TOURISM DESTINATIONS DEVELOPMENT TRENDS THROUGH THE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
The aim of this article is to underline the actual trends regarding tourism destinations, which are presented on social media channels by the most important international tourism organizations. Social media is nowadays one of the most popular way of communication due to the extremely large amount of users they have, the level of engagement they facilitate and, as well, due to lower costs they require in order to establish a proper marketing campaign. Moreover, being present and active on social networks can help an organization in reaching their audience and make it easy to spread information and to create awareness about new concepts and strategies concerning destination development. Furthermore, social networks help organizations to receive feedback and reactions on their themes and offer them a real framework for attracting attention about what they find most appealing. Based on content analysis of the social media data, this article want to emphasize the hottest topics related with sustainability, tourism destinations development and destination governance, which are promoted by the international specialized organizations.

Key words: destination development, sustainability, tourism destination, tourism destination marketing, social media

JEL Classification: L31 , M31, Z32

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is becoming part of more and more users day by day, due to the facile access to technology and the lowest cost of the Internet. Facebook is one of the most popular social netwroks, with more than 2.13 billion monthly active users, from all over the world.

Social media is considered a new way of interaction between people, and, as well, a new mean of communication. It is also challenging existing customer service, marketing and promotional processes throughout the tourism sector. (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014)

Fotis, Rossides, and Buhalis(2010) suggested that that the presence of social media seems to have caused an increasing mistrust for traditional marketing tactics, as well as diminishing the effect of traditional mass media. Although social media is not a panacea, it is an effective marketing channel able to be wisely used in integrated communications and marketing of tourism services (Sotiriadis & van Zyl, 2013).

Social media's presence in tourism is influential, especially on information search and share and the way tourists and tourism businesses participate in tourism. However, little research provided solid evidence to prove its direct contribution to product distribution and/or tourist sales. In this regard, there is no surprise in the argument that the impact of social media on tourism management might be less important than has been thought (Eyefortravel, 2011).

Social media allows tourism practitioners to provide customised information for the individual tourist. There is a great opportunity to deliver to travellers' customised information that addresses personal needs and preferences and which could build a base towards an Open Global Destination Marketing System(OGDMS) as a solution to destination marketing challenges (Matloka & Buhalis, 2010).

The goal of this paper is to underline the actual trends regarding tourism destinations, promoted on social media by the most important international tourism organizations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of Internet and other information communication technologies is leading to a new era for the global economy. Social media continues to growand increasingly influencemany social and economic aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry. Social media is fundamentally changing the way travellers and tourists search, find, read and trust, as well as collaboratively produce information about

tourism suppliers and tourism destinations. Social media is also challenging existing customer service, marketing and promotional processes throughout the tourism sector, and providing new ways for tourism organisations to reengineer and implement their business models and operations,such as newservices development,marketing, networking and knowledge management (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

Social media can be defined as ''a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content'' (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). User-generated Content (UGC) comprises a variety of different types of content (e.g. text, pictures, audio, and video) that is published in some context, arises from a certain amount of creative effort, and is created outside professional routines and practices (OECD 2007).

There has been a debate whether or not UGC can be trusted.While most researches confirmed its trustworthiness, several studies were sceptical, proposing caveats such as: that trusting such electronic word of mouth relies on source–receiver relationships, channel variety and presentation of contents, opportunities for information solicitation,message retention capabilities, and content provider motivations for disclosure (Tham, 2013).

According to their website (Who we are - UNWTO, 2018), The World Tourism Organization(UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, being the leading international organization in the field of tourism, which promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.

The World Travel and Tourism Council(WTTC), according to Wikipedia, is a forum for the travel and tourism industry, made up of members from the global business community and works with governments to raise awareness about the travel and tourism industry, its activity including research on the economic and social impact of the industry.

The social media concept is present on a large variety of fields, but in this situation, it is refered in the marketing context, through a marketing perspective. (World Travel and Tourism Council - Wikipedia, 2018)

According to UNWTO, a tourism destination is a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight, a cluster of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. (WTO - Conceptual Framework, 2018)

From the perspective of technology, some issues associatedwith the innovation potential of social media platforms have been raised. As for any other media, language is obviously a constraint on direct information sharing between social media users. In an English-dominated world, tourists and tourism practitioners from non-English language countries are at a disadvantage in the use of socialmedia in either international travel planning or international marketing (Hsu, 2012). Multiple language platforms or websites for tourism participants might be beneficial for both supply and demand. On the other hand, current product search engines fail to effectively leverage information created across diverse social media platforms. This requires research on how to design and innovate in IT or website design, to adapt data management to evolving social media development and to share information across different media sources (Ghose et al., 2012).

