PICCOLA IMPRESA

SMALL BUSINESS

RIVISTA INTERNAZIONALE DI STUDI E RICERCHE

n. 1 - anno 2019

- Special Issue: Research in tourism enterprises
- Tourism education and training in Greece
- Tourism MSMEs and strategic networks and alliances
- Restaurant firms, web 2.0 and marketing
- Italian street travel agencies and social media
- Tourism and sharing economy

ASSOCIAZIONE PER LO STUDIO DELLA PICCOLA E MEDIA IMPRESA

ASPI
Associazione per lo studio della Piccola e Media Impresa
Via Saffi, 42
61029 Urbino (PU)
www.rivistapiccolaimpresa.it

Redazione
Rivista Piccola Impresa/Small Business®
Via Saffi, 42
61029 Urbino (PU)
www.rivistapiccolaimpresa.it

Rivista accreditata AIDEA

Codice ISSN 0394-7947

®Registrazione del Tribunale di Urbino n. 204 del 16.6.2001 - Registro Periodici - Quadrimestrale - Contiene meno del 50% di pubblicita - Copyright® by ASPI. Stampato presso lo stabilimento tipografico ROTOGRAF di Fermignano (PU).

Piccola Impresa/Small Business è una rivista quadrimestrale interamente dedicata alla pubblicazione di studi e ricerche sulla piccola e media impresa. È stata fondata nel 1987 dall' Associazione per lo Studio della Piccola e media Impresa (A.S.P.I.), Università degli Studi di Urbino "Carlo Bo", via Saffi 42, Urbino.

Piccola Impresa/Small Business is published every four months and is entirely devoted to the problems of small and medium-sized firms. lt was started in 1987 by the Associazione per lo studio della piccola e media impresa (Aspi), Università degli Studi di Urbino "Carlo Bo", via Saffi 42, Urbino.

Amministrazione e distribuzione *(Administration and distribution)*: A.S.P.I. (Associazione per lo Studio della Piccola Impresa), c/o Dipartimento di Economia Società Politica (DESP), Via Saffi 42, 61029 Urbino (PU) – Andrea Buratti (cell. 338/1700434), Federica Palazzi (cell. 349/8525921)

Email: *andrea.buratti@uniurb.it* - Web: *http://rivistapiccolaimpresa.uniurb.it*

ORGANI RIVISTA

Lista Referee 2018

Abbate Tindara, Università di Messina
Aureli Selena, Università di Bologna
Bellini Nicola, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna
Berti Alessandro, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Bocconcelli Roberta, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Ciambotti Massimo, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Demartini Paola, Università Roma Tre
Francioni Barbara, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Giusepponi Katia, Università di Macerata
Korol Tomasz, Gdansk University of Technology
Marchegiani Lucia, Università Roma Tre
Mattarocci Gianluca, Università di Roma Tor Vergata
Metallo Gerardino, Università di Salerno
Murmura Federica, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Musso Fabio, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Nuryyev Guych, I-Shou University
Pagano Alessandro, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Palazzi Federica, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Pencarelli Tonino, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
Perna Andrea, Università Politecnica delle Marche
Picciaia Francesca, Università di Perugia
Poli Simone, Università Politecnica delle Marche
Presenza Angelo, Università del Molise
Risitano Marcello, Università di Napoli Parthenope
Sampagnaro Gabriele, Università di Napoli Parthenope
Savelli Elisabetta, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo

Abbonamenti individuali (Contratto di licenza per l'accesso on line ai contenuti editoriali)	Individual subscription (License agreement for online access to editorial content)
18,03 € + IVA 22%= 22 € Il contratto prevede l'accesso tramite un unico nome utente e password. Per sottoscrivere l'abbonamento on-line è necessario andare sul sito della rivista (http://rivistapiccolaimpresa.uniurb.it), registrarsi compilando la scheda nella sezione "Registrazione". Per il pagamento sono previste due modalità: tramite PayPal, accessibile da:sezione "Info" - > Abbonamenti - > tasto Iscriviti. *** tramite bonifico bancario, all'indirizzo IBAN: IT42 U0605568700000000008 732 con causale "Abbonamento (anno) PI/SM + username" L'attivazione avverà solo dopo conferma dell'avvenuto pagamento. ***Si avvisano i gentili utenti, che il pagamento digitale potrà essere effettuato solo previa semplice e sicura registrazione della propria carta di credito a PayPal.	18,00 € + VAT 22%= 22 € The agreement allows to access through a single username and password. To subscribe you need to visit the web site of the review (http://rivistapiccolaimpresa.uniurb.it) and register by filling in a specific form in the "register" section. As to payment two methods are allowed: by Paypal accessible from: the "about" section - > subscriptions - > subscription button*** by bank transfer, to the IBAN address: IT42 U0605568700000000008 732 specifying: "username (year) PI/SB +username" After having verified payment, the subscription will be activated ***All users must register their credit card in the Paypal system, otherwise you will not be allowed to effect payment
Abbonamenti Istituzionali (Contratto di licenza per l'accesso on line ai contenuti editorial)	Institutional Subscription: (License agreement for online access to editorial content)
100,00 € + IVA 22% Il contratto prevede l'accesso da più postazioni tramite IP sulla piattaforma di Torrosa Casalini. Il pagamento può avvenire tramite bonifico bancario all'indirizzo IBAN: IT42 U0605568700000000008 732 con causale "Abbonamento (anno) PI/SM + nome utente"	100,00 € + VAT 22% The agreement allows the access IP on from more workstations trough Torrosa Casalini's system. Payment can be made by bank transfer to: IT42 U0605568700000000008 732 specifying: "username (year) PI/SB +username"
Gli abbonamenti consentono l'accesso ai tre numeri annuali e ai numeri degli anni precedenti che non sono sotto l'embargo di un anno.	Both subscription allow to access to three annual numbers and previous numbers which are not under a one-year embargo**.**

ECSB – ICSB NEWS

Conducting Experiments in Entrepreneurship Research:
A Paper Development Workshop for Early-Career Scholars in Groningen, THE NETHERLANDS
on 8-9 October 2019
Deadline for extended abstracts: 5 July 2019

RENT XXXIII will take place in Berlin, Germany
on November (27) 28-29, 2019
The 2019 Conference Main Theme is: Embracing uncertainty: entrepreneurship as a key capability for the 21st century"
Registration: 2 September 2019

3E 2020 in Trondheim, NORWAY
on 13-15 May 2020
Abstract submission deadline 1 December 2019

For more information see: www.ecsb.org e https://icsb.org/

Sommario n. 1, 2019

Saggi

Recensioni

SPECIAL ISSUE:
"Research Areas and Emerging Challenges in Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises"

Guest Editors:
Giacomo Del Chiappa, Anestis K. Fotiadis

EDITORIAL

Tourism, with its related subsectors, is a highly fragmented sector with most tourism organizations being SMEs (e.g. Dredge, 2006). Small Tourism Businesses are the backbone of the economy of many countries around the world (e.g. Avcikurt, Altay & Ilban, 2011; Coles, Dinan & Warren, 2016), and Italy is certainly not an exception. Considering their varied activities, specialized services, and integration in the society, SMEs are certainly the economic lifeblood of the tourism sector (Morrison, Carlsen & Weber, 2010), especially in developing countries, rural and remote/unprivileged areas (Fotiadis, Yeh & Huan; Jacobsen, 2016; Yeh & Fotiadis, 2014). In fact, they have been recognized as being major job creators, important contributors to the development of local communities, supporters of destination image and infrastructure in many tourism destinations (e.g. McLarty, 1998; Peters & Buhalis, 2013; Wanhill, 2000; Thomas, Shaw & Page, 2011). Recent studies (e.g. Hallak, Assker & O'Connor, 2013) also profiled SMEs according to their level of support to the local communities to investigate the relationship between such support and the organizations performance, and identified two segments, namely "reluctants" and "community advocates" with the latter reporting greater level of performance.

The aforementioned considerations contribute to explain why SMEs literature have been attracting huge attention from academics working in several disciplines such as business and management, marketing, sociology, anthropology and politics (Thomas, Shaw & Page, 2011). Furthermore, they also explain why several studies have been recently starting to analyze how specific aspects of tourism policy might have an impact in entrepreneurship and SMEs development (Hall, 2009). Even though in the last few decades the SMEs related literature has advanced significantly, further advancing the knowledge about the heuristic processes could help to fill the gap between marketing theory and practice (e.g. Guercini, 2012). Despite this, the engagement by academicians in research relating to SMEs in tourism can be still considered to be limited. Many research areas still need to be further investigated and deepened, and a further effort should be done to acknowledge and to recognize spatial (i.e. different regions and countries), sectorial (different tourism sub-sectors) and temporal variation (e.g. different time of observations) (Aber & Reichel, 2005; Thomas, Shaw & Page, 2011).

In existing studies, there is not still a universally accepted definition for small and medium tourism businesses in term of number of employees, gross profit and balance sheet (e.g. Morrison, Carlsen & Weber, 2010; Thomas, Shaw & Page, 2011). However, there is huge consensus about the main constraints and barriers that SMEs need to face to be competitive. Among the others, existing studies refer to information and tacit marketing practice (Bocconcelli et al. 2018; Jocumsen, 2004; Yolal, Emeksiz & Cetinel, 2009), poor strategic marketing and planning (Agndal & Elbe, 2007), limited human, financial and operational resources (e.g. Aureli et al. 2015), little scope for economies of scale and scope, lack of access to capital markets (Franco et al., 2014). Research devoted to analyze the failure of SMEs has identified many reasons that increase the likelihood of business collapse, such as: emotional attachment to the business (Brown, 1987), no formal business or marketing background and no prior experience in tourism sector (McKercher & Robbins, 1998), ineffective strategies to cope with seasonal peaks, lack of knowledge and skills, limited adoption of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), internet and social media in marketing and management operations (e.g. El-Gohary, 2012; Karanasios, & Burgess, 2008; Lawson et al. 2003), administrative regulations, fears of commercial confidentiality (Hollis, 2003), ineffective customer relationship management (Özgener & İraz, 2006) and service design (Zehrer, 2009) and focus on lifestyle coupled with a limited desire to grow (Getz & Carlson, 2000).

As far as this last aspect is concerned, several recent studies have in fact highlighted that different types of small business owners are not always oriented towards the growth of their business and concerned with financial factors (the so-called small business oriented owners); hence, the term "lifestyle business" has been coined (e.g. Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000) to identify a category of the so-called non-entrepreneurs (people entering a business as a way of semi-retirement) and the ethically-driven owners (Lashley & Rowson, 2010). Tourism would be predominantly characterized by lifestyle-oriented businesses (Lashley & Rowson, 2010). However, it could be argued that the lifestyle orientation of small business owners is largely affected by the moral values of the individuals in themselves, an aspect largely influenced by the cultural background. This aspect would deserve further attention and call for cross-cultural comparison. Meanwhile, according to Hallak, Brown and Lindsay (2013), the actual support of SMEs to local communities is significantly influenced by their place attachment. Future studies would be needed to analyze the factors that might influence such an attachment and/or to examine the residents' views toward the SMEs support to the local community, a perspective largely unexplored in existing literature. Significant theoretical and empirical efforts have been done to identify, mostly using a supply-side perspective, the critical success factors for SMEs in tourism and to identify possible solutions for overcoming barriers to their growth. Among critical factors, Avcikurt, Altay and Oguzhan Ilban (2006) identified the following: use of Internet, service quality, financial performance, service design, customer relationship marketing and experience marketing. Other studies referred to team working, organizational and collective learning, cooperative missions and strategies, networking (e.g. Von Friedrichs, 2010), clustering, networking benchmarking (Hwang & Lockwood, 2006), inter-organization trust (e.g. Braun, 2002), information and knowledge sharing (Kyriakidou & Gore, 2005; Novelli, 2006). Augmenting and enhancing horizontal (between competitors), vertical (between tourism businesses in a different level of the tourism supply chain) and lateral collaborations (between businesses working in different sectors), would allow SMEs to achieve economies of scale and scope and tourism destination to be more competitive (Bregoli et al. 2016; Del Chiappa & Presenza, 2013; Martini & Buffa, 2017).

Despite literature on networking and clustering among SMEs has undoubtedly grown over time, there are still emerging research areas that merit attention in future studies. Firstly, it would be useful to deepen our understanding about how networking can occur between SMEs located in remote areas and/or facing problems of geographical distance (Jocobsen, 2017), also considering the role that Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) (e.g. Bregoli & Del Chiappa, 2013; Fortezza & Pencarelli, 2018) can play in orchestrating all the local tourism stakeholders so that visitors can be pleased with unique and memorable tourist experiences (e.g. Pencarelli & Forlani, 2016). Secondly, there is a need to re-contextualize key concepts developed within the wider literature on knowledge management into the field of tourism knowledge overspill, community of practices, the importance of network and interlocking directorates, human mobility, territorial basis of collective learning, the potential role played by boundary spanners. Hence, future research should be developed to examine the different type of innovation that can occur in SMEs tourism businesses and how these are distributed via the process of knowledge transfer (Shaw & Williams, 2009). Further, it would be useful to deeply acknowledge the disruptive power that ICTs, internet and social media and their contribution in solving information and communication needs for both the industry and consumers but also in transforming the entire tourism supply chain and tourism industry (Sigala, 2018). ICTs, internet, social media give rise to new business species (both in term of service providers and intermediaries), thus giving rise to a fierce competition among "old" and "new" actors (e.g. Airbnb, Uber, etc.) that call for a dynamic realignment and redefining of the relationships that underpin the economy (Gretzel et al., 2015).

Hence, there is a need to re-contextualize the networking-related literature through the recent theoretical lens of digital business ecosystem (Baggio & Del Chiappa, 2013, 2014; Baggio & Del Chiappa, 2016) and of smart tourism destination (Boes et al., 2016; Del Chiappa & Baggio, 2015; Gretzel et al., 2015) to recognize the enabling role that ICTs, internet and social media can play in favoring network conviviality (Guercini & Ranfagni, 2016), information and knowledge sharing, the collective organizational learning, the co-creation and co-innovation within the network.

In such a smart environment, an emerging topic is the one related to cybersecurity, a mandatory asset for any tourism organization (Magliuolo, 2016; Moira, Mylonopoulos & Vasilopoulou, 2013). While large tourism companies have already started to implement their cybersecurity strategies, the most part of SMEs are struggling in achieving the same goal. Future research would need to be developed to investigate the extent to which both hospitality marketers and travelers are conscious about the issue, their attitude toward it and what are they actually doing to cope with it.

Another research area that would merit attention is the one devoted to properly conceptualize the internationalization in tourism and to investigate why and how SMEs internationalize and innovate their operations (Williams & Shaw, 2011). In this vein, it would be also interesting to analyze whether and how the international mobility of tourism entrepreneurs and immigrants can contribute to the innovation process, and/or why their contribution should differ when compared to the one of national entrepreneurs. These aspects call for future research in the field of Ethnic SMEs (Williams & Shaw, 2011).

Finally, a further effort should be done to deepen our understanding about the motivations and the barriers to SMEs in tourism sector being sustainable and being able to cope with climate change and global warming issue, the actual actions to cope with these issues, and the impact of these measures (Buffa et al., 2018; Font et al., 2016; Goffi et al., 2018). Given that the most part of the existing studies devoted to these research areas are based on self-reported survey, future studies should be more focused on adopting qualitative and longitudinal approaches (Brouthers, Nakos & Dimitratos, 2015) and should be aimed to investigate the gap between self-reported and actual behavior, and to observe its dynamics over time.

This special issue was launched to call for research papers aiming to deepen our understanding around some of the aforementioned research venues.

Overall, fourteen research papers were received from national and international scholars, thus confirming the relevant interest academics have in further contributing to understand the main dynamics, challenges and opportunities that SMEs, the real backbone of many countries around the world, face in the tourism and hospitality sector. After a double round of blind review involving national and international reviewers, eight papers have been accepted to be published in Piccola Impresa/Small business (acceptance rate: 57,14%). The editorial policy of the Journal establishes that each issue can include up to five papers. This is the reason why this issue included only five articles, which were the fastest in ending the whole reviewing process. The remaining three articles will be published in the next issue of the journal.

The special issue opens with the paper "Current trends and prospects of tourism education and training in Greece", authored by Moira, Mylonopoulos and Kefala. The authors analyze how the tourism education and training system in Greece has been changing over time to cope with the economic crisis that has affected the country in the last decade and to make it more attractive for entrepreneurs, manager in SMEs and young people. Particularly, their study shows that the Greek tourism education and training system has been significantly transformed by merging university departments to eliminate previous dead-end paths of study, and by rationalizing the offer of available programs, boost stronger research opportunities, financial aids and high-end technological facilities. This led to a gradual increase in admissions and positions offered.

The second paper authored by Badran and Badran, "Strategic networks and alliances among tourism MSMEs: the case of Dubai's Wander With'", is devoted to investigate the criteria and factors for Micro Small Medium & Enterprises (MSMEs) to make effective networking with each other and to analyze the main challenges, risks and benefits MSMEs face/obtain when trying partnerships to increase the competitiveness of the whole tourism destination. Selecting Dubai as the research site of their study, and adopting a case study methodology, authors show that alignment with experience objectives, consistent high quality of delivery, low risk, reliable performance and integrity are significant variables for success.

The last three papers all deal with the relevant role ICTs, social media and the sharing economy all exert in being instrumental for solving the information and communication needs of both industry and consumers, and for representing a key transformational driver of the entire tourism supply chain and tourism industry.

Cioppi, Curina, Forlani and Pencarelli, in their article titled "The impact of the web 2.0 on the marketing processes of the restaurant firms", adopt a multiple approach-types method to investigate whether and how restaurants are able to effectively lever on Travel 2.0 application to boost the e-reputation and what effects social media use caused on restaurants' marketing processes. Despite the awareness and the use of social media appear to be widely existing, significant room for a further improvement seems to still exist. Interestingly, the study also proposes an Online Visibility Index of Restaurants (OVI-R index) to be used to measure the restaurant performance and to be benchmarked against competitors.

The paper "Profiling Italian street travel agencies based on their attitudes towards social media", authored by Del Chiappa, Atzeni and Pung, apply a factor-cluster analysis to a sample of Italian street travel agencies to profile them based on the extent to which they engage with social media as part of their marketing operations. The study shows that four different clusters exist (i.e. "Passive users", "Active users", "Strategically myopics" and "Enthusiasts"), and that significant differences among these groups are based on the frequency of use of social media, freedom to access the Internet, number of branches, and the firm's attitude towards marketing and communication tools.

The last paper, "The intersection between tourism and sharing economy from a different angle: the Home4Creativity case study", authored by Fortezza, Berdicchia and Masino, aims to enhance the body of knowledge devoted to analyze the sharing economy phenomenon, by presenting and discussing a specific case study (i.e. Home4Creativity) portraying a new value creation model in tourism that is rooted on a hybrid set of collaborative practices (i.e., renting, bartering, and sharing) that goes along a continuum between market exchange and shared sociality.

Closing this editorial, we would wish to thank all the authors for contributing to this Special Issue, and all the national and international reviewers for the useful comments and suggestions they provide to authors to further improve the quality of their manuscripts. Last, but not least, we are deeply grateful to the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal (Prof. Pencarelli), and all the Editorial Board Members, for giving us the possibility to experience such a wonderful "journey".

Giacomo Del Chiappa
Università di Sassari
gdelchiappa@uniss.it

Anestis Fotiadis
Zayed University, United Arab Emirates
anestis.Fotiadis@zu.ac.ae

Main references

Agndal, H., & Elbe, J. (2007). The internationalization processes of small and medium-sized Swedish tourism firms. Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 7(4), 301–327.

Ateljevic, I., & Doorne, S. (2000). Staying within the fence: Lifestyle entrepreneurship in tourism. Journal of sustainable tourism, 8(5), 378-392.

Aureli, S., Forlani, F., & Pencarelli, T. (2015). Network brand management. Issues and opportunities for small-sized hotels. International Journal of Management Cases, 17(4), 19-34.

Avcikurt, C., Altay, H., & Ilban, M. (2011). Critical success factors for small hotel businesses in turkey: An exploratory study. Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, 52(2), 153–164.

Baggio, R., & Chiappa, G. D. (2013). Tourism Destinations as Digital Business Ecosystems. In L. Cantoni & Z. (Phil) Xiang (Eds.), Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2013 (pp. 183–194). Berlin Heidelberg: Springer.

Baggio, R., & Del Chiappa, G. (2014). Real and virtual relationships in tourism digital ecosystems. Information Technology & Tourism, 14(1), 3-19.

Baggio, R., & Del Chiappa, G. (2016). Complex Tourism Systems: quantitative approach. In Uysal, M., Schwartz, Z., Sirakaya-Turk, E. (Eds). Management Science in Hospitality and Tourism: Theory, Practice, and Applications. NJ, USA: Apple Accademic Press.

Bocconcelli, R., Cioppi, M., Fortezza, F., Francioni, B., Pagano, A., Savelli, E., & Splendiani, S. (2018). SMEs and marketing: a systematic literature review. International Journal of Management Reviews, 20(2), 227-254

Boes, K., Buhalis, D., & Inversini, A. (2016) Smart tourism destinations: ecosystems for tourism destination competitiveness. International Journal of Tourism Cities, (2)2,108-124,

Braun, P. (2002). Networking tourism SMEs: e-commerce and e-marketing issues in regional Australia. Information Technology & Tourism, 5(1), 13-23.

Bregoli, I., & Del Chiappa, G. (2013). Coordinating relationships among destination stakeholders: evidence from Edinburgh (UK). Tourism Analysis, 18(2), 145-155.

Bregoli I., Hingley, M., Del Chiappa, G., & Sodano, V. (2016). Challenges in Italian wine routes: managing stakeholder networks. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 19(2), 204-224.

Brouthers, K. D., Nakos, G., & Dimitratos, P. (2015). SME entrepreneurial orientation, international performance, and the moderating role of strategic alliances. Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 39(5), 1161-1187.

Brown, B. (1987), Recent tourism research in South East Dorset, in tourism and development: overviews and case studies of the UK and the South West Region, in Shaw, G. and Williams, A. (Eds), Working Paper 4, Department of Geography: University of Exeter.

Buffa, F., Franch, M., & Rizio, D. (2018). Environmental management practices for sustainable business models in small and medium sized hotel enterprises. Journal of Cleaner Production, 194, 656-664.

Coles, T., Dinan, C., & Warren, N. (2016). Energy practices among small- and medium-sized tourism enterprises: a case of misdirected effort? Journal of Cleaner Production, 111, 399-408.

Del Chiappa, G., & Baggio, R. (2015). Knowledge transfer in smart tourism destinations: Analyzing the effects of a network structure. Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 4(3), 145-150.

Del Chiappa, G., & Presenza, A. (2013). The use of network analysis to assess relationships among stakeholders within a tourism destination: An empirical investigation on Costa Smeralda-Gallura, Italy. Tourism Analysis, 18(1), 1-13.

Dredge, D. (2006). Networks, conflict and collaborative communities. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 14(6), 562-581.

El-Gohary, H. (2012). Factors affecting E-Marketing adoption and implementation in

tourism firms: An empirical investigation of Egyptian small tourism organisations. Tourism management, 33(5), 1256-1269.
Font, X., Garay, L., & Jones, S. (2016). Sustainability motivations and practices in small tourism enterprises in European protected areas. Journal of Cleaner production, 137, 1439-1448.
Fortezza, F., & Pencarelli, T. (2018). A Comprehensive picture of the social media challenge for DMOs. Anatolia, 1-12, https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2018.1439759.
Fotiadis, A., Yeh, S.-S., & Huan, T.-C. T. C. (2016). Applying configural analysis to explaining rural-tourism success recipes. Journal of Business Research, 69(4), 1479–1483.
Franco, M., de Fátima Santos, M., Ramalho, I., & Nunes, C. (2014). An exploratory study of entrepreneurial marketing in SMEs: The role of the founder-entrepreneur. Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 21(2), 265–283.
Getz, D., & Carlsen J. (2000). Characteristics and goals of family and owner-operated businesses in the rural tourism and hospitality sectors. Tourism Management, 21, 547–560
Goffi, G., Masiero, L., & Pencarelli, T. (2018). Rethinking sustainability in the tour-operating industry: Worldwide survey of current attitudes and behaviors. Journal of Cleaner Production, 183, 172-182.
Gretzel, U., Sigala, M., Xiang, Z., & Koo, C. (2015). Smart tourism: foundations and developments. Electronic Markets, (25)3, pp.179-188,
Guercini, S. (2012), New approaches to heuristic processes and entrepreneurial cognition of the market. Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, 14(2), 199 – 213.
Guercini, S., & Ranfagni, S. (2016). Conviviality behavior in entrepreneurial communities and business networks. Journal of Business Research, 69(2), 770-776.
Haber, S., & Reichel, A. (2005). Identifying performance measures of small ventures—the case of the tourism industry. Journal of Small Business Management, 43(3), 257–286.
Hall, C. M. (2009). The public policy context of tourism entrepreneurship. In I. Ateljevic and S. J. Page (eds). Tourism and entrepreneurship (pp. 243-263). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
Hallak, R., Assaker, G., & O'Connor, P. (2013). Profiling tourism SMEs according to owners' support for community: a cluster analysis approach. Tourism Analysis, 18(6), 691-705.
Hallak, R., Brown, G., & Lindsay, N. J. (2013). Examining tourism SME owners' place attachment, support for community and business performance: the role of the enlightened self-interest model. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 21(5), 658-678.
Hwang, L. J., & Lockwood, A. (2006). Understanding the challenges of implementing best practices in hospitality and tourism SMEs. Benchmarking: An International Journal, 13(3), 337-354.
Jacobsen, D. (2017). Tourism enterprises beyond the margins: the relational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SMEs in remote Australia. Tourism Planning & Development, 14(1), 31-49.
Jocumsen, G. (2004). How do small business managers make strategic marketing decisions? European Journal of Marketing, 38(5/6), 659–674.
Karanasios, S., & Burgess, S. (2008). Tourism and Internet adoption: a developing world perspective. International Journal of Tourism Research, 10(2), 169-182.
Kyriakidou, O., & Gore, J. (2005). Learning by example: Benchmarking organizational culture in hospitality, tourism and leisure SMEs. Benchmarking: An International Journal, 12(3), 192-206.
Lashley, C., & Rowson, B. (2010). Lifestyle businesses: Insights into Blackpool's hotel sector. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 29(3), 511-519.
Lawson, R., Alcock, C., Cooper, J., & Burgess, L. (2003). Factors affecting adoption of electronic commerce technologies by SMEs: an Australian study. Journal of small business and enterprise development, 10(3), 265-276.
Magliulo, A. (2016). Cyber security and tourism competitiveness. European Journal of

Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation, 7(2), 128–134.
Martini, U., & Buffa, F. (2017). The links between territorial marketing, regional sustainability policies and the brand positioning of a small firm: An analysis of best practice in the dairy sector. Mercati e Competitività, 2, 149-172.
McKercher, B., & Robbins, B. (1998), "Business development issues affecting nature-based tourism operators in Australia. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 6(2), 173-88.
McLarty, R. (1998). Case study: evidence of a strategic marketing paradigm in a growing SME. Journal of Marketing Practice: Applied Marketing Science, 4(4), 105-117.
Moira, P., Mylonopoulos, D., & Vasilopoulou, P. (2013). The different types of delinquent behavior in the hospitality industry. International Journal of Management and Sustainability, 2(11), 172¬185
Morrison, A. J., Carlsen, J., & Weber, P. (2010). Small tourism business research change and evolution. International Journal of Tourism Research, 12(6), 739–749.
Novelli, M., Schmitz, B., & Spencer, T. (2006). Networks, clusters and innovation in tourism: A UK experience. Tourism management, 27(6), 1141-1152.
Özgener, Ş., & İraz, R. (2006). Customer relationship management in small–medium enterprises: The case of Turkish tourism industry. Tourism Management, 27(6), 1356-1363.
Pencarelli, T. & Forlani, F. (2016). Marketing of touristic districts-viable systems in the experience economy. Sinergie, 101, 199-238.
Peters, M., & Buhalis, D. (2013). SMEs in Tourism Destinations. In C. Costa, E. Panyik, & D. Buhalis (Eds.), Trends in European Tourism Planning and Organisation. Bristol: Channel View Publications.
Shaw, G., & Williams, A. (2009). Knowledge transfer and management in tourism organisations: An emerging research agenda. Tourism Management, 30(3), 325-335.
Sigala, M. (2018). New technologies in tourism: From multi-disciplinary to anti-disciplinary advances and trajectories. Tourism management perspectives, 25, 151-155.
Thomas, R., Shaw, G., & Page, S. J. (2011). Understanding small firms in tourism: A perspective on research trends and challenges. Tourism Management, 32(5), 963-976.
Von Friedrichs, Y. (2010). Collective Entrepreneurship. Networking as a strategy for business development. Mercati e Competitività, 1, 2-10.
Wanhill, S. (2000). Small and medium tourism enterprises. Annals of Tourism Research, 27(1), 132-147.
Williams, A. M., & Shaw, G. (2011). Internationalization and innovation in tourism. Annals of Tourism Research, 38(1), 27-51.
Yeh, S., & Fotiadis, A. (2014). Social Interactions in Rural Tourism: A Host Perspective Case Study. Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala, 46, 131-143.
Yolal, M., Emeksiz, M., & Cetinel, F. (2009). Marketing of SMHEs in Turkey: A comparative analysis. Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 18(4), 372-385.
Zehrer, A. (2009). Service experience and service design: concepts and application in tourism SMEs. Managing Service Quality: An International Journal, 19(3), 332-349.

