

MARKETING OF TOURISM E-SERVICES THROUGH FACEBOOK. THE CASE OF EUROPEAN MUSEUMS

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Abstract

New media technologies have offered innovative routes of communicating, structuralizing, saving and releasing information. In the web 2.0 era, environments are not static. Interactivity and participation play a key role in the functionality of this new landscape. Users are not only consumers but also the creators of online content.). In an age of connectivity, more and more people are essentially growing up online. Given the growing prevalence of online communities, their use as an approach to connect museums with emerging young adult audiences holds great potential. The vitality of the modern museum may lie within how it responds to innovative online outreach opportunities that address the new ways people learn and communicate. The research was concerned generally to see whether e-tourism is widely accepted and if museums, in particular, have embraced social networks. In the investigation the forty eight most known museums from thirteen European countries were included. The Facebook applications of these museums (47 applications) were categorized based on common elements and SPSS was used to export and analyze our data. The sampling process was made the spring of 2012

Keywords: marketing, e-services, e-tourism, Facebook

1. E-TOURISM

Tourism is an industry that is based on information. It is based on a series of information that are collected through various channels such as World Wide Web, leaflets, friends etc. This means that the tourist product demands the information of consumers but also the information of suppliers and leads to high informative costs. So, the tourism industry is influenced and highly formulated by

Information and Communication Technologies. This revolution has radical consequences to the way of managing tourism by offering effective cooperation as long as tools for market globalization.

Demographic changes and changes in the preferences considering travel destinations create new market conditions. The main characteristics are bigger flexibility, demand for more qualitative and less mass products as well as competitive prices and bigger variety of offered services. Today tourists show a more dynamic behavior and demand greater and better information. The ability of customers to trace themselves the information needed and buy services is constantly developed. In order for the tourism industry to respond to these new challenges, the development of telecommunicative and technological infrastructure is needed.

E-tourism is defined as the use of Information and Communication Technologies to the tourism industry. It includes the sale and purchase of tourism products and services through electronic channels. To e-tourism all intranet and extranet applications are included as well as issues concerning strategy, management and marketing that are related to the use of technology.

The internet leads to new ways of responding to the constant altering buying behavior and to the revolution of the tourism value chain. The data that relate to customers and sales are used to back marketing. It can be said that it is not only the procedures that change but new services can be created, expanding this way the variety of new products and their adjustment to the special needs of every customer.

2. MUSEUMS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

In museum studies literature, digital technologies and media are widely accepted and understood as means to appeal to and connect with new audiences by use of approaches based on dialogue, communities, forum and social media, user-generated content and co-creations (Lossing, 2009; Cameron & Kenderdine, 2007). Likewise, democratisation, accessibility and engagement have been emphasized in relation to digital media and technologies (Tallon & Walker, 2008; Simon, 2010).

Several museum research papers address the use, limitations and reservations of digital media and technologies both in practice and in theory. However, research regarding how digital technologies and media affect museum organisation, work processes and daily work are still very scarce, and in a Europe context almost non-existent. Darren Peacock has addressed how digital information and communication technologies act as a “catalyst for change” within the museums’ organization (Peacock, 2008, p. 334).

Tallon & Walker state that in a technological world, the museum visit no longer begins when a person enters the building, nor need it end when she or he leaves. The museum’s space is but one site – albeit a privileged one – in a continuum of the visitor’s imaginative universe. Unlike communication by means of traditional media (posters, catalogues, pamphlets etc.), digital media presents the possibility of transferring information from one media to another and thereby separating the information from the media. Furthermore, digital technologies and media allow remediation, meaning an intermedial relationship in which new media refashion and reshape previous media and ways of communicating. This is not for the purpose of replacing the old media, but in order to extend the possibilities within communication (Bolter & Grusin, 2000).

3. MUSEUMS AND FACEBOOK

Since the opening of private collections to the public in different parts of Europe during the latter years of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, it has been possible to start talking about the museum as an institution that is at the heart of the public realm. Therefore, the public is inherent to the concept of a museum.

