaisan hotels’ monthly revenue between 1992 and 2003 indicated that technology adoption related positively to a performance indicator. The revenue of the hotel was higher after the adoption than before and hotels with no web presence showed a negative trend in revenues (Scaglione, M. et al., 2009). Sigala, M (2003) had studied on the effects of technology towards three star hotels in the UK and the findings provided useful suggestions for sales productivity and revenue enhancing ICT applications and configurations. Information technology will be able to meet customer expectations from reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy perspectives, which will create guest satisfaction (Chathoth, P. K. 2007). A study conducted by Kim, T (2008) summarized that Information technology (IT) is an important strategic asset for hospitality organisations. The diffusion of new technology will allow for accomplishment of more work for the same effort, hence greater employee productivity.

**Figure 1**: A proposed Conceptual Framework of The Diffusion of New Technology amongst (SMHs) in Malaysia

4 Proposed Methodology
This study follows a case study approach with the aim of exploring the diffusion of new technology amongst SMHs in Malaysia. Multiple case studies will be conducted to provide a description of how SMHs in Malaysia are dealing with diffusion of new technology. Selecting a large number of respondents may not be preferable in qualitative case study research, given its traditional focus on information-rich cases (Neuman 2006). The selection of cases should be regarded as multiple experiments rather than multiple respondents (Yin 2014). Multiple results from multiple cases not only facilitate the building up of the logical conclusions from a research, but also help to generalize the research outcomes. Literal replication will be used in selecting the case study sites to allow cross-case comparison and strengthen the research findings by increasing the external validity of the study. According to Perry (1998), the selection of cases in qualitative research is done on the basis of purpose, information richness and replication logic rather than on representation of the population (Stake 1995). This study used six cases drawn from ownership structure, star rating and location. Semi structured face-to-face interviews are the first means of obtaining data from SMHs. Two or three persons, usually SMHs owners or managers and other key informants who have knowledge about IT and technology will be participating in this study. Through visitation of the firms sampled, the study will make observations to cross-examine the reality of adoption and implementation of new technology amongst SMHs. Triangulation will be employed in this study to strengthen the construct validity of a case study from multiple sources of evidence essentially providing multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Yin 2014).

Table 1: Purposive Sampling for Multiple Case Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Ownership Structure</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Star Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Independent Hotel/Owner or Family Operated</td>
<td>Tourist Attraction - Island (Langkawi)</td>
<td>2 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Chain Hotel/Management Contract</td>
<td>City (Kuala Lumpur)</td>
<td>3 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Independent Hotel/Owner or Family Operated</td>
<td>Regional (Kuala Terengganu)</td>
<td>2 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Chain Hotel/Management Contract</td>
<td>Tourist Attraction - Island (Langkawi)</td>
<td>3 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Independent Hotel/Owner or Family Operated</td>
<td>Tourist Attraction - Ecotourism (Sabah)</td>
<td>3 star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Independent Hotel/Owner or Family Operated</td>
<td>City (Kuala Lumpur)</td>
<td>2 star</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Anticipated Results

This study is to examine simultaneously the diffusion of new technology amongst SMHs in both the adoption and implementation stages. Most studies investigate the adoption and innovation, such as hotel websites and e-mail adoption, without considering diffusion stages. This study also contributes to the diffusion of technology research in developing countries such as Malaysia.

6 Expected Outcome, Contribution and Future Research

The major contribution of this study comes from the proposed conceptual framework of the diffusion of new technology amongst SMHs in Malaysia. Besides, adopted DOI
Theory and TOE Framework, this study added SMHs Characteristic as new factors influencing the new technology adoption amongst SMHs in Malaysia. In addition, diffusion studies should investigate the successful innovation implementation. This study examines the effects of new technology implementation on hotel performance amongst SMHs in Malaysia. Since this study is only based on multiple case study, the results do not extend to others types of SMHs such as boutique hotels or budget hotels or the hotels that have been rated as orchid rating by the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH). Future research should broaden the sampling by conduct a survey analysis across SMHs in Malaysia so that it can possibly help generalize the findings.
References


E-Distribution Channels as Instruments of Hotel Performance: A Case of European Business Perspective

Miha Bratec
Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana.
miha.bratec@ef.uni-lj.si

Abstract
The advert of Internet brought a new era to hotel rooms distribution. The different sorts of intermediaries such as online travel agents (OTAs), the hotel's own website (brand.com) and recent phenomena of flash-sale websites all compete for the same client and it is the hotel management’s duty to understand the channel conflict, react upon mediating it and manage the e-channels in a way that results in an increased hotel performance. The thesis explores the e-distribution channels and links them to hotel performance.

Keywords: ICT adoption, e-marketing, Distribution channels, Revenue management, Hotel performance.

1 Problem Definition

The quick development of technology and rapid use of Internet has shifted the ways how hotels are positioning & promoting themselves (Law, Buhalis, & Cobanoglu, 2014). As a matter of fact, effective e-marketing and revenue management are needed in order to successfully generate the online sales volume, as this is a rapidly growing contributor to the total sales volume (Jiang, 2014).