CURRENT TRENDS AND PROSPECTS OF TOURISM EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN GREECE

by Polyxeni Moira, Dimitrios Mylonopoulos, Stavroula Kefala

Abstract

Education and training have always been considered factors of utmost importance in economic development. To this aim, governments constantly strive to develop effective education systems, creating education and training structures at different levels which reflect the socio-economic conditions of each state. Since tourism as a social activity is internationally recognized as contributing significantly to economic and cultural development, the organization of the tourism education and training system is a research area of particular academic interest. More specifically, the structure of tourism education can be often confusing for both trainees and employers. This confusion is accentuated by factors such as the diversity of tourism as an interdisciplinary field and its inherent feature of employment seasonality, features directly linked to tourism enterprises, SME structure, function and employability opportunities. This article delves into the multidimensional system of tourism education and training in Greece, a country that is economically reliant on tourism. In particular, the education system is being analysed during the period of the country's economic crisis. Findings point out long-standing weaknesses of the education system intensified by uncoordinated political action under the pressure of the economic crisis. Analysis of tourism educational policy can possibly account for the ways knowledge is translated into practice, particularly in the area of small firms. This paper aspires to point out the relationship between government policy in Higher Education and small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) by highlighting the importance of tourism education on local economy. It turns out that in Greece, tourism education and training suffers from inherent weaknesses that are not necessarily due to the economic crisis but are potentially exacerbated by it.

Classification JEL: *I2, I230, L8, Z3*
Keywords: *tourism education and training, Greece, economic crisis.*

Data ricezione: 30/10/2018
Data accettazione: 03/03/2019

1. Introduction

It is an undisputable fact that there is a direct relationship between an educational system, a country's economy and its productive capacity. (Becker, 1974: 15-16; Mincer, 1975: 72-73; OECD, 2004: 6). The interdependence of education and the economy is essentially determined by social reality, since potential employees are expected to demonstrate skills and qualifications acquired through a high level of education or training. "Vocational education and training of human resources in tourism play an important role in the development of the tourism industry and hence in the national, regional and global economy"(Deaconu et al. 2018). According to this reasoning, the more qualified the employee, the greater his/her potential professional power. Tourism as an economic activity affects many sectors of a country's economy, namely transportation, accommodation, food & beverage, recreation and entertainment. As a complex "industry" covering a wide range of economic activities, tourism requires substantial investment in human capital.

The tourist industry in Greece is experiencing significant growth. According to the Greek Tourism Business Association (SETE in Greek), tourism in 2014 contributed directly to the creation of at least 9% of the country's GDP, while its direct and indirect contribution was estimated at 20% to 25%. According to available data, tourism is the driving engine of the Greek economy, with an estimated growth of 11.3% or € 1.8 billion in 2014 (from € 15.2 billion of direct contribution to the GDP in 2013 to € 17 billion in 2014 (Ikkos/SETE, 2015: 13). Concerning employment in tourism, it amounted to 9.3% of the total number of employees in the country since 2014, compared to 3.9% in 1983 and 7.0% in 2008. In 2016, the total number of employees in tourism according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority amounted to 341.2 thousand (Ikkos/SETE, 2015: 12-13). The SETE stresses that in terms of competitiveness, Greece cannot differentiate itself from competing countries at a cost level but at the level of product diversification and the offer of rich tourist experiences, provided there are well-trained human resources available (SETE 2005: 56).

The European Commission, in its Communication on "Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness" (SWD (2016) 195 final), considers it important to improve the skills shortages in various economic operators and launches a strategy plan for cross-sectoral cooperation in this field. The strategy plan was initially implemented based on a demand driven process in six sectors, including tourism. In many host countries it is deemed necessary to create modern educational programs that will facilitate the education and training of staff and executives in tourism companies whose specialized knowledge and skills will contribute to the qualitative upgrading of the tourist offer. Tourism education is therefore increasingly linked to sustainability (Moscardo, Benckendorff, 2015). In many host countries it is deemed necessary to create modern educational programs that will facilitate the education and training of staff and executives in tourism companies whose specialized knowledge and skills will contribute to the qualitative upgrading of the tourist offer.

It is widely accepted that the upgrading of the provided tourist services is achieved only through the education and training of human capital employed by major tourist enterprises and by increasing the student' engagement and skills. (Moscardo, Benckendorff, 2015, Farber Canziani et al. 2012). In particular, employers consider trained staff as a means to increase productivity and improve the quality of services that will consequently increase their company's profits. States are seeking to accelerate tourism development and boost competitiveness. Employees embrace training because their increase in performance, thanks to their tourist education, tends to increase their earnings (Dessler, 2013, Wilkinson et al. 2017). However, the appropriate training of human capital, necessary in a developed or growing tourism industry, presupposes the existence of a well-organized system of tourism education and vocational training. Training and training systems play an important role in the upgrading of skills. New forms of work organization and a more and more complex business environment require new approaches to training (Friis, 2001: 1). Acquisition and development of skills are vital to the performance and modernization of labor markets to provide new forms of flexibility and security for jobseekers, workers and employers (SWD (2016) 195 final).

2. The study

The survey was conducted from January to September 2018 due to the fact that major changes where taking place at the time, and are still underway, concerning the upgrading of tourism education and especially the merging of academic institutions which also affected tourism and hospitality paths of study.

The paper argues that tertiary tourism education in Greece is gradually being adapted to fit new emerging needs as a result of the economic crisis. This process of transformation has been carried out largely through mergers of University departments or the closing down of others. This could be considered as an effort to eliminate previous dead-end paths of study and limit the offer of available programmes. These moves are seen as providing the ground for efficient management of study options available at different levels and leading to different degrees, simultaneously steering future professionals towards more specific careers according to market needs. Another point of this paper is that in times of economic crisis, market needs should be reflected in the education and training of future professionals in two opposing directions. On the one hand by developing higher level tertiary academic curricula and providing students with a solid academic knowledge and background, and on the other hand by developing vocational programmes aiming at attracting professionals willing to fill the increasing needs for professional practitioners with practical skills. One of the proposed solutions carried out in Greece reflecting this model include the elimination of the Higher (in between) level of former 3-year 'TEI' studies (turned into 4-year ATEI).

2.1 Methodology

In order to track changes and assess this educational reform taking place in tourism education in Greece the authors attempted to record and map available programs of study as well as eliminated paths of study in an effort to collect and present data in a more consolidated and comprehensive way. The fact that programs at different levels (tertiary education, vocational training or professional schools) are offered by different institutions monitored by different state organizations or Ministries presents an extra difficulty. This research project makes use of secondary data collected by government departments and institutions' organizational records. Primary research was also carried out due to the writers' capacity of teaching staff in one of the major tertiary tourism education programmes examined in the project. An attempt is made to collect and present in inclusive tables the multitude tourism path programmes of study and to clarify any grey areas concerning which programs are still running and which are no longer available. Decline or increase in student numbers presented in the tables is believed to account for decisions made as to the longevity of a department or not.

2.2 The system of tourism education and training in Greece

In Greece, tourism education and training is provided by a number of public and private sector stakeholders (Moira et al. 2004: 59). But the main institutions in the field of education and training are state-owned as is also the case in other European countries. The system is centralized and focused on the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion, providing little room for flexibility to supervised education and training providers. Thus, the Ministry of Education, Research and Religions and the Ministry of Tourism (Law 3270/2004) operate predominantly in the public sector for issues of tourism education, training and education. The Ministry of Labor, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food and the Ministry of Administrative Reform are also active mainly in the field of secondary education and training, with a possible future involvement of other ministries, e.g. the Ministry of Health in the field of medical and thermal tourism, the Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy in marine tourism, diving tourism and others. It could be argued that, within the public sector, each ministry with its supervised legal entities seems to constitute a separate micro-system of education and training.

In the following section the available tourism study programs are presented analytically per organizing institution. The Ministry of Education is considered to be the major stakeholder followed by the Ministry of Tourism and other minor organizations. Programs are catalogued per level (undergraduate/postgraduate) or tertiary/vocational and provide information on areas of study, location and admissions.

Ministry of Education, Research and Religion. The dominant system of tourism education and training in tourism is the one formulated by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion. This system includes two different levels of education, the secondary level which comprises of the Professional High-schools (EPAL in Greek) which operate either during mornings or evenings and the tertiary level schools where Higher Education Institutions belong, i.e. Universities and Technological Educational Institutions. At the same time, formal training is provided by Vocational Training Institutes (IEK[1] in Greek), which belong to the post-secondary education category. There is also a subsystem of continuing vocational training in the tourism sector which is quite loosely structured. Continuing education and life-long learning, since the completion of the Certification of Vocational Training Centers (KEK in Greek) by the National Certification Center (Ε.ΚΕ.∏.Ι.Σ. in Greek), is carried out systematically by either public or private centres (KEK), and is subsidized by the European Operational Program run by the Ministry of Labor, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity. However, these programs are largely meant for the unemployed and not so much for workers who would like to improve their knowledge and skills.

All in all, the Ministry of Tourism offers programs at the following levels: Secondary, Post secondary vocational (IEK), Tertiary (Universities), Continuing and life-long education.

More analytically:

<u>At the secondary level of education</u>, tourism education is technologically oriented and is provided by EPAL (professional high-schoolsThe specializations were originally limited to "Hotel Management" (Moira et al.

[1] The IEK operate either as public or private institutions. The public are operated by the Ministry of Education, the Labor Force Employment Organization / OAED which to the Ministry of Labor, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Tourism. Their curricula and the awarded certifications are controlled and approved by the Ministry of Education.

2008) but recently changed to a more inclusive "Tourism Business Management", apparently to cover all types of tourism businesses and not exclusively hotels. However, due to the multidimensional nature of the tourist activity, there are also specializations involved in tourism but belonging to other fields and disciplines such as Food and Beverage Specialist which usually belongs to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

The Ministry of Education also comprises the National Organization for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP[2] in Greek) which supervises the Vocational Training Institutes (IEK[3]) which all kinds of training (initial or complementary). The vocational institutes (IEK) operate different specializations that are constantly changing to meet the needs of the labor market[4].

At tertiary level, tourism education is technologically oriented and is provided by Technological Educational Institutes (TEI in Greek). The length of studies at the TEI is of 4 academic years, while during the last semester of study students prepare a dissertation and carry out a practicum in a tourist business.

From 2001 until 2013 there were autonomous departments of "Tourism Management" in seven Technological Educational Institutes / TEI[5] (Athens, Thessaloniki, Piraeus, Patras, Larissa, Crete and Epirus). Most of the changes made in tourism education are reported in this level. A brief relation of events is considered appropriate at this point in order for the reader to better understand the reform. More specifically, in 2013-2014, due to the financial crisis and the pressure from the European Union institutions to reduce public spending, a large scale reform of the education system (Athena project) took place, leading to mergers, cancellations and renaming of departments with parallel changes in curricula. This reform led to the merger

---

[2] EOPPEP develops and implements a comprehensive national certification system for non-formal education (initial and continuing vocational training and general adult education) and provides scientific support to vocational guidance and counseling services.

[3] The IEK were established by Law No. 2009/92 (Government Gazette 18/A). They are not formally classified at an educational level (although they are considered as level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework) as they can be attended by graduates of Junior-high schools, Professional high-schools, OAED apprenticeship schools and any type of High school, depending on the individual specialties they offer (Article 4, Law 2009/92).

[4] In 2016-2017, specialties such as Tourism and Hospitality Specialist, Management and Economy Executive in the field of Tourism, Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Tours specialist, Air Transport Service Staff, and Culinary specialist/Chef were operating. http://www.foititikanea.gr/images/PDF/eidikothtes-diek-2016-2017.pdf

[5] Higher Technological Institutes (TEI) resembles the UK Universities of Technology. They emphasize the training of high-quality applications' executives, who through their theoretical and applied scientific training constitute a link between knowledge and application, developing the applied dimension of sciences and the arts in the respective professional fields and thus transferring, via modern technology, practices and techniques in the field of applications.

of the Department of Tourism Management with other departments of the School of Business and Economics e.g. Business Management, Marketing, etc. under the "umbrella" of a single "Business Management" Department under which optional study paths are either introduced from the first semester of study or later on. Thus, the Department of Tourism Management was incorporated as a "Tourism and Hospitality Management" study path in the Business Management Department. In this context, the reduction in government spending on education and despite the initial intention to reduce the University departments and thus the costs, the changes in the Athena project have resulted in an increase in the number of departments offering Tourism studies at a TEI level, from seven to ten, as a new department was founded in Grevena and two new departments were created within the TEI of Western Greece and Sterea Hellas respectively, with a specialty in "Financial and Communication Management of Cultural and Tourist Units". The Department of Tourism Management of TEI Patras, based in Patras, ceased to accept new students and was scheduled to continue operating until 2017-2018 at which time existing students were expected to complete their studies. But suddenly, in 2017-2018 it was decided that the department would re-operate as an autonomous department and it received 120 students. Finally and most importantly, in 2018, in an attempt to further reduce public spending[6], a merger of two higher education institutions of the Technological Sector (Piraeus University of Applied Sciences and TEI of Athens) was carried out which resulted in the creation of the third largest university of the country under the name University of Western Attica. Starting from the academic year 2018-2019 a Department of Tourism Management started operating within this new University, which resulted from the merger of the two previous TEI's departments of Tourism Management. This practised would prove to be an ongoing trend resulting in mergers of various other local TEI departments into larger University departments. At the same time, these changes have been the starting point for the gradual increase in the number of total admissions in Tourism departments from 385 in 2012-2013 to 1800 in 2017-2018. These changes are shown in Table 1.

[6] For example, the departments of the new institution have decreased from 42 to 26, following the shutting down of departments and specialisations which no longer fit the country's academic and scientific needs (Explanatory Report to the Law on the Establishment of the University of Western Attica). The merger will, according to estimates, lead to significant economies of scale at an academic, administrative and logistical level, with significant savings and efficient resource management.

Tab. 1: Changes in Higher and Tertiary Education in Greece 2012-2018

HIGHER TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF THEMINISTRY OF EDUCATION								
2012-2013 Department of Tourism Management	Admissions 2012-2013	2013-2014 Business Management Departments / Direction Tourism Management & Hospitality Management	Admissions 2013-2014	Admissions 2014-2015	Admissions 2015-2016	Admissions 2016-2017	Admissions 2017-2018	Admissions 2018-2019
Athens	85	Athens	85	85	90	120	110	***
Piraeus	50	Piraeus **	100	100	110	140	140	***
Thessaloniki	120	Thessaloniki	100	100	110	130	130	146
Patras *	70	Western Greece (former Patras*)	0	0	0	0	120	135
Larissa	0	Thessaly (former Larissa)	100	125	140	150	150	169
Crete (Heraklion)	60	Crete (Heraklion)	85	100	100	140	140	158
Epirus (Igoumenitsa)	0	Epirus (Igoumenitsa)	100	125	100	80	80	90
		Western Macedonia (Grevena)	100	150	170	170	170	191
		Ionian Islands (Lefkada)	130	175	190	230	240	270
Total	**385**	**Total**	**800**	**960**	**1010**	**1160**	**1280**	**1.159**
		2013-2014 Dept of Financial and Communication Management of Cultural and Tourism Units						
		Western Greece (Pyrgos)	150	200	170	210	210	236
		Central Greece (Amfissa)	130	125	150	170	170	191
		Total	**280**	**325**	**320**	**380**	**380**	**427**
Universities supervised by the Ministry of Education 2017-2019								
		Piraeus	0	0	0	0	70	79
		Aegean (Chios)	0	0	0	0	70	79
		West Attica (Athens)	0	0	0	0	0	288
		Hellenic Open University (Patra)	0	0	0	0	0	300
		Total	0	0	0	0	140	746
OVERALL TOTAL	**385**	**OVERALL TOTAL**	**1080**	**1285**	**1330**	**1540**	**1800**	**2332**

Source: Table developed by the authors

**The* T.E.I. *of Patras used to admit new students until 2012-13 when it ceased operating due to the "Athena" project. IT would continue its operation until 2017-18 without any new students until when the latter would graduate. In 2017-2018 the department started operating again as an autonomous "Dept of Tourism Management".*

*** The TEI of Piraeus as of 2014 was renamed as Piraeus University of Applied Sciences (Government Gazette B'3681 /2014)*

**** The TEI of Athens and the Piraeus University of Applied Sciences were merged under the title of University of Western Attica*

These changes have caused several problems in the operation of the Departments providing tourist education. As there is no longer an autonomous Department of Tourism Management, but an introductory study path to the wider discipline of Business Management and the professors come from different subject areas that are often unrelated to tourism, the new programs were expected to bring together different subjects, different disciplines, but also different expectations from both teachers and students. A typical example is the reduction of the offered tourism courses at the TEI of Piraeus from 24 to 19 and the TEI of Larissa/Thessaly from 26 to 18.

Indeed, Stergiou and Airey (2017:7) have stated that the changes were treated with skepticism and hostility by professors and students who felt that the level of tourist education was downgraded. The most withstanding argument was that this downgrading makes it impossible to respond to the needs for an ever-growing tourist industry.

In addition, the degrading of the educational process is also apparent in Table 1 where it appears that the changes led to an increase in the number of admitted students from 385 to 2.332 without there being a corresponding increase in the number of teaching staff, which decreased due to retirement and limitations in new recruitments following the 1:5 EU obligation (Law 3899/2010 and INE GSEE-ADEDY, 2012).

Another argument against changes states that regarding the existing study programs of the Business Management Departments in the path of "Tourism Management and Hospitality Management" of the TEI, research has shown that there is a common core of courses offered, for example, Tourism Principles, Tourism Sociology, Tourism Law, Tourism Marketing, etc. and there is a slight variation in selection courses depending on the differentiation of each department. For example, the TEI Piraeus in the "Hospitality Management" option, there is an emphasis on marine tourism and shipping, because Piraeus is an important tourist port. The TEI of Thessaly emphasizes the hotel management section, etc. Through the knowledge of how tourist businesses operate, students are informed and acquainted with issues such as the implementation of a management system with specific organizational structure, management, monitoring and reporting, environmental issues management - energy, water, waste, pollution, resources, human resource management and equal labor relations, building relationships with local society and markets, social pressures, certification and promotion issues, local characteristics and local cultural value.

As for the tertiary level, there were no undergraduate sections dedicated exclusively to tourism, but there were individual taught courses in some departments, mainly Business Management (Moira, 2004) either as compulsory or as elective courses, as was the case at the University of the Aegean. But from 2017-2018 there are two undergraduate departments of tourism studies representing the tourism sector. In particular, Piraeus

University operates a Department of Tourism Studies and the University of the Aegean (Chios) operates a Department of Economics and Tourism Management. The Ministerial Order (number F.253.1/50607/A5/2017) for the academic year 2017-2018 provided for a number of 79 admissions for each department. From the academic year 2018-2019 onwards, the newly founded University of Western Attica (see above) also became part of the Tourism Education available options at a tertiary level.

At a postgraduate level, until 2010, the TEI in accordance to the law could not organize postgraduate study programs independently. Thus, five universities (Piraeus, Aegean, Hellenic Open University, Macedonia and Athens University of Economic and Business) operated those tourism programs at a postgraduate level, instead. However, changes in the tertiary education system led to a rapid proliferation of the offered postgraduate study programs in the field of tourism, amounting to thirteen and provided by both universities and TEIs, autonomously, inter-departmentally or in cooperation between Universities and TEI (Table 2). Tuition fees for postgraduate programmes are to be decided by each institution.

Tab. 2: Offered graduate courses from Universities and T.E.I.

ORGANISATION	OPERATION	GRADUATE PROGRAMME	AREAS OF EXPERTISE	SEMESTERS	LOCATION	FEES in €
1. University of Piraeus	autonomous	(MBA-Tourism Management		3	Piraeus	7.500
2. University of the Aegean	Interdepartmental	"Tourism Design, Management and Policy"	a) Option «Tourism Development Strategy" and b) Option "Hospitality Management".	3	Chios	**3.500**
3. Athens University of Economics and Business	Autonomous Dept. of Business Management	«Service Management»	Option «Development and Management of Alternative Tourism Services".	3 part time 4 full time	Athens	6.500

4. Hellenic Open University		MA "Tourism Management"		Min 3 years, Max 5 years	Patras Athens Piraeus Thessaloniki Crete Ioannina Rhodes	3.250
5. University of Macedonia	Autonomous Department of Business Management	a)MA in Tourism Business Management for young graduates, and b)Master in Tourism Management-MTM for business executives		3	Thessaloniki	a) 4.800 and b)5.400.
6. International Hellenic University/ School of Economics, Business Management and Legal studies	autonomous	MSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management		1 year full time and 2 years part time	Thessaloniki	5.000
7. University of Thessaly	(interdepartmental) Department of Planning and Regional Development and Department of Economics	Tourism and Culture Design and Development		2 full time and 4 part time	Volos	2.900 full time and 3.200 part time
8. Harokopio University	The Departments of "Home Economics and Ecology", "Geography" and "Informatics and Telematics" of Harokopio University, the "Department of Business Management" of the University of the Aegean and the "Institute de Reserche et d' Études Supérieures du Tourisme" of Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne (IREST)	International Master in Sustainable Tourism Development: Cultural Heritage, Environment, Society		2	Athens	5.500

9. T.E.I. of Thessaloniki	Autonomous Dept. Business Management/ Tourism Enterprises management path	MA in Tourism Business Management	1) Hotel and Hospitality Management 2) Air Transport and Travel Operations Management, 3) Management of Nautical Tourism, Cruise and Ferry Operations, 4) Tourism Destination Marketing and Management 5) Cultural Tourism & Management and 6) Tourism Management	3	Thessaloniki	3.800
10. T.E.I. of Central Macedonia		MBA in Hospitality and Tourism (in English)		3	Serres	4.000
11. University of West Attica	Department of Tourism Management with the Department of Business Management of the University of the Aegean	Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Tourism	three options a) Hospitality Management, b) Management of Health and Wellness Tourism.	3	Athens	3.000
12. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	Interdepartmental (Depts Economic, Forestry and Natural environment, Agriculture, Spatial Panning and development, Theology and Law)	Tourism and Local Development	Three options: □) Tourism and regional development □) Environment and Sustainable Tourism c) Religious-cultural tourism	3	Thessaloniki	2.900
13. Democritus University of Thrace	Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences	Sports Tourism, Organization of Events, Dance	a)Sport Tourism and Recreation b) Organisation of Sport Evens c) Studies in Dance	3	Komotini	2.400

Source: Table developed by the authors

It can be argued that, within the field of tourism studies, there seems to be an excessive offer of post-graduate programs by higher education institutions, without any previous market research and graduate employment opportunities research. Also, these programs are aimed at graduates of different specialties, e.g. management of tourism businesses, economic departments, international studies, engineers, lawyers, environmentalists, etc. which at first sight could be considered a fruitful approach as tourism is not a one-dimensional scientific discipline but requires a multidisciplinary viewing. The problem, however, is that the admission to these programs is usually based on the first degree's total mark and/or after an interview rather than a written exam. The result is that students have no common background and they face difficulties attending specialized courses. For this reason, most MSc programs offer basic introductory courses to tourism which are usually taught at an undergraduate level. For example, the MSc. of the University of Western Attica offers Business Management and Organization, Tourist Policy, Hotel Operations Management, and Tourist Economics, the MSc. at the University of the Aegean offers Tourism Economics, Tourism Management, Marketing in Tourism and Hospitality, Tourism Sociology and Geography of Tourism. At the same time, limitations imposed by the economic crisis concerning the recruitment of specialized and experienced teaching staff leads to the recycling of professors and tutors in almost all the postgraduate tourism programs. On the other hand, market requirements may and should influence the nature of curricula, course specializations and the SMEs' engagement with education. Links may be established with universities and other higher-education institutions offering work placements and actively involving students in specific schemes and projects which would lead to a wide range of benefits for employers such as engaging with education and enhancing the students' skills and long-term recruitment policies thus contributing to professional development of future staff. Simultaneously, alumni could be provided with professional options while the SME sector would capitalise on young people's skills and productivity, important factors enhancing what companies call "Corporate Social Responsibility".

Ministry of Tourism. Within the Greek Ministry of Tourism[7] there is the Directorate of Tourism Education and Training, where all the responsibilities of the former Organisation of Tourism Education and Training[8] (OTEK in Greek) were transferred in 2013. It consists of the departments of Higher

[7] There have been many changes to the competent Ministry which has been renamed, abolished or merged several times (Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Tourism) (Mylonopoulos, 2016: 37-41).

[8] The Organisation of Tourism Education and Training (OTEK) was established by Law

Schools of Tourism Education (ASTE) and Tourist Guide Schools[9], the Vocational Training[10] Department and the Department of Life-long learning and Connection with the Labour Market[11].

At a post-secondary level the eight IEK of the Ministry of Tourism operate with programs approved by the Ministry of Education and with various specializations that are continuously adapted to meet the needs of the labour market. The IEK curriculum includes courses that promote knowledge about business practices and sustainability, which may allow graduates to contribute to healthy business models and SME proliferation, in a country where small scale businesses are the norm. Indicatively, the following are courses offered within the IEK curriculum: Principles of Food Industry Practice, Quality Management Systems (HACCP), Principles of Economic, Technical Facilities, Equipment, Goods Control, Catering, Restaurant Organization, Production Costs, Oenology, Hygiene and Safety.

Besides, the operation of the Schools in various parts of the territory (Attica, Thessaloniki, Crete, Rhodes, Corfu, Argos, Galaxidi, Alexandroupolis, Crete) is another way of bringing students in contact with local communities, businesses and local development, local cultures, as well as cultural and culinary traditions.

At a tertiary level there there are also two Higher Schools of Tourism Education operating in Rhodes (ASTER) and Crete (ASTEK). Their special feature is that their level is located between secondary education and higher education, called "superior", they are placed at level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework and entry is only possible through the national examination system for entry in tertiary education of the Ministry of Edu-

---

3105/2003 (Government Gazette 29/A) and was under the supervision of the Ministry responsible for tourism. The Organization, in accordance with the law, was the specialized state provider for tourism education and training in Greece. In 2014 (by Presidential Decree 112/2014 "Tourism Ministry Organization"), OTEK was abolished and its responsibilities were transferred to the Ministry of Tourism.

[9] Guide Schools belong to post-secondary vocational education. Prior to the crisis and the changes that followed, two Schools were operating in Athens and Thessaloniki and occasionally (depending on the needs of the local tourist market) in Heraklion, Mytilene, Corfu and Rhodes. The Guide Schools had been inactive for a few years and recently (September 2017) there has been a call for applications for the school of Athens.

[10] The current specialties are the same as those of EOPEP, the organisation which approves the relevant programs, without excluding the founding of new specialties in order to meet local needs. (Moira, 2007).

[11] OTEK used to organise life-long learning programmes (training) in various cities across the country, for those already employed in tourism or seasonal workers, who had only empirical knowledge of their subject-matter. The trainees were able to systematize and complement their technical skills with the necessary theoretical knowledge to improve their performance in service such as Reception, Restaurant, Catering, Cooking and Confectionery. In recent years, however, these programs have not been organized. The last programme was run on EU funds through the NSRF, from 2013 to 2015.

cation. The duration of study is 7 semesters and the subjects taught are similar to those taught at TEI. (Introduction to Tourism, Principles of Business Management, Tourism Economy, Sociology of Tourism, etc.). Graduation does not lead to postgraduate studies unless the graduate enrols in a Department of Tourism Management of a TEI. (and is placed in the 6th semester) in order to obtain the corresponding qualification/degree.

