

## FROM COMMENTS TO HASHTAGS STRATEGIES: ENHANCING CRUISE COMMUNICATION IN FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

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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*

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*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.*

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**Keywords:** *social media; Facebook; Twitter; cruise tourism; STAR model*

## INTRODUCTION

The information-intensive nature of the tourism industry suggests the importance of information communication technologies to the tourism delivery system. The emphasis is on internet and especially on social media (Munar, Gyimóthy 2nd, Cai III, & Jafari, 2013). The authors noticed also the take-off of online marketing and social media in tourism following a similar path of what happen in other industries (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). There has therefore been much discussion and research on social media and its implications for the tourism and hospitality industries (Goodyear, Casey, & Kirk, 2014; Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013; Hvass & Munar, 2012; Munar et al., 2013; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) identified three domains of influence in social media that merit consideration: 1) as information and communication technologies tools that depend on information technology and firms' digital marketing strategies; 2) as channels enabling peer-to-peer communication, based on content creation, collaboration and exchange of content between all companies; and 3) as a link to constructing a virtual community that affects people's behaviors.

Most of the research on social media in tourism and hospitality has been published after 2007. A closer look at the literature and these three domains reveals that the research focuses on the first sphere and is applied mostly to hotels and restaurants (Fotis, Buhalis, &

Rossides, 2012; Hays et al., 2013; Jeong & Jang, 2011; O'Connor, 2010; Rauch et al., 2015; Tiago, Amaral, & Tiago, 2015; Tuominen, 2011; Zhang, Zhang, & Law, 2014).

Therefore, there is a lack of research on the other spheres and in the different fields of tourism and hospitality, such as cruises and entertainment activities. The present work is an effort to describe social media strategies in the cruise industry due to the lack of studies in the literature, by analyzing the activity of three cruise lines on Facebook and Twitter, documenting the topic-criteria used, the engagement and sophistication achieved and transposing the engagement drivers to the components of the STAR (Storytelling Triggers Amusement Reaction) Model.

This paper is structured as follows. In the first two sections we review the literature and formulate the research questions. The next section describes the sample and a measure used, and then presents the major findings. Last section presents the discussion of the theoretical contributions and the practical implications.

## **MAIN BODY**

Technology has become a baseline of daily life: people posts tweets, likes and become fans, explore millions of mobile apps, search, create and share contents, and at the same time shop and execute transactions online. People live virtually connected through multiple devices that allow increasing efficiency, convenience, access to a wider spectrum of information, and broader selections of data sources (Tiago, Tiago, & Amaral, 2014).

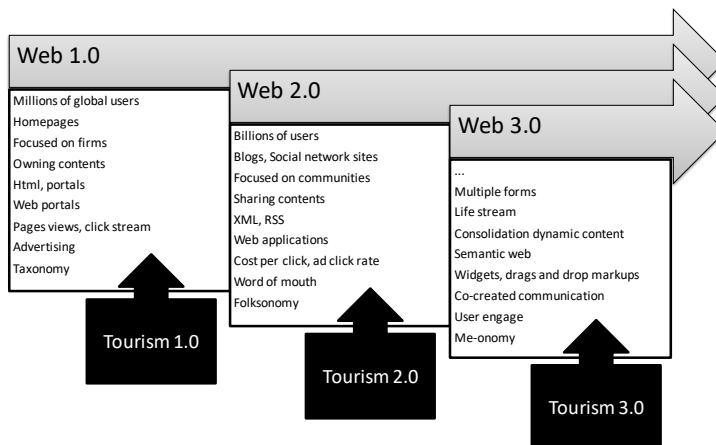
These communications technologies have redefined the tourism industry (Buhalis & Zoge, 2007). Both firms and customers have consequently undergone behavioral changes. From a firm's perspective, technology allows a cost reduction and strengthening the relationship with all stakeholders, permeating contemporary tourism marketing. Above all these technologies have transformed the culture

of purchasing and communication in hospitality and tourism firms, forging digital strategies that are ideally suited to the intangible nature of tourism (Cooper & Hall, 2013).

A study of the evolution of tourism and information communication and technology (ICT) developments, reveals a common evolutionary path. Tourism has embraced technology for more than three decades, beginning with the development of computer reservation systems, followed by communication with clients, interactivity, research tools, massive data storage and support or relationship management (Cooper & Hall, 2013).