Indeed, online sales nowadays globally already account for 57% of total sales (Bui, Jeng, & Lin, 2015). Thus the successful revenue management practice and consequential performance of hotels in the near future will largely depend on:
- the efficient investment into and the use of ICT (Hua, Morosan, & DeFranco, 2015)
- a knowledge-based – currently still mostly intuitive – approach to strategically manage the different online distribution channels (Zhao, Wang, Guo, & Law, 2015; Wang, Law, Guillet, Hung, & Fong, 2015), and
- seeking the optimal balance between the distribution channels used.

Only a successful adoption of all three factors mentioned above is logically deemed to yield improved profit margins, increased RevPAR (Revenue Per Available Room) and consequentially maximized GOPPAR (Gross Operating Profit Per Available Room) for hotel operators (Assaf, Josiassen, Mattila, & Cvelbar, 2015).

The proposed doctoral thesis, currently at an early proposal development stage, is rooted in action research approach based on the author’s past practical experience as an e-commerce hospitality professional; it adopts practitioners’ perspective trying to find answers on relevant business dilemmas by linking the developing disciplines of e-marketing, ICT-adoption, revenue management with the more traditional academic firm performance measurement literature.

Lastly, according to Leung et al. (2015), Internet marketing research needs more theory development, including the development of ground-breaking multi-
disciplinary models aimed at further scientific inquiry. Thus, the main aim of the thesis is to explore ways and propose a conceptual model in which hotels could maximize their performance by using different e-distribution channels. Within the process, a special emphasis will be put on the currently growing phenomenon of flash sale websites, which remain largely under-researched from the hotel business performance perspective.

2 Literature Review

As Egger & Buhalis (2008) state, eTourism is still a very fragmented discipline and plenty of concepts still need to be linked and explained. Further, the studies dealing with hotel e-distribution mostly come from American or Asian scholars and thus a European perspective on the trends in hotel e-distribution would be most welcome. Also, the literature that intersects marketing and ICT is still very scarce in the tourism and hospitality context (Leung et al, 2015), as are the studies dealing with and examining the OTAs as intermediaries in hotel e-distribution space.

Undoubtedly, recent developments such as the advent of social media and the rise of OTAs are now challenging the industry (Inversini & Masiero, 2014), as is the rapid growth of flash sale websites following the global crisis.

Anderson (2009) figured out that the benefit of being listed on OTAs not only increases a hotel's booking volume and ADR, but also positively affects the performance of the channels other than the OTA in question; this is created as a consequence of the OTA-listing and described as the billboard effect. Also it is clear that the OTAs-generated user reviews generate price premiums aka higher ADR for listed hotels with good reputations (Yacouel & Fleischer, 2012).

OTAs which emerged in the mid-90s (e.g. Expedia, Booking.com, HRS), play a crucial role in e-distribution. Morosan & Jeong (2008) define them as third-party companies that have become increasingly more powerful than hotels in terms of Internet readiness and economic force, putting hotels in the disadvantaged position of selling a large portion of their inventory through third-party intermediaries. One of the main reasons for these e-intermediaries’ success was their ability to provide cheaper room rates than the ones offered by the hotel brands websites or their reservation offices (Gazzoli, Kim, & Palakurthi, 2008). Price disparities among the distribution channels of hotels have shaped the perceptions of the consumers who are now searching several online engines and shopping around for better deals (Gazzoli et al., 2008).

On the other hand, the even more recent outgrowth in marketing and sales is the phenomenon of social couponing, also known as daily deals, flash sales, and private sales (Piccoli & Dev, 2012), which are e-forms of traditional price promotions (Christou, 2011). For the purpose of the thesis they will be referred to as flash sale websites. As per Piccoli & Dev (2012), the flash sales can be divided into daily deal websites and private sale sites, which require some sort of membership. Yet, both types similarly offer customers promotions that are timely very limited and provide dramatic saving. The core market involves travel sites that offer enticing discounts at top-end properties, which are seeking to fill rooms when occupancy rates are low. The sites seem to appeal to a growing (mostly female) segment of the well-educated and above-average-income population.
The flash sale website business model grew at a fast clip in response to the 2008-10 recession as deal-oriented offerings have become “all the rage”. In fact, it was so wildly successful in its early introduction in local markets with retailers like restaurants and hair salons that these startup companies quickly added hotels (Green & LoManno, 2012) and nowadays many of such websites are exclusively focused around selling hotels and travel. Ultimately, as travel has led the recovery, many new ventures have focused luxury travel sales on amenities and services rather than just the best price. As an example, the British flash sale website Secret Escapes said it has seen year-over-year revenue growth of 260% and now operates in 13 European markets. (Travelweekly, 2015)

Yet, the hospitality managers are not entirely certain what to make of these sites; Piccoli & Dev (2012) point out that though there are concerns relating to brand and existing demand cannibalisation, the exposure through flash sale intermediaries is thought to bring new customers, increase sales and brand recognition as well as stimulate repeat business. In their survey they found out that hoteliers mostly use flash sale sites for branding and marketing purposes, while profit and revenue optimisation were less frequently mentioned. Further 2 out of 3 deals resulted as at least somehow successful and that almost 70% of hoteliers would run the slightly modified deal again. This also indicates the general willingness of the sector to experiment with this new channel. Moreover, the general finding about the guests was that the “flash” customers were not dramatically different from the traditional guests (Piccoli & Dev, 2012).

