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INTRODUCTION

Tourism Management, Marketing, and Development: The Importance of Networks and ICTs

Marcello M. Mariani, Rodolfo Baggio, Dimitrios Buhalis, and Christian Longhi

The Tourism Industry Today

Over the last six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2012). More specifically, in spite of sporadic shocks, international tourist arrivals have recorded a virtually uninterrupted increase: from 277 million in 1980 to 1.035 billion million in 2012. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in its most updated long-term outlook of future tourism trends (Tourism Towards 2030) estimates that international arrivals worldwide are expected to reach nearly 1.8 billion by the year 2030 (an increase by 3.3% a year on average from 2010 to 2030). This implies that the potential impact of tourism on individual destinations and companies might be crucial in the next years.

Many factors, such as the development of mass transportation/motorization, the introduction and implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) applications in the tourism sector, the rhythm of increase of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (and the increase of disposable income to be allocated to travels), the improvement of security and rights for tourists, as well as the process of globalization, have significantly contributed to expand the market for tourism activities (Mariani and Baggio, 2012). The above-mentioned factors are significantly contributing to shaping a different institutional landscape and economic environment for a number of economic players such as Hotels, Airlines, Destination Management Companies (DMCs), Conference Venues, Congress, Convention and
Exhibition Centers, Convention Bureaus, Professional Conference Organizers (PCOs). Moreover, companies in the tourism sector are confronted with increasing managerial challenges and have to deal with a competitive, turbulent and fast-changing environment (Baggio et al., 2013; Mariani et al., 2013). At least at a European level, the enormous fragmentation and the smallness of the average company size (Baggio, 2012) poses serious problems in adapting to the heavily technologized World (MGI, 2011) that has been practically monopolized by a handful of companies (PhoCusWright, 2012).

Purpose of This Book

The growing importance of tourism as a socioeconomic phenomenon, together with the understanding that even apparently profitable tourism companies and destinations endowed originally with the best assets (natural and cultural) could not survive the escalating international competition without good managerial practices (Crouch, 2011) has provided significant momentum for the development of the disciplinary field of tourism management in the last three decades.

In order to enrich the ongoing debate, the European Institute of Advanced Studies in Management (EIASM) has organized the EIASM International Conference in Tourism Management and Tourism Related Issues. The first three editions of the conference proved very successful with more than 200 papers submitted. After an accurate double reviewing process a very limited number of articles has been accepted for presentation at the conference.

This book provides an overview of state-of-the-art research in today’s tourism management, by including 12 chapters from a diverse international group of academics, namely some of the best papers that have been presented at the aforementioned conference. More specifically the volume displays three key distinctive features:

1. recognizes the relevance of tourism and tourism activities as major economic drivers.
2. contributes to the advancement of managerial knowledge and practice in the fast growing tourism sector, trying to answer a wide range of research questions with a specific focus on the role of physical and digital networks and ICTs.
3. is the outcome of the collective intellectual efforts of a number of international scholars, with dissimilar geographical roots and backgrounds. They cultivate original research on tourism management from a variety of theoretical perspectives (economic, managerial), by adopting different epistemological paradigms and research methodologies or techniques, and multiple methods (theory building, experimental and inductive case-based inquiries).
The Book’s Audience

This book provides a number of relevant perspectives within the tourism management field and brings about fresh empirical evidence of such fast-changing business dynamics as those pertaining to tourism activities. While the scientific body of literature (under the form of journal articles) on the role of networks and ICTs is growing substantially, most of the books related to tourism have dealt with the aforementioned topics by relegating them to a few chapters of standard textbooks. This book instead is a research-based collection of chapters, which is built upon robust research. As a consequence, it targets a wide range of readers: tourism scholars and academics; practitioners and managers willing to explore new issues and topics in the tourism sector, students at the undergraduate and graduate level in tourism programs. Courses on tourism management are likely to use most of the materials contained in the book as supplementary readings. It is important to notice that the contributions discuss issues for a wide number of countries, so there are no special “geographic” limitations.

The Research Object: Networks and ICTs in Tourism

State-of-the-art research recognizes the importance of both networks and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in tourism management. The importance of these topics can be easily assessed by a simple Google search. A quick run using terms such as: “tourism network”, “e-tourism”, or “ICT and tourism” provides (as of December 2013) an excess of 600 million results.

As far as networks are concerned, the extant literature on cooperation and interorganizational relationships (IORs) is a consolidated stream that has been cultivated in the economic and managerial literature over the last 50 years by a number of scholars. Surprisingly research on how cooperation and IORs are initiated, developed and maintained over time in the tourism field is relatively scant with most of the contributions appearing over the last decade.