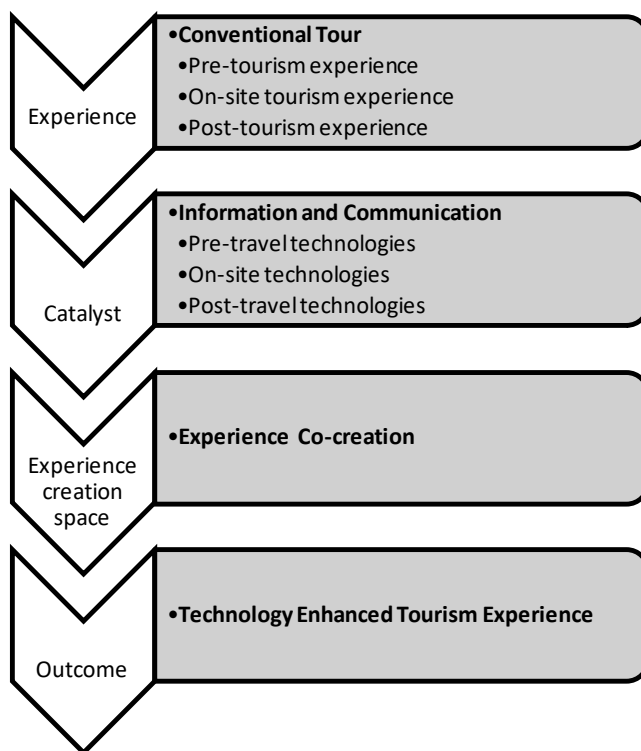
Before the Internet, tourism was seen as mass tourism or version 0.0., where technologies acted as operational mediators, accessible only to firms (Amaral, Tiago, & Tiago, 2014). In the early years of Internet – Web 1.0 – the first behavioral change in tourist took place: an individual with internet access could search for and retrieve information. In this sense tourists became active searchers of the content that firms provided (see, Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Web and tourism evolution



With billions of online users, the second generation of Web-based services appeared (Schegg, Liebrich, Scaglione, & Ahmad, 2008). Web 2.0 was accompanied by a communication shift in which internet users ceased to be mere consumers of contents and firms adopted a more active online posture (Tiago & Verissimo, 2014). This was also true in the tourism domain, where changes pertained to communication and buying behavior, with technology catalyzing and enhancing the entire tourism experience (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2014) (See, Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Framework for Technology Enhanced Tourism Experience



Source: Adapted from Neuhofer et al. (2014)

As presented above, technology is widely recognized by academy and practitioners as a crucial factor that can improve tourism offers and experiences, and that permeates the tourism value chain (Law, Buhalis, & Cobanoglu, 2014). Tourists are turning away from the traditional sources and social media are becoming the main source of information on tourism experiences. Tourists' written descriptions and/or reviews posted on social network sites, can have a strong influence on the travel decisions of prospective travelers (Rossetti, Stella, Cao & Zanker, 2015).

Keitzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) opened their study of social media with “welcome to the jungle,” since “social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.” And, social network sites are web services that allow users to construct a profile and share opinions, photos, movies, videos and recommendations with other users and to consume information supplied by other users (Zavišić & Zavišić, 2011).

Therefore, Web 2.0 applications have turned the internet from an information repository to a source of global opinion, where the critical factor is no longer access to information, but the ability of treat all available data, converting it into information that supports management decisions and customer orientation strategies.

Cooper (2006) notes that Web 2.0 was marked initially by an increase in the number of data sources about tourism data and reviewed the knowledge flows and diffusion within a knowledge management framework applied to tourism. Cooper (2006) identified several barriers to the adoption of knowledge management in tourism, some of which were specific to tourism firms. Among those barriers, we concentrate on the lack of trust between the knowledge creators and those who might use it, since mistrust can have a direct reflection on the e-tourism approach.

Web 3.0, also known as semantic web, is the next big step, combining the evolution of technology with user-generated content, and resulting in the automated exploitation of the opinions shared by customers to construct a new model for e-tourism.

Going over these three steps of web and tourism evolution, a common characteristic is found: the development of the tourism experience is becoming knowledge-based or knowledge-intensive, derived from the large influence and use of information and communication technology (Kahle, 2002; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008).

The strategy and degree of sophistication of social media adoption varies among firms (Mistilis & Gretzel, 2014). Therefore, even though social media is a "megatrend" which has had a significant impact on the tourism system, hospitality and tourism firms still have not fully leveraged the potential of these networks and have distinctive approaches to them.