Lastly, what remains largely unexplored are the business consequences of running flash sale promotions, especially the indirect ones; it seems believable that the billboard effect (Anderson, 2009), which appears as a consequence of the OTA listing, will also in some (temporarily limited) way be present following a hotel’s feature on a flash sale website. Similarly, while logically relying on flash sale websites should decrease the ADR, it would be interesting to explore how it impacts hotels’ RevPAR.

3 Conceptual Development

Based on the above statements, the starting point for conceptual development is based on Tan & Dwyer’s (2011) concept of distribution channel conflict (as an online version of achieving the traditional marketing channel mix), who also point out that there is still no real understanding & empirical evidence supporting it in the literature.

In today’s global competitive environment, hotel revenue management has to deal with different ways of distributing room inventory, including brand.com, OTAs (such as Expedia and Priceline), social media outlets (such as Facebook and Twitter), and even mobile booking apps (such as Hotel Tonight). To achieve the goal to distribute room inventory more effectively, revenue managers have to be familiar with a variety of distribution channels and multi-channel RM strategies (Jiang, 2014) The three main types of e-channels(as graphically presented in Figure 1.) that are independent of previous allotment contracting and are thus flexible to manage are represented by the brand.com website, the OTAs and the flash sale websites (the last two being intermediaries) that together generate a majority share of total online sales.

Thus it is assumed that figuring out the optimal mix among them will also have an impact on total sales numbers and should therefore be the central goal of hotels’ revenue management strategy. Further, in case this goal is achieved it is believed that
the optimal use of e-channels will positively impact the general performance of the hotel, or at least its RevPAR (Hua et al., 2015).

In terms of exploring this conflict and perceived managerial dilemmas (Piccoli & Dev, 2012) the dissertation will in its first part deal with an in-depth analysis of flash sale websites as they appear in 2016. Through the SWOT analysis it will seek to establish:
- In what circumstances the hotels use flash sale websites
- What are the main threats of their use
- How do hoteliers see them compared to the OTAs
- What is their up-to-date experience and best practice in using them;

The second part of the dissertation will explore the co-competition of different channels while trying to figure out whether hotels by using flash sale websites reach new booking audience and thus create the billboard effect (Anderson, 2009), or only shift their demand from other channels.

Specific research questions will include:
- Does a Flash Sale increase the number of: a) website visitors, b) reservations?
- Does a Flash Sale increase the number of: a) Booking.com profile visitors, b) Booking.com reservations?

Ultimately, the last part of the dissertation will link the use of flash sale websites and hotel performance and try to answer the following research questions:
- Do hotels that use flash sales as part of their strategy perform better?
- Do hotels that use flash sales improve/damage their ADR?
- Do hotels that use flash sales improve/damage their RevPAR?
- Do hotels that use flash sales improve/damage their GOPPAR?

4 Proposed Methodology

As the thesis deals with different disciplines and seeks to bridge knowledge, an eclectic set of research methods will be needed to answer the main research goals.

Following the literature review, the first part of the research will be of a quality nature. A focus group consisting of representatives of senior hotel managers from Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, Austria and Hungary complemented by few well-established hospitality marketing professionals (taken from European HSMA’s Top 20 extraordinary minds list) will be used to define the most relevant research questions as perceived by the industry representatives.

The second phase will be rather quantitative, as the experiences with OTAs and flash sale websites and attitudes towards these will be surveyed in a classical quantitative survey with questionnaires distributed to hospitality managers in Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, Austria and Hungary in the process of which 200 answered questionnaires are expected to be obtained.

Further in exploring the impacts (billboard effect) of flash sale websites on other e-channels, a quasi-experimental case study approach will be used. Here, a flash sale on specific markets will be launched for a specific hotel and the consequential web analytics and PMS data will be monitored in order to track the changes in website statistics and revenue.
Lastly, in order to link the use of particular channel or an optimised channel mix to hotel performance, a stochastic modelling function will be performed in order to calculate the selected performance indicators such as RevPAR and GOPPAR.

**Figure 1. Hotel-E-Distribution Model**

5 Expected Results

While it is difficult to clearly anticipate the results at such an early stage of the research, the thesis should bring order and clarity into the concept of e-distribution of hotel rooms. The attitudes and experience of hoteliers towards OTAs and flash sale websites should be further clarified and the existing theory on online sales of hotel rooms extended with a conceptual model of an optimal hotel e-channel distribution.

Further, the use of flash sale websites should be outlined from many different perspectives, including the currently missing perspective of hotel performance.