Tab. 3: Admissions at the Higher Schools of Tourism Education

HIGHER SCHOOLS OF TOURISM EDUCATION							
SCHOOLS	**Admissions 2012-2013**	**Admissions 2013-2014**	**Admissions 2014-2015**	**Admissions 2015-2016**	**Admissions 2016-2017**	**Admissions 2017-2018**	**Admissions 2017-2018**
ASTE Rhodes (ASTER)	60	60	75	75	90	90	101
ASTE Aghios Nikolaos (Crete) (ASTEAN)*	50	50	75				
ASTE Crete (ASTEK)*				75	90	90	101
	Total	110	150	150	180	180	202

Source: Table developed by the authors

** The Higher School of Tourism Education operating in Aghios Nikolaos (Crete) was renamed in 2014 into ASTE Crete (ASTEK).*

Through course choices such as: Architecture, Tourism Sociology and Tourist Psychology, Tourism Geography of Greece, Working Relationships, Foreign Languages, Tourism Marketing, Intercultural education and communication in tourism, Tourism Market Research and Tourism Behaviour, the cultivation of tourist awareness and awareness on issues of sustainable development and protection of the social and cultural environment is ensured. In addition, contact with large and small business through (payed) traineeships allows students to get acquainted with concepts such as the use of mild energies for heating, reuse and recycling, composting, the use of biodegradable detergents, the consumption of food products from small-scale local bio-cultivations, etc. Students acquaint themselves with tourism businesses operation, they are informed and acquainted with issues such as the implementation of a management system with specific organizational structure, management, monitoring and reporting, environmental issues management, waste management, pollution, human resource management and equal labour relations, building relationships with local society and markets, social pressures, certification and promotion issues, local characteristics and local cultural values.

<u>Concerning continuing education,</u> within the Ministry of Tourism, the Tourist Education and Training Directorate also supervises the function of the Tourist Guides School, which is a post-secondary two-year voca-

tional school. Graduates who successfully pass the final examinations are awarded the official tourist guides' license. Lately, the schools had been inactive since 2010 (Mylonopoulos, et al., 2012). Instead, Universities (such as the University of Macedonia, the University of the Aegean and the Ionian University) have been given the task of running fast-track tourist guide programs. Also, the new legal framework mentioned that the only professionals able to practice the profession of tourist guide are the graduates of University Departments of Archaeology, History, History of art, Ethnology and Social Anthropology. According to these arrangements, it was possible to become a tourist guide in just two months, compared to two years with the previous regime, provided that the student was a graduate of specific University department as mentioned above and spoke at least one foreign language, in most cases English, fluently. This was believed to have led to deficiencies in tourist guides fluent in lesser known languages that respond to new tourist trends, such as the Russian and the Asian tourist flows. This change has been severely criticized, and the Federation of Guides has appealed to the Council of State, considering that the new legislation "... grossly violates the Constitution, the European law, but also the national legislation while progressively attempting to abolish its excellent professional training for Tourist Guides provided by the Ministry of Tourism, which have been implicitly put to disuse by the same Ministry" (Kalogiros, 2013). As a result of the protests and the overall negative situation caused by this system, in 2017 it was announced that the Tourist Guide School of Athens would reopen and operate a two-year training programme (Ministerial decision 13239/2017). The Athens School Tours reopened for the academic year 2018-2019 with the admission of 30 students.

Other Ministries. The Labour Force Employment Organization (OAED[12]), which operates as a legal entity under public law is supervised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance & Social Solidarity. OAED provides vocational education and training and implements Continuing Vocational Training programs for workers and self-employed. Also, OAED operates vocational schools (IEK) with the same tourism specialties as those of OEEK.

Until the onset of the economic crisis, specialized training was provided by the Schools of Training and professional Highschools (EPAL) of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food, with specialties such as "Environment and Agrotourism[13]". Currently no programs are running. Also until 2011 there was a "Tourism Economy and Development" specialization path in the National School of Public Administration[14]

---

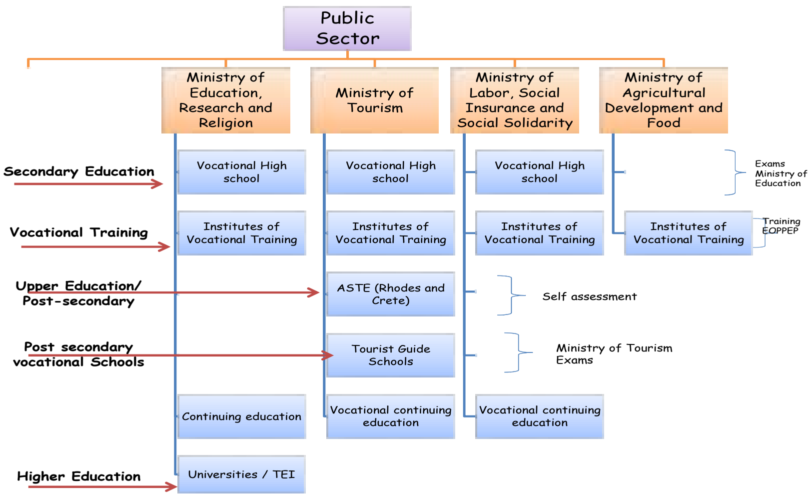
[12] The Agency was established by Law 2961/1954 "Establishing an Employment and Insurance Organization for Unemployment" (Government Gazette A197), which was renamed to Labour Force Employment Organization. 212/1969 (Government Gazette A11) and was restructured by Law 2956/2001 (Government Gazette A25).

of the then Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization[15].

The department started operating in 2006 with the purpose of creating competent high-ranked civil service staff specializing in tourism policy. Graduates of the Department have been extremely successful in serving the Ministry of Tourism, the Hellenic Tourism Organization (EOT) and the former Organization for Tourism Education and Training (OTEK).

The importance and necessity of the Specialisation's creation was mainly based on the fact that the bodies that define and implement the country's tourism policy need specialized personnel capable of responding to new requirements of the international tourist environment. The beginning of the economic crisis and the signing of the memoranda led to the abolition of this specialisation path, which created a significant gap in the staffing of public tourism bodies.

Fig. 1: Studies in tourism in Greece, 2017



Source: figure developed by the authors

[13] The organization "DIMITRA" was established by Law 2520/97 (Government Gazette A173). It also includes the provision of agricultural vocational education and training, which until the beginning of the economic crisis also involved tourism. So, under the supervision of the organization, Professional schools (TEE) operated offering the specialty of "Environment and Agrotourism" (Moira, 2007).

[14] The National Center of Public Administration was established by Law 1388/1983 (Government Gazette A113), aiming at the training of public administration officers for central and decentralized state organisations and legal entities through highly specialized professional training and a new approach to problem-solving, in order for them to effectively contribute to the democratization and modernization of public administration. The National Centre of Public Administration consists of the National School of Public Administration (ΕΣΔΔΑ) and the Institute for Continuing Education (ΙΝΕΠ).

[15] The National Center for Public Administration and Local Government (ΕΚΔΔΑ) is

3. Discussion

It has been shown through the data that the merging of University departments although carried out under strict financial conditions, actually led to a gradual increase in admissions and positions offered. It is believed that this could be due to the fact that local TEI/ATEI departments couldn't accommodate large numbers of students or didn't have similar financial support as larger established Universities. Merging facilitated former smaller and independent departments to evolve and develop under the umbrella of larger institutions boasting stronger research opportunities, financial aid and high-end technological facilities. Consequently these newly emerged departments were able to accept larger numbers of students. Arguments against the multitude of tourism studies offered state that there seems to be a pattern of tourism path studies eliminated and reduced to a mere optional choice of few courses within a larger specialization of e.g. Business Administration. This could be seen as a downgrade of the tourism specialization. Simultaneously however, the emergence of larger and stronger departments specifically dedicated to Tourism, on a higher level than before (ATEI departments merging into a new University) may prove to be beneficial for this specific academic area.

Similarly, within the Ministry of Tourism's offered programs, there has been also an increase in admissions, which could reflect the ongoing demand of students for these schools which are directly connected to the market through placements in hotels and more practical training.

4. Conclusions

Graduate employment for tourism education and tourism training programs in Greece has not been systematically investigated. A study carried out among TEI graduates (Moira et al. 2004) and a survey conducted among tourism managers (Christou, 2002) point out the problematic relation between the knowledge and skills acquired through study and those required by the tourism industry.

Although 17 years have elapsed since the TEI were awarded higher education status [Law number 2916/2001] and since the restructuring of

---

the national strategic body for human resources development in public administration and local government. It was founded in 1983 as a legal entity of public law. Today it operates under the authority of the Ministry of Administrative Reform. Its mission is to create competent high-ranked public administration staff, and to upgrade existing employees through continuing education and certified training (see http://www.ekdd.gr/ekdda/index.php/gr/).

their curricula, and despite the constant changes in the offer of curricula both in the field of tourism education as well as that of tourism training, changes do not seem to be done in a systematic manner or following a thorough study of the market's real needs. Scarce studies are fragmented, "photographing" certain time periods (Moira et al. 2004) and do not seem to depict and reflect reality. At the same time, there seems to be no systematic communication or exchange of information between the academic community and the tourism industry, especially small and medium enterprises, which are the backbone of Greek tourism (Stergiou, 2017: 611).

The existing system of tourism education and training in Greece is complex, multi-leveled and often involves overlapping areas. Tourist education is offered at various levels (secondary, tertiary, graduate, etc.) and by different public bodies. This complexity causes confusion which is accentuated by the lack of formal professional recognition or legal vesting at various levels in the exercise of professional rights or the recognition of the same professional rights at different levels of study. Also, despite the existence of so many levels, the distinction between education and training is often unclear. As a result in some cases professional bodies provide theoretical education programs and educational bodies provide technical training in tourism professions. This finding was highlighted 10 years ago during the forum for tourism education and training of the Ministry of Tourism (Moira, et al. 2008; Moira, 2008a; Moira, 2008b; Moira and Mylonopoulos, 2008a; Moira and Mylonopoulos, 2008b). In addition, there are often important changes, such as a change in the curricula of tour guides which converted the educational programme into vocational training, the abolishment or revival of academic departments, the establishment of university departments without the provision of teaching staff, etc. which are being made without a previous investigation on the necessity of such new arrangements. This confusion is transferred to the tourism industry and causes problems in the staffing of tourist businesses, resulting in a negative impact on the quality of provided services. This paper attempted to catalogue all tourism education programs offered in Greece on a secondary, post-secondary, tertiary and continuing education level. Through analytical presentation of data including admissions, undergraduate and postgraduate programs and peripheral as opposed to centralized institutions this paper offered a map of current tourism education in Greece. It is believed that this study will help clarify the reasons that major reforms have been carried out in view of economic crisis restrictions and how these decisions influence student outcomes. It has been found that on the one hand changes mean practical difficulties for students concerning student/tutor ratio for example, it seems that more established institutions research-wise are more likely to thrive and offer solid academic knowledge as well as professional future to graduates. Reforms also seem to follow the trend and market need for practical skills and vocational training. Tourism is an interdisciplinary field of knowledge that implements in a holistic way the tools of various sciences, mainly of social sciences but not only. In this context, it is necessary to combine knowledge from different disciplines with as a common denominator the achievement of human communication, which characterizes all forms of tourism activity. In particular, the basis of tourism entrepreneurship in Greece consists of small and medium-sized business and even family businesses, which are characterized by a strong element of ancient Greek hospitality. Another feature of small and medium-sized family businesses, which is positive but at the same time becomes an obstacle to further training in tourism, is the fact that these businesses were created by self-employed locals with no specific knowledge and skills. It is therefore often difficult, even impossible, to persuade both them and the younger generations of the need for vocational training and continuous training. The existing tourism education system, with its inherent weaknesses, has not managed to attract neither entrepreneurs who have not perceived the importance of tourism education nor young people who, affected by social stereotypes (probably influenced by the seasonality of mass tourism), believe that employment in tourism is short-lived and unattractive for a stable career which should provide opportunities for growth and higher salaries. It is noted that the timeless weaknesses of the education system are exacerbated by political actions implemented under the pressure of the economic crisis. It turns out that in Greece, tourism education and training suffers from inherent weaknesses that are not due to the economic crisis but are potentially exacerbated by it. Through direct involvement of SMEs, which constitute the bulk of tourism businesses in a small country like Greece, and the encouragement of direct recruitment of graduates leading to personal professional satisfaction, enjoyment and staff motivation. The solution to the problem of tourism education and training in Greece possibly does not only involve a differentiation between levels of upper and higher education, but also the cultivation of a national tourist consciousness (Kikilia, 2013: 48), which is acquired from early years' education and is shaped throughout life.

Polyxeni Moira,
University of West Attica / Greece
polmoira@uniwa.gr

Dimitrios Mylonopoulos
University of West Attica / Greece
dimilon@uniwa.gr

Stavroula Kefala
Greek Ministry of Tourism, Dept. of Tourism Education and Training / Greece
kefala_s@mintour.gr

References

Becker, G. (1975). Investment in Human Capital: Effects on Earnings, (p. 13 - 44), In Becker, G ed. *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, Second Edition, New York: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Christou, E. (2002). Revisiting competencies for hospitality management: contemporary views of the stakeholders, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*, 14(1), pp. 25-31.

Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *A New Skills Agenda for Europe, Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness*, {SWD(2016) 195 final}, Brussels, 10.6.2016 COM(2016) 381 final at http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-381-EN-F1-1.PDF

Deaconu, A., Dedu, E.M., Igreț, R.Ș., Radu, C. (2018). The Use of Information and Communications Technology in Vocational Education and Training—Premise of Sustainability. *Sustainability*, *10*, 1466

Dessler, G. (2013). *Human Resource Management*; Pearson Education: London, UK.

Farber Canziani, B., Sönmez, S., Hsieh, Y., Byrd, E.T. A Learning Theory Framework for Sustainability Education in Tourism. J. Teach. Travel Tour. 2012, 12, 3–20.

Friis, J. (2001), *Tourism and Employment*, Follow up given to the Council Conclusions of 21 June 1999, Final Report of Working Group B, Improving Training in order to upgrade skills in the Tourism Industry, June.

Mincer, J. (1975). Education, Experience, and the Distribution of Earnings and Employment: An Overview, (p. 71 - 94). In F. Thomas Juster, ed. **"***Education, Income, and Human Behavior***"**, New York: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Moira, P. – Mylonopoulos, D. – Parthenis, S. – Costis, Chr. (2008). «Tourism Education and Training in Greece» In C. Hu (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 2008 Annual International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators (ISTTE)* Conference, 30 September - 2 October 2008, In Dublin, Ireland.. St Clair Shores, MI: International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators, Vol. 20, pp. 230-244.

Moira, P., - Milonopoulos, D. and Anastasiou, S. (2004). "Producing Graduates for the Tourism Industry in Greece: A case study", *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, Oxford Brooks University, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 55-60.

Moscardo, G., Benckendorff, P. (2015). Education for Sustainability in Tourism—A Handbook of Processes, Resources, and Strategies; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany.

Mylonopoulos, D. Moira, P. Kikilia, Aik. (2012). The free provision of services in the field of guided tours. A legal approach. In Lowry, L. (ed.), *"Sustainable Education in Travel and Tourism"*, St Clair Shores, MI: International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators, Vol. XXIV, pp. 76-89.

O.E.C.D. (2004). *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* - 2004 Edition, at https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/33716892.pdf

Stergiou D. and Airey D. (2017). Tourism education and industry expectations in Greece: (re) minding the gap, In *Hanbook of Teaching and Learning in Tourism*, ed. Pierre Benckendorff, Anita Zehrer, Edward Elgar Publishing.

Ikkos, A. (2015). *I simvoli tou tourismou stin elliniki oikonomia to 2014 – sinoptiki apeikonisi vasikon megethon* [The contribution of tourism to the Greek economy in 2014 - a brief overview of key figures], Athens: SETE, February, p.13, (in Greek) at http://sete.gr/media/3004/simasia_tourismou_sete_intelligence_report.pdf

INE GSEE-ADEDY (2012). *I elliniki oikonomia kai i spascholisi* [The Greek Economy and Employment]. Annual Report 2012, p. 357, (In Greek) at http://www.inegsee.gr/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/files/EKTHESH%2014.pdf

Kalogiros, B. (2013). Ston aera ta programmata katartisis xenagon. Sto STE prosefige i Omospondia Xenagon ["The Tour Guides Programmes are being abolished. The Federation of Guides has appealed to the Council of State"], online newspaper *NewsBeast*, 18/11/2003, (In Greek) at http://www.newsbeast.gr/greece/ekpaideusi/arthro/609740/ston-aera-ta-programmata-katartisis-xenagon

Kikilia, Aik. (2013). *Touristiki Sinidisi kai Ethniki Pedia* [Tourist Consciousness and National Education], Athens: Diros Publishing (in Greek).

Moira, P., Mylonopoulos, D. (2008a). «To kathestos tis idiotikis touristikis ekpedefsis. I periptosi ton idiotikon Instituton Epaggelmatikis Katartisis» [«The status of private tourism education. The Case of Private Vocational Training Institutes"]. *Tourist Issues*, Issue 7, December, pp. 108-121. (In Greek).

Moira P., Mylonopoulos D. (2008b). «To kathestos tis idiotikis touristikis ekpedefsis. I periptosi ton Kedron Eleftheron Spoudon» [«The status of private tourism education. The Case of Post-secondary Colleges"]. *Labor Relations Review*, Issue 52, Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 2008, pp. 60-71. (In Greek).

Moira, P. (2007). «I polischidis pragmatikotita tis touristikis ekpedefsis kai katartisis stin Ellada» [«The multi-faceted reality of tourism education and training in Greece»], presentation at the 1st *International Conference of Tourism Education and Training Forum*, Ministry of Tourism, Athens, 1-2 March 2007. (In Greek).

Moira, P. (2008a). «Turistiki Ekpedfsi kai Katartisi » [«Tourist Education and Training»], conclusions of the 1st Work Cycle. Proceedings of the *1st International Conference on Tourism Education and Training,* Ministry of Tourism, Athens, June 2008, pp. 201-246 (In Greek)

Moira, P. (2008b). «I eggenis adinamia tou turistikou kladou stin aporrofisi ton apofoiton anotatis touristikis ekpedefsis» [«The inherent weakness of the tourist sector concerning the employment of tourism education alumni»], presentation at the *2nd International Conference on Tourism Education and Training, Ministry of Tourism,* Athens, 26-27 June 2007. (In Greek)

Mylonopoulos, D. (2016). *Touristiko Dikaio* [Tourism Law], 2nd Edition, Athens: Legal Library, (In Greek).

SETE (2005). *I proklisi tis antagonistikotitas kai I anagki epanatopothetisis tou ellinikou touristikou proiondos* [The challenge of competitiveness and the need to reposition the Greek tourist product], Athens (in Greek).

Stergiou, D. (2017). «Oi prosdokies tis touristikis viomichanias apo tous apofoitous touristikis ekpedefsis» [The expectations of the tourist industry from tourism education graduates], pp. 607-613. (In Greek) In Tsartas, P. & Lytras, P. (eds.) (2017). *Tourism, Tourist Development, Contributions of Greek Scientists,* "Library of Tourism Sciences", Athens: Papazisis. (In Greek).

Wilkinson, A., Redman, T.; Dundon, T., (2017). *Contemporary Human Resource Management*; Pearson Education Limited: London, UK.

Nel numero precedente
n. 3 - anno 2018

Sommario n. 3, 2018

Saggi

Osservatorio

Recensioni

STRATEGIC NETWORKS AND ALLIANCES AMONG TOURISM MSMES: THE CASE OF DUBAI'S 'WANDER WITH'

by Badran Badran, Nada Badran

Abstract

The aim of this study is to discuss the role of networks and strategic alliances in the life of small enterprises working in tourism. This is done by presenting a case study that discusses the experience of Wander With, a micro-SME (MSME) that operates in Dubai's young, multinational tourism market. It investigates the criteria for an MSME to select partners and alliances, the challenges and risks an MSME faces while dealing with networks and alliances, the benefits an MSME obtains from networks and alliances, the extent to which the Dubai tourism market is connected with the global market, and the tools an MSME uses to become known and to generate business globally. Among the general findings of this study is that the main impetus for MSMEs to develop strategic alliances with other organizations is to marshal resources and to leverage mutual support. Cooperation among various MSMEs increases their innovation and profitability. Moreover, networking among diverse partners is essential to supply integrated tourist products and to provide optimum services to tourists. Finally, Dubai MSMEs have a low scalability potential due to the prevalence of high overhead structures, coupled with high existing capacity utilization levels. This case study fills a gap in the research about MSMEs in tourism in the Arab Gulf region, specifically about the role networks and alliances play in their business model.

Classification JEL: *L8*

Keywords: *micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), Networks and Alliances, Dubai, tourism, UAE SME, entrepreneurship*

Data ricezione: 5/12/2018
Data accettazione: 20/2/2018

.

1. Introduction

The competitive tourism industry is filled with strategic players all vying for the limited attention of consumers. For any organization to build its strategic advantage, it must exploit its internal strengths, remedy its weaknesses, take advantage of its external opportunities, and employ a risk management approach to minimize its threats. While the organization may have the necessary skills and competencies for its internal affairs, it can only maximize its potential by networking with external organizations that can contribute their resources and expertise to co-create value.

The travel and tourist industry is no exception as it involves many actors who can work together to make such products and services accessible to the consumer. By its very nature, the tourism industry links various stakeholders, such as tourism businesses, tourists, airports, national tourism offices, transportation providers, attractions and other types of supporting organizations who are directly or indirectly involved in tourism. It also has strong links to other related industries. Tourism therefore is regarded as a network of interrelated organizations interacting to produce and to deliver a service (Van der Zee and Vanneste, 2015; Scott et al., 2008; Baggio, 2008).

Hence, the aim of this study is to fill a gap in the research about MSMEs in tourism in the Arab Gulf region and to highlight the power of collaborative advantage among partners to extend market access by presenting the experience of Wander With, an MSME that operates in one of the world's rising star destinations, Dubai, part of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as a case study. Wander With is about curating tour experiences for the curious traveler. The experiences are designed to capture moments of culture, people, and authenticity and to be transformative to the traveler. Guests have the option of selecting from ready-to-go tours that follow preplanned routes and provide the opportunity to meet like-minded travelers, or customizing private experiences based on their interests and schedules. For Wander With, this has involved forging partnerships with companies in similar and in different industries such as related service providers such as hotels and travel websites and other unrelated MSMEs such as colleges and payment platforms. Using the case study methodology, this paper will examine the various players and alliances among tourism-related and non-tourism related SMEs that are imperative for success.

It will also attempt to answer the study questions, including what are the criteria for an MSME to select partners and alliances; what are the challenges and risks an MSME faces while dealing with partners and alliances; what are the benefits an MSME obtains from partners and alliances and how connected is the Dubai tourism market with the global market?

2. Literature Review

Academic research on tourism MSMEs' networks and alliances in the UAE -- including Dubai -- is in its first stages. The following literature review includes mainly international, and some regional and Dubai-specific general studies. Cooper et al (2005) state that SMEs "form the backbone of most tourism destinations." In Europe, for example, SMEs account for 90% of all tourism businesses and more than 94% are micro operators employing fewer than 10 individuals. SMEs "make a positive contribution to economic and social development at the destination, they encourage entrepreneurship, mobilize savings and boost regional development. However, they are regarded as 'an endangered species' as they struggle to compete with larger players" (Cooper et al., 2005).

Elaborating on the definition of SMEs, Elasrag (2012) mentions both quantitative and qualitative criteria. Quantitative criteria include (a) number of employees, (b) value of fixed assets and (c) turnover per enterprise. Qualitative measures tend to focus on characteristics of SMEs that are essential in their nature, including: (a) management and ownership are rarely separate, (b) control over business operations and decisions reside with one or two usually family members, (c) project's equity is not publicly traded, (d) personal security of the owners is required to secure loans and repayment, (e) the level and number of formal contractual relations are kept at a minimum level, and (f) personal objectives of the owners guide and influence business decisions directly.

Because Wander With is a micro enterprise, it is useful to ascertain how micro enterprises are defined. The European Union (EU), for example, defines a micro enterprise as one with a maximum of 10 employees. However, the OECD categorizes a micro enterprise as consisting of 1-4 employees. In the Arab World, the most common definition of MSMEs is based on employment (Elasrag, 2012). Elasrag (2012) argues that MSME contributions to employment creation, productivity, and income generation are underutilized in the Arab countries. Statistics show that SMEs represent 90% of total companies in the vast majority of economies worldwide and provide 40-80% of total job opportunities in addition to contributing largely to GDPs of many countries. In the UAE, SMEs account for about 94.3% of the economic projects in the country, employ about 62% of the workforce and contribute around 75% of the GDP of the state.

Dubai defines an MSME as "any enterprise which meets the thresholds of employee headcount and turnover as applicable to the industry group it belongs to (Trading/ Manufacturing / Services)." An enterprise is defined as "an entity engaged in an economic activity, with a legal form, i.e. registered as a business either with a commercial registry or with a freezone/ industrial zone authority". The MSME definition is therefore a combination of the employee headcount and turnover parameters. As part of this definition, a micro business in service industries, such as tourism, is any enterprise with less than or equal to 20 employees and a turnover of less than or equal to AED 3 million, equivalent to 716,520.00 Euros (The Definition of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) of Dubai, 2009).

Al Ansari et al. (2013) surveyed 200 SMEs in Dubai to identify their innovative characteristics. They observed that UAE SMEs (including Dubai) are characterized by centralized organizational structures, a short-term focus, high administrative intensity and top-down and formal communication. Their survey reveals that the drivers of innovations in Dubai's SMEs are management, customers, technology and employees. In addition, quality improvement, customer value added, strategic growth, and new business models represent main platforms of innovation. Innovation is influenced internally by organizational culture and externally by the nature of industry. Among the obstacles to SME innovation, the study singles out economic risks, capital resources, the market, lack of skilled labor, and the nature of legislation and regulation policies.

The Dubai Statistics Centre (DSC) estimates that SMEs in Dubai account for 95% of the total enterprise population in the emirate. Micro firms account for 72% of the overall business count in Dubai, followed by small and medium firms, accounting for 18% and 5% of SMEs, respectively. They employ 42% of Dubai's workforce and contribute 40% toDubai's GDP. The Mohammed Bin Rashid Establishment for SME Development (MBRES), on the other hand, estimates that 98.5% of Dubai's enterprises are SMEs, employing 61% of the total workforce of the emirate. As many as 200,000 UAE-based SMEs are currently providing over 85% of private sector jobs (Schilirò, 2015). The CEO of MBRES states that Dubai's "future economic policies must incorporate and integrate SME development policies." MBRES finances pilot projects – both small and medium enterprises – and provides technical expertise to support local entrepreneurs for local investors as a way to promote investment and encourage innovative ideas. Travel agencies and tour operators constitute less than 8% of SMEs in Dubai's service sector (The Definition of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) of Dubai, 2009). A report entitled 'The State of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)' in Dubai (2015) describes the results of a study of Dubai MSMEs to ascertain their characteristics. The themes include:

1. Degree of international orientation
2. Prevalence of innovation
3. Level of IT adoption
4. Degree of human capital orientation
5. Degree of corporate governance
6. Level of access to finance
7. Scalability potential

The report reveals that SMEs were found to be highly oriented towards internationalization, but low in orientation towards innovation, corporate governance and scalability potential. Specifically, only 19% of SMEs have high scalability potential due to the prevalence of high overhead structures, coupled with high existing capacity utilization levels. In addition, a majority of SMEs (80%) had used their personal funds, including savings and/or equity as the primary source of finance to start their businesses. Only 23% of SMEs had accessed bank finance in the last five years. Regarding their level of IT adoption, half of the SMEs surveyed had a website and only 6% had online ordering capabilities compared to 31% of SMEs in New Zealand. Finally, service SMEs were found to be the most focused on training and development. Only 24% of these SMEs had a regular KPI-based performance evaluation approach ('The State of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Dubai', 2015).

Dahms and Dubey's (2015) study of Internet adoption by SMEs investigated the extent to which SMEs in four emirates have adopted Internet technologies and the reasons behind it. Findings indicate that industry pressures and customer expectations are positively associated with Internet adoption by travel agents across the UAE. In addition, the authors noted that lack of local institutional support was found to be negatively associated with Internet adoption but had no effect on the perceived importance of Internet features. This, Dahms and Dubey explained, illustrates a typical predicament for enterprises in developing countries: they are exposed to stronger competition and to the increasing sophisticationof their customers but lack the means to satisfy this demand.

Zaidan (2017) investigated usage patterns of the Internet by Dubai travel agents (TA), which are mostly SMEs. The study found that the majority of TAs use the Internet for customizing services, attracting customers, communicating with customers, gaining access to global markets, providing TAs with information and procuring suppliers and competitors. Perceived benefits identified include establishing a reputation in the global markets, increasing sales and revenues, improving distribution channels, increasing competitive advantage and customizing services. Principal obstacles hindering e-commerce adoption were the high cost of e-commerce adoption, online security concerns, lack of skilled IT resources, customer readiness, and advice and support (Zaidan, 2017).

Networks and alliances present an important source of support for MSMEs by providing them and their businesses with a wide range of opportunities (Johannisson, 1986). Networks of connected private and public organizations can be regarded as stakeholders of the destinations (Baggio and Cooper, 2008). Since only a networked partnership between various stakeholders within tourism destinations allows for the delivery of an integrated product to tourists (Scoot et al., 2008). According to Braun (2002), networks, knowledge, and relationships have become vital assets to business success. Research indicates that network building is a major new source of competitive advantage. Businesses develop strategic alliances with other organizations to marshal resources and to leverage mutual support. Networking and business relationships ensure entrepreneurs' access to management capabilities, technology, customers, various distribution channels, suppliers, and other resources enabling the growth of a company. Therefore, cooperation among various MSMEs increases their innovation and profitability (Merenda et al., 1994).