Despite the increasing relevance of this industry to the tourism and hospitality sector, less academic research has been conducted in this field than in other areas of tourism (Brejla & Gilbert, 2014).

According to statements of cruise lines and trade associations, the worldwide cruise industry is the fastest growing sector in the entire leisure market. Indeed, the number of people cruising since the 1970s has increased. A similar growth is visible in cruise line revenues and number of ships. The greatest growth in this sector, however, is in the amount of information being shared by both firms and customers.

Vogel, Oschmann, Papathanassis, and Wolber (2012) have wondered if this phenomenon is truly promising, since Cruise prices have gone down in the last decade and competitors keep reinventing themselves to offer memorable tourist experiences. For cruise line management, understanding what motives their customers and how these motivations influences other customers is relevant in the design and promotion of new offers.

Over time, different factors have been found to influence tourists' intentions to take a cruise. The initial efforts were centered in the economic, institutional and cultural environment (Vogel et al., 2012), leading to the definition of segments based on prices (Field, Clark & Koth, 1985; Petrick, 2005) and destinations (Field, Clark & Koth, 1985). However, cruises are fairly complex products and tourists are constantly searching for extraordinary experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Williams, 2006).

Williams (2006) suggested that the development of creative tourist experiences relies on three components: fantasy, feeling and fun. In a cruise context, these components are tightly linked to social interactions among customers and service providers (Huang & Hsu, 2009), as well as with critical incidents (Petrick, Tonner, & Quinn, 2006), and perceived image of cruise travel (Lim, Widdows, & Park, 2006).

Alongside with these factors, Hung and Petrick (2011) reported that passengers' intention to take a cruise could be influenced by a wider set of personal and emotional factors: escape from the everyday environment, relaxation, prestige, enhancement of relationships with family, facilitation of social interaction, and novelty (Crompton, 1979; Botha et al., 1999).

This list of motivators is quite similar to those found in other tourism activities, positioning cruises at the same competitive level. However, Hung and Petrick (2011) found eight additional categories: convenience, destinations, activities, amenities/services, being at sea, weather, value, and word of mouth. Above all, they report that taking a cruise was a way to strengthen a friendship or a relationship, reinforcing the notion of social ties and experiences.

The evidence has proven that the cruise environment is conducive to the development of social structures among customers and between customers and service providers (Huang & Hsu, 2009). Moreover, these tourist-to-tourist interactions can have a positive impact on the cruise experience, and indirectly on vacation satisfaction, by being a source of favorable word of mouth.



Yarnal and Kerstetter (2005) analyzed the social interactions during a cruise and found the intersection between group vacation contexts with tourism experiences. So, if cruises are sources of social interactions in a precise physical space, social network sites can be the digital space of the tourism experience, allowing the sharing of past experiences and enabling the search for information regarding others experience.

Tourism and hospitality firms have embraced social media due to its potential for engagement and co-creation with consumers, thereby taking advantage of the natural social bonding of most tourist experiences. Looking at Haven and Vittal (2008) definition of user engagement is composed of four “Is” (p. 3):

- “Involvement” (“the presence of a person at the various brand touchpoints”);
- “Interaction” (“the actions people take while present at those touchpoints”);
- “Intimacy” (“the affection or aversion a person holds for a brand”);
- “Influence” (“the likelihood a person is to advocate on behalf of the brand”)

Enhancing firms’ engagement can be difficult, since it entails managing millions of co-creators who have been empowered by the digital solutions that can increase a business’ profits and improve its image (Wiley, 2009). This requires a twist to the mindset of the entire firm. The firm becomes a global player of content creation and allowing customers to design and share their experiences. In addition, this twist allows for the exploration of social network sites as promotion and communication tools and enhancing word of mouth online (eWOM) (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Social network sites contents have the ability to influence the purchasing decisions of consumers by passing information via electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Cheung &

Thadani, 2010). However, not all individuals or firms activity conducted in these social network sites generates eWOM that counts.

The exposure to eWOM changes customers' buying processes, especially concerning service encounters, because clients are likely to know what to expect. Evidence also shows that negative reviews have less of an effect on a tourist's behavior, especially when that tourist is already familiar with the service provider (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009).