Lastly, the thesis should provide business-relevant answers to hoteliers on how to manage the channel mix in the most efficient way in order to gain maximum exposure whilst generating maximum revenue.
References


Yacouel, N., & Fleischer, a. (2012). The Role of Cybermediaries in Reputation
Trends in Travel Agencies’ e-Business: Perspectives of Human Resource Sector

Ivana Mišković
Faculty of sport and tourism, Novi Sad, Serbia
EDUCONS University
ivana.miskovic021@gmail.com

Abstract

Despite the fears that open online market where providers of tourist services and computer literate, independent and cost sensitive buyers meet will jeopardise mediator position of travel agencies, research shows that their disappearance from the “scene” should not be expected, instead only the form of their mediator role might change. Adapting to modern e-business models for the agencies means adopting technological innovations and implementing core changes into their businesses. This primarily refers to the acquisition of modern work tools and changing employee structure. Modern tourist workers are expected to “listen” to the needs of the market, be proactive and respond to client demands faster than ever, use information technologies with skill and speak several foreign languages. New skills and competencies that modern tourist workers must have, profile them towards new occupations that were non-existent exist only a few years ago.

There are numerous disadvantages to the current classification of occupations and working positions in the tourist sector in Serbia. It contains occupations that are technologically obsolete and no longer exist, while new occupations have not been registered in several years. This creates problems during employment and in the record keeping of the employed and unemployed individuals. Furthermore, in practice, there is an increasing need for outsourcing of individuals, who have certain kinds of knowledge, skills and qualifications (primarily from IT). This leads to an imbalance in terms of the contribution of the permanently employed and the periodically hired workers.

The basic aim of this research is to uncover those new occupations, i.e. work positions that are necessary for the tourist agencies to function in a modern technological environment. Also, this research encompasses knowledge, business skills and work tasks mandatory for every occupation. The method used is a semi-structured interview, followed by coding and the classification of results.

Keywords: Travel agencies, e-business, Human resources, Changes

1. Problem definition

World trends in tourist industry show that the majority of work is conducted on-line and that tourist agents must have different kinds of knowledge compared to their colleagues in the same workplace 20, 10 or even 5 years ago. The influence of social
networks, the speed of communication, availability of information, habits and expectations of modern tourists are all reasons why the nature of working in tourism took on a completely new dimension that is continually susceptible to change. Furthermore, as the work is becoming increasingly more mobile, elastic and volatile, new modalities of employment appeared that gave priority to flexible work force hired from external environment, if needed, with a specific task and for a limited time (Tomka et al., 2015). The increasingly frequent need to outsource external IT experts, such as web designers, web developers, community managers, social media marketers and similar, shows that the nature of being a mediator in tourism changes with technological progress and with global market trends.

In the scope of the research project conducted by the Faculty of Sports and Tourism in Novi Sad in the year 2015, occupations have been mapped according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISIC Rev.4), and the data were taken from the official statistics of the National Bureau of Labor of The Republic of Serbia, Provincial service of Vojvodina. At the very beginning of the analysis, it has been noted that in the current classification used by the Statistical Office there are outdated occupations, which have not existed in practice in years. This is accompanied by a number of occupations referenced as “manual”, e.g. 912102 “laundry washer (manual)”, although machines have been used in these kinds of jobs for decades. On the other hand, many occupations currently present in the market have yet to be classified. Occupations closely linked with the process of creation, innovation and placement of tourist services are not yet listed in the classification of occupations, nor are those referring to jobs dealing exclusively with computers and specialised software. This mainly includes employees in OTA, programmers, web designers, web developers, social media marketers, online support and other occupations that have been specialised for the tourist market years ago. The kinds of workers were mostly hired as freelancers or part-time associates, but with technological progress and an increased portion of work done online, there is a need for full time employment of such workers. This, of course requires being registered in the state classification of occupations.

New trends in the form of employment and the newly created job positions in the tourist sector should be researched in more detail, which is why it was postulated as the basic problem of this research.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, the role of traditional travel mediators (tour-operators and travel agents) has changed due to the introduction of the internet and e-commerce technologies. As the suppliers believe they no longer need a mediator to sell their products, direct marketing is cutting into the business of traditional agencies (Tsai, Huang, & Lin, 2005). On the other hand, consumers are becoming increasingly technologically literate, and are therefore, more selective and knowledgeable about purchasing online. For young, educated, independent and budget-limited tourists who are used to getting information instantly on the internet, the idea of waiting for someone else to book their trip is becoming increasingly rarer. Nowadays, only a third of internet users prefer dealing with a travel agent rather than with a web site (Etourismnewsletter, 2002). However, a handful of travel agencies have proven that, even if a person can individually book a good deal, there are still instances where a travel agency can find even a better one (Travel Agent, 2012). In practice, consumers ever more often bring printouts from the internet to travel agencies and request them
to either match the offer they have or do the actual booking for them (Buhalis & Licata, 2001).

The role of travel agents has changed from making reservations to offering advice and consultations for individuals and corporations (Chu, 2001). Mediators already conduct their business as information brokers, DMCs (Destination Management Companies), processors of payment/money transactions, advice providers and value-added service providers (managing special requirements, needs, policies etc.). Many traditional travel agencies now have full-service web sites so that the client can have the convenience of self-serve online booking with the benefit of talking to a real person when needed.