Measuring the effectiveness or success of organizations' social media activities is of increasing importance to make sure that scarce resources are allocated in the most productive way. In fact the successful management of any marketing communication instrument requires the measurement of meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs)—what you cannot measure, you cannot manage. In contrast to more traditional media, social media resemble living, interrelated and interactive organisms, which are out of the control of organizations (Peters et al. 2013).

The tourism industry is primed to take advantage of social media outlets, as the industry has long relied largely on destination reputation, consumer opinion, spread of information, and positive word-of-mouth advertising. However, different countries and businesses have different realities regarding the social media used for tourism management. On one hand, the importance of online marketing has not been fully recognised in tourism management. It is estimated that only 1.55% of the total destinationmedia expenditurewas spent on Internet advertising in 2008 (Nielsen, 2009).
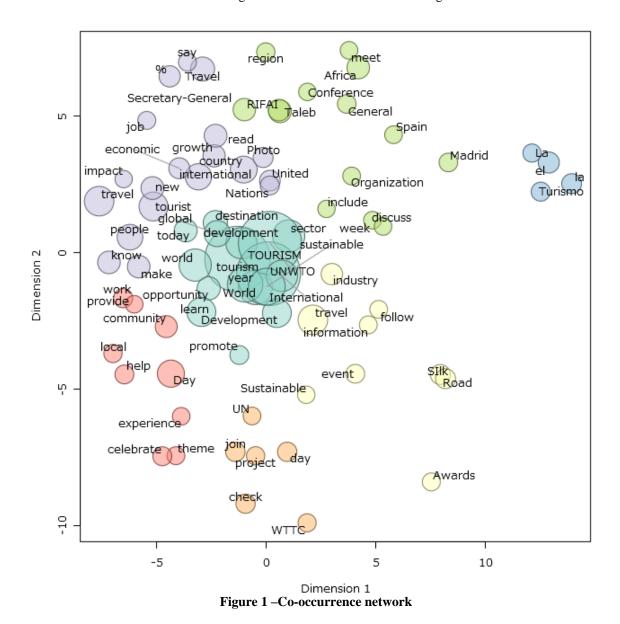
III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research focused on the mining of Facebook posts of UNWTO and WTTC. In total 2900 posts were centralized and analyzed within software applications. Content analysis represented a successful way of understanding the tourism trends promoted on social media by the two of the most importants tourism organizations. This paper is constructed on a quantitative approach, the data set being analyzed based on terms frequency and Jaccard coefficient. The data was mined from Facebook using Facepager application, was stored in an Excel file and was processed with KH Coder, being generated a co-occurence network and a multidimensional scaling(MDS).

The co-occurence network is a common technique in quantitative content analysis field, this being a very common technique for analyzing media

messages (Danowski, J. A., 1993). KH Coder uses Jaccard coefficient to calculate strength of co-occurence and the top 60 strongest co-occurrences are drawn as network edges.

Figure 1 –Co-occurrence network

Multidimensional scaling is a means of visualizing the level of similarity of individual cases of a dataset. (Multidimensional Scaling - Wikipedia, 2018)
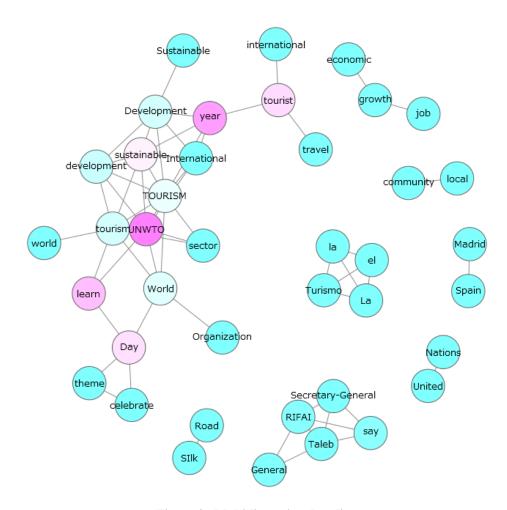
Figure 2 –Multidimensional scaling

IV. CONCLUSION

Two of the most important tourism organization, UNWTO and WTTC, are present on social media promoting sustainable development as a main topic, this being aligned with their own vision about tourism development.

The limitations of this research are represented by the uniqueness of this case study regarding just two of the major tourism organizations presented on Facebook, but it could be extended to more organization and, as well, to more social networks, and at the same time social media sources could represent a huge data potential.

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