

Editorial: Special issue on ENTER2015

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As information and communication technology (ICT) has become integral to key processes supporting travel and tourism, it is important for research and development to continue providing innovative approaches and critical reflections for the effective use of ICT in the tourism industry. The papers published in this volume are extended versions of highly selected research papers among the many contribution presented at ENTER2015 eTourism Conference, which took place in Lugano, Switzerland, on February 3–6, 2015, organized by the International Federation for IT and Travel & Tourism (IFITT). While far from being inclusive of all research areas in ICT and tourism, the collection of five articles in this special issue provides an excellent selection of the latest research on applications of ICT in travel and tourism.

Social media has been one of the prominent areas of research in tourism and ICT since the last decade (Dwivedi et al. 2011; Hvass and Munar 2012; Leung et al. 2013). In tourism literature, the topic is highly associated with the different aspects of tourism marketing (Hays et al. 2013), including consumer behaviour (Munar and Jacobsen 2014; Tham et al. 2013; Xiang and Gretzel 2010) and destination branding (Lim et al. 2012; Munar 2011). The first three articles in this volume discuss how tourism destinations and hospitality businesses make strategic use of social media and user-generated content to communicate and assess destination brands among their consumers. The first article (Huertas and Marine-Roig 2015) explores the effectiveness of destination brand communication via social media by analysing user reactions (i.e., likes, comments, shares, mentions, etc.) to destination brand

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content (i.e., brand image and emotional values) posted on social media channels. In particular, analysing selected destinations in Spain, this research identified specific destination attributes and/or themes that generated most reactions from audience, which reflect the value of brand engagement and interactivity. In this way, the article provides Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) with suggestions to identify social media content strategies that are effective in maintaining user engagement and, at the same time, increasing destination popularity.

The second article (Lalicic and Dickinger 2015) demonstrates how DMOs can assess destination brands from the consumer perspectives using two different methods: an analysis of user-generated content from social media and a survey. In particular, utilizing Aaker's (1997) brand personality model, this article extracts the dimensions of brand personality and emotional values from TripAdvisor reviews across different aspects of tourism services (e.g., restaurants, hotels, attractions) using content analysis and sentiment classification. Comparing the results of text analysis with consumer responses to a survey, the researchers found different dimensions from user-generated content that are not represented in survey responses, suggesting the potentials of user-generated content to provide DMOs with valuable knowledge to inform the development of proactive brand positioning strategies. With the abundance of user-generated content afforded by the many platforms of social media, this article signifies the importance of listening to consumer conversation to be able to extract valuable intelligence for the development of destination branding strategies.

In this vein, the third article (Marine-Roig and Clavé 2015) presents a detailed method to analyse massive user-generated content from social media. Specifically, the paper provides a guideline for semi-automatic downloading, arrangement, cleaning, debugging, and analysis of large-scale travel blogs and online travel review data. To illustrate the usefulness of the proposed method, the researchers extracted and analysed more than 130,000 trip diaries from visitors to Catalonia, Spain between 2004 and 2014. The content analysis on the dataset revealed patterns concerning the distribution of destination brands across different travel reviews that are important for National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) and DMOs to improve their marketing and branding policies. The results from this research confirm the value of extracting knowledge from user-generated content with a greater level of details for the development of marketing intelligence and destination performance metrics.

The fourth article (Oses et al. 2015) analyses the practice of dynamic pricing among hoteliers in Basque Country, Spain by collecting hotel room price data periodically from an Internet distribution channel in 2013–2014. Different visualization and analysis techniques assisted in interpreting patterns of room rate changes from a total of 3,924,016 observations, which include information regarding when and why price changes occur in addition to the prices themselves. As a result, two patterns of dynamic pricing practices were identified: hotels are changing a number of prices of contiguous, future target dates on the same date or changing prices a set number of days in advance. The evidence of dynamic pricing practices on online booking engine can be useful for hoteliers to improve their pricing strategies by taking into consideration their competitors' practices as well as for online travel agencies and infomediaries to provide more accurate booking

recommendation for consumers based on the identified patterns of dynamic pricing practices.

While the aforementioned articles discuss the advantages of harnessing technology to assist strategic decisions among service providers and tourism destinations, the last article (Dinhopl and Gretzel 2015) discusses the behavioural implications of technological development in videography on various tourist practices. In particular, the paper aims at developing a theoretical foundation of tourist videography as a distinct practice from photography. While both practices of tourist photography and videography signify the role of tourists as consumers and producers of tourism-related media, this article demonstrates that videography and photography are different in the practices of representation, seen from both technological and social perspectives, as well as in the ways in which they mediate tourism experiences. As a consequence of this new practice, destination and attraction managers need to carefully integrate the facilitation of videography into the design of tourism sites and experiences.

The five articles in this collection enrich the literature on ICT and tourism in many ways. Firstly, while most of these papers confirm the application of existing concepts in new research contexts (e.g., destination image and brand personality models; Aaker 1997), they contribute to the important discussion and conceptualization of emotion-based theory in destination branding (e.g., Hosany et al. 2014), tourism and visual culture (Haldrup and Larsen, 2010), and mediation of tourism experiences (Jansson 2002, 2007; Jennings and Weiler 2006; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier 2009). Secondly, these articles demonstrate the use of different methods for collecting, managing, and analysing massive data sourced online from social media, booking engines, and other publicly available data sources for tourism research. As tourists and service providers increasingly use ICT and digital media for various tourism experiences, the challenge for tourism destinations is to extract valuable knowledge about consumer behaviour and experiences from a massive amount of data collected online (Fuchs et al. 2014). The articles in this special issue present the state-of-the-art of data analysis and visualization, which are useful for research involving large-scale user-generated content. Lastly, these articles provide managerial implications for NTOs, DMOs, hoteliers, and other business entities in tourism, especially in areas of marketing (i.e., including branding and pricing) and experience design.

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