The key advantage of travel agents is in their ability to provide personal information and advice to tourists and recognize the adoption of IT in business processes as one of the key factors of success (Suárez Álvarez, Díaz Martín, & Vázquez Casielles, 2007). Although qualitative aspects of tourism work are changing, tourism employment is growing in scale (Baum, 2015). Globally, it rises 2.4% per annum and will constitute approximately 3.4% of direct and 10.2% of total employment (WTTC, 2014).

Online travel agencies are increasing their competitiveness using quality as a strategic element (Roger-Monzo, Marti-Sanchez, & Guijarro-Garcia, 2015). IATA airline members, booking system providers and GDSs have all implemented the use of new technologies in their business (Andreu, Aldas, Bigne, & Mattila, 2010). WTO (2001) also indicated that electronic business offers SMEs (Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises) the opportunity to conduct their business in new and more cost-efficient ways. OECD (2000) revealed that the advent of internet-based electronic commerce offers considerable opportunities for companies to expand their customer base, enter new product markets and rationalise their business.

Some organizations adopt electronic business proactively, while others go through the process in stages (Lin and Lee, 2005). All phases of this process include hiring staff that provides support, but also continuous improvement. Additional education of the existing staff demands a lot of time, financial investment and a particular resistance towards changes. In order to avoid HR management being a weak point of agency business, practice has shown that agencies most often resort to hiring freelance workers to fill in the gaps in knowledge.

If one looks back upon existing world trends, it is noticeable that from mid 1980s, more and more jobs belong to one of the new forms of atypical employment, where the workers lead a so called “freelance-portfolio life” (Capelli, Bassi, Katz, Knöke, Osterman & Useem, 1997). In this form of employment the most important is the practical application of knowledge and the manner in which potential candidates do their business i.e. what is important are one’s results instead of one’s diploma. The matter of personal competencies becomes the key aspect in the modern concept of employment. The prediction is that in the economically developed world the idea of “permanently employed” (Camden, 2005) will completely disappear by the year 2050. This line of thought is already gaining ground in agency business, which is gradually transitioning to online regime and demands hiring staff that handles that environment well and has rich work experience in tourism (skills in sales, communication, knowledge of products, customer psychology etc.).

Hiring freelance workers has its advantages and its disadvantages, both to the employer and the employee. The most frequently listed advantages are the freedom of choosing the employer, work from home, small investments, flexible working hours, closer contact with family, better possibility of personal advancement, etc. The negative sides of freelance business are the unresolved matter of health and pension
insurance, lack of physical activity and social life, uncertainty of work etc. (Elance Srbija, 2015). Hiring this sort of work force is very frequent in tourism, especially when it comes to tourist guides, agency representatives in destinations and IT experts. From the viewpoint of the employer, the advantages are primarily related to the decrease of costs and obligations to the workers, however, the drawbacks are not negligible either. This primarily refers to team-work, which is a key aspect in tourism, loyalty and informedness of the employee of current events and the wholesome offer of the agency, as well as the speed of information transfer.

The subject of this research is the study of the structure of staff involved in work processes of travel agencies that conduct business in terms with modern trends, with the aim to map new knowledge and job positions that have the potential to became “classic”, and for which there is a need in terms of education, training and licencing. The general aim of the research is to examine the influence of modern trends in tourist demand and information-technological progress in the sphere of agency business, in relation to the change of human resource structure and organisation of work. Apart from contributing to agency management, research results can be of use in creating new, or innovating existing classification of occupations in tourism with a particular focus on agency business.

3. Conceptual Development

The research shown here is a part of a wider study encompassed by a PhD dissertation. The dissertation is focused on providing a detailed analysis of transformation process of business of tourist agencies in Serbia, in the context of adjusting to changes made under the influence of modern information-communication technologies and demands of modern tourism market.

Special focus in the research is placed on HR in terms of analysing newer, more modern occupations that are becoming necessary for work in a contemporary technological environment. For that purpose, all working positions in agencies currently in business should be analysed, and all human resources occasionally hired “on the side” should be listed. Furthermore, a short description of obligations, responsibilities and basic working operations encompassed by individual occupations will be given.

The frequency of their hiring and their contribution to the business as a whole will be analysed. A table will be created, containing all listed occupations classified according to the degree of importance to the business, and according to how often their services are required. The expected result of this analysis is to determine, which occupations would be useful enough to agency management to provide full-time employment, and which can be hired as needed. Furthermore, results are expected to show that, by rationale, some of the current full-time employees should be dismissed, or they should be enabled to work from home, with shorter working hours or paid for performance.