Conventionally, cooperation has been described on one hand by looking at strategic alliances and on the other hand by leveraging on the idea of collectives of organizations. The first set of inquiries has portrayed organizations as actors setting up and maintaining cooperative ventures in order to gain a superior competitive advantage (see, e.g., Contractor and Lorange, 1988; Garcia-Canal et al., 2002; Powell et al., 1996; Zaheer, 1995). Within the second collection of studies, organizations have been depicted as members of a collective, jointly mobilizing action and resources toward the accomplishment of shared ends (e.g., Astley, 1984; Astley and Fombrun, 1983; Barnett et al., 2000; Bresser, 1988; Reur and Ariño, 2007).
A number of scholars have argued that in many real-world situations neither pure competition nor pure cooperation are ordinary but instead the simultaneous presence of competition and cooperation—named coopetition (Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996; Brandenburger and Stuart, 1996)—can be much more frequent and relevant.

Coopetition is about the coexistence of competition and cooperation (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000; Dagnino and Rocco, 2009; Mariani, 2007), which leads to value creation within extensive, multiple organizational networks that go beyond the boundaries of an individual firm (Dagnino and Mariani, 2010).

Globalization processes not only intensify international competition between regions and companies, but also generate opportunities for collaboration among enterprises willing to compete internationally (Mariani and Kylänen, 2014). This is the reason why networks and interorganizational relationships are becoming more relevant for small and medium co-located companies.

The aforementioned tendency is particularly relevant in competing tourism destinations (Karlsson et al., 2010) wherein competing tourism businesses have also to cooperate in order to better market a tourism destination and to strengthen its brand image in order to attract more customers in the area (Kylänen and Mariani, 2012). In this process the public stakeholders often play a leading role, encouraging private companies to collaborate with each other (Kylänen and Rusko, 2011; Mariani and Kylänen, 2014).

Cooperation and networking between destinations and companies is even more strengthened by the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and can, in turn, generate innovation (Shilling and Phelps, 2007).

This is an even stronger necessity in a vastly globalized and technologically enhanced world. ICTs have traditionally been very strongly connected with Tourism in the last 60 years (Werthner and Klein, 1999). The advent of Internet and the Web first, and the more recent Web 2.0 developments have deeply changed our lives and the way we all make business or move around the world. It is mainly the Web 2.0 environment that has influenced this change. Such a short life to be able to fully understand the implications, we start now to draw the very first conclusions on the investigations conducted. Web 2.0 represents an evolution from an informational medium to an environment that cultivates, enhances, and modifies social interactions and communications (Weinberg, 2009). As such it is having a very strong impact on information-intensive industries such as tourism (Buhalis and Law, 2008).

This transformation of the virtual landscape, due to the unprecedented diffusion and the greatly improved usage facilities, is so important that the concept of digital ecosystem has acquired a fundamental role in explaining the structural relationships between ICTs and tourism and the influences
on the dynamic evolution of tourism systems (Baggio and Del Chiappa, 2013).

As important mega trend that has radically impacted the industry, the role and use of ICTs in tourism operations and management have been widely discussed in the research literature (Buhalis and Law, 2008). Despite the latest technological developments, however, past history has shown very clearly that in many cases pure technological approaches have failed to provide significant outcomes (Alford and Clarke, 2009).

The issue is that productivity gains build up not from ICT investments per se, but rather from the exploitation of the full possibilities offered by a wide range of ICT tools and applications. ICTs as such do not improve firms’ profitability directly, but exert an indirect positive impact through a combination of other competitiveness factors (differentiation, quality, image, reputation, etc.) that contribute in a holistic way to the competitiveness on tourism markets (Mihalic and Buhalis, 2013).

The important, and probably obvious, conclusion is that the ICT productivity paradox (Sigala et al., 2004) can be overcome only with an increased focus on managerial and strategic attitudes in the implementation of ICTs in a balanced and sustainable way into organizations in order to contribute to business performance and growth, both at destination and individual stakeholder level.

### Structure of This Book

In view of the fact that the book is the result of the joint effort of a group of international scholars, its chapters include original research on tourism management from a variety of theoretical perspectives, and display different epistemological paradigms and mixed research methodologies and techniques.

The volume is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with the role and impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the tourism sector. The second tackles the nature and features of networks and interorganizational relationships in tourism.