User-generated content can be classified according to its quantity, valence and attributes, and when there is a common language and type of content among users, it allows for the creation of online imagined communities. As Kavoura (2014) recalls, these online imagined communities offer unique communication opportunities for marketers and advertisers. They provide direct access to consumer targets and are updated through comments that reflect consumers' state of mind, desires, and likes. These virtual imagined communities are opportunity spaces for reinforcing brands by making or strengthening the emotional connection with community members. This emotional tie is intimately related to engagement, which is probably the most overused word in social media.

One of the most important tasks facing cruise marketers is keeping users engaged, since engagement reflects users' interest as driver of actual tourism behavior. According to Bharathi and Goswami (2014), companies use "engagement practices" to direct customers to their websites. This "user engagement" consists of retaining customers through websites and social media sites by using quality content.

With so much time focused on the messenger, the value of the message itself tends to be devalued. The STAR model innovates by focusing on the messages content and reveals that digital engagement reflects the capability of the messenger to combine four dimensions: storytelling; triggers; amusement and reaction.

As explained by Singh and Sonnenburg (2012), storytelling in social media is a nonstop and, most of time, improvisational course made up of interlinked content, which enhances the peer-to-peer relationship. Heller and Parasnis (2011) pointed out that storytelling can promote more than individual relationships, allowing brands to move from social media communication to social customer relationship management. Digital stories often present in compelling and emotionally engaging formats, and can be interactive, becoming the bases of storytelling. These contents are shared in the format of small stories, which follow a line of emotions states or thoughts regarding a subject or person life aspect. Based on the discourse analysis perform the comments were classified as having or no these characteristics of storytelling.

The fans and followers involvement with a social media page passes by stimulating them to think about a given topic or event and make them eager to share it frequently with their friends. Both links and images can act as triggers or amusement, depending on if it stimulates an emotional state of mind that leads the individual to share or follow a hyperlink or simply makes the content memorable with the action of "like it". Triggers are all elements that can promote virality of contents shared both by firms and tourists.

Nowadays, more and more people are creating their own "digital stories", but not all the stories can generate the same reaction of the public. The denominated "reaction" dimension concerns with the active posts and comments created by fans individually and are not entirely controlled by the profile owner or brand. This dimension derives from the comments generated.

The components of amusement and reaction are related to content valence and the ability to encourage tourists to share, comment and have fun.

All four dimensions are not mandatory, but from their balance use upper levels of engagement can be achieved. Regardless of the main differences found between cruise lines, all of them have reached

high levels of engagement and established a virtual community of fans and followers using the STAR model.

Effective use of social media can bring about great opportunities for tourism firms in terms of social relationship management—easy connection with customers; brand awareness; staying relevant; and keeping track of customers.

## **RESULTS**

The growing influence and range of social activities impel marketers to seek a wider understanding of tourist behavior in order to formulate tourist-oriented strategies. With the STAR model as the baseline, two sets of research questions have been formulated. The first set is designed to understand the extent to which the content created and shared by users and firms can promote engagement:

Q1. To what extent do tourists' shared contents influence engagement level?

Q2. What are the main types of content engagement shared by cruise lines?

Most research on cruises relies on the use of structured questionnaires with Likert-type scales. This type of analysis has been criticized for confining subjects' responses to pre-determined items and forcing subjects to respond to items which may not apply to them (Samdahl, 2005; Tapachai & Waryszak, 2000). Research within the cruise industry can now use Web-based content created by tourists as an information source. Therefore, instead of directly asking tourists about their cruise, this study examines the content that has been created and shared by tourists on cruise lines' Facebook and Twitter sites.

The challenge of looking at the web effect on people is to validate past conceptual constructions in social media and to consider all the available data. For this purpose, and based on the network structure of the three Norwegian, Disney and Princess cruise lines, content analysis was performed combined with the measurement of social

media metrics, such as engagement and klout score (the klout score is a number between 1-100 that represents the influence of each user in social media networks).

The data used was gathered directly from the original social network sites of the companies and from three traffic analysis tools available online: Alexa, SocialBackers and SimplyMeasured. The data was retrieved for November 2014 - April 2015 and weekly engagement levels were established.

We used variables related to the website activity like the number of visitors, bounce rate, time online, geography, gender, access point and education. For Facebook analysis we considered number of fans, likes, posts, shares and content posts. For Twitter analysis we used the number of followers, tweets and retweets, in addition to the text of each piece of user-generated content.