Apart from the practical uses to the agency management, in terms of rationalising costs, the list of occupations and the degree of their engagement in business (the degree of business success from their work) will help in creating a proposal of new classification of occupations in the tourist sector of Serbia. This will clearly show which occupations are directly linked to tourism sector, and which belong to complementary sectors, although it is expected that a clear limit between the two will very difficult to determine.
4. Proposed Methodology

The research concept consists of two basic parts. The first part involves polling, and the second part semi-structured interviews with employers from agency sector. Employers and managers chosen as interviewees would be from agencies, which, more or less, have already accepted the concept of e-business and have the need to hire certain expert profiles whose competencies are linked to online communication, web development, programming, social media marketing, web sales, web design and similar. Also, the author pays close attention to the existing staff in agencies and the transformation of their everyday activities in the past 10-15 years, as well as the changes that occurred in that period related to work organisation (number of employees, working time, office location, equipment, education and mayor investments, etc.).

The sample in the poll consists of tourist agencies owning a website, which according to Lin & Lee (2005) means that they have made initial steps towards implementing e-business. From the selected agencies, polling will be used to gather basic data about the implementation of e-business, kinds and length of business, and the staff from each of the agencies. The data from the polls will be processed using the tool SPSS 20, as to establish possible correlation between the stage of online business (according to: Lin & Lee, 2005) and the number of employees, the number of external associates that are hired if needed, and the areas of work for which they are hired. As far as the method is concerned, semi-structured interviews would be used to gather information about new occupations, job positions and skills necessary for business in a modern environment. Furthermore, the questions would relate to the characteristics of every work position, where persons with specific competencies are hired. All interviews would be transcribed in order to proceed with coding. The coding will be done by the author and two other independent coders. One of them should be an expert in HR of tourist agencies, while the other should be an expert in HR management field in general. Finally, mapping of key claims would be conducted.

Research sample would consist of minimum of 20 travel agencies of various profiles (incoming, outgoing, tour operators, traditional sales agencies, on-line agents etc.).

As the aim of the research is to form a list of all identified occupations (job positions), which appear in the sector of agency business. The practical application of research results is possible in the process of creation of innovative classification of occupations in tourism, planning of educational programmes aimed at tourism (colleges and academic studies), creating courses and programmes for retraining or additional training of existing staff etc.

During the writing of the dissertation, the results of this research were planned to be put into context with trends in employment and self-employment, with intertwinment of tourist and complementary activities, and with predicting of possible scenarios expected by the HR sector in tourism in the future.

5. Anticipated Results

The anticipated results are that the agencies that conduct business on-line, i.e. communicate, advertise and sell their services using the internet, will hire a different type of staff, meaning that they have a need for staff profiles that have not been
directly related with tourism until now. First and foremost, this includes IT experts, web designers, web developers, call centre employees etc. Furthermore, the organisation of work in terms of working hours, location, monthly expenses (electricity, water, paper etc.), is completely different in companies where the computer is the basic, and often even the only work tool, when compared with agencies that still have direct contact with consumers.

A general aim of the research is the formation of a list of new occupational profiles and work positions in agency sector, including a list of competencies, skills and knowledge necessary for each work position. In relation to the applicability of research results, it is expected that they will be of use in two basic areas. The first one is state institutions that deal with the matter of employment, establishments of higher education, organisers of various programmes and courses for service training, career management, professional orientation etc.

On the other hand, in the practice of agency business, owners, i.e. managers of tourist companies that deal with HR, can use the results in order to rationalise costs. A list of occupations and the degree to which experts of different profiles are hired, can enable savings or relocation of investments. In Serbia, the areas commonly neglected when it comes to investments are technological innovations and marketing, which are most definitely the key element for successful business in a modern working environment.

Finally, the results could be of use to young people who are yet to choose a certain occupation and who have to make important life decisions related to career planning.
References


The Effects of Hotels Engagement with Daily Deal Websites on Employment Patterns and Employee Wellbeing

Katarzyna Minor
Cardiff Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
kaminor@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Abstract

The hospitality industry has widely adopted the use of daily deal websites however research into the effects of engagement within the sector is still in the infancy. To date most research is focused on websites, merchants or customers while the impact of and upon the employee is omitted. Using a hermeneutical approach this PhD research investigates the relationship between the three service stakeholders: the employers, employees and customers within the daily deal promotion delivery with the aim of providing a holistic, multi-stakeholder perspective view of the daily deal phenomenon in order to identify the impacts involvement has on hospitality businesses and in particular upon their employees. It is anticipated that this research will result in a development of a model relating to the impact upon and of staff upon successful adaptation of daily deal promotions.

Keywords: Hotels, Engagement, Websites, Wellbeing

1 Problem Definition

Daily deal websites have been widely adopted within the services industries, especially restaurants and hotels, however most research within the tourism and hospitality industries is anecdotal with only very limited pedagogical research available (Boon, 2013; Sigala, 2013). As highlighted by Boon et al. (2012), Lee and Lee (2012) and Shiau and Luo (2012) daily deal websites are fairly new phenomenon and there have only been a few studies undertaken in the social, behavioural, economic and managerial aspects of the practice.