Information and communication technologies have changed the concept of public space and created a redefinition of concepts and practices in areas such as the economy, politics or culture as they affect the artistic field. As Marshall McLuhan visioned in the 1960s through the Global Village concept, time, space and body no longer exist and societies are walking towards a global culture. In the Museum without Walls, Malraux's ideal form for an appropriate museum that would allow the deepening and enrichment of cultural experiences in modern society was the photographic book. The key point in Malraux's museum proposal was to make a museum accessible to all in a kind of "virtual form".

Museums mostly use Facebook as a marketing tool in order to show their product/service and not as a virtual environment to interact with prosumers. Their main goal is to market themselves as good as possible by uploading information concerning present and future exhibitions and events. This way they try to motivate people visit the museum.

They tend to use Facebook as a homepage, uploading several posts once or twice a month instead of being continually present in their Facebook profile. Although, this means that their Facebook pages are not considered to static taking the form of just an "online catalogue", what they do not accomplish is dialogue with the prosumers. They fail to promote users to interact and participate.

Facebook can be used in order to reinvent a museum. Contrarily to the physic world, on Facebook the basic concerns are relationship to and the dialogue with the users. As mentioned above, in a prosumers culture, the art museum's authorized role as an institution representing the cultural heritage is challenged, since the museum's enunciation becomes only one voice among many. By being co-producers of the art museum's representation through its online Facebook profile, users themselves become representatives of the art museum. This causes a dramatic power shift between the museum and its users: "To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths."

Furthermore, the space of the art museum is transformed because social media break down the borders between the ritual museum space and the public space. Last but not least the art museum is encountering a new and emerging user group, to which we will from here on refer as the 'art interested'. This is a growing user group, consisting of people who for one reason or another do not physically visit the museum, but nevertheless have an interest in the museum and actively follow its activities online (Damkjær).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was concerned generally to see whether e-tourism is widely accepted and if museums, in particular, have embraced social networks. In the investigation the forty eight most known museums from thirteen European countries were included. The Facebook applications of these museums (47 applications) were categorized based on common elements and SPSS was used to export and analyze our data. The sampling process was made the spring of 2012.

The museums used for the implementation of this research are the thirty four European museums that are most active on Facebook. These are LOUVRE, D'ORSEY, BRITISH, VATICAN, TATE, NATIONAL GALLERY, DESIGN MUSEUM, GALLERY D'ITALIA, HERMITAGE, LES ABBATTOIRS, GUGGENHEIM, CENTRE POMPIDOU, MADAME TUSSAUDS, OTTO-LILIENTHAL, FABERGE MUSEUM, NATIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF, GEORGIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM, MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL, NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, MUSEO REINA SOFIA, KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM, ACROPOLIS MUSEUM, FOLKLIFE& ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM, MUSEUM OF GREEK FOLK ART, KAZANTZAKIS MUSEUM, THE GARAGE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART MUNICIPAL ART GALERY OF CHANIA, THE GARAGE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, MOSCOW MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, GALERIE AN DER PINAKOTHEK DER MODERNE, KONINKLIJK MUSEUM, DANISH MUSEUM OF ART & DESIGN, MUSEUM OF BYZANTINE CULTURE.

The Facebook characteristics found in these museums are Number of friends, wall comments (from the museum), wall comments (from users), like, user produced content, exhibitions, phone number, parking, email, location, working hours, public transportation, website, map, ticket value, route instructions, "welcome" (application for the welcoming of users), Facebook notes, Blog RSS Feed Reader, Twitter link, Twitter App, Extended Info, Flash Player, Photographs, application photos I like, videos, links, LINK FLICKR, Application MY FLICKR, LINK YOUTUBE, Application YOUTUBE BOX, WIKIPEDIA, application "was here", journal, "talk about it, SKYPE, recommendation, publications, SKYPE, Application 4CAST WEATHER, gowalla, yelp, ABOUT US, What's on, apocalyptic tracks, foursquare, DAILYMOTION, MOBILE, MY SPACE, DELICIOUS, questions, EMAIL SIGNUP, SCVNGR.

5. RESULTS

In Table 1, the first four applications that are included in the "Interaction with museums" group are shown. This group includes the following applications: "wall comments from museums" wall comments from users", I like" and "users' contents". By analyzing the data the conclusion is that on average. These applications mostly show up to the webpage that they have created to the Facebook and especially to the "I like" application.