Omerzel and Kregar (2015) cite Jarillo (1989) who argues that developing relationships with other organizations provides the new ventures with access to resources, which increases enterprise growth and enables SMEs to achieve higher flexibility. Due to resource collaboration through networking and formal and informal business relationships, SMEs may be successful despite their size (Human and Provan, 1996), which enables them to benefit from advantages resulting from access to many resources. Consequently, many SMEs are more flexible than their larger counterparts, since their managers are more in touch with their immediate environment than do managers from larger, well-established firms (Smeltzer and Fann, 1989).

The final tourism product is the result of a wide range of services and products provided by various complementary and competing stakeholders operating in the industry (McCabe et al., 2012). Tourists expect a smoothly organized service, which requires a high level of coordination and collaboration among different tourism players representing the tourism experience (Van der Zee and Go, 2013). Thus, the tourism industry is a complex environment in which networking among diverse partners seems essential to supply integrated tourist products and to provide optimum services to tourists.

Cooper et al. (2005) mention the benefits of SME clusters, a concept somewhat similar to networks and alliances. Benefits include information sharing, working together to boost power, marketing resources and research, lobbying authorities for their interests and using a rational and efficient distribution of activities at the destination. Often, the public sector is expected to coordinate such clusters.

Haryopratomo et al. (2011) believe that in order to allow foreign private sector companies to invest and import knowledge into the Dubai tourism cluster, the UAE's foreign investment rules must be changed to allow 100% foreign ownership in mainland areas. Also, the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) should encourage foreign tour operators to invest in setting up local operations in Dubai, allowing cluster companies to have a direct, local insight into customer preferences. Dubai's SME policy should be targeted at the tourism cluster to increase rivalry.

Collaborative Entrepreneurship (CE) between corporations and startups in Dubai is a new platform to "cultivate and encourage mutually beneficial business partnerships." Haddad et al. (2016) state that a growing number of corporations have recognized that collaborations with startups could potentially generate mutual commercial and strategic benefits. From innovation to cultural change, corporations are poised to work closely with startups to address business challenges and to innovate at a faster pace. Startups, in turn, recognize that corporate collaborations are key to their ability to grow and thrive. Working with the right corporate partners can provide startups with a platform to attain market credibility required to scale into new markets, gain access to resources such as funding and technology, and provide them with opportunities to acquire new clients.

Networks and alliances are at the core of the business strategy of the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM). The DTCM has strategic alliance managers for its main inbound markets. Moreover, the DTCM chooses key players in the markets it targets to generate a bigger volume of visitors to Dubai. For example, the DTCM worked with Charson Advisory, "a long-standing and trusted partner that has provided DCTCM with in-depth marketing research, brand consultancy services and effective marketing strategies over the past 20 years." According to the DTCM, the successful partnership with Charson Advisory has resulted in a significant increase in visitors from India, considered as the principal source market for Dubai's inbound tourism (Dubai Tourism announces new strategic alliances for India market, 2018).

3. Methodology

This paper uses a mixed method of social science research. It uses the case study method described by several researchers, including Jennings (2010). It also uses the practitioner or action research method which may be defined as "the study of a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding" (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001). Practitioner research is characterised by a focus on research done by practitioners themselves, usually with a view to evaluation and improvement (Ellis, 2012).

This study is classified as a single, intrinsic, exploratory and explanatory case study, based on Jennings' (2010) typology of the case study research method in tourism. A case study is regarded as single when only one case is studied holistically, such as one tourism organization, one tour operator, one transportation company or one tourism event. Because this is a study of one tourism organization – Wander With – it is therefore a single case study. According to Jennings (2010), a case study is also classified as intrinsic when the case studied holds particular interest for the researcher, which in this case is the co-author of this paper.

Based on Yin's (2009) characterization of case studies as exploratory, Jennings (2010) describes such category as one where the researcher explores single or multiple cases of the phenomenon to discover uniqueness or characteristics, since no pre-existing empirical materials exist in the public area. This study is therefore deemed exploratory since it explores a single case of the phenomenon with the aim to discover uniqueness or characteristics, since no pre-existing studies exist in the public area about MSMEs alliances and networks in Dubai's tourism sector. Also, a case study is considered explanatory when it seeks to determine 'how and why' the single case operates as it does (Jennings, 2010).

The following steps were followed for the case study design and empirical material collection. First, the issue or research theme was identified. Second, the type of case to be used was determined and the case of a tourism micro establishment "Wander With" was selected as the case study. Third, a review of literature was conducted using library and online resources as well as reports published by various Dubai organizations such as the Mohammed bin Rashed Establishment for SME Development. Next, empirical material was collected using participant observation, interviewing 10 stakeholders, including representatives of companies and organizations that constitute the networks and alliances involved with "Wander With", such as the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing. A content analysis of company records was undertaken to identify information relevant to the study questions. Finally, the material collected was categorized and used to answer the research questions. Answers to these research questions are also based on the business experiences of the founder and Chief Operating Officer of Wander With, a licensed MSME that operates in the Dubai market since 2016.

Ethical considerations in the study design, data collection, analysis and reporting of findings were followed. Questions posed by Caplan and Caplan (1999) to determine the bias of researchers were applicable to this study. Reasons for conducting this research are stated as to contribute to the scientific knowledge available to tourism scholars, tourism industries and policy makers. The wording of research questions does not contain any overt or implicit bias by the researchers. The research design follows acceptable practice in tourism research and the social sciences in general. Data and empirical materials were interpreted objectively without any bias or agenda. All possible explanations of the findings are discussed in the paper.

Research Questions

1. What are the criteria for an MSME to select partners and alliances?
2. What are the challenges and risks an MSME faces while dealing with partners and alliances?
3. What are the benefits an MSME obtains from partners and alliances?
4. How connected is the Dubai tourism market with the global market? What are the tools an MSME uses to become known and generate business globally?

These research questions are based on, and are related to, theoretical propositions that are expressed in the literature review section of this paper.

4. Findings

Dubai's travel and tourism sector has gradually gained prominence on the world stage, with the emirate now ranking 4th on the world's most visited cities in Mastercard's Global Destination Cities Index (GDCI) (2018). According to Dubai Tourism, the authority empowered to govern Dubai's tourism industry, the vision is to position Dubai as the 'first choice' for the international leisure and business traveler (Dubai Tourism, 2018). Its objectives aim to promote Dubai as a go to destination for travelers, as well as a must re-visit destination. In 2017, the emirate welcomed 15.79 international guests and aims to attract 20 million visitors per year by 2020.
Such ambitious targets have been driven and influenced by government policies, various promotional campaigns, continuous infrastructure improvements, and the increased tourism products offered by the industry's participants. Many companies deal with offering travel packages including provision of airfare, accommodation, tours, and excursion services. Such services are offered by liaising with ground operators who are based locally in Dubai or the UAE, and who have the necessary skills and expertise to cater to the end users. Wander With provides such on the ground services which entail cultural experiences in the UAE.
Launched in Dubai in 2016, Wander With's initial partnerships were made directly with organizations in both the public and private sectors. Public sector involvement was crucial as it is a core component of the tourism industry. Many of the tourism products and services are contingent on the existence of public assets such as the natural and cultural environments. Hence, a key role that the public sector plays is the provision of the basic infrastructure, essential services, destination management, and licensing and training among other provisions.
The private sector is also vital as it entails companies which provide prod-

ucts, facilities and services such as booking agencies, payment providers, sights, attractions, hotels, restaurants, and other entities which offer synergistic strategic value. This sector ranges from large corporations to small family businesses. Hence, it warrants different partnership approaches.

Selection Criteria

Such partnerships were carefully chosen as per select criteria, including:
- Alignment with experience objectives
- Consistent high quality
- Low risk
- Reliable performance
- Integrity

Following selection, Wander With dealt directly with the potential partners to discuss strategic goals and to assess the ability to partner and produce mutual benefits. This was integral to launching such partnerships as it determines if there is 'chemistry' between the parties, ensures high quality provisions, and establishes channels of rapport, particularly considering the small size of the business, which was an area of concern for many. Thereby, establishing such direct alliances was crucial to assure relationship survival.

Challenges

1. *Licensing requirements for SMEs:* In order to legally be able to provide such tour experiences and services, Wander With needs to be a registered business with the Department of Economic Development (DED), as do all businesses in mainland Dubai. Registration entails several requirements including an office lease contract, recurring license fees, and lengthy visa procedures. The office lease contract is one which outlines the location, size, and rent agreement as it required that all businesses have a physical office space. This particular law in place curtails micro SMEs from launching their businesses as rent fees can be quite significant even for small spaces or in cheaper areas. Even when considering co-working spaces or flexi desks, the rent fees represent an opportunity cost which can be utilized to fund other business projects and initiatives that enable growth. Considering the industry and line of business, Wander With's tour experiences are considered 'mobile'. Such expenses add up to significant overheads which can impede and restrict growth in many ways. Therefore, policymakers should refrain from treating all companies in the same ways.
2. *Banking requirements and procedures:* While many banks in Dubai boast of offering SME specialist services and accounts, the reality is far from

what's advertised. To begin with, the estimated account opening time can range from 1 to 3 months' time, in contrast to the '3 days' listed on banks' websites. Souqalmal, a leading comparison website in the Middle East, provides users with an easy interface to compare financial and insurance products before committing and saying 'I do'. The website has a section dedicated to SMEs which provides users with a quick summary of the banks' details, requirements, and processing times. Of the 51 search results found for 'Bank Accounts for SMEs', 98% indicate that the approval time takes 1 to 3 days. A thorough research and in-person visits to several of the listed banks indicated otherwise as actual timings revealed were between the 1 to 3 months time due to 'verification and compliance mandatory checks'. Many of the bank officers are also not necessarily trained in the various types of business licenses; hence, the many conversations with staff were lengthy assurances of Wander With's sustainable business model and relatively smaller number of employees. Understandably, regulatory pressures on the banking industry may have led to more lengthy and stringent policies in place, particularly if financing is to be provided. However, for basic bank services such as account opening to provide customers with a legal and accessible way to transfer funds, the system is completely flawed and hurts entrepreneurs who are seeking simple and efficient banking methods.

3. *Accessibility and Collaborations:* In principal, micro SMEs and large corporations would very much benefit from working with each other. For the micro SME, such an alliance could fuel its growth, for example, by gaining access to market information and expertise which may have been previously inaccessible. For the corporation, such an alliance could potentially lead to successful innovation and experimentation at a relatively lower cost. In practice, seeking such commitment and dedication within large firms is difficult to achieve and maintain for the long-run, as such collaborations don't necessarily materialize in the immediate future. For Wander With, there was a common overarching tendency by potential partners and collaborators to demand high minimum targets and to squeeze margins to the point of extinction. This was particularly the case with well-established resellers who are the undisputed leaders in the market, and have established trust and confidence in their services. This tendrils of their influence have resulted in high commissions which they warrant as necessary for their significant marketing spends and for establishing such loyalty. Therefore, the importance of harnessing synergies in the tourism industry tends to be overridden by the tendency of corporations to maximize profits even when faced with the reality that quality inevitably suffers as a consequence.

Risks

1. *Lack of scope clarity:* Due to the relatively less tested nature of a startup's environment, the terms of the agreements with larger corporations are often broadly stated and leave room for ambiguity. As startups are still in the early stages of discovering the optimal processes, markets, and business model to run by, they are often found by corporations to be less organized. This is often counterintuitive to larger established businesses who are comparatively more defined in their ways; hence this results in asymmetry in the relationship. This can be a huge risk for the startup if there is no culture of tolerance in the corporation and if there are no clear definitions of progress. This can also lead to a waste of the startup's already minimal resources if it proves to be a fruitless collaboration. As results can be difficult to predict, strategies and operational plans should be defined and detailed to the extent possible. Frequent enough meetings or updates should be shared between the corporation and startup to avoid any surprises and to manage expectations; however, keeping mind that results often take time to materialize.
2. *Dependency and imbalance of power:* Due to a startup's minimal resources and urgency to find revenue, it can often rely heavily on the corporation as the limited time factor tends to weigh in. This can negatively affect startups if corporations deal with them in the same way that they do other corporations. According to a report co-authored by executives from Expo 2020 and Wamda titled 'Collaborative Entrepreneurship - The state of corporate-startup engagement in MENA', some of the greatest risks that startups are exposed to in the region are long sales and payment cycles. Underestimating these cycles is what could potentially lay the startup to rest, as its success or failure is determined by its cash flow management. One way to eliminate this reliance on corporations is to diversify the consumer base as rapidly as possible (Amir Farha, BECO Capital). By successfully validating the product or service with a wider consumer base, this in turn reduces the corporation's risk and "fear of failure." It also ultimately reduces the startup's reliance on the corporation and the common tendency to be ignored due to the imbalance of power. As the tourism industry in the UAE is quite seasonal with most visitors arriving between November and March, these relationships have had to be managed tactfully to ensure business continuity throughout the year, or until the next season. They also inevitably carry the burden of a high risk of dependency on one another, as each stakeholder focuses on their core strengths and relies on the other to complement its offerings.
3. *Losing the startup spirit:* Big corporations which have access to many resources tend to offer multiple products and cater to the masses. Such

diversification in services offers customers the convenience of a one-stop-shop, boosting sales. The wealth of resources and reliability of varied offerings in turn creates a barrier to entry for competitors and allows the company to thrive. Startups are somewhere on the opposite end of the spectrum. To begin with, they have fewer resources and so their best strategy is to find a niche product or service that they can provide 100x better than others. This 'focus' allows startups to share a narrative with consumers that resonates with them and can then potentially be viral. However, with corporate expectations, tedious approvals, and snowballing costs with no revenues in near sight, startups run the risk of losing the spirit which inspired them from the get-go. They may find themselves caving to less than desirable terms and lured by more reliable revenue streams that are more 'corporate' than they are 'creative'. Therefore, it is imperative that creative culture is embedded into the partnerships and is fostered to allow the startups to grow as they would in a utopian scenario where such reliance does not hinder its innovative spirit.

Benefits

While each may have its own priorities, business models, and targets, both startups and large corporations want to grow sustainable businesses. Successful alliances have been often built due to their congruent agendas.

1. *Access to markets / Distribution:* Startups realistically have limited distribution channels that they can access, hindered often by their smaller sizes, high costs, and limited accessibility. A key success factor is being able to increase their reach to a wider audience which they can do by gaining access to distribution networks. For Wander With, selling the tour experiences online via the website was a necessary starting point which allowed direct sales, thereby incurring minimal costs. However, without an established reputation at its launch as well as sufficient SEO to direct potential customers to the sales page, the company had to enlist the support of larger corporations with such established connections. Therefore, websites such as Viator, GetYourGuide and similar others were contacted to liaise with. Despite lengthy approval processes and steep commissions, such partnerships have enabled the business to cast a much wider net and to capitalize on the existing reputations of these trusted brands; thereby, increasing sales.
2. *Credibility:* Corporate partnerships definitely provide a huge boost to a startup's credibility. Startups often rely on such associations to open doors which would have been previously slammed shut due to lack of references or unproven products. While it doesn't guarantee complete confidence or signed contracts every time, it does give startups an extra '30 seconds in the room' to pitch their services and to potentially sway

the potential partner. Using the already trusted infrastructure of an established corporate has proven to be successful in the case of Wander With. TripAdvisor, which claims to be the world's largest travel site, is a perfect example of how conversions can be made using the established reputation of a larger corporation. When launched, TripAdvisor's core business was providing user-generated reviews and ratings for travelers about destinations around the world, which grew to become very successful. Consumers used the platform to research and read others' opinions on hotels, attractions and services, even if written by absolute strangers. A 2017 study of consumers' path to purchase concluded that 60% of purchases visit TripAdvisor seeking unbiased guidance (Majority of Global Online Travel Buyers Visit TripAdvisor before Booking a Hotel or Flight, 2018). Therefore, TripAdvisor's acquisition of Viator, a resource for booking destination activities around the world, has allowed the corporation to capitalize on the network effect it has created and to monetize it. TripAdvisor now provides travelers with a one-stop-shop solution for all things travel related. Readers are encouraged to book directly through TripAdvisor who they know and trust, and are even offered incentives such as discounts to do so. Such gateways allow startups like Wander With to leverage faster routes internationally particularly to harder-to-convince markets, albeit at a cost (TripAdvisor Enters Into Agreement to Acquire Viator, 2014). The online world now plays a crucial role in the traveler's decision-making process. In a market flooded with information, travelers now have the necessary tools and voice to engage with vendors through social media platforms. This can be highly advantageous for the traveler as it allows for greater transparency, provides visual aids, and facilitates relatively quicker dialogue with vendors. In turn, vendors now also have greater visibility when utilizing the appropriate social media channels that their niche markets participate actively in. They can therefore capitalize on the global trend of using relevant social media channels to develop valuable content that achieves desired results. For Wander With, utilizing platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter has proven to be integral to marketing the brand and has helped connect with potential travelers and partners, media, and other stakeholders.

3. *Access to resources:* One of the biggest roadblocks that a startup will inevitably have is limited resources. Decisions will have to be made judiciously and initiatives prioritized based on such limitations, which may impede the startups' ability to scale their proof of concept. Therefore, strategic partnerships between startups and larger corporations, once established, grant access for both parties to a realm of opportunity and resources mostly due to the latter's deeper pockets. This access deepens the knowledge necessary for a startup to build the business and

may potentially also help avoid setbacks. Tangible resources include research, data, tools, materials, funding and technology among others. It is worth highlighting that not all resources – funding aside – may appear handy at first due to what may appear to be 'different interests or ways of doing business' but sharing processes can truly be eye opening and later leveraged. Intangible resources include industry knowledge, guidance, expert opinions, mentorship and relationships. Although such alliances are rarely seamless, a collaborative ecosystem provides access to such resources which are invaluable as they may open the door to other stakeholders.

5. Conclusion

This case study has sought to contribute to the academic literature about the MSMEs in tourism, specifically about the role networks and alliances play in their business model. Answers to the study's research questions have captured the inherent need by an MSME to establish criteria to select partners and alliances in order to discover compatibility. Wander With, a successful MSME in Dubai, forged alliances with public and private entities that were carefully chosen as per select criteria. These included alignment with experience objectives, consistent high quality of delivery, low risk, reliable performance and integrity. Establishing such relationships can be complex as they often come with baggage. There are many challenges and risks that an MSME can potentially face while dealing with partners and alliances, many of which arise when confronted with reality and unanticipated hurdles. Challenges encountered by this MSME included challenging and costly licensing requirements which apply to similar SMEs, banking requirements and procedures and accessibility and collaborations. Risks identified included the lack of scope clarity, dependency and imbalance of power and the prospect of losing the startup spirit. However, relationships with partners and alliances that do blossom yield benefits as well which may open new doors and allow parties involved to capitalize on opportunities.

The benefits of association with alliances and networks for Wander With included access to markets/distribution, credibility and access to resources. Tangible resources include research, data, tools, materials, funding and technology among others. Intangible resources include industry knowledge, guidance, expert opinions, mentorship and relationships. As the travel industry has become more interconnected and collaborative, Dubai's tourism market is seen to connect with and contribute to the development of the global travel industry as it is of mutual interest. MSMEs are hence able to make the most of such a contribution by collaborating with giant global players and bridging the resource gaps. A case in point is the online travel site TripAdvisor, which allows MSMEs like Wander With to leverage faster routes internationally by bridging the branding and marketing gap. Viator, a TripAdvisor asset, is another growing source of business for Wander With, despite its negative effect on profit margins. For Wander With, utilizing platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter has proven to be integral to marketing the brand and has helped connect with potential travelers and partners, media, and other stakeholders.

Based on this case study, the following assumptions that were developed from the literature review were found to be accurate. First, the main impetus for MSMEs to develop strategic alliances with other organizations is to marshal resources and to leverage mutual support. Second, cooperation among various MSMEs increases their innovation and profitability. Third, networking among diverse partners is essential to supply integrated tourist products and provide optimum services to tourists. Fourth, Dubai MSMEs have a low scalability potential due to the prevalence of high overhead structures, coupled with high existing capacity utilization levels.

Consequently, businesses can thrive or wither in part because of their ability to manage and to nurture interpersonal relationships with those in their business environment or ecosystem. MSMEs should understand the web of relations surrounding their business and develop a strategy for dealing with stakeholders, in sickness and in health. To deal with stakeholder issues, it is crucial for management to build and to develop skills in negotiation and in conflict resolution. Such skills are often imperative so that partners then value their own resources and importantly, the resources the others bring to the table. In other words, the relationship is seen as fostering mutual benefits as opposed to being one-sided and encourages appreciation vs. resentment. Management should also ensure that partnerships are adjusted for reality and circumstances. Nurturing such skills is thereby essential to effectively managing networks and alliances.

6. Implications for Future Research

There is a clear need for more research about MSMEs in tourism, especially on the role networks and alliances play in their business model. With the growth of MSMEs in the Arab Gulf region in general, and in the UAE and Dubai in particular, more studies should investigate whether the working conditions for these micro and small enterprises that constitute a growing share of the tourism market are similar or different, and whether they constitute one model or different business models with unique characteristics. As Dubai and other Gulf states in general view a future where micro and small businesses play a bigger role in the tourism industry, researchers are invited to identify success and failure factors and how networks and alliances can be strengthened to support these expanding enterprises. By understanding how MSMEs in tourism work and how networks and alliances contribute to their success, we begin to build current knowledge that will help scholars build a general theory about the factors contributing to the success and competitiveness of MSMEs in tourism.

7. Study Limitations

By their nature, single case studies are limited, and researchers are not able to generalize their findings to other cases. Also, case studies tend to be more subjective than objective (Jennings, 2010). However, this study has provided a unique glimpse into the world of a successful micro SME in a competitive tourism setting. In addition, any similar study can only account for the period studied. To describe clear patterns, a study should ideally cover a longer period of MSME development. Admittedly, the lack of research in this area in the Gulf region has limited the study's foundations.

Badran Badran, Nada Badran
Wander With Tourism Guidance Services
badranabadran@gmail.com
info@wanderwithnada.com

References

Al-Ansari, Y., Pervan, S., & Xu, J. (2013). Innovation and business performance of SMEs: the case of Dubai. Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues, 6(3/4), 162–180. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/EBS-04-2013-0012.

Baggio, R. (2008). Network analysis of a tourism destination. School of Tourism, The University of Queensland, Australia (Ph.D Thesis) (pp. 1-263).

Baggio, R. & Cooper, C. (2008). Proceedings of the IASK Advances in Tourism Research 2008 (ATR2008), Aveiro, Portugal, 26-28 May. (pp. 44-53).

Big Cities, Big Business: Bangkok, London and Paris Lead the Way in Mastercard's 2018 Global Destination Cities Index. Mastercard. https://newsroom.mastercard.com/press-releases/big-cities-big-business-bangkok-london-and-paris-lead-the-way-in-mastercards-2018-global-destination-cities-index/

Braun, P. (2002). Networking tourism SMEs: e-commerce and e-marketing issues in regional Australia. Information Technology & Tourism, 5(1), 13-23.

Caplan, P. & Caplan, J. (1999). Thinking Critically About Research on Sex and Gender. New York: Longman (pp. 1-119).

Cooper, C., Fletcher, J., Fyall, A., Gilbert, D. & Wanhill, S. (2005). Tourism Principles and Practices. 3rd Edition. Harlow: Prentice Hall (pp. 748-750).

Dahms, S. & Dubey, A. R. (2015) Internet Adoption by Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Developing Countries: The Case of Travel Agents in the United Arab Emirates. The Arab World Geographer. September 2015, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 169-191.

Diez, M. A. (2001). The evaluation of regional innovation and cluster policies: Towards a participatory approach. European Planning Studies, 9, 907–923."Dubai Tourism announces new strategic alliances for India market," (2018). Travel Trade Journal, http://www.traveltradejournal.com/dubai-tourism-announces-new-strategic-alliances-for-india-market/

Elasrag, H. (2012). The developmental role of SMEs in the Arab countries. MPRA Paper No. 40608. August 2012, (pp. 8-9). https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/40608/.

Ellis, N. J. (2012). Teachers' experiences as practitioner researchers in secondary schools: A comparative study of Singapore and New South Wales. Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education and Social Work. The University of Sydney (pp. 1-250).

Haddad, H., Boustani, E., & Assaf, T. (2016). Collaborative Entrepreneurship: The state of corporate-startup engagement in MENA. Expo 2020 Dubai and Wamda. (p. 13). http://wamda-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/lab-reports/e7066a627c7de36.pdf

Haryopratomo, A., Kos, S., Samtani, L. Subramanian, S. & Verjee, J. (2011). The Dubai Tourism Cluster From the Desert to the Dream. Microeconomics of Competitiveness. (p. 29). https://www.isc.hbs.edu/resources/courses/moc-course-at-harvard/Documents/pdf/student-projects/UAE_(Dubai)_Tourism_2011.pdf

Human, S. E. & Provan, K. G. (1996). External Resource Exchange and Perceptions of Competitiveness within Organizational Networks: An Organizational Learning Perspective. In: Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research (Ed.) P. D. Reynolds; W. D. Bygrave; S. Manigart; C. M. Mason; G. D. Meyere; H. J. Spapienza and K. S. Shaver), Babson Park: Center for Entrepreneurial Studies (pp. 240-252).

Jennings, G. (2010). Tourism Research. 2nd Edition. Australia Tourism Series. Milton, Qld. Australia: John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd. (pp.186-187).

Johannisson, B. (1986). Network strategies: management technologies for entrepreneurship and change. International Small Business Journal. 5, (1), 19-30.

Majority of Global Online Travel Buyers Visit TripAdvisor before Booking a Hotel or Flight, According to New Study (2018). Cision PR News Wire. https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/majority-of-global-online-travel-buyers-visit-tripadvisor-before-booking-a-hotel-or-flight-according-to-new-study-300628574.html

Omerzel , D. G. & Kregar, T. B. (2015). Networking in the Tourism Industry: The Case of Three Neighboring Mediterranean Tourism Destinations (p. 67). https://hrcak.srce.hr/

file/233183

Rhys Rowland-Jones (2013) A perspective on United Arab Emirates small and medium-sized enterprises management utilizing the European Foundation for Quality Management concepts of excellence, Total Quality Management & Business Excellence. 24:1-2, 210-224. DOI: 10.1080/14783363.2012.756748

Schilirò, D. (2015). Innovation in Small and Medium Enterprises in the United Arab Emirates. International Journal of Social Science Studies. August 7, 2015. 3 (5), 148-149. http://www.redfame.com/journal/index.php/ijsss/article/viewFile/1014/946. doi:10.11114/ijsss.v3i5.1014

Scott, N.; Cooper, C.; Baggio, R. (2008). Network Analysis and Tourism: From Theory to Practice. Clevedon, UK: Channel View (p. 3).

Wander With Tourism Guidance Services. (2018). http://wanderwithnada.com/

Smeltzer, L. R. & Fann, G. (1989). Comparison of managerial communication patterns in small entrepreneurial and large, mature organizations. Group and Organization Studies, 14 (2), 198-215.

TripAdvisor Enters Into Agreement to Acquire Viator (2014). https://tripadvisor.mediaroom.com/2014-07-25-TripAdvisor-Enters-Into-Agreement-to-Acquire-Viator

The Definition of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) of Dubai, (2009). Mohammed bin Rashed Establishment for SME Development (pp. 34-63). http://www.sme.ae/English/DataCenter/Pages/StudiesAndResearch.aspx

The State of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Dubai (2015). Mohammed bin Rashed Establishment for SME Development. http://www.sme.ae/StudiesAndResearchDocument/STATE_of_SMEs_in_Dubai_Presentation.pdf

Van der Zee, E. & Vanneste, D. (2015). Tourism networks unraveled: a review of the literature on networks in tourism management studies. Tourism Management Perspectives. 15, 46-56.

Winter, R & Munn-Giddings, C., (2001). A Handbook for Action Research in Health And Social Care. London: Routledge (p. 8).

Zaidan, E. (2017). Analysis of ICT usage patterns, benefits and barriers in tourism SMEs in the Middle Eastern countries: The case of Dubai in UAE. Journal of Vacation Marketing, 23 (3), 248–263. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766716654515

THE IMPACT OF WEB 2.0 ON THE MARKETING PROCESSES OF RESTAURANT BUSINESSES

by Tonino Pencarelli, Marco Cioppi, Ilaria Curina, Fabio Forlani

Abstract

This paper analyzes the modalities whereby the restaurant industry is facing the web 2.0 evolution. To achieve this objective, the study adopts multiple approach-types (adoption of an online visibility index, fuzzy-set ideal type analysis and interviews conducted to 33 Italian restaurants). Results highlight relevant gaps between full exploitation of the web potentialities and the best results obtained by the investigated restaurants (subdivided into four different ideal-types based on their online visibility performances). From a theoretical viewpoint, the study contributes to enriching the analysis of the online visibility management applied to the restaurant sector, through the creation of an index able to measure the online performances by each restaurant in relation to competitors. In addition, the work also provides managerial implications for firms' marketers and practitioners, by identifying possible guidelines for the adoption of a pro-active attitude in using the 2.0 tools.