Most of the academic research into daily deals so far focuses on three stakeholders in the daily deal campaign: the websites, the customers and the business. However within the hospitality industry service delivery relies heavily upon the involvement of employees, therefore making them a vital stakeholder within the provision and receipt of any hospitality service (Salesh & Ryan, 1991; Titz, 2001). Employees, particularly front line employees, are critical to the success of a business as their behavioural conduct and appearance creates a strong first impression on the customer, making them a crucial component of service delivery (Harline & Ferrell, 1996; Iacobucci, 1998; Yoo et al., 2006; Wu & Liang, 2009). From managers' point of view management of the service encounter is problematic as the direct provision of the service depends almost exclusively on the employee at a point where the manager has the least control over the behaviour of their employees (Yoo & Park, 2007; Lee-Ross, 2001).

The purpose of this research is to provide a holistic view of the impact of daily deals upon the three principle stakeholders identified in the hospitality industry: the employees, employers and customers with the intention of investigating each groups interpretation of their own and other’s role, behaviour and attitude with regard to
this phenomenon. This will enable an in-depth understanding of the impact of the daily deal upon the dining and accommodation experience to be constructed.

2 Literature Review

Daily deal websites offer unique marketing opportunities, especially for small and medium business (Dholakia, 2011b; Stulec et al., 2011; Lee & Lee, 2012a). Relatively unknown businesses can gain exposure to large amount of potential customers and capture data for future promotional use. Hospitality businesses can benefit from a boost in out of season trade and up-selling of their highly perishable product by filling empty restaurant seats or hotel rooms, a product otherwise left unsold (Dholakia, 2011b; Edelman et al., 2011; Stulec et al., 2011; Piccoli & Dev, 2012; Subramanian, 2012; Wu et al., 2012; Sigala, 2013; Zhang et al., 2013). At the same time customers have an opportunity to try services and experiences which they have never tried before at a discounted price, therefore at a reduced financial risk (Dholakia, 2010, 2011b; Edelman et al., 2011; Erdoğmuş & Çiçek, 2011; Stulec et al., 2011; Cox, 2012; Shiau & Wu, 2013).

However concerns have been raised regarding the long term sustainability of daily deals and heavy discounting. Boon (2013), drawing upon more traditional sales promotion research, concluded that daily deals may negatively affect the brand of a merchant. Byers et al. (2011) highlighted that online ratings may decline after featuring a daily deal, therefore the merchant’s brand may suffer as a result of participation in the online deal. Furthermore long term use of the discount websites may result in long term brand devaluation, which in turn may lead to diminished profitability of the business (Mintel, 2012). Additionally the use of daily deals may negatively affect customer purchasing behaviour as the customers may anticipate deals and become less willing to pay the full price for the product and service (Boon, 2013). This may put into question the sustainability of the offers for accommodation providers, as the daily deals promotions have financial implications of the merchants. Faced with the paradox of maintaining higher rates or higher occupancy some merchants may find it hard to separate from the discounts offered, fuelling a downward price spiral (Enz et al., 2004; Mintel, 2011).

Overall profitability of the offers for the merchants is affected by the combination of the steep commission, (between 20 % and 50 %) and steep discounts (up to 90 %). This may lead to the merchants only breaking even or providing the services at a loss (Dholakia, 2011a, 2011b; Dholakia & Tsabar, 2011; Sigala, 2013). As Boon et al.’s (2012) study underlined a significant issue is that the main focus of the websites is commercial gain, hence it is in their best interest to maximise their revenue by charging the maximum possible commission and structuring the deal to sell the most amount of vouchers. This may suggest that the deals may be less equitable for the merchants and may not produce profitable promotions for their business (Wang & Pham, 2014). One way of making the daily deal more profitable is by increasing the revenue per customer via selling additional products to the deal the customer bought (Aydin & Ziya, 2008) i.e. should the customer buy wine alongside the meal voucher profit is more likely to be achieved (Dholakia, 2011b; Minor, 2012).

Zhang et al. (2013) underlined the importance of service quality within the daily deal environment, but also noted that achieving service quality whilst running a promotion is not easy. The employers need to ensure high quality service to entice the customers
who have used the voucher to come back for a full price purchase. However Zhang et al. (2013) showed that since daily deal sites mainly feature small restaurant, the establishments may be unable, unprepared or untrained to deal with a large influx of customers. Cox (2012), Boon (2013) and Ardizzone and Mortara (2014) found a mixture of positive and negative comments reoccurring when considering daily deals through the eyes of the customers. From the negative selection similar observations were identified by the researchers: service quality problems and sub-service treatment of customers, redemption problems and overcrowding. All these issues had a derogatory effect upon reputation and the willingness of customers to return for a repeat purchase.

3 Conceptual Development

The majority of the studies to date focus upon the business implications of the engagement or customer experiences, perceptions and behaviours resulting from daily deal website involvement. Only a handful of studies have highlighted the importance of the employee within the daily deal reality (Dholakia, 2010, 2011b, 2011c; Kimes & Dholakia, 2011; Wu et al., 2012). However, even in these studies the employees were never the sole purpose of the study and the findings in relation to employees were mentioned anecdotally alongside others. This is surprising as Dholakia (2010, 2011c) highlighted the importance of the employees by emphasizing the correlation of employee satisfaction with the deal and profitability of the promotion. The service the employees provide not only directly influences the levels of ‘upsells’ but also has an indirect effect on customer buying intention during and post daily deal promotion. As positive service quality is likely influence spend beyond the voucher face value (Sigala, 2013), proper employee training and preparation is vital for the success of the daily deal (Boon, 2013).