In the first part of the book, Chapter One, “Tourism Branding, Identity, Reputation Co-creation and Word-of-mouth in the Age of Social Media,” by Dimitrios Buhalis and Alessandro Inversini aims to contribute to the increasing body of research on the role of social media in tourism, by introducing the brand new concept of Online eBranding Space where clients and companies are continuously interacting and negotiating brand identity, image, and reputation, thanks to eWord-of-Mouth and collaboration. The chapter discusses the aforementioned issues by leveraging on iconic examples built on three perspectives, namely: the social web perspective, the information search perspective, and the demand- and supply-side perspective.
The objective of Chapter Two, “Technological Innovation in e-Tourism: The Role of Interoperability and Standards,” by Rodolfo Baggio is to propose a conceptual contribution to highlight the importance of standardization and interoperability as crucial prerequisites for encouraging creativity and innovation, and to discuss the role they have in fostering innovative developments in the challenging area of e-tourism. Indeed, creativity and innovation are the watchwords on which today, more than ever, companies and organizations base their competitiveness and success. Besides individual characteristics, innovation and creativity can be highly favored by a number of environmental factors. This is particularly true in the case of tourism, where the issue of competitiveness is only partially attributable to individual operators, but strongly depends on the characteristics of the local system (the destination) in which they operate. The chapter discusses these issues and focuses on the role played by interoperability and standards as elements that can provide that favorable environment for enhancing the innovative capabilities of tourism businesses in the rapidly evolving technological contemporaneous world. Policy actions are suggested as well as changes in the attitude by tourism operators.

Chapter Three, “Open Data: Challenges and Opportunities for the Tourism Industry and the Destinations,” by Christian Longhi, Lucas Viallis, and Jean-Bernard Titz, defines the open data phenomenon and explores the different implications for the tourism industry, considered as a sectoral system of innovation and production. This approach allows to grasp the different dimensions of the impacts of open data—institutions, knowledge bases and technologies, organizations and interactions, demand—their co-evolutions and resulting evolutions of the boundaries and dynamics of the tourism industry. Open data initiatives from governments or local authorities are recent, but they have rapidly resulted in the development of services or mobile applications, often dedicated to tourism. The research presented in this chapter is mainly explorative, and attempts to clarify the opportunities and challenges open data represents for tourism, and draws the resulting evolving frontiers of the industry.

In Chapter Four, “The Role of ICT within Tourism Development Processes in Postindustrial Sites: Empirical Evidence from Poland,” by Justyna Majewska and Szymon Truskolaski a critical evaluation of the online marketing activities of a number of Polish postindustrial attractions located in Upper Silesia and Lesser Poland is carried out. The chapter, by deploying quantitative metrics including a survey, and analysis of statistical data obtained through Google searches, Google Analytics, and Google Trends applications, generates insights on the introduction of websites for the selected attractions and their impact on the number of visitors, drawing relevant managerial implications.

Chapter Five, “Managing e-Reputation and Strategic Development Using the Tools of Web 2.0: The Case of Hotel Industry,” by Christel Douyère and Franck Sosthé highlights that although the concept of e-reputation is relatively recent, and closely bound to the advent of Web 2.0,
the notion of reputation is centuries old, as revealed by a review of the literature. Analysis of numerous texts concerning reputation immediately raises a core question: how did the notion of reputation transform into the e-reputation concept? Whereas reputation can be considered to have initially involved a static process, the advent of the e-reputation following the development of the Internet, and especially Web 2.0 tools, has introduced a dynamic factor. Along with providing Internet users a means for real-time expression, Web 2.0 tools represent a new management challenge for businesses. Companies must recognize the importance of this new phenomenon because their reputation is now managed by the consumer who wields incredible power thanks to Web 2.0 tools. The hotel industry cannot afford to ignore the importance of reputation management as a new means for strategic development. While this business sector is strongly affected by the e-reputation concept, the chapter shows that many of its leading actors do not seem to have truly realized how essential it has become.

Chapter Six, “Segmentation of Repeat Visitors with the Help of Passive Mobile Positioning,” by Andres Kuusik and Margus Tiru presents an explorative approach to the topic of passive mobile positioning (PMP) for the monitoring of visitors. The chapter discusses how these new data sources can be used for detecting different segments of visitors, which could be used as the valuable input for the improvements in the destination marketing strategy. The authors propose a new treatment of segmentation of repeat visitors, explain the PMP method, data, and methodology, and finally present and discuss the first empirical results.

In the second part of the book, Chapter Seven, “Network Structure and Performance in the Tourism Industry,” by Wojciech Czakon uses a network approach that focuses on interaction patterns in order to explain what impacts tourism performance. To date, network studies in tourism have mainly followed a descriptive thread, and performance as dependent variable has only seldom been in light. In this chapter the authors adopt a broad management perspective on the association between network structure and its performance. In this way it is possible to substantiate a curvilinear relationship between popular structural variables in network studies and performance. Implications for future tourism studies state that beyond structures also governance and behavioral variables cannot be omitted.