Keyword: *Restaurant firms; online visibility; social media marketing*
Jel Classification: *M3*

Data ricezione: 5/12/2019
Data accettazione: 11/03/2019

1. Introduction

The widespread availability and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) has deeply affected many industries, but their impact on the hospitality and tourism industry has been even more extraordinary (Sigala, 2018; Standing et al., 2014; Buhalis and Law, 2008; Karanasios and Burgess, 2008; Litvin et al., 2008). Given the experiential nature of tourism products (Forlani and Pencarelli, 2018; Adhikari and Bhattacharya, 2016; Neuhofer et al., 2014), the Internet is the best place for tourists to gather and share information, buy products and interact with tourism suppliers (Neuhofer et al., 2015; Baggio and Del Chiappa, 2014). Consumers use the internet throughout all the different stages of their travel and tourism experience, shifting their role from passive recipients to co-creators (Campos et al. 2018; Neuhofer et al., 2014; Munoz-Leiva et al., 2012; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).

More recently, the social media revolution has turned the Internet into a democratic and accessible-to-all platform which is facilitating dialog and critical discussion (Trunfio and Della Lucia, 2018; Cioppi et al., 2016; Leung et al., 2013). Tourism practitioners and organizations can no longer stay away from the Internet since every type of business (ex. hotel, restaurant, airline company) and service may be real time reviewed by customers (Leung et al., 2015).

The widespread use of web 2.0 applications has caused profound changes in the tourism industry, leading to the enlargement and redefinition of its traditional boundaries (Zhang et al., 2017), to the entrance of new web-based tourism players (ex. Booking, Airbnb, TripAdvisor, Uber) and to the rethinking of marketing strategies and policies (Pencarelli et al., 2015; Middleton and Clarke, 2012; Del Chiappa, 2011). Thus, tourism firms are now called to compete, first and foremost, in the online environment in order to survive and communicate their existence (Cioppi et al., 2016).

In addition, recent studies (Horster and Gottschalk, 2012; Inversini et al., 2010; Middleton et al., 2009) also underline the key role of tourists as new protagonists of an increasingly short and disintermediated supply chain (Xiang et al., 2008). As a result, web and social media marketing techniques have become crucial in the interaction with the 2.0 users and in allowing them to fully perform their function of experience co-creators (Campos et al., 2018; Khobzi and Teimourpour, 2014).

In this scenario – which is peculiar to the hotel sector (De Pelsmacker et al., 2018; Aureli and Supino, 2017; Leung et al., 2015; Pencarelli et al., 2015; Xie et al., 2014) – the aim of this work is to assess if the same dynamics can be found in the restaurant industry, a tourist sector which received less attention from scholars (Kim et al., 2016). In particular, the way restaurants are coping with the web 2.0 and the opportunities deriving from it, is investigated.

The rest of the paper is structured in the following sections: (ii) a framework focused on the impact of the Internet and web 2.0 on the restaurant sector; (iii) methodology; (iv) presentation of the results, (v) discussion of the results and (vi) presentation of the main conclusions, implications and suggestion for future research.

2. Internet and web 2.0 in the restaurant industry

The rise of the Internet has profoundly influenced the dynamics of the restaurant industry as well. One of the first attempts to analyze the role of the Web, within this sector, was the contribution of Murphy and colleagues (1996), whose results already confirmed how web marketing would have become a necessity rather than an opportunity for the restaurant firms.

In the last years, restaurants' promotional activities shifted, indeed, from traditional advertising – such as newspapers and brochures – to online marketing (Salleh et al., 2015). With the recent evolution from web 1.0 to web 2.0 and the introduction of many new interactive applications which allowed communication and cooperation between users, online marketing has become increasingly complicated. Furthermore, considering the huge number of restaurants existing online and the fact that customers are less and less willing to wait during the research stage (Beese, 2011; Zhang et al., 2010), the online visibility management becomes a key element in restaurants strategies (Salleh et al., 2015). As assessed by Smithson et al. (2011), the competitive advantage of online tourism firms is mainly connected to the way the online presence is managed, rather than to fact of just being on the net. In particular, by focusing on the restaurant sector, Zhang et al. (2010) investigate the advantage for firms to be easily noticed online. Online visibility can, in fact, increase the intention of online users to click through to the restaurants' online contact points (Kimes, 2011). As a result, according to Raguseo et al. (2017), high visibility on the web allows hotels and in particular restaurants to achieve higher occupancy levels and table reservations, by consequently increasing sales and performances.

An additional implication of the web 2.0 evolution concerns the rise of online review sites such as TripAdvisor.com which allow consumers to share their experiences (Kim et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2013; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Zhang et al., 2010). This type of websites usually offers a series of filters to help consumers in their research through the presentation of a list of matched restaurants, with a synthetic overview of each, including the restaurant name, address, website and consumers' reviews of its food and services (Mellet et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2010). Notably, the consumers' online reviews and comments are perceived as being more truthful and reliable than information given by the firms (Zhao et al., 2015). This is even more true in the decision-making processes concerning experiences which are unknown before consumption (Litvin et al., 2008). For this reason, in the restaurant industry, online reviews can highly influence trust, performances, credibility, booking intentions, firms' quality perceptions and reputation (Kim et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2010; Litvin et al., 2008).

Finally, another research stream, identified by the extant literature on restaurants, focuses on the role assumed by photo and video-based social media, such as Instagram, in enhancing customers' intention to make a reservation. In particular, pictures and videos of food help users to experience sensory appeal, by creating a mental impression and then by inspiring them to plan a visit to the restaurant (Salleh et al., 2015; Wang, 2011).

In this rapidly evolving landscape, restaurant managers should necessarily improve their marketing strategies in order to strengthen the online attractiveness of their restaurants (Zhang et al., 2010). However, given that collecting data on restaurants' performances and metrics represents a challenging task, and that the extant literature focusing on these issues is very limited (Kim et al., 2016), the present study aims to analyze the approaches through which the restaurant firms are facing the web 2.0 challenge and how they are effectively taking advantage of opportunities deriving from it. Moreover, considering that research on the restaurant industry in the internet era, mainly focuses on communication (Kim et al., 2016; Salleh et al., 2015; Mellet et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2013; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Wang, 2011; Zhang et al., 2010) and distribution (Kimes, 2011), this work intends to fill a gap in the extant literature, by investigating the comprehensive impact of web 2.0 on the restaurants' marketing process. In this respect, an exploratory analysis has been conducted with the final aim of identifying 1) the modalities through which the web 2.0 impacts on the restaurants' management policies; 2) possible specific topics that could outline new research areas.

Hence, the following research questions have been postulated:

[RQ_1] Which is the level of use of web 2.0 tools in the restaurant industry? And how are these tools used?
[RQ_2] Which impact has web 2.0 on the marketing processes of the restaurant firms?

3. Methodology

With the final aim of verifying if, and how, the current tourism digital trends – as outlined by literature – are impacting the restaurant industry, this research has been designed using a multi-method approach (Tab. 1).

Tab 1: Research design

	Research phase	Description
1	Adaptation of the Online Visibility Index of Hotels [OVI-H] to the restaurant sector [OVI-R]	Identification of the major social networks adopted within the restaurant sector (literature review); Focus group
2	OVI-R adoption	Adoption of the OVI-R on the restaurants of the cities of Fano, Pesaro, and Urbino (n=408);
3	Ideal-types building	Adoption of the fuzzy-set ideal type analysis (FSITA)
4	Telephone interviews	Directed to the top-25 restaurants of each city (n=75) identified through the OVI-R Conduction of 33 valid telephone interviews
5	Analysis of the results	Analysis of the interviews Conclusions and implications

Source: Our elaboration

In a first phase of the research, the Online Visibility Index of Hotels [OVI-H] (Cioppi et al., 2016) has been adapted to the specific characteristics of the restaurant sector [OVI-R], in order to identify the most relevant cases to investigate. The OVI-H (Cioppi et al., 2016; Pencarelli et al., 2015) fitting to the restaurant sector has been completed by information gathered from the focus group. First, the most used social networks in the restaurant sector (Al Muala, 2018; Cioppi et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Salleh et al., 2015) have been identified. Then, the resulting index has been submitted to the opinion of the focus group participants (three restaurants' owners and three web managers specialized in social media management strategies for the restaurant industry), who were asked to confirm its reliability. In order to assess the restaurants' online visibility, 11 aggregate final sub-indicators – subdivided into three categories (Internet, generalist, and specialized social networks) – have been identified (Tab. 2).

Tab. 2: OVI-R: Selected variables, sources and scoring methods

Category	Variables	Source	Scoring method
	1. Google organic position[1]	Cioppi et al., (2016)	Presence of the activity's website within the first four pages of the search engine, regardless of the entered search string and the position (organic or sponsored). To the restaurants whose name appeared on the first results page, a score of 1 has been assigned; for those present in the second: 0.5, while for those present in the third and fourth page: 0.33 and 0.25 respectively.
Internet	2. Google sponsored position	Cioppi et al., (2016)	
Generalist social network	3. Number of likes (Facebook)	Al Muala (2018)	For each variable, it has been established the restaurant with the highest achieved result: to this it was assigned the value 1, while the scores of the remaining ones have been assigned proportionally, starting from the best as a reference.
	4. Number of talking about (Facebook)	Al Muala (2018)	
	5. Number of visualizations (YouTube)	Al Muala (2018)	
	6. Number of members (YouTube)	Al Muala (2018)	
	7. Number of followers (Instagram)	Salleh et al. (2015)	
	8. Number of followers (Twitter)	Al Muala (2018)	
	9. Number of followers (Google Plus)	Al Muala (2018)	
	10.TripAdvisor position	Kim et al. (2016)	Also, in this case, the score assigned to the variables has been 1 for the restaurant that has obtained the best result and in relation to it, the scores of the subsequent ones have been then calculated.
Specialized social network	11.Number of TripAdvisor reviews	Kim et al. (2016)	

Source: Elaboration of Cioppi et al. (2016)

As for the selected sample, the study focused on the analysis of restaurants located in Fano, Pesaro, and Urbino. Even if they belong to the same cultural, territorial and competitive context, the restaurants present different characteristics with regard to the demand of services and experiences. The list of restaurants to be submitted to the OVI-R has been obtained by crossing multiple online databases (including the Province of Pesaro and Urbino website and TripAdvisor). At the time of the research (March 2018), a total of 408 restaurants were existing in the three cities (142 in Fano, 68 in Urbino and 198 in Pesaro).

[1] For this evaluation, specific keywords (restaurant, tavern, trattoria, pizzeria, agritourism) associated with the locality of reference has been searched on the search engine Google.

In a second phase, the index has been calculated for the restaurants – subdivided per cities – in order to identify those achieving the highest scores, i.e. representing the businesses which make the most of the new opportunities offered by the web 2.0.

Thirdly, the index allowed to build the ideal typologies or ideal-types (Fiss, 2011; Kvist, 2007). According to this approach, the case study (traditionally qualitative in nature) can be carried out through quantitative techniques (fuzzy-set ideal type analysis), thus transforming narrative information into codified and comparable data. Notably, the fuzzy-set ideal type analysis (FSITA) entails four phases (Ciccia and Verlo, 2012; Kvist, 2007). In the first step, it is necessary to identify theoretically significant dimensions of the ideal-types leading to the construction of all the possible logical combinations of the selected dimensions. Subsequently, each of these aspects need to be defined as a set in which cases can have a degree of membership. Once the dimensions have been transformed into empirical indicators (operationalization), it becomes necessary to establish anchors in order to transform empirical values into 0 to 1 fuzzy score (calibration). In particular, for each dimension three breakpoints must be defined: full membership (1), no membership (0) and crossover point (0.50), the last one representing the point where a case begins to move from being more out to being more in the set (Ciccia and Verloo, 2012). The third step consists in the calculation of each case's membership score in the theoretically relevant configurations. Finally, the evaluation of each case's membership in the different ideal types is carried out with the final aim of identifying the configuration with the highest score.

After the construction of the ideal-types, in the last phase of the research, telephone interviews have been conducted. Notably, once the top-25 restaurants per each city were identified through the OVI-R, telephone interviews have been carried out (May 2018) to the marketing/communication managers. The interviews – designed according to the relevant literature and to the advice of experts of the restaurant sector – lasted approximately one hour each. This length of time allowed interviewees to freely express themselves and go deeper into the topics. The interview guide had six sections: [1] general information; [2] the social media adoption and use [3] the social media management; [4] the degree of social media interactivity; [5] the web and social network effects on the marketing processes; [6] the last-5-years trends with regard to the obtained results, turnover, profits and personnel.

In the next sections of the paper, the ideal-types will be defined and the results of the interviews will be presented in order to highlight the degree and modalities of use of the web 2.0 and in order to verify if its effect on the marketing processes of the restaurants varies according to the identified ideal-types.

4. General results

4.1 Ideal-types' definition

Starting from the variables adopted for the online visibility analysis (Tab. 2), two significant visibility dimensions have been identified: web visibility (indexing on the Google search engine) and social visibility (notoriety on the generalist and specialized social networks). According to the FSITA, for each indicator of both dimensions, values have been assigned between two extreme statuses: 1 or 0. Status 1 means maximum visibility, while status 0 means minimum visibility (absence of visibility).

Tab. 3: Specification of empirical indicators and translation of data to fuzzy scores range

Category	Empirical indicator	Fully in	Neither more in nor out	Fully out
		1,00	0,50	0,00
Internet	1. Google organic position	First page	Second page	After the fourth page
	2. Google sponsored position	First page	Second page	After the fourth page
Social network	3. Number of likes (Facebook)	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present
	4. Number of talking about (Facebook)	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present
	5. Number of visualizations (YouTube)	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present
	6. Number of members (YouTube)	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present
	7. Number of followers (Instagram)	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present
	8. Number of followers (Twitter)	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present
	9. Number of followers (Google Plus)	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present
	10. TripAdvisor position	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present
	11. Number of TripAdvisor reviews	First of the destination	Half of the maximum obtained value	Not present

Source: Our elaboration of Cioppi et al. (2016)

On the basis of the selected variables, the followings have been assigned:

- High web visibility for the cases obtaining scores higher than or equal to 1 by summing the results of the variables 1 and 2;
- Low web visibility for the cases scoring less than 1, by adding the results of the variables 1 and 2;
- High social visibility for the cases achieving scores higher than 1 by summing the results of the remaining variables (3-11);
- Low social visibility for the cases obtaining scores lower than or equal to 1, by adding the results of the remaining variables (3-11).

By crossing these different dimensions (High/Low web visibility and High/Low social visibility), four typologies of online visibility have emerged: Full, Social, Web and Partial Visibility (Tab. 4).

Tab. 4: Restaurants' Ideal-types (based on their online visibility)

Visibility	High social	Low social
High web	Full	Web
Low web	Social	Partial

Source: Our elaboration

The first ideal-type (Full) consists of restaurants that have full visibility as they have managed to be significantly visible both on the Google search engine and on the adopted social network platforms.

The second ideal-type (Social) is composed of restaurants that have achieved relevant visibility only on social networks.

The third typology (Web) is made up of restaurants that have reached significant visibility on the organic or sponsored Google search engine.

The last ideal-type (Partial) consists of restaurants that failed to gain significant visibility in either of the two categories (web and social). In particular, even if these restaurants have obtained a certain visibility (they are among the 25-most visible restaurants of the city), they do not show up in the top positions neither on the web nor on the adopted social networks. In other words, they have a visibility spread over multiple channels without emerging in each of them.

4.2 OVI-R

Results highlight, on the one hand, the presence of a significant gap between the first restaurant in the city rank and those in the lowest positions, and on the other, the existence of a gap – albeit less marked – among the first activities in each city rank (Tab. 5).

Tab. 5: OVI-R: Top-25 restaurants (Fano, Pesaro and Urbino)

	Fano	Pesaro	Urbino
1	0,324	0,359	0,281
2	0,304	0,33	0,266
3	0,287	0,249	0,231
4	0,208	0,234	0,221
5	0,208	0,22	0,22
6	0,207	0,176	0,218
7	0,174	0,125	0,216
8	0,172	0,114	0,195
9	0,171	0,11	0,189
10	0,156	0,11	0,176
11	0,137	0,107	0,169
12	0,134	0,104	0,148
13	0,124	0,099	0,143
14	0,122	0,092	0,136
15	0,122	0,092	0,133
16	0,118	0,091	0,124
17	0,118	0,09	0,118
18	0,117	0,084	0,117
19	0,102	0,083	0,116
20	0,101	0,077	0,108
21	0,098	0,076	0,104
22	0,095	0,075	0,104
23	0,092	0,071	0,098
24	0,087	0,066	0,098
25	0,084	0,065	0,096

Source: Our elaboration

In a second phase, the 75 selected restaurants have been traced back to the four identified ideal-types as shown in Table 6.

Tab. 6: The top-25 restaurants per cities [Urbino, Fano, and Pesaro] subdivided per ideal-types

Visibility	Urbino	Fano	Pesaro	Total	Total %
Full	8	4	2	14	18,7%
Web	9	5	8	22	29,3%
Social	8	9	5	22	29,3%

Partial	0	7	10	17	22,7%
Total	25	25	25	75	100,0%

Source: Our elaboration

4.3 Interviews' results

Overall, 33 interviews have been conducted (out of the 75 restaurants' owners to whom the questionnaire has been submitted). Also, in this case, the surveyed restaurants were traced back to the four ideal-types (Tab. 7).

Tab. 7: Interviewed restaurants (subdivided per ideal-types)

Visibility	Urbino	Fano	Pesaro	Total	Total %
Full	5	2	1	8	24,2 %
Web	6	2	1	9	27,30%
Social	6	3	0	9	27,3 %
Partial	0	5	2	7	21,2 %
Total	17	12	4	33	100,0%

Source: Our elaboration

Table 8 shows the significance of the sample of the interviewed restaurants.

Tab. 8: Significance of the interviewed restaurants' sample

Visibility	Total selected	%	Total interviewed	%	Deviation
Full	14	18,7%	8	24,2%	-4,50%
Social	22	29,3%	9	27,3%	2,00%
Web	22	29,3%	9	27,3%	2,00%
Partial	17	22,7%	7	21,2%	1,50%
Total	75	100%	33	100%	

Source: Our elaboration

4.3.1 Social media adoption and use

The findings on social media adoption and use show that, among all the interviewed restaurants, those belonging to the full, social and partial typologies adopt social media. On the contrary, among the restaurants belonging to the web ideal-type, a not negligible percentage (22,22%) admits to have no social accounts.

Furthermore, the majority of the full (87,50%) and partial (85,71%) typologies restaurants and the totality of those belonging to the social type claim to have two or more social networks accounts, while a significant percentage (44,44%) of web ideal-type restaurants only manages one social media platform.

With regard to the reasons why restaurants adopt social media, results assess that motivations differ among businesses belonging to different ideal-types: for the full restaurants, the adoption of social media is especially connected to the retention of existing customers, for the social ones the main goal is the promotion of events, while for the web and partial ideal-types the main aim is the acquisition of new customers.

Tab. 9: Social media adoption and use

Do you adopt social networks?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**100,00%**	**100,00%**	77,78%	**100,00%**
No	0,00%	0,00%	**22,22%**	0,00%
How many social networks do you use?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
0 social	0,00%	0,00%	11,12%	0,00%
1 social	12,50%	0,00%	**44,44%**	14,29%
2-3 social	12,50%	**44,44%**	22,22%	**57,14%**
> 3 social	**75,00%**	**55,56%**	22,22%	**28,57%**
For what purposes?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Existing customers' loyalty	**100,00%**	88,89%	66,67%	71,43%
New customers' acquisition	87,50%	88,89%	**88,89%**	**100,00%**
Events' advertising	87,50%	**100,00%**	77,78%	85,71%
Discounts and promotions	62,50%	22,22%	33,33%	28,57%

Source: Our elaboration

4.3.2 Social media management and organization

Interviews also investigated whether social media are managed by the restaurants' staff or by an external organization. Findings show that the majority of the restaurants belonging to the social (88,89%), web (77,78%) and partial typologies (57,14%), as well as the half of the full typology restaurants (50%) do use internal resources (owner or a staff member) to manage social media. Furthermore, a significant percentage of partial (28,57%) and full-type restaurants (25%) choose to support their internal staff members with external professionals. Finally, a good part of the full-type restaurants (25%) delegate in full the management of social media and communication strategies to external practitioners. Moreover, in order to analyze the effective social media management and organization, respondents were asked

[1] whether their social activities follow an editorial calendar or, on the contrary, are decided randomly, and [2] if their online contents are studied ad hoc based on the users' characteristics and on the type of social media. Notably, results show that while the majority of the social type restaurants (55,56%) and half of the full ones (50%) state to manage their online visibility by relying on an editorial calendar, the majority of the web (88,89%) and partial type restaurants (57,14%) claim not to follow an editorial program for their online activities.

A similar result emerges when asking about content adaption, i.e. the majority of the full (75%) and social type restaurants (55,56%) confirms that contents and activities are adapted to the different type of social network used, while the great part of the web (66,67%) and partial (57,14%) type restaurants admit to post the same contents on all their social media accounts.

Tab. 10: Social media management and organization

Who is the figure in charge of social media management?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Insourcing (Owner; staff member)	50,00%	88,89%	77,78%	57,14%
Insourcing and outsourcing	**25,00%**	0,00%	0,00%	**28,57%**
Outsourcing	**25,00%**	11,11%	11,11%	14,29%
Nobody	0,00%	0,00%	11,11%	0,00%
Do you follow an editorial calendar in the management of social media?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**50,00%**	**55,56%**	11,11%	42,86%
No	**50,00%**	44,44%	**88,89%**	**57,14%**
Do you adapt contents and activities according to the type of social network used?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**75,00%**	**55,56%**	33,33%	42,86%
No	25,00%	44,44%	**66,67%**	**57,14%**

Source: Our elaboration

4.3.3 Degree of social media interactivity

In the light of the increasingly relevant role of customers in value co-creation processes, the work investigated the degree of social media interactivity of restaurants. The interviewees have been asked if they manage somehow the relationship with their customers and which is their attitude towards users' reviews and comments. Also, their inclination to organize events in cooperation with users has been asked and to which type of comments they answer; and how quickly they do it. Notably, with regard to the events' organization, results show how the majority of the social (88,89%), web (77,78%) and full-types restaurants (62,50%) have organized (at least once) events in cooperation with users. On the contrary, the majority of the partial type restaurants (57,14%) state they never organized events.

With regard to the type of users' comments they answer to, the majority of the social (66,67%) and full type restaurants (62,50%) state that they respond to all types of users' comments and messages (regardless of their positive or negative nature), while a relevant percentage of partial type restaurants (42,86%) claim they never answer to any type of comment. As for the response time, all the full-type restaurants and the majority of the social (88,88%), partial (85,72%) and web type restaurants (55,55%) assess they answer to users' messages within the day or within a few days. A significant percentage of web-type restaurants (44,45%) admit they never answer to social media messages. Similar results emerge with regard to answering to consumers' comments on social media: i.e. all the full-type restaurants and the majority of the social (77,77%), web (66,66%) and partial type restaurants (57,14%) respond within the day or within few days. A relevant percentage of partial type restaurants (42,86%) state they rarely answer to users' comments on social media.

Tab. 11: Degree of social media interactivity

Have you ever organized events exploiting the active participation of users?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**62,50%**	**88,89%**	**77,78%**	42,86%
No	37,50%	11,11%	22,22%	**57,14%**
To which comments and messages do you usually answer?	**FULL**	**SOCIAL**	**WEB**	**PARTIAL**
All	62,50%	66,67%	44,44%	42,86%
Only the negative ones	25,00%	0,00%	11,11%	0,00%
Only the positive ones	0,00%	0,00%	11,11%	14,28%
I never answer	12,50%	33,33%	**33,34%**	42,86%

How long, on average, do you respond to messages on Social media?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
In the day	75,00%	44,44%	33,33%	42,86%
In a few days	25,00%	44,44%	22,22%	42,86%
Rarely	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	14,28%
I never answer	0,00%	11,12%	**44,45%**	0,00%
How long, on average, do you respond to comments on Social media?	**FULL**	**SOCIAL**	**WEB**	**PARTIAL**
In the day	62,50%	44,44%	33,33%	42,86%
In a few days	37,50%	33,33%	33,33%	14,28%
Rarely	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	**42,86%**
I never answer	0,00%	22,23%	33,34%	0,00%

Source: Our elaboration

4.3.4 Web effects on the marketing processes

In addition, the interviews allowed to go deeper into specific marketing issues. Firstly, the respondents were asked if the web 2.0 has changed their strategies. Notably, the majority of the social (88,89%), full (87,50%) and partial type restaurants (85,71%) stated that their strategies have been profoundly influenced by the web 2.0. On the other hand, a not negligible percentage of web ideal-type restaurants (33,33%) claimed that the 2.0 web has not affected the dynamics of their business in any way. Similar results emerge with regard to the restaurants' attitude to distinguish between marketing and communication, with the majority of the partial (71,43%), social (66,67%) and full type restaurants (62,50%) being able to make a strict distinction and a relevant percentage of web ideal-type restaurants (66,67%) not distinguishing marketing from communication strategies. Furthermore, with regard to the role of social media in gathering information on consumers, findings show that the four ideal-types behave in different ways. In particular, while the majority of the social (66,67%) and full type restaurants (62,50%) confirm to adopt social networks also with the aim of collecting users' information, the majority of the partial (85,71%) and web type restaurants (55,56%) affirm, on the contrary, not to use the social media platforms for this specific purpose. Similar results emerge as for the restaurants' attitude to tailor their offers to a specific target. In fact, the full (87,50%) and social type restaurants (66,67%) confirm the adoption of segmentation strategies while the web (77,78%) and the partial ideal-types (71,43%) assess they do not to customize their offers. Another remarkable finding concerns the restaurants' inclination to conduct market researches. Notably, only the majority of the social restaurants (55,56%) state they implement market researches, while the majority of the partial (85,71%), web

(66,67%) and full type restaurants (62,50%) answered they do not. Moreover, with regard to the importance of customers' online comments, all the ideal-types claim they exploit users' comments and reviews in order to improve their activity. In particular, all the social and partial type restaurants and the majority of the web (88,89%) and full ones (87,50%) affirm they use consumers' comments and reviews as enhancing tools. Lastly, similar results emerge with regard to the importance of restaurants' online image. All the full and social type restaurants and the majority of the web (88,89%) and partial (85,71%) ones do consider the constant monitoring of their online image as a very relevant activity.

Tab. 12: Web effects on the marketing processes

Have the web 2.0 inputs modified your strategies?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**87,50%**	**88,89%**	**66,67%**	**85,71%**
No	12,50%	11,11%	**33,33%**	14,29%
Do you distinguish between marketing and communication?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**62,50%**	**66,67%**	33,33%	**71,43%**
No	37,50%	33,33%	**66,67%**	28,57%
Do you use social networks to collect information about users?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**62,50%**	**66,67%**	44,44%	14,29%
No	37,50%	33,33%	**55,56%**	**85,71%**
Do you have a target (the type of customer) on which you build the offer?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**87,50%**	**66,67%**	22,22%	28,57%
No	12,50%	33,33%	**77,78%**	**71,43%**
Do you realize market research?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	37,50%	**55,56%**	33,33%	14,29%
No	**62,50%**	44,44%	**66,67%**	**85,71%**
Do you use reviews and user comments to improve yourself?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**87,50%**	**100,00%**	**88,89%**	**100,00%**
No	12,50%	0,00%	11,11%	0,00%
Do you monitor your image on the web and on social media?	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Yes	**100,00%**	**100,00%**	**88,89%**	**85,71%**
No	0,00%	00,00%	11,11%	14,29%

Source: Our elaboration

4.3.5 Restaurants' performances and dimensions

In the last phase of the work, in order to be able to contextualize the collected data and to provide an estimation of the results achieved through the pursuit of the strategy, the restaurants' trends over the last 5 years in terms of results obtained, turnover, profits, and personnel have been investigated. In particular, in relation to the results obtained in the last 5 years, only half of the full ideal-types claim that the results achieved are above the average, while the majority of the partial (71,43%), social (55,56%) and web (55,56%) restaurants consider their position in the average with respect to their reference context. The turnover trend turns out to be similar, with only the full ideal-type restaurants (62,50%) experiencing growth and with the majority of the partial (71,42%) and social ones (66,67%) confirming a stable turnover. A relevant percentage (44,45%) of web type restaurants state that they have experienced a decrease in the last five years.

When asked to evaluate their last-5-years profits' trend versus the competitors' trends, all the social type restaurants and the majority of the full ones (87,50%) state that they have experienced an increase in profits or that they have not perceived major changes, while on the contrary the majority of the web (88,88%) and partial ideal-types (71,43%) claim their profits remained stable or decreased during the investigated time frame.