For data treatment, we used a mix of qualitative and quantitative analyses, starting with a descriptive analysis of traffic, volume and structure. To evaluate the STAR model dimensions the storytelling dimension was measured by the existence or non existence on the content post evidences of small stories with a sequence line or emotional flow. To measure the triggers ability of comments the number of share or hyperlink used were accounted. The amusement dimension was given by the average likes by fan that each post received and the reaction dimension was measured by the active posts and comments created by fans.

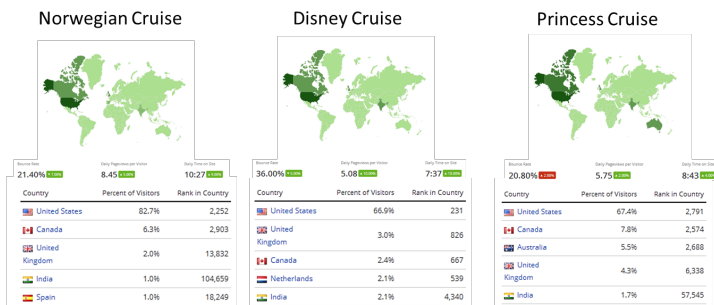
Based on the variables mentioned above, engagement and klout were measured and used to classify fans and followers on Facebook and Twitter, allowing identifying those who are opinion makers.

Finally, user-generated content was analyzed and transposed to a dispersion tool, based on the graph analysis methodology. Using Gephi - an open-source network visualization platform – a social network analysis was conducted to establish the social data connectors and map the Disney networks. The centrality measure used to establish how well the node is connected was the klout. After

establishing the main network, a connected subgraph  $G(V, E)$  such that  $G$  includes all the followers of Disney by country of origin, the cardinality of  $V$  is minimum klout, and  $\sum \text{NetWorth}(v_i \in V)$  is maximum klout was estimate. Additionally, for each country the most frequently used hashtags were retrieved in order to identify the common words used in the network and the graph by country was redraw.

These three companies have a strong internet presence. Norwegian has the highest number of daily page views with an average of 8.45; Princess is next with 5.75 average of daily page views and Disney is third at 5.08 average of daily page views. The amounts of time spend on the Norwegian and Princess sites are similar, with about 8.4 minutes for Norwegian and 7.37 minutes for Disney. When it comes to the bounce rate, Disney is first with 36% of bounce rate, Norwegian's has 21.4% of bounce rate and Princess' has 20.8% of bounce rate.

Figure 3 – Web page visitors comparison



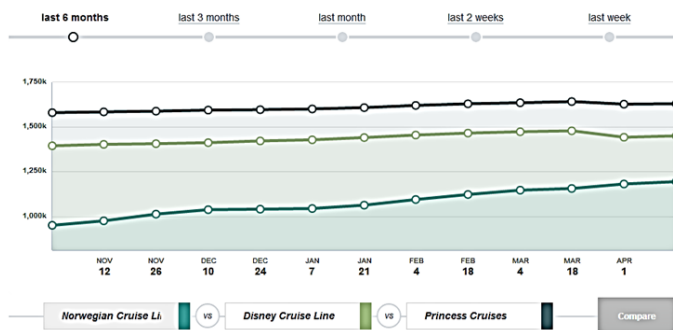
In descending order, the number of visitors to the site from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. More than 65% of the visitors to the Princess and Disney sites are from the US; 82.7% of the visitors to Norwegian site are also from US.

Among Canadians, 6.3% visit Norwegian site and 7.8% visit Princess site. Among visitors to the Disney site, the second-largest numbers of visitors are from the United Kingdom (3.0%) and Canada (2.4%).

On all three sites, women are three-quarters of all visitors. This is something that companies should take into consideration. The visitors to Norwegian and Princess sites tend to be college-educated, but those to the Disney site are not. This disparity can be associated with the public perception of Disney. Another salient aspect is the number of site visits that are made in school to Disney website that may reflect the importance of children opinion in the choice of cruise to take.

Even though in the website analytics Norwegian appears in first place, the Facebook analytics tell a different story. Trying to better understand the fan base on Facebook we can see that Princess cruises has the most views, 1.630 million fans, followed by Disney cruise lines, with 1.449 million fans and Norwegian with 1.193 million fans.

Figure 4 – Number of Fan Page Comparison over 6 month period



The nationality of Facebook fans is similar to the official firm site and even more concentrated in the US for all companies, followed by Canada and the United Kingdom. Mexico also appears in Disney and Princess and Puerto Rico, a US territory, is also present on all sites.