In Table 2, the next twelve applications that belong to the "Information" group are shown. By analyzing the data we reach to the conclusion that the information that mostly appears in the webpage that the museums have created on Facebook is address of the museum's webpage, the physical location of the museums and the working hours.

In Table 3 there are the next six applications that belong to the "Social Networks" group. By analyzing them we draw the conclusion that museums in their Facebook page, in most cases, do not connect to other social networks.

In Table 4, it is shown that in museum's Facebook pages RSS application is very widely used and application 4CastWeather is mostly rarely used.

In Table 5 there are the applications that belong to the "Audiovisual means" group. By analyzing the data it is obvious that by average in the museums under investigation audiovisual means are used very often in a wide range with a focus on photographs

In Table 6 there are the applications that belong to the “Social Network Links” group. Here, it is made clear that the museums that possess a Facebook page do not have a link that connects to other social networks.

In Table 7 there are the next seven applications that belong to the “Calendar” group. This specific data show that “Talk about this page” application is used in most museum webpages rather than “Journal” application.

In the last Table, there are the applications that belong in the “Rest” group. “Connections” application is seen in most museums. “Profile message” is less used. Generally, more than half of the museums use these applications.

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Table 1 Interaction with museums

	Wall comments from the museum	Wall comments from users	I like!!!	Content produced by users
N Valid	48	48	48	48
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	,9583	,9583	,9792	,9583
Std. Deviation	,20194	,20194	,14434	,20194
Minimum	,00	,00	,00	,00
Maximum	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00

Table2 Information

	Events	Extended Info	Parking	E-mail	Location	Working hours	Public transportation	Webpage	Map	Books	Ticket value	Instructions
N Valid	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	,6458	,1458	,2083	,3125	,9167	,8542	,7917	,9375	,7500	,0417	,2083	,7500
Std. Deviation	,48332	,35667	,41041	,46842	,27931	,35667	,41041	,24462	,43759	,20194	,41041	,43759
Minimum	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00
Maximum	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00

Table 3 Social Networks

	Facebook Notes	Application YOUTUBE BOX	Application MY FLICKR	Twitter App	Skype	My Space
N Valid	48	48	48	48	48	48
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	,3958	,3750	,2708	,1875	,0000	,0208
Std. Deviation	,49420	,48925	,44909	,39444	,00000	,14434
Minimum	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00
Maximum	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	,00	1,00

Table 4 Other applications

	4CAS T WEA THER	Blog RSS Feed Reader	Gowalla	Yelp	Apocalyp tic Tracks	Welcome: Foursquare	Wikipedi a
N Valid	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	,0000	,9583	,4167	,2500	,0208	,2917	,0417
Std. Deviation	,0000	,20194	,49822	,43759	,14434	,45934	,20194
Minimum	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00
Maximum	,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00

Table 5 Audiovisual means

	Flash Player	Photographs album	Photos I Like	Profile photograph	Video
N Valid	48	48	48	48	48
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	,8958	,9375	,9375	,9583	,8958
Std. Deviation	,30871	,24462	,24462	,20194	,30871
Minimum	,00	,00	,00	,00	,00
Maximum	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00

Table 6 Social Network Links

	Link Fickr	Link Youtube	Link Twitter
N Valid	48	48	48
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	,1250	,1458	,1875
Std. Deviation	,33422	,35667	,39444
Minimum	,00	,00	,00
Maximum	1,00	1,00	1,00

Table 7 Talk about this Page

	Was here	Talk about this page	Journal	Suggestions	About Us	What's on	Relative publications
N Valid	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	,7500	,9792	,04167	,6875	,0417	,0417	,2292
Std. Deviation	,43759	,14434	,201941	,46842	,20194	,20194	,42474
Minimum	,00	,00	,000	,00	,00	,00	,00
Maximum	1,00	1,00	1,000	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00

Table 8 Rest

	Connections	Profile Message
N Valid	48	48
Missing	0	0
Mean	,6042	,5417
Std. Deviation	,49420	,50353
Minimum	,00	,00
Maximum	1,00	1,00