From the employees' trend perspective, only the half of the full restaurants state that they have increased their staff in the last five years, while the majority of the web (77,78%), partial (71,43%) and social ones (66,67%) maintained a stable number of employees.

Tab. 13: Restaurants' performances

The achieved results are...	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
Above the average	**50,00%**	44,44%	22,22%	28,57%
Average	**50,00%**	**55,56%**	**55,56%**	**71,43%**
Below the average	0,00%	0,00%	**22,22%**	0,00%
Turnover is..	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
On the rise	**62,50%**	33,33%	22,22%	14,29%
Stable	25,00%	**66,67%**	33,33%	**71,42%**
In decline	12,50%	0,00%	**44,45%**	14,29%
Profit is..	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
On the rise	**37,50%**	**33,33%**	11,12%	28,57%
Stable	**50,00%**	**66,67%**	**44,44%**	**28,57%**
In decline	12,50%	0,00%	**44,44%**	**42,86%**
Staff is..	FULL	SOCIAL	WEB	PARTIAL
On the rise	**50,00%**	33,33%	11,11%	28,57%
Stable	37,50%	**66,67%**	**77,78%**	**71,43%**
In decline	12,50%	0,00%	11,11%	0,00%

Source: Our elaboration

Finally, a restaurants classification by size was tried cross-referencing the number of seats (1-40 small; 41-100 medium; more than 100 big) and the staff head-count (1-5 small; 6-10; medium; more than 10 big). The restaurants with both parameters "small" have been categorized as small; those with both parameters "big" as big, while the remaining restaurants have been classified as medium. Notably, interviewing results show how the restaurants belonging to the full ideal-type are mainly of big dimensions (4/8), the social ones are mainly medium-sized (6/9), the web ones are mainly of small dimensions, while the partial ones are medium sized (6/7).

Tab. 14: Restaurants' dimension

Full	S	M	B	Tot	Average
Number of seats	1	1	6	8	85,63
Number of employees	1	2	5	8	12,63
Seat & Employees	1			8	
Social	S	M	B	Tot	Average
Number of seats	5	2	2	9	61,56
Number of employees	5	4	0	9	5,22
Seat & Employees	3	6	0	9	
Web	S	M	B	Tot	Average
Number of seats	5	3	1	9	55,33
Number of employees	7	2	0	9	4,22
Seat & Employees			0	9	
Partial	S	M	B	Tot	Average
Number of seats	1	4	2	7	92
Number of employees	1	6	0	7	7,86
Seat & Employees	1	6	0	7	

Source: Our elaboration

5. Discussion

Thanks to the data collected through the interviews, the above research questions are answered as follows. Concerning the first one (*Which is the level of use of web 2.0 tools in the restaurant industry? And how are these tools used?*), the study allowed to underline how the best-in-class restaurants in the cities of Fano, Pesaro and Urbino recognize the strategic relevance of the new online channels. Notably, almost all the restaurants, belonging to the four identified ideal-types, state to adopt social media and to have modified their strategies in response to the web 2.0 advent.

However, despite their awareness, the implementation of the OVI-R, revealed a significant gap between the potentially obtainable results and the actual outcomes achieved by the investigated restaurants.

The second research question aimed to investigate the impact of web 2.0 on restaurants' marketing processes. Results enabled the identification of the main behaviours adopted by the restaurants belonging to the four ideal-types, in response to the web 2.0.

Firstly, it emerged how the full ideal-type – consisting of restaurants which have achieved full visibility both on Google search engine and on the adopted social media platforms - usually manages two or more social networking accounts with the aim of increasing the loyalty of the existing customers. Furthermore, the majority of the restaurants belonging to this typology consciously manages online channels, using internal resources to deal with the social media organization; to create an editorial calendar which involves the adaption of the contents to the different adopted social media and to organize online events with the active participation of users. Moreover, the strategies of the full ideal-type restaurants have been profoundly influenced by the web 2.0 channels, which become valuable tools in order to gather consumers' information and to enhance business through the analysis of the consumers' comments and reviews. However, despite their attitude to identify specific target audiences, these restaurants do not conduct market researches. Finally, from a performance point of view, the majority of the full ideal-type restaurants (which are, the biggest ones among the four identified categories) experienced, in the last five years, growth in terms of results, turnover, and staff.

The second ideal-type (social) is composed of restaurants achieving relevant visibility, especially on the social media platforms. Overall, even if they present behaviours very similar to the first typology, some differences emerged. Notably, the events' advertising represents the main motivation which leads them to adopt social media, in contrast to the full ideal-type. Secondly, another difference concerns the marketing sphere, since only this typology of restaurants conducts market researches. Concerning the performance, the majority of the restaurants belonging to the social ideal-type (which are medium-sized) did not experience important changes in their results, turnover, and staff which remained stable during the investigated time frame. The third typology (Web) - made up of restaurants reaching significant visibility only on the organic and sponsored Google search engine – presents some relevant differences with respect to the full and social categories. In particular, the web restaurants focus at most only on one social media platform especially in order to acquire new customers. Furthermore, their social activities are not subordinated to an editorial calendar, nor planned and indeed randomly implemented. Also, their online contents are not studied ad hoc, based on the types of adopted social media, but they are shared the same way on all of their social networking accounts. These behaviours consequently affect their marketing activities, with the majority of the web ideal-type restaurants not distinguishing between communication and marketing strategies and not using social media to gather information on customers and not identifying specific target audiences. Finally, with regard to the performance, what distinguishes these restaurants (which are, among the four identified categories, those with the smallest dimensions) from the others, is the fact that a significant percentage of them has experienced a turnover reduction in the last five years.

The last typology (Partial) consists of restaurants that failed to gain significant visibility in either category (web and social). Results show how this category is similar to the others. Notably, it is composed of restaurants adopting two or more social networks (likewise the full typology) especially in order to acquire new customers. However, they do not follow an editorial calendar, do not adapt the online contents to the type of social media, do not use social media to gather information and do not identify specific target audiences (likewise the web typology). On the other hand, similarly to the social ideal-type, the partial category includes medium-sized restaurants and registered a stable performance (in terms of results, turnover, and staff) in the last five years. Finally, this category presents a characteristic which significantly differentiates it from the three others: the unwillingness to organize online events with the active participation of users.

6. Conclusions, implications and avenues for future research

Overall, the paper provides two types of implications. From a theoretical point of view, the study fills a gap in research, by deeper analysing the approach used by restaurant firms to face the web 2.0 challenge (Kim et al., 2016). Moreover, it widens the extant research, by analysing the comprehensive impact of the web 2.0 on the restaurants' marketing process. In addition, the work offers a valuable tool, the OVI-R index, to measure the restaurants performance and compare it to the competitors' results. This index also represents a valuable tool for gathering data to be used both for the strategy definition and the constant monitoring of its progress and effectiveness. Furthermore, it allows to identify the main points of strength and the major weaknesses of the restaurant firms and to measure results on a regular intervals basis and compare them in order to underline the trend and the strategy's progress. From a managerial perspective, the study provides implications for firms' marketers and practitioners, by identifying possible guidelines for the adoption of pro-active attitudes in using the 2.0 channels. Notably, the interviews results showed how the restaurants belonging to the more visible ideal-type (full), as well as those belonging to the less visible one (partial) delegate the online channels' management both to internal resources and/or to external professionals. This means that online visibility performances do not depend on the insourcing/outsourcing choices, but they especially rely on the pro-active management of online activities. Indeed, the major differences – identified by comparing the full and the partial ideal-type's behaviours - are mainly connected to the social media and marketing strategies management and to the overall restaurants' performances. In particular, while in the majority of the full ideal-type restaurants, editorial calendars are adopted in order to schedule the planning of the social media contents, the online contents are adapted according to the social networks types and online events are organized, in the partial ideal-type, these strategies are often not adopted, with the majority of the restaurants sharing the same contents in all their social media accounts and avoiding editorial calendars as well as the organization of online events through the exploitation of the active participation of users.

Also, from a marketing perspective, relevant differences emerged especially with regard to the adoption of segmentation strategies. Particularly, while the restaurants belonging to the full-ideal type adopt social media to gather information about customers and to target their communication strategies, the partial ones claim they do not rely on these activities.

Besides the communication and marketing strategies, another difference emerged between the more visible and the less visible restaurants, i.e. the last five years' performance increased for the full restaurants, while it remained stable for the partial ones. In general, the analysis highlights the need to strengthen (change) the restaurants' culture concerning the opportunities offered by the web 2.0. One of the possible causes of this lack of culture (especially in the partial ideal-type restaurants) may lie in the fact that often the restaurants' managers mainly entertain contacts with hotel management schools in order to search for professional figures to be included in the hall and kitchen activities, by giving, therefore, less relevance to the communication and marketing know-how. One possible solution could be to strengthen the cooperation with local universities, to get professionals with the needed skills.

Even the insourcing choice could be a successful solution. However, in order to achieve positive results, the internal staff concerned with the communication and marketing activities should be properly trained and kept up-to-date to face the rapidly changing social media environment. Nevertheless, this option has some costs, both in terms of money and time. In fact, as already mentioned, training should be constant and continuous in order to be always up-to-date. A cheaper choice, could be to delegate the communication activities' management to external professionals. Indeed, outsourcing allows better short-term results, requires less time investment and costs less than training courses. However, by entrusting the partial or the total management of the communication to an external figure, part of the control can be lost (an aspect that is not always negligible within the organization of a SME). The main limitation of the study is connected to the fact that the analysis is limited to a specific territorial area (the three cities of Fano, Pesaro, and Urbino) and could, therefore, be affected by the cultural and competitive features of the territory. A second limitation is linked to the research timing. The empirical study was carried out in a single period (March 2018), underlying in this way the need to repeat the survey in the future in a longitudinal way in order to outline a more detailed picture of the situation and in order to analyze how the online visibility ranking changes over time. A third limitation is related to the fact that the adopted model (Cioppi et al., 2016) does not divide the indicators between community, content, and interactions with content, as the most recent literature suggests (Trunfio and Della Lucia, 2018). In this respect, the present model could be refined, in future researches, by distinguishing how online visibility is generated. Finally, the present study represents a first exploratory attempt to investigate the comprehensive impact of the web 2.0 on the restaurants' marketing processes. Consequently, it could be interesting to realize, in future researches, empirical analyses on this topic, by deeply exploring some statistical relations among the identified variables (i.e. firms' dimensions and online visibility performances; online visibility performances and firms' economic results).

Tonino Pencarelli
University of Urbino "Carlo Bo"
tonino.pencarelli@uniurb.it

Marco Cioppi
University of Urbino "Carlo Bo"
marco.cioppi@uniurb.it

Ilaria Curina
University of Urbino "Carlo Bo"
ilaria.curina@uniurb.it

Fabio Forlani
University of Perugia
fabio.forlani@unipg.it

References

Adhikari, A., & Bhattacharya, S. (2016). Appraisal of literature on customer experience in the tourism sector: review and framework. Current Issues in Tourism, 19(4), 296-321.

Al Muala, A. (2018). Influence of Viral Marketing Dimensions on Customer Satisfaction in Fast Food Restaurants in Jordan. Journal of Management & Sustainability, 8(1), 149-155.

Aureli, S., & Supino, E. (2017). Online Reputation Monitoring: An Exploratory Study on Italian Hotel Managers' Practices. International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration, 18(1), 84-109.

Baggio, R., & Del Chiappa, G. (2014). Real and virtual relationships in tourism digital ecosystems. Information Technology & Tourism, 14(1), 3-19.

Beese, E. (2011). The use and perceived effectiveness of e-marketing technologies in restaurants. Paper Presented at the 9th Undergraduate Research.

Buhalis, D., & Law, R. (2008). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the Internet—The state of eTourism research. Tourism Management, 29(4), 609-623.

Campos, A. C., Mendes, J., Valle, P. O. D., & Scott, N. (2018). Co-creation of tourist experiences: A literature review. Current Issues in Tourism, 21(4), 369-400.

Ciccia, R., & Verloo, M. (2012). Parental leave regulations and the persistence of the male breadwinner model: Using fuzzy-set ideal type analysis to assess gender equality in an enlarged Europe. Journal of European Social Policy, 22(5), 507-528.

Cioppi, M., Curina, I., Forlani, F., & Pencarelli, T. (2016). La visibilità on-line delle imprese alberghiere: un possibile modello di misurazione. Piccola Impresa/Small Business, 1(2016), 78-98.

De Pelsmacker, P., van Tilburg, S., & Holthof, C. (2018). Digital marketing strategies, online reviews, and hotel performance. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 72(2018), 47-55.

Del Chiappa, G. (2011). Trustworthiness of Travel 2.0 applications and their influence on tourist behavior: an empirical investigation in Italy. In Law, R., Fuchs, M., Ricci, F. (eds.), Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism, Wien: Springer.

Fiss, P. C. (2011). Building better causal theories: A fuzzy set approach to typologies in organization research. Academy of Management Journal, 54(2), 393-420.

Forlani, F., & Pencarelli, T. (2018). The Tourist Offer of the Destination in an Experience Logic Perspective. In The Experience Logic as a New Perspective for Marketing Management (pp. 71-89). Cham: Springer.

Horster, E., & Gottschalk, C. (2012). Computer-assisted webnography: A new approach to online reputation management in tourism. Journal of Vacation Marketing, 18(3), 229-238.

Inversini, A., Marchiori, E., Dedekind, C., & Cantoni, L. (2010). Applying a Conceptual Framework to Analyze Web Reputation of Tourism Destinations. In Gretzel, U., Law, R., & Fuchs, M. (eds.), Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism (pp. 321-332), Wien: Springer.

Jeong, E., & Jang, S. S. (2011). Restaurant experiences triggering positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) motivations. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 30(2), 356-366.

Karanasios, S., & Burgess, S. (2008). Tourism and Internet adoption: a developing world perspective. International Journal of Tourism Research, 10(2), 169-182.

Khobzi, H., & Teimourpour, B. (2014). How significant are the users' opinions on social media? International Journal of Accounting & Information Management, 22(4), 254-272.

Kim, W. G., Li, J. J., & Brymer, R. A. (2016). The impact of social media reviews on restaurant performance: The moderating role of excellence certificate. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 55(2016), 41-51.

Kimes, S. E. (2011). The current state of online food ordering in the US restaurant industry. Cornell Hospitality Report, 11(17), 6-18.

Kvist, J. (2007). Fuzzy set ideal type analysis. Journal of Business Research, 60(5), 474-481.

Leung, X. Y., Bai, B., & Stahura, K. A. (2015). The marketing effectiveness of social media in the hotel industry: A comparison of Facebook and Twitter. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 39(2), 147-169.

Leung, D., Law, R., Van Hoof, H., & Buhalis, D. (2013). Social media in tourism and hospitality: A literature review. Journal of travel & tourism marketing, 30(1-2), 3-22.

Litvin, S.W., Goldsmith R.E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. Tourism Management, 29(3), 458-468.

Lu, X., Ba, S., Huang, L., & Feng, Y. (2013). Promotional marketing or word-of-mouth? Evidence from online restaurant reviews. Information Systems Research, 24(3), 596-612.

Mellet, K., Beauvisage, T., Beuscart, J. S., & Trespeuch, M. (2014). A "democratization" of markets? Online consumer reviews in the restaurant industry. Valuation Studies, 2(1), 5-41.

Middleton, V. T., & Clarke, J. R. (2012). Product formulation in tourism. In Marketing in Travel and Tourism (pp. 138-154). London: Routledge.

Middleton, V.T., Fyall, A., Morgan, M., & Ranchhod, A. (2009). Marketing in travel and tourism. Oxford: Routledge.

Munoz-Leiva, F., Hernández-Méndez, J., & Sánchez-Fernández, J. (2012). Generalizing user behavior in online travel sites through the Travel 2.0 website acceptance model. Online Information Review, 36(6), 879-902.

Murphy, J., Forrest, E., & Wotring, C. E. (1996). Restaurant marketing on the world wide web. The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 37(1), 61-71.

Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D., & Ladkin, A. (2015). Technology as a catalyst of change: enablers and barriers of the tourist experience and their consequences. Information and communication technologies in tourism 2015 (pp. 789-802). Cham: Springer.

Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D., & Ladkin, A. (2014). A Typology of technology-enhanced tourism experiences. International Journal of Tourism Research, 16(4), 340-350.

Pencarelli, T., Cioppi, M., & Forlani, F. (2015). L'impatto del web 2.0 sul marketing delle piccole imprese alberghiere. Piccola Impresa/Small Business, 2(2015), 11-32.

Raguseo, E., Neirotti, P., & Paolucci, E. (2017). How small hotels can drive value their way in into mediation. The case of 'Italian hotels vs. OTAs and TripAdvisor'. Information & Management, 54(6), 745-756.

Salleh, S., Hashima, N. H., & Murphy, J. (2015). Instagram marketing: a content analysis of top Malaysian restaurant brands. E-Review of Tourism Research, 6(2015), 1-5.

Sigala, M. (2018). New technologies in tourism: From multi-disciplinary to anti-disciplinary advances and trajectories. Tourism management perspectives, 25(2018), 151-155.

Smithson, S., Devece, C. A., & Lapiedra, R. (2011). Online visibility as a source of competitive advantage for small and medium-sized tourism accommodation enterprises. The Service Industries Journal, 31(10), 1573-1587.

Standing, C., Tang-Taye, J. P., & Boyer, M. (2014). The impact of the Internet in travel and tourism: A research review 2001–2010. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 31(1), 82-113.

Trunfio, M., & Della Lucia, M. (2018). Engaging Destination Stakeholders in the Digital Era: The Best Practice of Italian Regional DMOs. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 43(3), 349-373.

Wang, H. Y. (2011). Exploring the factors of gastronomy blogs influencing readers' intention to taste. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 30(3), 503-514.

Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. Tourism Management, 31(2), 179-188.

Xiang, Z., Woeber, K., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2008). Representation of the online tourism domain in search engines. Journal of Travel Research, 47(2), 137-150.

Xie, K. L., Zhang, Z., & Zhang, Z. (2014). The business value of online consumer reviews and management response to hotel performance. International Journal of Hospitality

Management, 43(2014), 1-12.

Zhang, H. Y., Ji, P., Wang, J. Q., & Chen, X. H. (2017). A novel decision support model for satisfactory restaurants utilizing social information: A case study of TripAdvisor. com. Tourism Management, 59(2017), 281-297.

Zhang, Z., Ye, Q., Law, R., & Li, Y. (2010). The impact of e-word-of-mouth on the online popularity of restaurants: A comparison of consumer reviews and editor reviews. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 29(4), 694-700.

Zhao, X., Wang, L., Guo, X., & Law, R. (2015). The influence of online reviews to online hotel booking intentions. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 27(6), 1343-1364.

PROFILING ITALIAN STREET TRAVEL AGENCIES BASED ON THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA

by Giacomo Del Chiappa, Marcello Atzeni, Jessica Mei Pung

Abstract

User Generated Content (UGC) exerts a great influence on tourists' choices, sometimes driving them to change the accommodation previously suggested by a street travel agency. In this context travel agencies need to proactively use both the Internet and UGC to build and maintain their competitive advantage. Despite this, there is no published paper profiling travel agencies based on how they use social media (SM). This study was therefore carried out to profile a sample of 281 Italian street travel agencies based on their perceived strategic value, perceived usefulness, emotional engagement, perceived ease of use, intention to use, satisfaction and intention to recommend SM use to others. Four segments were identified, namely: "Passive users", "Enthusiasts", "Strategically myopics" and "Active users". Hence, chi square analysis was run to ascertain significant differences among clusters based on business-related variables. Findings show that significant differences among clusters exist only based on the frequency of SM use and the overall travel agencies' attitude towards the importance of marketing and promotion tools for their competitiveness. Theoretical contributions and managerial implications are discussed, providing suggestions for further research.

Keywords: *social media, travel agencies, Italy.*
Jel classification: *M31*

Data ricezione: 5/12//2018
Data accettazione: 3/3/2019

1. Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are essential nowadays for the survival and competitiveness of businesses in the tourism industry (Cheng and Cho, 2011). The Internet has especially revolutionised the hospitality and tourism sector in the way product information is distributed and online purchases are provided (Hidalgo-Alcázar et al., 2014), calling for tourism businesses to find the best use of technology to constantly improve their efficiency and respond to the consumers' evolving needs (Law et al., 2014).

As a second wave of digital transformation called Web 2.0, the advent of social media also represents an important opportunity for tourism marketing, as more and more prospective tourists rely on user-generated content (UGC) to choose services such as accommodation, itineraries and destinations according to other consumers' feedback and experiences (Litvin et al., 2008; Del Chiappa et al., 2018). Since the Internet and UGC have become popular tools for travel planning, it is necessary for travel agencies to include these in their e-commerce model and marketing strategy.

Among such digital tools, social media not only represents a source of useful ideas but also exerts a great influence on the actual planning process, even after tourists' decisions have been taken (e.g. Xiang et al., 2015). Adopting a supply-side perspective, social media represents an opportunity for marketers to provide engaging storytelling to a wider audience and better interactions with customers (Fotis et al., 2012). This further proves the urgency of integrating UGC platforms such as social media in the marketing strategy of tourism operators. Despite the fact that several studies have illustrated the benefits of technology adoption and social media engagement in the tourism industry (e.g. Park and Oh, 2012; Abou-Shouk et al., 2013; Law et al., 2014; Roult et al., 2016), there has been limited investigation into how street travel agencies use social media to promote their business. Specifically, this paper aims to profile a sample of 281 Italian street travel agencies according to the extent to which they engage with social media as part of their marketing operations. Furthermore, the study also aims to investigate whether significant differences exist among clusters based on a number of business characteristics (e.g. the presence of a person in charge of managing social media, number of employees, etc.).

2. Literature Review

In 2017, tourism accounted for €223.2 billion of the GDP (13% of total GDP) in Italy (WTTC, 2018). Despite still being under researched and under theorised (Thomas et al., 2011), small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in ensuring the success of tourism development of any tourism destination (Hallak et al., 2015). In Italy, this is particularly evident with regard to the travel agency sector, where micro (employing less than 10 people) and small (employing between 10 and 49 people) travel agencies have the biggest shares in terms of value added and employment (Eurostat, 2012). However, travel agencies are currently threatened by an increasing disintermediation taking place in the tourism industry, caused by the advent of e-commerce (Buhalis and Licata, 2002; Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). In order to react to these changes, tourism SMEs are encouraged to develop technology adoption and new marketing communication tools (Abou-Shouk et al., 2013).

Technology adoption can improve business efficiency and performance (e.g. Teo et al., 2009), as well as small improvements in decision making, transactions, inventory keeping, accountability, knowledge building, employment growth, staff recruitment and staff satisfaction (e.g. Daniel and Wilson, 2006; Álvarez et al., 2007). By specifically engaging in e-commerce, tourism SMEs can benefit from a wide range of advantages: earn more profits (e.g. Park and Oh, 2012); increase productivity and sales (e.g. Simpson and Docherty, 2004; Migiro and Ocholla, 2005); facilitate collaboration with new and established partners (Taylor and Murphy, 2004); create new products and services (Migiro and Ocholla, 2005), and improve their services and communication with customers (e.g. Saffu et al., 2008). These benefits have the potential to provide survival in the market, stability and competitive advantage (e.g. Kartiwi and MacGregor, 2007).

With regard to marketing operations, SMEs can also widely benefit from e-commerce, mainly enhancing distribution channels and reducing costs (Abou-Shouk et al., 2013). By implementing marketing campaigns on the Internet, businesses can also better promote their image and reputation to a wider audience (Collins et al., 2003; Cho and Huh, 2010). While Abou-Shouk et al. (2013) have found that marketing and competition are the main benefits perceived by small and medium travel agents in engaging with e-commerce, SMEs still encounter different barriers to their involvement with digital media (Camilleri, 2018). For example, such businesses may only employ advertisement and not use the Internet in promoting their services to niche or small markets (Shah Alam, 2009; Sin Tan et al., 2010). Furthermore, SMEs may not have enough resources and time at disposal to engage with digital media, nor the skills and competence (Brouthers et al., 2015; Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015). Another important barrier to adopting digital marketing may be SMEs' management resistance caused by prejudices or no clear strategy of which communication channel would be the most effective (Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015). In addition, a concern for privacy and security may also deter making online transactions (Gupta et al., 2013).

Because of the co-existence of barriers and benefits, the extent of technology adoption by SMEs has been defined as variable, and few studies have defined adoption stages accordingly. Lefebvre et al. (2005) distinguish e-commerce non-adopters and adopters. Adopters gradually engage in information search and content creation online (stage 1); electronic transactions (stage 2); complex online transactions (stage 3) and, finally, electronic interaction and collaboration (stage 4) (Lefebvre et al., 2005). Al-Qirim (2007) identifies starters, who use e-mail and the Internet; low-level adopters of e-commerce, who develop websites; advanced-level adopters who make online transactions; extended adopters, who use the Intranet and extranet. From their review of literature on e-commerce technology adoption, Chen and McQueen (2008) have drawn four growth stages, characterised by: (1) searching information and using e-mail; (2) online marketing through a static website; (3) online ordering with manual payment; (4) online transactions.

Very few studies have devoted their attention to profiling SMEs according to their ICT adoption level. In profiling small accommodation providers, Hills and Cairncross (2011) have found that some are little aware of the advantages the Internet provides and are unresponsive to them, while others proactively engage in innovative practices to respond to UGC websites. Moreover, Spencer et al. (2012) has found that the levels of technology adoption in owner-managed small firms are strongly driven by the typology of leadership, profiled in: resistors, enforcers, stabilisers, reactors and converters. Together with the level of employee acceptance, management attitude is also believed to constitute a major challenge and even a barrier to adopting social media in SMEs, more than "hard factors" such as costs and technical problems (Meske and Stieglitz, 2013).

While so far literature has discussed SMEs' adoption of e-commerce, limited research has focused on travel agencies as adopters of ICT, nonetheless practising digital marketing. The use of ICT has been described as an ideal tool for travel agencies because of their intrinsic need to constantly adjust fares, reservations and itineraries, as well as to provide electronic tickets (Bigné et al., 2008). Through the Internet, travel agencies can also amplify their service offer online, which represents a source for consolidation and competitiveness in the market (Suárez Álvarez et al., 2007). Direct customer interaction is also enhanced by the web, which is important to improve information distribution and customer satisfaction with the travel agency (Roult et al., 2016). Finally, cost reduction has also been found to be a major benefit of marketing content on the Internet (Law et al., 2004).

In this scenario, researchers nowadays concur that social media are increasingly trusted by consumers who rely on UGC content to make decisions according to other consumers' experiences (Fotis et al., 2012). As such, travellers' reviews are among the preferred information sources consumers use to make their choices. In this context, consumers have also been found to often post online comments and reviews with regard to their experience with street travel agencies (Cioppi et al., 2016). Recent studies have also showed that UGC could induce tourists to even change the accommodation choice suggested by travel agencies (Del Chiappa, 2013; Del Chiappa et al., 2014; Prayag and Del Chiappa, 2014). This urges traditional travel agencies to engage in social media use in order to retain a secure and competitive position in the distribution chain. In fact, social media can be considered relevant marketing tools that street travel agencies can use to gain greater interaction and connectedness with customers (Trusov et al., 2009; Michaelidou et al., 2011), as well as fast and easy information provision and diffusion, often engaged by customers themselves (Kaplan and Haelnein, 2010; Park and Oh, 2012). Furthermore, social media are particularly useful for enhancing brand awareness and image, as well as for proactively improving their online reputation (Park and Oh, 2012; Pencarelli et al., 2015), managing complaints and saving marketing costs on other platforms (Weber, 2007).

Despite this, and besides the limited research describing the advantages for travel agencies in developing e-marketing, there is still very little research aimed at investigating the extent to which street travel agencies use social media to promote their business. This is particularly evident in Italy: despite the fact that some studies have analysed how effective Italian travel agencies are in managing their official website (e.g. Cioppi and Buratti, 2014), there has been no published paper specifically devoted to investigating social media adoption. Based on a relatively recent call for further research investigating how tourism enterprises engage with consumers and stakeholders across social media platforms (Law et al., 2014), this study was carried out to profile a sample of 281 Italians street travel agencies based on the extent to which they engage with social media as part of their marketing operations.

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this study, an ad-hoc questionnaire was built based on prior literature. Specifically, the survey was divided in three main parts.

In the first part, the respondents were asked a number of questions aimed at assessing their social media (SM) use in the workplace, the size of their firm (i.e. number of employees) and level of social media engagement, as well as the firm's general attitude towards marketing and communication tools.

In the second part, respondents were asked to express the extent to which they agreed or disagreed (1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree) with a list of statements specifically used to measure:

- the perceived usefulness of SM, with perceived usefulness being defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" (Davis, 1989, p. 320);
- the perceived ease of use, with perceived ease of use being defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (Davis, 1989, p. 320);
- the perceived strategic value of SM, with perceived strategic value being defined as the value that an organisation thinks to gain in term of operational support, productivity and strategic decision when using SM (Grandon and Pearson, 2003; Saffu et al., 2008).

