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An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism

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Web 2.0 allows firms to implement innovative forms of communication and co-creation with customers. Despite the value of social media for tourism, few researchers have analyzed the content strategies of cruise lines on Facebook and Twitter. This study contributes by introducing a new approach to content strategy development, proposing a concept for firms to enhance their social media activity - STAR model – applied to three major cruise lines' social media activity. Digital activity was proven to be quite different among company websites, Facebook and Twitter, and among the Norwegian, Princess and Disney Cruise lines. Companies tend to have its own base of fans and followers, but these have a common language, reflected in their hashtags. Results show

that to have a content-oriented strategy that maximizes engagement in social media, a cruise line should share rich multimedia content that leverages storytelling values and that can be used on multiple platforms.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TRAVELERS 2.0

Emmanouil Stiakakis & Maro Vlachopoulou

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Social Media (SM) are one of the latest and most typical examples of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which have been widely adopted in the tourism industry at all stages of a trip. The objective of this paper is to investigate the impact of SM on travelers 2.0, as well as their views concerning relevant issues. A survey was conducted to analyze the behavior of travelers 2.0, using a sample of 250 individuals from October to November 2013. The research findings revealed that the reasons for which travelers 2.0 use SM depend on each stage of the trip. Travelers 2.0 are influenced by the different elements / services provided through SM, but to a different extent; as this influence increases, it is more likely that holiday plans will be altered accordingly. Despite the influence of SM on travelers 2.0, they still have not gained their confidence and trust.

MUSEUMS ON FACEBOOK WALL: A CASE STUDY OF THESSALONIKI'S MUSEUMS

Aspasia Vlachvei & Andreas Kyparissis

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The objective of this study is two-fold: first, to review the academic literature pertaining to social media strategies, in case of museums, and second, to provide and empirical analysis of the role of social media within marketing and communication strategies. We use first the suggested by the literature metrics, to evaluate the museums' efforts and to measure the stakeholder engagement, and second a content analysis is conducted, in order to explore how museums use their Profile on Facebook to support their marketing and communication strategies. In order to achieve the above research aims, we use data from Facebook pages of the four main museums of Thessaloniki, Greece over a whole year 2014 period. According to our results, museums' main efforts focus on promotion, communication and word of mouth, while they don't support enough yet innovation (through motivation of fans to suggest new products and services, or co-creation) and reputation (by motivating dialogue with fans and monitoring comments).

MUSEUMS & CULTURAL HERITAGE VIA SOCIAL MEDIA: AN INTEGRATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Chris A. Vassiliadis & Zoe - Charis Beleniotii

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Museums are increasingly using social media to include newer active experiences and entertainment. Not only does this digital shift provide a cost-effective, targeted and direct communication with the audience, but it also expands the museum experience beyond the borders of time and place. Although social media has triggered the attention of scholars, no previous study has classified the main ways in which social media affect museums. Drawing on a review of 54 papers this paper both categorizes and presents four major effects. The first effect relates to the opportunities of social media to museum experience and communication. The second effect is the social media enhancement to museums' learning process. The third effect analyses patterns of social media use in museums. The fourth effect involves both the problems and the barriers attendant to social media integration in museums. This study contributes by presenting new theoretical insights, research topics and managerial implications.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Social Media and User-Generated Content for Marketing Tourism Experiences

Marketing in the fields of tourism, travel, hospitality and leisure industries is one of the most cutting edge and challenging themes of recent years. Technology has been revolutionising tourism marketing and reengineering the entire tourism ecosystem (Buhalis and Foerste, 2015). The scope of this special issue is to explore developments in Tourism Marketing and Management and the implementation of new technologies for the promotion of tourism experiences. It focuses on the way social media are being implemented within the framework of tourism related activities. The papers included provide insights and an enhanced understanding of the current state-of-the-art research in social media and user-generated content for marketing tourism experiences.

Social networks and online tourism communities enhance people's active participation in the development of their travel experiences. Social media and user-generated content in tourism enable the co-creation of travel (Leung , Law, van Hoof, & Buhalis, D 2013). However, online tourism and social media marketing strategies, are understudied fields of research. A better understanding of these fields will improve how organisations respond to contemporary tourism challenges and issues.

Organisations need to develop marketing strategies and practices to get closer to their markets who already adopt information and communication technologies in their everyday activities. Interaction and engagement is the new form of marketing that will determine the competitiveness of tourism organisations in the future. The closer and deeper that engagement is, then the more personalised and individualised the experiences will be through co-creation leading to the emergence of more satisfied customers.

Still, many organizations are not ready to implement social media in their communication activities. They often employ a one-way communication approach mainly for promotional announcements and they use social media as if they were electronic brochures (Chung *et al.*, 2014; Lehman and Roach, 2011). Even if social media are considered to be an effective communication strategy to engage with the public, implementation by organizations within the framework of tourism is still under-studied (Fletcher and Lee, 2012; Koo, 2015; Lazzaretto *et al.*, 2013; Mitchell, Madill and Chreim, 2015, Leung, Law, van Hoof, & Buhalis, D 2013).