For Princess visitors, Australians are the third-largest nationality. Germans appear only on Norwegian; Brazilians are strongly represented on Disney and the Japanese are represented among Princess fans. Europeans are most likely to be fans of Norwegian. There is a significant number of fans from Philippines but many crew members of these companies are from the Philippines.

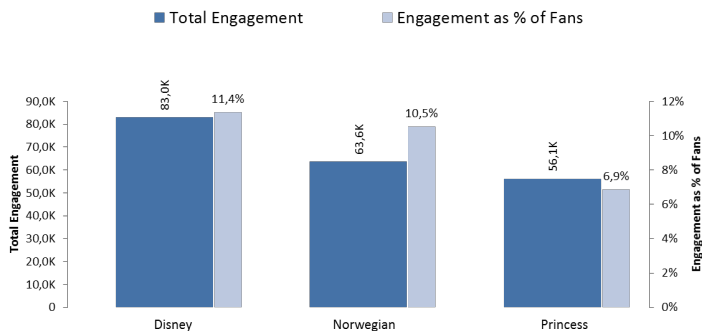
Figure 5 – Number of Fan Page Comparison by Country of Origen

Norwegian Cruise Line Fan Overview			Princess Cruise Line Fan Overview			Disney Cruise Line Fan Overview		
Country	Local fans	%	Country	Local fans	%	Country	Local fans	%
United States	1.037.431	86.9	United States	1.171.450	71.9	United States	1.150.492	79.3
Canada	23.959	2	Canada	116.254	7.1	Canada	52.920	3.6
Philippines	17.932	1.5	Australia	103.215	6.3	United Kingdom	24.636	1.7
United Kingdom	10.316	0.9	United Kingdom	48.864	3	Mexico	20.159	1.4
Puerto Rico	6.621	0.6	Japan	20.481	1.3	Brazil	16.131	1.1
Germany	5.565	0.5	Philippines	19.918	1.2	Puerto Rico	15.620	1.1
India	5.130	0.4	Puerto Rico	10.860	0.7	Philippines	14.093	1
Australia	4.789	0.4	Mexico	9.665	0.6	India	9.999	0.7
Italy	4.291	0.4	New Zealand	8.811	0.5	Australi	9.676	0.7
Brazil	3.854	0.3	India	8.601	0.5	Argentina	7.482	0.5
Others		6.1	Others			Others		

Surprisingly, when looking at engagement value of Disney on Facebook, the company has a total engagement reach of 83.0 thousand people; Norwegian has 63.6 thousand people and Princess has 56.1 thousand people.

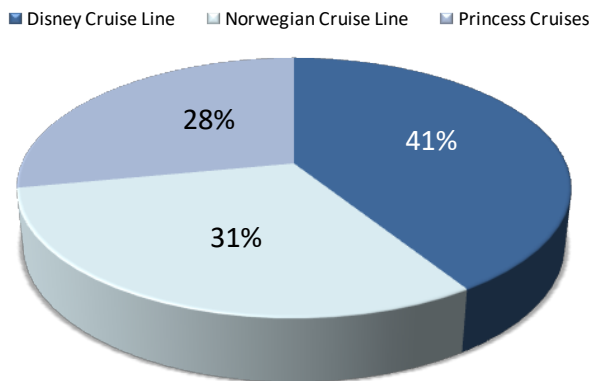
Figure 6 - Fan Page Comparison: Total Engagement on Brand Posts on Facebook





The engagement in relation to fans is similar: Disney has 11.4%, Norwegian 10.5% and Princess only 6.9%. That means that Disney has a 41% of share of engagement, Norwegian 31% and Princess 28%.

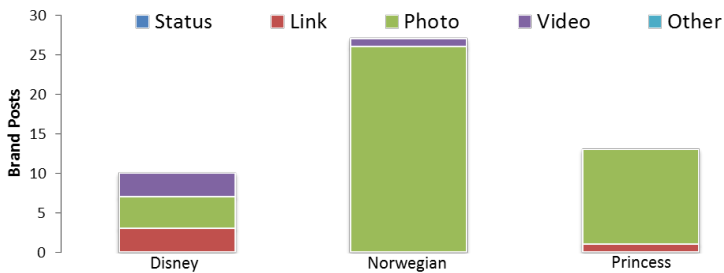
Figure 7 - Relative Share of Engagement on Facebook



Although Norwegian has more posts per day than either Princess or Disney, this does not translate into higher total engagement reach,