The statements used to measure each construct were sourced from Grandon and Pearson (2004) and Camilleri (2018), and partially adapted to suit the specific research setting of this study.

In the third part, respondents were asked to express the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a list of statements specifically used to measure:

- their emotional engagement with SM use, with emotional engagement being viewed as the "positive affect: enjoyment, fun, psychological arousal" (O'Brien and Toms, 2008, p. 948), assessing the employees' motivation and interest in using SM. The items were sourced from O'Brien and Toms (2008) and partially adapted to suit the specific research setting of this study;
- their level of satisfaction towards SM use, their intention to use SM in the future and to recommend them to others. The items used to measure these constructs were sourced from previous studies (i.e. Davis, 1989; Zeithaml et al., 1996) and partially adapted to suit the specific research setting of this study.

The survey was conducted online during April-June 2015. The database of the emails was assembled by using a well-established Italian tourism book/directory. Hence, a total of 2,500 travel agencies were finally included. These travel agencies received an e-mail inviting them to complete the online questionnaire by clicking on a link directly provided in the email. At the end of data collection, a total of 281 valid questionnaires were obtained. This yielded a response rate of 10.44%, which can be considered acceptable, given that SMEs studies usually recognise response rates of less than 10% being the norm in SMEs-related data collection (Jay and Schaper, 2003).

4. Findings

The sample (Tab. 1) was composed by 281 respondents employed at small and medium travel agencies, with one (78.2%) or two (14.0%) branches and less than 10 employees (89.0%). Most of the respondents had started to use SM 1-2 years (39.2%) or 2-3 years (18.5%) before the data collection, and tended to use SM a couple of times a week (27.5%) or a few times a day (28.6%). Of the travel agencies involved in this study, 15% employed a social media (SM) manager full time, 39.5% had a SM manager working part time and 38.9% did not have a dedicated SM manager. The majority of travel agencies (83.4%) did not restrict /limit their employees' access to Internet , and had not adopted Internal guidelines for SM use (84.1%). Further, 56.5% reported that they did not have adequate hardware and software for SM use. However, the firms involved had an overall positive attitude towards marketing and communication tools (83.10%).

Tab. 1: Sample composition

How often do you use social media?	%	**How many co-workers have Internet access?**	%
Hardly ever	5.8	None	4.7
Less than once a month	5.3	Few	3.6
A couple of times a month	10.6	Most of them	8.3
A couple of times a week	27.5	Everyone	83.4
Around once a day	22.2	**Branches**	
A few times a day	28.6	1	78.2
When did you start using social media?		2	14.0
Less than 3 months ago	5.3	3	4.1
Less than 6 months ago	7.9	More than 3	3.7
Less than a year ago	16.4	**Employees**	
1-2 years ago	39.2	Less than 10	89.0
2-3 years ago	18.5	Between 11 and 20	6.7
More than 3 years ago	12.7	Between 21 and 40	2.5
Is there a SM manager in your firm?		Between 41 and 60	0.5
Yes, full time	15.1	Between 61 and 80	1.0
Yes, part time	39.5	More than 80	0.5
No	38.9	**Do you have adequate HW e SW for SM use?**	
No, we rely on a consultant	5.4	Yes	43.5
No, we rely on ADV o PR agency	1.1	No	56.5
Does your firm have guidelines for SM use?		**Does your firm have a positive attitude towards Mk and Communication tools?**	
Yes	15.9	Yes	83.1
No	84.1	No	16.9

Source: Our elaboration (2018)

On the whole, the strategic value of SM was partially acknowledged (e.g. "Using SM media provides information that help make effective decisions" – M=3.29; "Using SM increases firm's productivity – M=3.06), and some concerns were raised with regard to the role of SM use in improving staff productivity (M=2.76) and communication in the organisation (M=2.71). Overall, the respondents partially perceived SM as stimulating (M=3.11) or interesting tools (M=3.29), and showed a neutral position in relation to SM ease of use ("I think social media would be flexible to interact with" – M=3.15). Despite this, respondents mainly scored highly on their perceived usefulness of SM (e.g. "Using SM helps develop awareness of our offer" - M=4.02; "Using SM helps provide new distribution channels" – M=3.81), and their intention to use SM (e.g. "I will probably use and continue using SM" – M=3.67). Overall, they were neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the effectiveness of SM use (M=3.15) and only appeared partially willing to recommend SM tools to others (M=3.31). Despite this, they intended to start or continue using SM in the future (M=3.64).

For the purpose of this study, a factor-cluster approach was employed (Hair et. al, 2010). Hence, an explorative factor analysis, principal component analysis, and varimax rotation were used to reveal the underlying factors in the data. Six factors summarising the 75.17% of total variance were identified (Tab. 2). The first factor was named "Perceived strategic value" (PSV) (42.29% of total variance), and was strongly related to items describing the strategic benefits perceived in using SM. The second factor was labelled "Perceived usefulness" (PU) (10.07% of total variance), and was composed by items describing the perceived advantages of SM use on travel agencies' marketing operations. "Emotional engagement" (EE) was identified as the third factor (9.74% of total variance), with items measuring the extent to which respondents found SM engagement stimulating. "Perceived ease of use" (PEU) (5.12% of total variance) included items describing the level of ease of use of SM. The fifth factor, "Intention to use" (IU) (4.72% of total variance), measured the behavioural intention of respondents to use SM. The last component was named "Satisfaction and intention to recommend" (SIR) (3.20% of total variance) and was related to items measuring the respondents' level of satisfaction in using SM and their intention to recommend these tools to others.

Tab. 2: Factor Analysis

	Loadings	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Alpha
Perceived Strategic Value (PSV)		15.649	42.295	0.948
PSV.1 Using social media increases firm's productivity	0.452			
PSV.2 Using social media provides information that helps make effective decisions	0.597			
PSV.3 Using social media helps improve customer service	0.686			
PSV.4 Using social media helps have new distribution channels	0.672			
PSV.5 Using social media helps reap operational benefits	0.816			
PSV.6 Using social media helps provide effective support role to operations	0.792			
PSV.7 Using social media helps increase ability to compete	0.729			
PSV.8 Using social media helps provide better access to information	0.762			
PSV.9 Using social media helps provide access to methods and models in making functional area decisions	0.799			
PSV.10 Using social media helps improve communication in the organisation	0.684			
PSV.11 Using social media helps improve staff productivity	0.764			
PSV.12 Using social media helps support strategic decisions	0.760			
Perceived Usefulness (PU)		3.728	10.076	0.930
PU.1 Using social media helps expand our target markets and identify new customers	0.814			
PU.2 Using social media helps develop awareness of our offer	0.856			
PU.3 Using social media helps enhance effectiveness in marketing communication	0.743			
PU.4 Using social media helps increase our ability to find new customers in our target markets	0.808			
PU.5 Using social media helps improve knowledge sharing	0.731			
PU.6 Using social media helps provide new distribution channels for our products	0.807			
PU.7 Using social media helps increase our competitiveness	0.765			
Emotional engagement (EE)		3.605	9.744	0.955

EE.1 Using social media is fun	0.780			
EE.2 Using social media is stimulating	0.767			
EE.3 Using social media is interesting	0.708			
EE.4 Using social media is enjoyable	0.797			
EE.5 Using social media makes me feel good	0.724			
EE.6 Using social media let me feel good	0.786			
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)		1.897	5.126	0.914
PEU.1 Learning to operate social media is easy for me	0.820			
PEU.2 Using social media would enable us to accomplish our tasks more easily	0.524			
PEU.3 Social media would be flexible to interact with	0.824			
PEU.4 It would be easy for me to become skilful at using social media	0.879			
PEU.5 I can use social media without help from an expert	0.790			
PEU.6 In general, I think I would find social media easy to use	0.904			
Intention to USE (IU)		1.749	4.728	0.964
IU.1 I will probably continue using social media	0.819			
IU.2 I intend to continue using social media	0.815			
IU.3 I will often use social media in the future	0.778			
Satisfaction and Intention to recommend (SIR)		1.185	3.202	0.911
SIR.1 All in all, the degree of social media effectiveness satisfies our expectations	0.843			
SIR.2 In general, our firm is satisfied with the advantages derived from social media use	0.838			
SIR.3 I will recommend social media use to other people / colleagues	0.716			

Source: Our elaboration (2018)

The scores of the six principal components were entered into a cluster analysis. A two-step cluster analysis was applied: a hierarchical cluster (Ward method and Manhattan distance) was performed. Four groups emerged, based on a dendrogram inspection and an ANOVA test (p-value < 0.00) (Hair et al., 2010). Then, a non-hierarchical method (k-means) was applied to factor scores, and four different groups were identified, namely: “Passive users”, “Enthusiasts”, “Strategically myopics” and “Active users” (Tab. 3)

Tab. 3: Cluster analysis

	Passive users	**Enthusiasts**	**Strategically myopics**	**Active Users**
	N=32	N=176	N=40	N=33
PSV	-0.10182	0.26173	-118.815	0.14304
PU	-1.63194	0.16722	0.39822	0.20796
EE	0.16683	0.29794	-0.44901	-120.656
PEU	-0.36622	0.06771	-0.10132	0.11681
IU	0.34082	-0.02324	-103.136	1.04356
SIR	0.52321	-0.01883	0.19057	-0.63793
PSV				
PSV.3	3.00	3.55	1.88	2.91
PSV.4	3.25	3.74	1.95	3.48
PSV.5	3.28	3.92	2.1	3.55
PSV.6	3.31	4.18	2.51	4.15
PSV.7	2.78	3.79	1.95	3.33
PSV.8	2.78	3.72	2.13	3.30
PSV.9	3.03	4.10	2.1	3.55
PSV.10	3.28	4.11	2.41	3.79
PSV.11	2.97	3.68	1.87	3.06
PSV.12	2.59	3.29	1.71	2.15
PSV.3	2.63	3.38	1.61	2.3
PSV.4	2.69	3.60	1.90	2.79
Perceived Usefulness (PU)				
PU.1	2.94	4.19	3.80	4.05
PU.2	3.16	4.37	4.40	4.10
PU.3	3.06	4.16	4.20	3.62
PU.4	2.91	4.07	3.80	4.05
PU.5	2.81	4.13	3.60	3.62
PU.6	2.78	4.24	3.60	4.05
PU.1	2.88	4.07	3.20	3.75
Emotional engagement		3.605	9.744	0.955
EE.1	2.88	3.52	2.00	2.24
EE.2	3.16	3.72	2.05	2.36
EE.3	3.16	3.89	2.25	2.73
EE.4	2.87	3.58	2.03	2.21
EE.5	2.23	2.99	1.38	1.42
EE.6	2.68	3.48	1.67	1.79
Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)				

PEU.1	3.19	3.76	3.53	3.55
PEU.2	2.69	3.26	2.10	2.76
PEU.3	2.81	3.43	2.73	3.06
PEU.4	2.63	3.45	3.03	3.06
PEU.5	2.81	3.47	2.80	3.36
PEU.6	2.69	3.56	3.08	3.27
Intention to USE (IU)				
IU.1	3.84	4.04	2.08	4.27
IU.2	3.69	4.00	2.03	4.36
IU.3	3.53	3.97	1.78	4.15
Satisfaction & Intention to recommend (SIR)				
SIR.1	3.09	3.36	2.83	2.64
SIR.2	3.09	3.42	2.50	2.50
SIR.3	3.13	3.75	2.83	2.32

Source: Our elaboration (2018)

"Passive users" (N=32), the smallest segment, was mainly composed of SM early users (18.8% reported a 2-3 years length of SM) and used SM a couple of times a week. They worked for travel agencies with one (57.1%) or two branches (21.4%), and employing less than 20 people (75% employed less than 10 people and 14.3% between 11 and 20 people). SMEs in this cluster did not have SM use guidelines (78.1%) and a substantial proportion had restricted Internet access to their employees (26.6%). Further, half of travel agencies in this cluster had a SM manager part time (while 43.8% did not have one) and reported inadequate hardware and software for SM use (58.6%). Most travel agencies belonging to this cluster had a positive attitude toward marketing and communication tools (89.7%).

"Enthusiasts" was the largest group (N=176), comprising SM daily users (36.3% a few times a day) with 1-2 years of SM use (38.9%). The travel agencies in this cluster were small, with one branch (80.6%) and less than ten employees (89.3%). Nevertheless, they often employed a SM manager part-time (35.5%) or full time (20.9%), and did not limit Internet access to their staff (88.9%). Most travel agencies in this group did not follow any guidelines for SM use (87.4%), and showed an overall positive attitude towards marketing and communication tools (94.1%). However, they reported a lack of adequate software and hardware for SM use (57.4%).

"Strategically myopics" (N=40) were mostly SM low users (31.3% used SM a couple of times per month), with 1-2 years of SM use (75%). They were employed at micro travel agencies (91.1% with less than 10 employees and 88.60% with one branch). Travel agencies in this group had not hired a SM manager (60%) and partially limited their workers' use of Internet: 19.5%

of respondents in this group reported that their co-workers had little to no access to the Internet, with no guidelines for SM use (76.3%). Employees did not have adequate technology to engage with social media (52.8%) and their firm had a negative attitude towards marketing and communication tools (56.8%).

"Active users" (N=33) was composed by respondents with a recent and frequent engagement with SM (21.4% a few times a day; 25% around once a day; 42.9% were reported to have 1-2 years of use). Respondents in this group worked at small and medium firms (7.4% employing between 21 and 40 workers, 14.8% with 11 to 20 employees), with two (14.8%) to three (25%) branches. They were employed in agencies with a part-time (46.4%) or full-time (17.9) SM manager and perceived marketing and communication tools positively (88.90%). These travel agencies did not adopt guidelines for SM use (89.3%) and did not limit their employees' Internet access (89.3%). However, a lack of adequate software and hardware for SM use was still reported (55.6%).

Overall, "passive users" scored relatively close to the central value of all the items measuring their perception of SM use, thus showing a relatively passive/neutral attitude towards the SM PSV and PU (e.g. "Using SM helps reap operational benefits" – M=2.78; "provide new distribution channels for our products" – M=2.78). Further, they did not feel emotionally engaged when using SM ("I think using SM is enjoyable" – M=2.23), which could be associated to the fact that SM were not perceived as easy to use by this group (M=2.69). While they were not satisfied (M=3.09) nor willing to recommend SM (M=3.13) to other people, "passive users" scored relatively high in items measuring the IU SM in the future (M=3.84).

"Enthusiasts" scored high on most items, showing a very positive attitude towards social media. In particular, they scored high in their PSV of SM (e.g. "Using social media helps improve customer service" – M=3.92; "provide better access to information"; M=4.11), PU (e.g. "Using social media helps develop awareness of our offer" – M=4.37; "provide new distribution channels for our products" – M=4.24), as well as PEU (e.g. "Learning to operate social media would be easy for me" – M=3.76; "In general, I think I would find social media easy to use" – M=3.56), and they thought using SM could be fun (M=3.52) stimulating (M=3.72) and interesting (M=3.89). Furthermore, they showed enthusiasm in their willingness to use and continue to use SM in the future (M=4.04) and to recommend it to other people (M=3.75) but, at the same time, they were only slightly satisfied with the degree of SM effectiveness (M=3.36) and the advantages derived from SM use (M=3.42).

The "strategically myopics" mainly perceived SM as a useful marketing tool that may increase the effectiveness of marketing mix activities, but they did not believe that SM could be of use in operations such as developing and improving the companies' strategies, thus showing a certain level of SM-based "strategic myopia". Specifically, they scored high on items measuring the SM PU (e.g. "Using SM helps develop awareness of our offer" – M=4.4; "enhance effectiveness in marketing communication" – M=4.2), but scored low or very low on items related to their PSV (e.g. "Using SM provides information that helps make effective decisions" – M=1.95; "support strategic decisions" – M=1.90). Further, they appear to be quite concerned about the PEU (e.g. "I can use SM without help from an expert" – M=2.8) and they did not view SM as enjoyable or interesting tools (e.g. "Using SM is interesting" – M=2.25; "I think using SM is enjoyable" – M=1.67). Overall, they appeared to be dissatisfied (M=2.83), not willing to recommend SM use (M=2.83) or to use SM in the future (M=2.08).

The "active users" perceived SM as useful tools in improving both the firm's operational strategies and marketing activities, but not enjoyable or very easy to use. Specifically, they scored slightly positive on items measuring the PSV (e.g. "Using social media provides information that help make effective decisions" – M=3.48; "increase ability to compete" – M=3.55) and positive on items related to the PU of SM ("Develop awareness of our offer" – M=4.1; "Increase our ability to find new customers in our target markets" – M=4.05), but, at the same time, they stated / believed that using social media was neither fun (M=2.24), stimulating (M=2.36) or enjoyable (M=2.21). Further, they scored neutral or slightly positive on items measuring PEU (e.g. "I think learning to operate social media would be easy for me" – M=3.55; "I think I can use social media without help from an expert" – M=3.36). Surprisingly, despite scoring the lowest mean value in terms of both satisfaction (M=2.64) and intention to recommend to others (M=2.32) among all the clusters, they were very willing to start or continue to use SM in the future (M=4.36).

A series of Chi-squared statistical tests were performed with the aim to identify any differences among clusters based on specific business-related variables (Tab. 4).

Tab. 4: Chi-squared test

	Chi-squared	Sig
How often do you use social media?	*26.157*	*0.036**
When did you start using social media?	25.042	0.052
Is there a SM manager in your firm?	20.150	0.064
Does your firm have guidelines for SM use?	3.963	0.265
How many co-workers have Internet access?	**21.205**	**0.012****
Branches	*35.628*	*0.024**
Employees	85.822	0.185

Do you have adequate HW e SW for SM use?	0.301	0.960
Does your firm have a positive attitude towards Marketing and Communication tools?	**52.143**	**0.000****
* *p < 0.05* ; ****p < 0.01**		

Source: Our elaboration

Results showed that differences existed between clusters based on the frequency of use of SM (χ^2 = 26.16, p=0.036), freedom to access the Internet (χ^2 = 21.21, p=0.012), number of branches (χ^2 = 35.63, p=0.024) and the firm's attitude towards marketing and communication tools (χ^2 = 52.14, p=0.000). No significant differences existed in length of use SM (χ^2 = 25.04, p=0.052), SM manager employment (χ^2 = 20.15, p=0.064), adoption of guidelines for SM use (χ^2 = 3.96, p=0.265), number of employees (χ^2 = 85.82, p=0.185) and adequate HW and SW for SM use (χ^2 = 0.30, p=0.96).

5. Conclusion

Despite the important role played by micro and small travel agencies in facilitating the competitiveness and the development of tourism destination (Hallak et al., 2015), especially in the context of Italy, very few studies have been devoted to analyse the ways micro and small travel agencies are reacting to changes and threats caused by the advent of globalisation, e-commerce and social media. This research was therefore carried out to broaden the scientific debate around this topic.

Specifically, the study presents and discusses results of a factor-cluster analysis, and showed that Italian street travel agencies are not homogeneous in their views and attitude towards SM use, as expressed in terms of six different factors, namely: perceived strategic value, perceived usefulness, emotional engagement, perceived ease of use, intention to use, and satisfaction and intention to recommend to others. Hence, results confirm that the level of SMEs' technology adoption is also not homogeneous (Lefebvre et al., 2005; Al-Qirim, 2007; Chen and McQueen, 2008). Specifically, results showed that four different clusters exist (i.e. passive users, enthusiasts, strategically myopics and active users), with passive and strategically myopics only accounting for 25.62%. Further, findings show that significant differences among clusters only exist based on frequency of SM use, freedom to access the Internet, number of branches and the firm's attitude towards marketing and communication. On the contrary, no significant differences were reported based on the adoption of SM use guidelines, number of employees, adequate hardware and software for SM use, length of SM use, and presence of a SM manager. The fact that clusters do not differ based on length of SM use and the availability of a SM manager seems to contradict prior research suggesting that attitude towards technology, e.g. internet and social media, should be more positive when people are more experienced with it (Schumacher and Morahan-Martin, 2001). This may suggest that travel agencies are becoming quite sceptical about the actual benefits SM use allows them to exploit.

Further, the majority of respondents reported a lack of adequate technology at their disposal for SM use, which confirms that SMEs and travel agencies still do not have enough resources to engage with digital media (Brouthers et al., 2015; Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015). That said, this study found that "strategically myopics", the cluster with the most negative attitude towards SM use, also reported the highest consensus on stating that their firms had a negative attitude towards marketing and communication tools. This finding seems to suggest that SM adoption by SMEs is not necessarily driven by technical-related factors, and other factors (e.g. leadership and management attitude) may play a key role in inhibiting SM adoption (e.g. Spencer et al., 2012; Meske and Stiegliz, 2013). However, this study also showed that most Italian travel agencies (54.6%) employed a part-time or full-time SM manager, showing that the majority acknowledges the importance of digital media and is willing/committed to establish a specific organisational position in charge of this task. Moreover, 16.7% of the "strategically myopics" was reported not to allow their co-workers to access the Internet. This result further confirms that SMEs' management prejudices about technology and e-commerce are still one of the main barriers to adopting digital marketing (Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015; Camilleri, 2018).

The present study offers relevant insights for both researchers and practitioners. From a theoretical point of view, the study contributes to the scientific debate on the SMEs' adoption of technology and, more specifically, on SM use as a marketing and communication tool for travel agencies, widening the number of variables that can be considered as potential factors moderating the SMEs' perception of SM tools. From a managerial point of view, this study suggests that "soft" factors (e.g. management attitude towards the adoption of technology and the employees' degree of acceptance) are key factors facilitating SM adoption in travel agencies, and more in general in tourism-related SMEs. Furthermore, our results suggest that once travel agencies start engaging with social media, they should consider the possibility of removing all limitations to Internet access, while setting internal rules preventing SM for personal use during working hours. Furthermore, results suggest that travel agencies should employ a SM manager (part-time or full-time), in order to create a more favourable environment for employees to accept such engagement with digital tools, and to proactively manage and nurture the online reputation of the organisation. Finally, the reported lack of adequate software and hardware for

SM use leads to recommend that travel agency owners and managers invest more in upgrading their hardware and software systems. In this vein, considering that spending on the adoption of technology is often slowed down by costs and financial issues (e.g. Levy and Powell, 2005; Meske and Stiegliz, 2013), policy makers could consider the possibility to provide travel agencies with financial support (e.g. contributions, tax reliefs, etc.).

Despite the theoretical and managerial contributions, this paper is not free of limitations. First, the study is based on a convenience sample (not representative of the total population of travel agencies), so the findings cannot be considered generalisable. Future research could repeat this study on a larger sample and in other countries, as well as consider a wider number of variables that could moderate the views travel agencies have towards SM use. Further studies could also run more sophisticated statistics (i.e. SEM analysis) to test the different constructs shaping the intention to use (or continue to use) SM, the overall satisfaction and intention to recommend SM use to others.

Giacomo Del Chiappa
Università di Sassari
gdelchiappa@uniss.it

Marcello Atzeni
Università di Cagliari
marcelloatzeni@icloud.com

Jessica Mei Pung
Università di Cagliari
jm.pung@unica.it

References

Abou-Shouk, M., Megicks, P., & Lim, W. M. (2013). Perceived Benefits and E-Commerce Adoption by SME Travel Agents in Developing Countries: Evidence from Egypt. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 37(4), 490-515. doi:10.1177/1096348012442544

Alarcón-del-Amo, M. C., Lorenzo-Romero, C., Gómez-Borja, M. A. (2011). Classifying and profiling Social Networking Site users: A latent segmentation approach. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 14(9): 547-553. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2010.0346

Al-Qirim, N. (2007). A research trilogy into e-commerce adoption in small businesses in New Zealand. *Electronic Markets*, 17, 263-285. doi:10.1080/10196780701635872

Álvarez, L., Díaz, A., & Casielles, R. V. (2007). Relationship marketing and information and communication technologies: Analysis of retail travel agencies. *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(4), 453-463. doi:10.1177/0047287507299593

Bigné, J. E., Aldás, J., Andreu, L. (2008). B2B services: IT adoption in travel agency supply chains. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 22(6), 454-464. doi:10.1108/08876040810901873

Brouthers, K. D., Nakos, G., & Dimitratos, P. (2015). SME entrepreneurial orientation, international performance, and the moderating role of strategic alliances. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 39(5). doi:1161-1187. doi:10.1111/etap.12101

Buhalis, D., & Licata, M.C. (2002). The future eTourism intermediaries. Tourism Management, 23(3), 207-220. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00085-1

Camilleri, C. M. (2018). The SMEs' technology acceptance of digital media for stakeholder engagement. Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, doi:10.1108/JSBED-02-2018-0042.

Chen, J., & McQueen, R. (2008). Factors affecting e-commerce stages of growth in small Chinese firms in New Zealand: An analysis of adoption motivators and inhibitors. *Journal of Global Information Management*, 16(1), 26-60.

Cheng, S., & Cho, V. (2011). An integrated model of employees' behavioral intention toward innovative information and communication technologies in travel agencies. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 35(4), 488-510. doi:10.1177/1096348010384598

Cho, S., & Huh, J. (2010). Content analysis of corporate blogs as a relationship management tool. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 15(1), 30–48. doi:10.1108/13563281011016822

Cioppi, M., & Buratti, A. (2014). La dimensione relazionale nei siti web delle agenzie di viaggio online. *Piccola Impresa/Small Business*, 2, 13-26. doi:10.14596/pisb.172

Cioppi, M., Curina, I., Forlani, F., & Pencarelli, T. (2016). La visibilità online delle imprese alberghiere: un possibile modello di misurazione. *Piccola Impresa/Small Business*, 1, 78-98. doi:10.14596/pisb.233.

Collins, C., Buhalis, D., & Peters, M. (2003). Enhancing SMTEs business performance through the Internet and e-learning platforms. *Education + Training*, 45(8/9), 483-494. doi:10.1108/00400910310508874

Daniel, E., & Wilson, H. (2002). Adoption intentions and benefits realised: A study of e-commerce in UK SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 9(4), 331-348. doi:10.1108/14626000210450522

Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and user acceptance of Information Technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319-340.

Davis, F. D., Bagozzi, R. P., Warshaw, P. R. (1989). User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models. *Management Science*, 35(8), 982-1003.

Del Chiappa, G. (2011). Trustworthiness of Travel 2.0 applications and their influence on tourists' behaviour: an empirical investigation in Italy. In R. Law, M. Fuchis, & F. Ricci (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2011*Proceedings of the international conference in Innsbruck, Vienna (pp. 331–342). Springer.

Del Chiappa, G. (2013). Internet versus travel agencies: The perception of different groups of Italian online buyers. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 19(1), 55-66.

doi:10.1177/1356766712466613

Del Chiappa, G., Lorenzo-Romero, C., & Gallarza, M. (2014). Attitude toward disintermediation in hotel reservations: Spanish travellers profile. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 9, 129–143.

Del Chiappa, G., Lorenzo-Romero, C., & Alarcón-del-Amo, M. (2018). Profiling Tourists Based on Their Perceptions of the Trustworthiness of Different Types of Peer-to-Peer Applications. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(3), 259-276. doi: 10.1080/13683500.2015.1077208

Durkin, M., McGowan, P., & McKeown, N. (2013). Exploring social media adoption in small to medium-sized enterprises in Ireland. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development,* 20(4), 716-734. doi:10.1108/JSBED-08-2012-0094

Eurostat (2012). *Travel agency and tour operator statistics – NACE Rev.2*. Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Archive:Travel_agency_and_tour_operator_statistics_-_NACE_Rev._2.

Fotis, J., Buhalis, D., & Rossides, N. (2012) Social Media Use and Impact During the Holiday Travel Planning Process. In M. Fuchs, F. Ricci, & L. Cantoni (Eds.), *Information and communication technologies in tourism*, Proceedings of the international conference in Helsinborg, Sweden, 25-27 January (pp. 13-24). Vienna: Springer. doi:10.1007/978-3-7091-1142-0_2

Grandon, E., & Pearson, J. (2003). Strategic value and adoption of electronic commerce: an empirical study of Chilean small and medium businesses. *Journal of Global Information Technology Management*, 6(3), 22-43. doi: 10.1080/1097198X.2003.10856354

Grandon, E., & Pearson, J. (2004). Electronic commerce adoption: an empirical study of small and medium US businesses. *Information & Management*, 42, 197-216. doi:10.1016/j.im.2003.12.010

Gretzel U., & Yoo, K. H. (2008). Use and Impact of online travel reviews. In: O'Connor, P., Höpken, W., & Gretzel, U. (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism proceedings of the international conference in Innsbruck* (pp. 35-46). Vienna: Springer-Verlag. doi:10.1007/978-3-211-77280-5_4

Gupta, P., Seetharaman, A., & Raj, J. R. (2013). The usage and adoption of cloud computing by small and medium businesses. *International Journal of Information Management*, 33(5), 861-874. doi:10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2013.07.001

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis: A global perspective* (7th ed.). New Jersey, NJ: Pearson.