Many of the daily deal customers are treating themselves to what they perceive to be a new high quality experience they can’t usually afford therefore when they receive unfavourable treatment from the front line staff, whether real or perceived, they will experience low satisfaction which in turn will lead to poor client retention and bad word of mouth (Liang & Zhang, 2011). According Dholakia (2010; 2011c) and Kimes and Dholakia (2011) satisfied employees are the most important factors for the success of daily deal promotions. Employee wellbeing is not only shaped by subjective job satisfaction and emotions but also by work load demands, by the quality of related psychological experiences, inclusive of some personal control over the job, support from supervisors and colleagues, positive relationships at work, a reasonably clear role, and a sense of control or involvement in changes (CIPD, 2005; Ilies et al., 2015). Therefore employee preparation for periods of heightened customer demand should be high on employers’ agenda. However despite this, as Dholakia’s study (2011c) showed most managers’ failed to prepare their employees for the influx of customers and for the hardships, such as longer working hours and lower tips, the daily deal may bring. The managers also did not explain the goals of the promotions which resulted in the employees failing to acknowledge the potential business benefits of the deal. The need for more employee wellbeing focused studies was further backed up by Sigala’s (2013) research which linked ‘unhappy’ and stressed employees to low satisfaction experienced by customers and the diminished probability of return and positive word of mouth.

As previously stated, despite their importance in the service delivery the role of the employees was not main focus of the above studies. More surprisingly the data
gathered was not based on employee based surveys or interviews, but rather a reflection of the employers’ perceptions of staff satisfaction with the daily deal offered (personal communication, U Dholakia, 30th December 2013). This PhD research aims to give voice to employees by examining their experiences alongside that of the other two stakeholders. The research aims to provide a holistic, multi-stakeholder perspective view of the daily deal phenomenon. It will identify the impacts involvement has on the hospitality business for the three main stakeholders groups and from this develop a better understanding of the phenomenon which will enable participation in daily deals to become profitable within the hospitality industry.

4 Proposed Methodology

This study aims to identify the issues surrounding the phenomenon of daily deals in which power is not uniform and ‘success’ may depend upon the perception of stakeholders. Therefore the study is qualitative in nature, adopting a constructionist ontology and supported by an interpretivist epistemology. As the chosen ontology and epistemology assume that knowledge is not discovered but created in the minds of individuals within society it was decided that the study requires a procedure that reflects the subjective views of the participants (Bryman, 2008; Botterill & Plantenkamp, 2012; Sarantakos, 2013). The main aim of the constructionist researcher is to uncover as much as possible the individual actors’ world views and bring them to into a consensus or conjunction with one another so an accurate construction can arise from the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore hermeneutics has been adopted as a methodology. The researcher adopts an interactive research process, in which the first step is the identification of groups or individuals in that social setting, followed by uncovering what the group or a person think, in a way that gradually attempts to develop a shared perspective on the problem (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This process is referred to by Brady (2005) as a hermeneutic spiral where via each turn of the spiral a new part of the construction of knowledge is achieved, and all the parts of the construction lead to the final snapshot of the shared perspective. Importantly a hermeneutical approach encourages researchers’ reflections upon their own point of departure and role within the construction of meaning (Gadamer, 1989; O’Gorman & Gillespie, 2010). This was an essential consideration in this research as the author herself has had experiences of belonging to all of the stakeholder groups identified.

This research focuses on small and medium hotels with onsite restaurants as well as restaurants with rooms, which have featured an accommodation and food inclusive offer on daily deal websites. Since three key stakeholders have been identified the collection of primary data has been split into three phases, each dealing with one stakeholder group. The data in stage one and two, dealing with employers and employees respectively, was collected using semi structured, one to one interviews. Stage three, dealing with customers, will use focus groups to gather the data. All the data will be analysed thematically.

5 Anticipated Results

The full results of this research project will not be known until all primary data has been collected and analysed. As of September 2015 the stage one primary data collection had been completed and analysis of data was underway. The preliminary analysis suggests a much wider set of employee interactions that has previously been identified in other studies, such as the importance of reception staff in the hotel daily deal experience. When completed it is anticipated that this research will contribute to
the growing body of knowledge regarding daily deal websites by offering new hospitality and employee focused perspectives, identifying new factors which contribute to the profitability and success of daily deal promotions. The study will result in the development of a model for use by industry professionals as well as academia showing the impact upon and of staff in relation to the successful adoption of daily deal promotions.

References


CIPD (2005), Reflections on employee well-being and the psychological contract, CIPD, London

http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~dholakia/


123


Lee-Ross, D. (2001), Understanding the Role of Service Encounter in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure Services, in J. Kandampully, C. Mok, and B. Sparks, (Eds.), Service Quality Management in Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure (pp. 85-95), The Haworth Hospitality Press, Binghampton