This Special Issue of *Tourismos* encompasses five papers that provide insights in the social media usage in tourism and hospitality industries. Special emphasis is put upon the implementation of social media from cultural organizations based on the studies of these papers, a promising area for further research. The use of new technologies and new methods of communications in the tourism industry has reinforced the need for dialogue among providers and users. The up-to-date topics presented in these six selected papers for the special issue of *Tourismos* will inform not only marketers and tourism professionals but also readers and academics on the topic of social media and user-generated content for marketing tourism experiences.

The first paper titled “The Visual Turn in Social Media Marketing” by Ulrike Gretzel explores recent changes in social media platforms and camera technologies that are heralding a new era of social media practices. It portrays the premises and promises of visual content sharing platforms such as Instagram, livecasting platforms like Periscope and the multi-media messaging app Snapchat. It argues that, as a result of shifts in the social media landscape, new social media marketing approaches are needed. The paper outlines opportunities and challenges for tourism marketers in taking advantage of new visual trends. It calls for a better understanding of tourists’ visual content creation and the use of visual

social media behaviours to inform tourism marketing practice. It concludes that visual social media marketing therefore goes beyond including images in social media posts. Instead, it requires developing a comprehensive visual strategy that takes into account where and how target consumers want to engage with visual content.

The second paper by Teresa Tiago, João Pedro Couto, Flávio Tiago and Sandra Dias Faria titled “From Comments to Hashtags Strategies: Enhancing Cruise Communication on Facebook and Twitter” provides insights into the implementation of social use. It introduces a new approach to content strategy development by proposing a concept for firms to enhance their social media activity in order to implement an innovative form of communication and co-creation with customers. The content strategies of social media activity on Facebook and Twitter are examined for three major cruise lines. It is found that companies tend to have their own base of fans and followers, that often have a common language, reflected on their hashtags. Results show that to have a content-oriented strategy that maximizes engagement in social media, a cruise line should share rich multimedia content that leverages storytelling values and uses multiple platforms. The paper advances current knowledge of cruise lines’ presence in social media by revealing the dimensions and strategies adopted to promote and enhance their customer experience. Moreover, this is one of the first studies to explore experience co-creation from the cruise-tourist perspective and to identify ways in which organizations use user-generated content to enhance their experiences.

The third paper is titled “The Impact of Social Media on Travelers 2.0” by Emmanouil Stiakakis and Maro Vlachopoulou and investigates the impact of social media on travelers 2.0. A survey was conducted to analyze the behavior of travelers 2.0, using a sample of 250 individuals. The research findings reveal why travelers 2.0 use social media on each stage of their trip. Travelers 2.0 are influenced by the different elements / services

provided through social media. As this influence increases, it is more likely that holiday plans will be altered accordingly. Despite the influence of social media on travelers 2.0, travellers still have not gained their full confidence and trust. The paper provides future research directions towards the investigation of the reasons behind the attitude of lack of confidence and trust. The findings help to learn the requirements of potential customers and how to operate in such a way that meets them effectively.

The other two papers in the special issue focus on the implementation of social media within the cultural environment. The paper titled “Museums on Facebook Wall: A Case Study of Thessaloniki’s, Greece Museums” by Aspasia Vlachvei and Andreas Kyparissis provides an empirical analysis of the role of social media within marketing and communication strategies of museums. They evaluate the museums’ efforts and measure stakeholder’s engagement. Content analysis was conducted to explore how museums use their profile on Facebook to support the marketing and communication strategies for the four main museums of Thessaloniki, Greece. The results illustrate that the main efforts of museums focus on promotion, communication and word of mouth. However, they do not support enough innovation yet (through motivation of fans to suggest new products and services, or co-creation) and reputation (by motivating dialogue with fans and monitoring comments). The paper concludes that museums have a unique opportunity through social media to deliver powerful experiences that not only inspire and teach but also interact with society and guide wide audiences.

Chris Vassiliadis and Zoe-Charis Belenioti’s paper titled “Museums and Cultural Heritage via Social Media: An Integrated Literature Review” classifies the main ways in which social media affects museums. Drawing on a review of 54 papers this contribution both categorizes and presents four major effects. The first effect relates to the opportunities offered by

social media to promote the museum experience and communication. The second effect is the social media enhancement of learning processes in museums. The third effect analyses patterns of social media use in museums. The fourth effect involves both the problems and the barriers attendants face to social media integration in museums. This study contributes by presenting new theoretical insights, research topics and managerial implications. The study reveals that besides social media effectiveness, museum managers fail to engage with dialogical communication due to their limited understanding of social media enabled dialogue.

Overall, these papers present new insights in the evolving use of social media in the tourism industry. It is evident that social media should be used as a strategic communication tool to draw the demand and supply side in the tourism and hospitality services closer together.

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