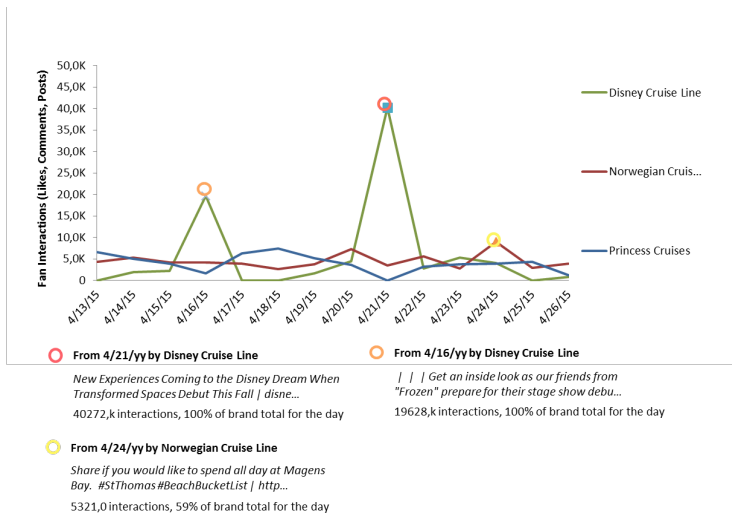
which Disney has. This might be because Disney has the greatest diversity of branded posts, with similar numbers of links, photo and videos. In contrast, Norwegian and Princess depend almost exclusively on photos.

Figure 8 - Relative Share of Engagement on Facebook



The engagement over time reveals that Disney offers the most new features and shows, and Norwegian has the most specific offers. This shows that companies have to create and promote events or offers in order to keep their Facebook fans engaged. This engagement can be related to storytelling.

Figure 9 - Fan Page Engagement Comparison Over Time on Brand Posts on Facebook



The case of Twitter is very different. Disney has 288.883 followers, compared with 87.497 followers for Princess and 78.827 followers for Norwegian.

This difference between the number of Facebook fans and Twitter followers could be because Facebook is stronger in Europe and Twitter is stronger in the US.

Figure 10 – Twitter Followers



Among Twitter followers of cruise companies, the majority are from US and Canada with Europe a distant third.

This is interesting since the nationality is very similar between all companies therefore suggesting that the greater number of followers versus fans is more attributable to companies' investment in the Twitter than Facebook. Perhaps Disney's strategy is much more focused on Twitter than Norwegian's and Princess' are, integrating Facebook and Twitter platforms with Instagram and YouTube.

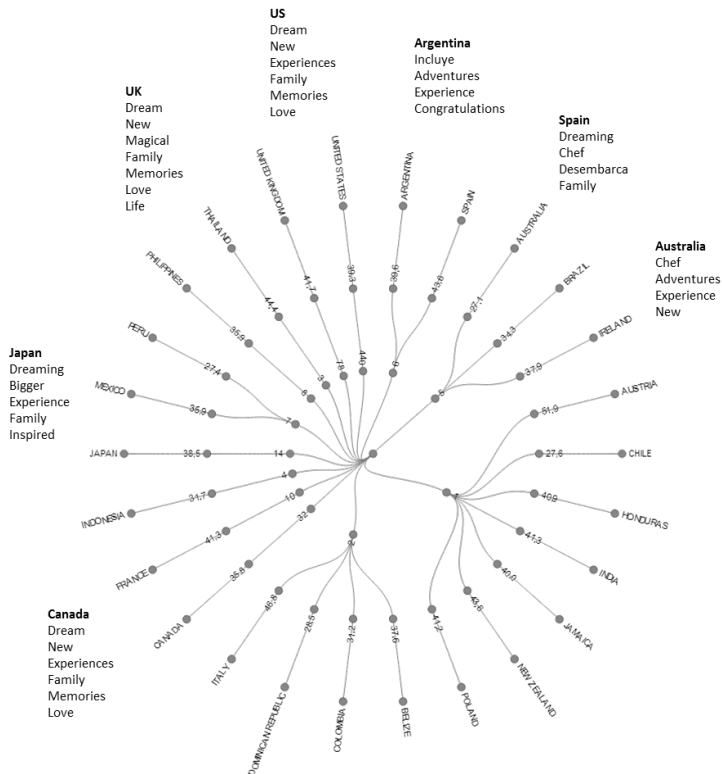
By analyzing Twitter's customer service work flow, we observe that Norwegian has 1.039 brand mentions and Disney 1.063 brand mentions. The average number of followers per person is 2.224,7 with 927 unique people for Norwegian and 4.722,5 with 1.292 unique people in Disney.