Chapter Eight, “Cooperative and Coopetitive Practices: Cases from the Tourism Industry”, by Mika Kylänen and Marcello M. Mariani aims to discuss coopetitive strategies, namely a mix of competition and cooperation, that are becoming increasingly relevant in tourism destinations, where competing, co-located companies also collaborate. The purpose of this chapter is to disentangle interorganizational practices of spatially competing co-located actors. In particular, the chapter addresses the dynamics through which cooperative and coopetitive arrangements are formed and maintained. The study deals with Italian and Finnish tourism destinations in the regions of Riviera Romagnola and Lapland, respectively. The
analysis shows that coopetitive practices vary according to the seasonality and are affected by the overall state of the economy.

In Chapter Nine, “Public and Private Sector Specificity as a Determinant of Cooperation in a Tourist Region,” by Pawel Piotrowski and Katarzyna Czernek the issue of cooperation between the public sector (represented by local government) and the private sector (represented by private, profit-motivated entrepreneurs) in a tourist region is illustrated. The issue is significant because of the complex nature of a regional tourist product: both sectors are complementary and cooperation between them is essential to satisfy the different needs of tourists staying in the region and to assure the region’s competitiveness. Building on the existing literature, the authors propose a conceptual framework that classifies the differences between the two sectors. The framework is then applied to a region located in the south of Poland where cooperation agreement dedicated to the promotion of the destination have been formalized. Constraints arising from the little experience in public–private cooperation in tourism is evidenced from the exploratory case study, which constitutes a starting point for further research.

In Chapter Ten, “Accessibility of Cities and Regions in Supranational Branding: The Case of Rail Baltic,” by Malla Paajanen attention is devoted to a transnational transport project involving the Eastern Baltic Sea region: the Rail Baltica Growth Corridor. On the basis of the analysis of unique insider data, the chapter emphasizes the importance of an extensive stakeholder cooperation involving the public and private sectors and the European Union—through a holistic triple-helix structure. This provides an effective bottom-up approach for a supranational branding challenge, such as the one represented by the Rail Baltica Growth Corridor. The author suggests that the triple-helix method, combined with the key arguments of Rail Baltic—improved accessibility, global competitiveness, green growth and region’s self-identity—can form a solid footing for the design of a systematic branding agenda of the supranational region.

In Chapter Eleven, “Success Factors for Collaborative Destination Marketing,” by Giulio Pattanaro, the collaboration in destination marketing is researched in depth through the use of conceptual lenses and a field research investigation of two collaborative destination marketing initiatives in Europe. In particular, the author identifies 11 success factors for this kind of collaborative destination marketing experiences, by suggesting a rich research agenda on the topic.

Chapter Twelve, “Experiential Marketing and Destination Management: Do Formal Network Strategies Matter?” by Francesco Maria Barbini, Manuela Presutti, and Lucrezia Zambelli focuses on the crucial link between experiential consumer behavior and tourism destination management, a link scarcely considered in the growing literature on experiential marketing. This chapter shows how an experiential marketing initiative has had important effects in terms of tourism activities and, eventually,
how it initiated a tourism destination adopting a case-study methodology. The case explored is the Jack Daniel’s Visitor Center, located in the small city of Lynchburg (Tennessee). The tourism network surrounding the Visitor Center represents a sort of spontaneous coordination among interdependent tourism agents, encouraged by the strong and experiential tie between consumers and the product brand. The research analyzes how an experiential marketing initiative initiated at the customer level can support the successful development of a tourism destination by adopting a case study methodology fed by reliable interesting databases. It concludes by introducing a discourse about the implications for local policy makers.

**Conclusion or Further Research Agenda?**

Despite the variety of cases, situations, and contexts described and discussed in the book, several common themes emerge.

The first one pertains to the development of cooperative attitudes among the stakeholders involved in managing a destination: they conjointly contribute to the performance of the destination through effective cooperation and by means of public–private partnerships.

The second theme revolves around the implementation of ICT applications in the tourism sector. Technology is engendering a major shift both in the performance of individuals and companies involved in the tourism sector (e.g., by increasing for example efficiency in the reservation and booking processes). It is also having a significant impact on the way individuals consume services and enjoy experiences in space and time. Moreover, they can, if well supported, be an incredible environment for fostering creative and innovative implementations that form, today, a crucial factor for the attractiveness and the competitiveness of destinations and companies.

A further important topic concerns the importance and the role network structures and their dynamic evolution may have in influencing a number of crucial issues for the development of a tourism destination such as cooperation, performance, information, and knowledge flows. The effects these issues may have on the performance of the companies that operate in the destinations, highlight how much they can gain from good and well-structured sets of relationships.

Many of the aforementioned themes need more investigation and this book provides a first crucial step contributing to lay down a challenging research agenda for tourism management studies.

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