An interesting aspect is that the average firms' time of response to users' posts which reflects an interactive posture and engagement strategy that for the case of Norwegian cruise line is around 5 hours, with Sunday at 5:00 pm being the most active time. This is important for firms to know, so that they can post new content when people are

most likely to see it and to schedule customer service representatives when they are most needed.

The content analysis associated with the graph analysis produced for Disney, shows similarities in terms of hashtags: #new#, #dream#, #experiences# and #family# are the most used words regardless of the tweet's country of origin. The United States and Canada present minimal differences in the hashtags used. Countries at a greater cultural distance from these two, such as Japan and Argentina, adopted particular hashtags: #bigger# and #incluye# respectively.

Figure 11 – Graph analysis for Disney Twitter



A look at the branches shows that the number of members posting is not directly correlated with the average klout level. A caveat here is that some people posting online have very high branch of influence in their personal network, and therefore companies need to pay close attention to these trend setters.

## CONCLUSIONS

Technology has transformed the tourism and hospitality industry: it allows firms to strengthen their relationships and communication

with customers as customers become more active in the definition and communication of their tourism experience.

With Web 2.0, tourists became content generators and data providers. Their preferences, values and experience are accessible with a click. For some tourism and hospitality firms this is a unique opportunity to understand customers better but for others it is a challenge since firms can no longer control their brand image.

In this context, social network sites are becoming live stream repositories of information and whiteboards for tourists on which to post and search information about their travels. All types of tourism and hospitality firms have discovered the potential of this media and try to adopt an active posture that enhances their customer orientation strategies.

Despite significant research, few studies have analyzed cruise lines' activity in social media. Therefore, this paper advances current knowledge of cruise lines' presence in social media by revealing the dimensions and strategies adopted to promote and enhance the 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 customers' co-created content to enhance their experiences.

The first conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that social media community and activity are not directly related to traffic to official cruise line websites. The number of visitors is not proportional to the number of Facebook fans or Twitter followers.

In addition, the number of fans cannot be considered a reliable indicator of Facebook engagement. As found in other studies, fans can have distinctive levels of activity and engagement. While Norwegian has the strongest Facebook presence, Disney has the most Twitter followers.

A third conclusion is that Facebook fans and Twitter followers belong to completely different communities, despite using some common hashtags. For instance, Disney's most common hashtags are

#new#, #dream#, #experiences# and #family#. Some countries introduce other hashtags that reflect their own culture, such as #bigger# in Japan or #incluye# in Argentina.

Of the three companies, Disney has made the best use of the STAR model, adopting a multi-content brand post strategy, and obtaining the highest levels of engagement for a smaller number of posts.

The last conclusion reinforces the STAR model; companies that adopt the four dimensions strategy can maximize the engagement of their customers. In fact, the relatively poor results found in both Norwegian and Princess are a consequence of a concentration on photos that elicit few comments, tweets and retweets. Disney adopts a full STAR model dimensions strategy, investing also in movies, written contents and integrating different platforms.

In terms of managerial implications, the STAR model demonstrates the need to adopt an integrative content strategy in order to maximize engagement. Therefore, cruise lines should invest more in co-creation, and in the development of small videos that become part of their storytelling and can be shared across multiple platforms.

As mentioned previously, another relevant aspect that needs to be taken into account, is the time of response and especially the times when there is the most activity on the site, since firms should use this period to post new content and to respond to customer queries outside of traditional business hours.

The use of these media can enable cruise lines to expand their target markets in different countries, since cruise lines are now concentrated in the North American market.

Our results also show the need to offer content that appeals to specific target populations, especially women and children, since women constitute the clear majority of visitors to all of the websites; in the case of Disney, a large proportion of visitors access the site from schools. This suggests the need for a deeper analysis of the content that is posted and the reactions to them. Thus, further research



should be conducted to unveil differences in the profiles of tourists within the cruise line community.

Considering the constant evolution of data on social media activity and time variations, these conclusions need to be verified over time and subjected to analysis of more systematic metrics.

Social media and web-driven strategies need to be closely monitored. Special attention should be given to the development of a hashtag-engagement dictionary that companies can use to generate automatically personalized responses.

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