Hallak, R., Assaker, G. & Lee, C. (2015). Tourism Entrepreneurship Performance: The Effects of Place Identity, Self-Efficacy, and Gender. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(1), 36-51. doi:10.1177/0047287513513170

Harindranath, G., Dyerson, R., & Barnes, D. (2008). ICT adoption and use in UK SMEs: A failure of initiatives? *Electronic Journal of Information Systems Evaluation*, 11, 91-96.

Hidalgo-Alcázar, M. C. H., Sicilia, M., & Ruiz de Maya, S. (2014). The effect of user-generated content on tourist behavior: the mediating role of destination image. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 10, 158-164.

Hills, J. R., & Cairncross, G. (2011). Small accommodation providers and UGC web sites: perceptions and practices. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Managemen*t, 23(1), 26-43. doi:10.1108/09596111111101652

Huang, L. (2012). Social Media as a New Play in a Marketing Channel Strategy: Evidence from Taiwan Travel Agencies' Blogs. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 17(6), 615-634. doi:10.1080/10941665.2011.635664

Jay, L., & Schaper, M. (2003). Which advisers do micro□firms use? Some Australian evidence. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 10(2), 136-143. doi:10.1108/14626000310473166.

Kajogbola, D. (2004). The impact of information technology on the Nigerian economy: A study of manufacturing and services sectors in the South Western and South Eastern Zones of Nigeria (ATPS Working paper Series No. 39).

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003

Karagozoglu, N., & Lindell, M. (2004). Electronic commerce strategy, operations, and performance in small and medium sized enterprises. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 11(3), 290-301. doi:10.1108/14626000410551555

Kartiwi, M., & MacGregor, R. (2007). Electronic commerce adoption barriers in small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in developed and developing countries: A cross country comparison. *Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organization*, 5(3), 35-51. doi:10.4018/jeco.2007070103

Kotler, P., Bowen, J.T., & Makens, J.C. (2010*). Marketing for hospitality and tourism*. (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Law, R., Buhalis, D., & Cobanoglu, C. (2014). Progress on information and communication technologies in hospitality and tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 26(5), 727-750. doi:10.1108/IJCHM-08-2013-0367

Law, R., Leung, K., & Wong, J. (2004). The impact of the Internet on travel agencies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 16(2), 100-107. doi.org/10.1108/09596110410519982

Lefebvre, L., Lefebvre, É., Elia, E., & Boeck, H. (2005). Exploring B-to-B commerce adoption trajectories in manufacturing SMEs. *Technovation*, 25(12), 1443-1456. doi:10.1016/j.technovation.2005.06.011

Levy, M., & Powell, P. (2005). *Strategies for Growth in SMEs - The Role of Information and Information Systems*. Information Systems Series (ISS). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 458-468. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.011.

Meske, C., & Stieglitz, S. (2013). Adoption and use of social media in small and medium-sized enterprises. In: F. Harmsen, & H.A. Proper (Eds.), Practice-Driven Research on Enterprise Transformation. PRET 2013. Lecture Notes in Business Information Processing, vol 151 (pp. 61-75). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer.

Michaelidou, N., Siamagka, N. T., & Christodoulides, G. (2011). Usage, Barriers and Measurement of Social Media Marketing: An Exploratory Investigation of Small and Medium B2B Brands. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40 (7), 1153-1159. doi:10.1016/j.indmarman.2011.09.009

Migiro, S., & Ocholla, D. N. (2005). Information and communication technologies in small and medium scale tourism enterprises in Durban, South Africa. *Information Development*, 21, 283-294. doi:10.1177/0266666905060089

Nie, J. (2007). A study of information technology adoption for small and medium sized enterprises strategic competitiveness. Paper presented at the 2007 International Conference on Wireless Communications, Networking and Mobile Computing, WiCOM, Shanghai (pp. 4342-4346). doi: 10.1109/WICOM.2007.1071

O'Brien, H. L., & Toms, E. G. (2008), What is user engagement? A conceptual framework for defining user engagement with technology. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 59(6), 938-955. doi:10.1002/asi.20801.

Park, J., & Oh, I. (2012). A Case Study of Social Media Marketing by Travel Agency: The Salience of Social Media Marketing in the Tourism Industry. *International Journal of Tourism Sciences*, 12(1), 93-106, doi: 10.1080/15980634.2012.11434654.

Pencarelli, T., Cioppi, M., & Forlani, F. (2015). L'impatto del Web 2.0 sul marketing delle piccole imprese alberghiere. *Piccola Impresa/Small Business*, 2, 11-32. doi:10.14596/pisb.146.

Prayag, G., & Del Chiappa, G. (2014). Hotel disintermediation in France: Perceptions of students from Generation Y. *Anatolia—An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 25(3), 417-430. doi:10.1080/13032917.2014.902386

Quayle, M. (2002). E-commerce: the challenge for UK SMEs in the twenty-first century. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 22(10), 1148-1161. doi:10.1108/01443570210446351

Rogerson, C. (2005). Unpacking tourism SMMEs in South Africa: Structure, support needs and policy responses. *Development Southern Africa*, 22(5), 623–642. doi:10.1080/03768350500364224

Roult, R., Gaudette, M., Auger, D., & Adjizian, J. (2016). Site Management and Use of Social Media by Tourism Businesses: The Case of Quebec. *Czech Journal of Tourism*, 5(1), 21-34. doi:10.1515/cjot-2016-0002.

Saffu, K., Walker, J. H., & Hinson, R. (2008). Strategic value and electronic commerce adoption among small and medium-sized enterprises in a transitional economy. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 23(6), 395-404. doi:10.1108/08858620810894445.

Schumacher, P., & Morahan-Martin, J. (2001). Gender, Internet and computer attitudes and experiences. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 17(1), 95–110. doi:10.1016/S0747-5632(00)00032-7

Shah Alam, S. (2009). Adoption of internet in Malaysian SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 16(2), 240-255. doi:10.1108/14626000910956038

Simpson, M., & Docherty, A. J. (2004). E-commerce adoption support and advice for UK SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 11(3), 315-328. doi:10.1108/14626000410551573

Sin Tan, K., Choy Chong, S., Lin, B., & Eze, U. C. (2010). Internet-based ICT adoption among SMEs: Demographic versus benefits, barriers, and adoption intention. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, 23(1), 27-55. doi:10.1108/17410391011008897

Spencer, A. J., Buhalis, D., & Moital, M. (2012). A hierarchical model of technology adoption for small owner-managed travel firms: an organizational decision-making and leadership perspective. *Tourism Management*, 33(5), 1195-1208. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2011.11.011

Stamboulis, Y., & Skayannis, P. (2003). Innovation strategies and technology for experience-based tourism. *Tourism Management*, 24(1), 35-43. doi: 10.1016/S0261-5177(02)00047-X

Stansfield, M., & Grant, K. (2003). Barriers to the take-up of electronic commerce among small-medium sized enterprises. *Informing Science*, 737-745.

Suárez Álvarez, L., Diaz Martín, A. M., & Vázquez Casielles, R. (2007). Relationship marketing and information and communication technologies. Analysis of retail travel agencies. *Journal of Travel Research*, 45(4), 453-463. doi: 10.1177/0047287507299593.

Taiminen, H. M., & Karjaluoto, H. (2015). The usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 22(4), 633-651. doi:10.1108/JSBED-05-2013-0073

Taylor, M., & Murphy, A. (2004). SMEs and e-business. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 11(3), 280-289. doi:10.1108/14626000410551546

Teo, S. H., Lin, S., & Lai, K. (2009). Adopters and non-adopters of e-procurement in Singapore: An empirical study. *Omega*, 37(5), 972-987. doi:10.1016/j.omega.2008.11.001

Thomas, R., Shaw, G., & Page, S. J. (2011). Understanding small firms in tourism: A perspective on research trends and challenges. *Tourism Management*, 32(5), 963-976. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2011.02.003

Trusov, M., Bucklin, R., & Pauwels, K. (2009). Effects of Word-of-Mouth Versus Traditional Marketing: Findings from an Internet Social Networking Site, *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (5), 90-102. doi:/10.1509/jmkg.73.5.90

UNWTO (2016). *Global Report on The Power of Youth Travel 2016*. Madrid: World Tourism Organisation. Retrieved from: https://www.wysetc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Global-Report_Power-of-Youth-Travel_2016.pdf

Vermunt, J. K., & Magidson, J. (2005). *Latent GOLD 4.0 User's Guide*. Belmont, Massachusetts: Statistical Innovations Inc.

Weber, L. (2007). *Marketing to the Social Web: How Digital Customer Communities Build*

Your Business. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons. doi:10.1002/9781118258125

WTTC (2018). *Travel & Tourism – Economic Impact 2018 Italy*. London: World Travel and Tourism Council. Retrieved from: https://www.wttc.org//media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/countries-2018/italy2018.pdf

Xiang, Z., Magnini, V. P., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2015). Information technology and consumer behavior in travel and tourism: Insights from travel planning using the internet. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 22, 244-249. doi:10.1016/j.jretconser.2014.08.005

Zeithaml, V. A., Berry L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. *Journal of Marketing*, 60(2), 31-46. doi:10.2307/1251929

Zelenka, J. (2009). Information and communication technologies in tourism. Influence, dynamics, trends. *E&M Economics and Management*, 9(1), 123-132.

THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN TOURISM AND SHARING ECONOMY FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE: THE HOME4CREATIVITY CASE STUDY

by Fulvio Fortezza, Domenico Berdicchia, Giovanni Masino

Abstract

In the last few years the so-called sharing economy has been the subject of a great deal of attention, in tourism as well, with special regard to:

- *the effects of the Airbnb model on the tourism industry and related drivers;*
- *the transformative power of collaborative tourism experiences, especially Couchsurfing.*

We aim to enhance this body of knowledge by taking into consideration the combined effect of a hybrid set of collaborative practices (i.e., renting, bartering, and sharing) that goes along a continuum between market exchange and shared sociality.

We purport to do that through a special project from Italy, i.e., a digital platform that aims to connect people who want to share their homes, working spaces, time, and skills with others and who strive to change their lives. The guests can either pay a fee for the various services or give their time, artistic skills or entrepreneurial ability in return. This case study portrays a new value creation model in tourism.

***Classificazione Jel**: M3*

***Keywords:** sharing economy, hybrid economies, tourism*

Data ricezione: 4/12/2018

Data accettazione: 23/03/2019

1. Introduction

In the last few years the so-called sharing economy (Botsman and Rogers, 2010) has been the subject of a great deal of attention in several streams of literature, especially in marketing (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012; Belk, 2010; Corciolani and Dalli, 2014; Giesler, 2006; Ozanne and Ballantine, 2010; Ozanne and Ozanne, 2011). The sharing economy frame includes a wide set of practices that show different, and sometimes very limited, degrees of sharing (Belk, 2014b).

The main drivers of this new scenario are; people's rising interest in sustainability (Scaraboto and Figueiredo, 2017), the search for lifestyles based on downshifting (Huneke, 2005), and the new pursuit of happiness (Dunn, Gilbert, and Wilson, 2011; Fortezza, 2014). 'Collaborative consumers' have also been greatly helped by the development of digital platforms and other Internet resources that increase the opportunities for unknown persons to get in touch, exchange, collaborate, and share (Belk, 2014a, 2014b; Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Perren and Kozinets, 2018).

Although the sharing economy has, so far, been widely (but generically) considered to have changed the social dynamics of consumption and impacted sustainable development in a positive way (Guyader, 2018), there remains much confusion regarding the actual nature of this phenomenon. In fact, the sharing economy tends to be mostly identified with those large commercial venture capital-financed platforms that are so ubiquitous nowadays, such as Airbnb, Uber, or Deliveroo (Laamanenet al., 2018) and that are just a part of the whole and not necessarily the most significant or interesting one.

In order to grasp the more profound essence of this phenomenon, several scholars (Hofmann et al, 2017; Perren and Kozinets, 2018) suggest focusing on one prominent key-factor, i.e., people empowerment, both in value creation and value acquisition, through collaborative or "lateral" processes. Indeed, in the sharing economy perspective, people-to-people interactions are crucial to value creation. Moreover, people partake in these processes either for economic reasons or to pursue other key benefits (Belk, 2014).

In tourism, people's empowerment basically translates into:

- new job and business opportunities, for example in the following areas:
  - accommodation, especially referring to home renting, either professional (small B&B owners) or not;
  - tourism-related services (Uber or the like);
  - packaged local tourism experiences (Fortezza & Pencarelli, 2011, 2018). Here, the existing literature is mostly about the effects of the Airbnb model on the tourism industry and related drivers (Guttentag, 2013, 2015; Tussyadiah, 2015; Zhang et al., 2018). In general, as Wilhelms et al. (2017) underline, today "an increasing number of people are turn-

ing into micro-entrepreneurs, engaging in peer-to-peer (P2P) asset sharing by offering their personal possessions to others for a rental fee facilitated via online-based platforms."

- new ways of satisfying people's needs, that are not necessarily within the market or driven by economic factors. Here, the existing scholarly gaze is mostly focused on Couchsurfing and Home Sharing as special contexts in which to study the transformative power of collaborative tourism experiences (Andriotis and Agiomirgianakis, 2013; Decrop et al., 2018; Molz, 2013).

We argue that something important remains to be explored since the existing literature in the tourism domain only considers one collaborative practice at a time, either within the market (e.g. Airbnb) or outside the common market setting (e.g. Couchsurfing). Therefore, our research goal is to further enhance the current body of knowledge by providing a more comprehensive picture of the business opportunities which can come out of the creative combination of different practices and value regimes (Scaraboto, 2015; Scaraboto and Figueiredo, 2017) in tourism.

This is not a trivial point, because people now use a wider set of channels and ways of getting the resources they need or want (Figueiredo and Scaraboto 2016; Kozinets 2002; Scaraboto, 2015) and tend to shift from one to another based on contextual factors (Dalli and Fortezza, 2019).

This is worth exploring, in general, for a better understanding of the developments of the sharing economy, a phenomenon that cannot be considered either transitory or isolated (Guyader, 2018; Perren and Kozinets, 2018; Piscicelli et al., 2015). In fact, the new (collaborative) practices, spaces and processes will be increasingly integrated with the more traditional ones within a different value creation framework. This also means that market and non-market logics will be ever more intertwined, since people will never completely escape the market (Kozinets, 2002). Accordingly, one main point does emerge: how can non-market logics combine with market logics to lead to even higher value for all the parties involved in such innovative and complex processes? Why is that so important in tourism, in particular? In order to achieve our research goal, based on the interpretive nature of the study, we will carry out qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Siggelkow, 2007) through a highly revelatory and unique case study (Yin, 1994) from Italy, i.e., Home4Creativity, which cleverly combines aspects of sharing (Belk, 2007, 2010), renting (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012), and bartering (Dalli and Fortezza, 2016, 2019), thus revealing a completely new value creation model in tourism. We propose to accomplish our objective by means of an in-depth interview with the founder and CEO of Home4Creativity in the aim of shedding light on the following key-points:

- the nature and the extent of the collaborative mix of practices that the company relies on;

- how market-based and non-market-based features coexist;
- the effects of this combination in terms of value creation.

In the following sections of the article we will discuss how to frame the collaborative practices and their main differences. As a related aspect, we will explain the concept of hybrid economies as the fruit of the combination between practices that can even be profoundly different in nature. There will follow a discussion of the Home4Creativity case study as a special example of hybridization in tourism. Lastly, we offer some conclusions and suggest possible further research steps.

2. How to frame the collaborative practices and why this is important

As Wilhelms et al. (2017) point out, "the umbrella concept of the sharing economy includes a wealth of practices from sharing to bartering, as well as fee-based rental-like transactions and more." Each of these practices shows specific features and refers to different value regimes.

From this standpoint, drawing on Corciolani et al. (2013), Fortezza (2014) suggests a possible way of framing the new collaborative practices (Fig. 1) based on the following aspects:

- ownership vs access: we can thus distinguish those practices that imply the transfer of ownership (e.g. purchases on second-hand markets like eBay, or bartering) from those that just imply the possibility to access (individually or jointly) a resource, as in the case of car sharing (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012);
- price vs non-price: here we can find practices that imply the payment of a fee in order to get a needed or wanted resource (e.g. renting services like Airbnb or Uber) and others that otherwise do not (e.g. carpooling, which only entails the sharing of travel costs between the parties involved in the travel experience).

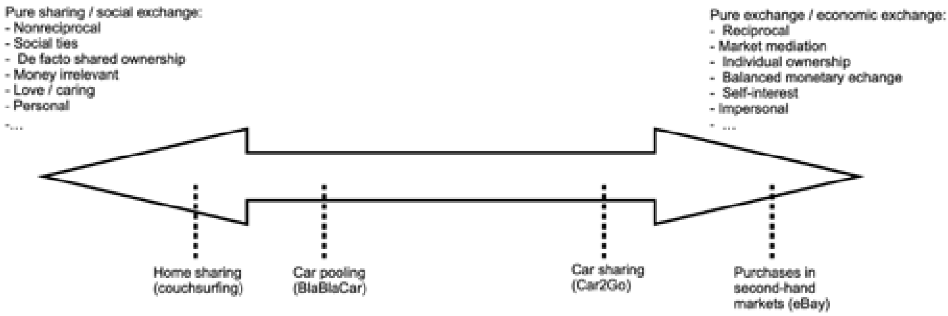
Fig. 1 - A framework for collaborative practices

	OWNERSHIP	ACCESS
PRICE	Purchases in second-hand markets, off-line and on-line (e.g. eBay)	New forms of renting (e.g., Car2Go, Airbnb)
NON PRICE	Donation Bartering	Borrowing Sharing, to different degrees (e.g. Couchsurfing or BlaBlaCar)

Source: our adaptation of Fortezza 2014, p. 82.

There are scholars like Habibi et al. (2016), for example, who go even further, putting collaborative consumption practices on a continuum whose extremes are pure sharing and pure exchange (Fig. 2). As mentioned before, these extremes can be also seen as two opposite value regime types, i.e., economic exchange and social exchange or mutuality (Dalli and Fortezza, 2019).

Fig. 2 The continuum of collaborative practices



Source: our adaptation of Habibi et al. 2016, p. 289.

As Scaraboto and Figueiredo (2017) explain, a value regime refers to the following aspects:

- specific modes of exchange;
- models of value creation and distribution, including processes of production and exchange, mechanisms of valuation, and their associated market structures and business models;
- normative and cultural values regarding the moral and social value of products, lifestyles, the natural environment, and so on;
- governance mechanisms in value creation, representing formal and informal rules, power relations, standards that are significant to the parties.

In particular, in our scheme economic exchange is mediated by the market, while social exchange occurs without monetary rewards, even if costs and benefits (either tangible or intangible) can be considered by participants when deciding whether or not to transfer or simply give access to a resource. In economic exchange, it is usually assumed that the parties tend to act in their own self-interest, while in social exchange conditions there is more room for altruism and solidarity (Giesler, 2008).

3. The concept of hybrid economies

Collaborative practices are usually seen as synonymous of "alternative economies" (Scaraboto and Figueiredo, 2017) that carry a strong moral logic and represent intentional forms of resistance to the mainstream market (Marcoux 2009). Despite this (mis)perception, alternative economies are not infused with only one logic (e.g., the moral logic) (Scaraboto 2015) and are not at all separated from the more traditional modes of (market) exchange (Kozinets, 2002; Perren and Kozinets, 2018). Indeed, hybridity is one of the constitutive characteristics of the new set of consumption practices. This concept is twofold.

First of all, it stems from the combination of practices that are different in nature as a new intriguing opportunity in value creation processes. As Arcuri et al. (2018) state, "hybrid contexts that combine initiatives based on market rules, such as sharing and other forms of exchange, are increasingly common." In a similar fashion, Schau et al. (2009) point out that new and traditional practices "can be combined in complex ways […] end effects of interactions are at minimum addictive and potentially exponential."

As a second important point, every collaborative mode of consumption appears to be essentially dualistic in which both of the characteristics of sharing and exchange coexist to varying degrees (Habibi et al., 2016). Therefore, to reiterate what was discussed in the previous paragraph, each practice falls somewhere in between two extremes of the continuum which goes from pure sharing to pure exchange. From this standpoint, Dalli and Fortezza (2019) underline how each practice may lay closer to one extreme or another depending on various factors such as, for example, the cultural imprinting, the governance style, and/or the attitude of the infomediary (a digital platform, basically) that enables and/or boosts the exchanges (Perren and Kozinets, 2018) and users' profiles and related attitudes and/or drivers. Taking bartering as a possible key-example (Arsel, 2015; Dalli and Fortezza, 2019), we can find (barters and) barterers who are more oriented to economic and substantial individual benefits, and who appreciate above all exchange value, and others who are mainly oriented towards a social and collective stance. For the latter, bartering is often just a way to get in touch with like-minded people and fuel their sustainable way of life. Similarly, we can consider the example of coworking (Fortezza et al., 2016), that can be framed more as renting or more as sharing based on the comprehensive formula designed by the coworking owner, the internal atmosphere, and the daily activities promoted by the community manager. Again, the characteristics and profiles of coworkers represent a key-factor, as well. In more general terms, scholars specialized in the collaborative field strongly agree on the fact that "agents" and contextual factors dramatically influence peer-to-peer value creation processes.

Overall, the intersection of and translation between different practices and value regimes (Arnould, 2013; Scaraboto, 2015; Scaraboto and Figueiredo, 2017) is an emerging hot topic in the collaborative consumption domain. This is also related to the interplays between markets and non-markets (Kozinetz, 2002; Ozanne and Ozanne, 2016) and to the interactions between market-based exchanges and social processes (Dalli and Fortezza, 2019; Scaraboto, 2015).

What appears to be clear is that the new exchange practices exist (and can thrive) alongside the dominant market exchange paradigm (Figueiredo and Scaraboto 2016), and that these practices actually go well beyond the strict anti-consumption domain (Kozinets, 2002).

4. The Home4Creativity case study

4.1. The business idea and how it was generated

The intriguing Home4Creativity's formula is based on a digital platform that aims to connect people who want to share their homes, working spaces, time and skills with others and who strive to change their lives, by means of restoring environments and experiences and getting in touch with inspiring like-minded people.

The initial idea of the company's founder was to give new life to her parents' homestead in a very green and remote area in the Calabria region, in southern Italy. At the very beginning, she just aimed at experimenting with co-living, a concept she had heard about and was fascinated by. Very soon, she realized she could go even further, by adding more offering features, such as co-working, but within a comprehensive experiential scheme.

The company's founder was also driven by the desire to promote those places that are far away from the best-known tourist destinations. "Our first site in Calabria" – she said – "is very difficult to reach, so the challenge was to make it interesting for people from all over the world to come here, stay, share, and experience the authenticity of such an inspiring place!"

4.2. The value proposition and the (transformative) experience offering

The value proposition of Home4Creativity is entirely based on typical Mediterranean features (Bartolazzi et al., 2008), such as the focus on what is local (that means, in particular, discovery and rediscovery of authentic places), on warm relationships, and on slow living as a value. The company's founder explained: "Our main goal was to create a system of opportunities in order for people to feel good, enjoy the (shared) time spent in our venues, and see life in a different manner."

From this standpoint, both the features of the venues and the host destinations are fundamental. As a rule, each venue is designed to allow for significant creative, recreational, and contemplative opportunities. Although there is no single standard to comply with, all of the venues must share some common basic features, starting from rurality. In more detail, they must be:

- independent buildings (either private homes or pre-existing touristic accommodations);
- not too close to other buildings in order to assure enough privacy and tranquility to tourists;
- equipped with no less than four rooms;
- equipped with enough outdoor green spaces based on the internal surface area of the venue[1];
- equipped with a shared kitchen;
- equipped with at least one co-working space and adequate areas in which to host events and training sessions.

As for the host destinations, they must be beautiful and inspiring places, but, at the same time, not too crowded or "glamorous". Actually, they must be somewhat underexplored, off the beaten path, and even, a little "rustic", but potentially very rich from a cultural point of view.

Moving on to the company's product range, it includes both services and memorable experiences which are meant to enable positive transformations (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

While the services are more stable, the experiences are more flexible based on the proactive effort of each venue's manager who can propose specific experiential initiatives meant to make the most of local amenities.

The services offered by Home4Creativity include the following:

- rent of a private room with its own bathroom, plus breakfast (a typical accommodation service) at the average rate of €45 to 50 per day, but with progressive discounts based on length of stay and with special conditions for monthly stays;[2]
- rent of co-working spaces and facilities[3] with the option to also rent more private spaces when needed.[4] The coworking fee is around €6 per day, but it can be included in the accommodation price in the case

[1] For instance, if the venue has 7 rooms, the garden must be at least 500 square meters.
[2] For instance, a monthly stay costs 500 euros and includes; bed and breakfast, co-working, the so-called "philosophical talk", and free access to a gym, if available.
[3] Based on data provided by the company's founder, 6 out of 10 guests, on average, pair the accommodation service with co-working.
[4] For instance, in the venue situated in Calabria, co-workers can also use more traditional working spaces located in the venue's nearest town (so, not in the countryside) if needed for special purposes, like meeting business partners, very important clients, or the like.

of long stays;
- professional, highly specialized (paid) services such as:
  - training programs: thanks to a strong network of key-partners, Home4Creativity constantly organizes differentiated training events in each venue; these are meant to provide any interested party (not only the venue guests[5]) with specific managerial or technical tools;
  - various kinds of business mentoring (from counseling on a preliminary business or product idea to real business incubation) in several fields (e.g. tourism, technology, etc.).

As for the (authentic) experiences in the product range, they include the following items (either for-free or for-payment):
- social eating: each guest can use the common kitchen on his/her own without any limitations. Moreover, each venue manager actively fosters a shared culinary experience as a special time to spend all together. In this case, guests do not pay a per-meal price, but just compensate the host for food preparation costs;
- "brainstorming around the kitchen table": in the founder's words, "our aim is to celebrate those precious moments when people sit down to have a meal, starting from breakfast. Too often, people waste the opportunity to open their minds and relax when having a meal. This is absolutely a not-to-be-missed opportunity. So, we want our guests to take their time and enjoy the meal and the time spent with one another. We try to create the best conditions so people can feel good and happy when having their breakfast or lunch or dinner, and can benefit from sharing their thoughts, daily plans, and goals with others. If you think about it carefully, too many times people too hurriedly and mechanically just have dinner as a sort of duty. Maybe they eat while messaging on their smartphones. At our venues people play, interact, and talk, a lot, over dinner. From this point of view, we just aim to rekindle healthy behaviors";
- "the philosophical talk": this is a two-hour talk inspired by philosophical logics with the aim of helping people to "deconstruct and reconstruct" the path of their life. "We want people to realize – the company's founder said – that they can give their lives a new boost and that their dreams can really come true. It's so special for us to see people who, through the steps they take during their stays at our venues, can take on new inspiring projects for their life or their work";
- "the philosophical walk": this is a touristic walk in authentic places such

[5] For instance, the so-called "Workation-Camp", i.e., a one-week intensive training event, is meant to professionally represent all the job and business opportunities coming from the tourism digital revolution.

as the historic center of a village, out in the countryside, or elsewhere. This sightseeing is organized by the Home4Creativity team who aim to encourage people to interact, relax, and enjoy their time together;
- one or more days' packaged tourist experiences in collaboration with several diversified partners (e.g. restaurants, castles, cultural associations, local residents, sport or cultural associations, etc.). The company's founder stated: "In a way, we act as a tour operator, by putting together all those activities that can be pleasant and enjoyable for our guests. And this is something our guests really like."

As mentioned before, overall this formula is designed to foster transformative effects on people (Andriotis and Agiomirgianakis, 2013; Decrop et al., 2018; Molz, 2013) and this is also related to the nature and intensity of relationships that are built on a daily basis by participants. "The added value of spending time in our venues" the company's founder added, is multi-faceted, but I think that the community commitment represents the most important one. We speak of relationships that last for a long time, even for one's entire life. Roughly 70% of our guests keep in touch with one another, out of friendship but also for professional reasons, after leaving a place. I can recall the case of a guy from Cremona (Italy) and another from Holland who decided to create a venture together since they had a common background and diversified skills. That's magic, isn't it?"

4.3. The host profiles

As regards the company's structure, Home4Creativity is akin to a franchising system based on a specific offering and branding scheme. As a consequence, each venue must comply with common standards in terms of positioning, product range, and relationship management.

Venue franchisees are not necessarily the owners. Nevertheless, their role is fundamental, because, as the community managers, they must see to it that the venue's daily activities flow smoothly. Sometimes, they also have to mediate among persons with different backgrounds and habits. In general terms, they are the key to the comprehensive atmosphere that people can experience during their stays. As mentioned above, they must also find the best players to be involved in the value creation processes and manage the related business relationships.

Overall, the hosts are called to build high-value relationships and connect the guests with the locals, in order for them to experience authentic and transformative stays. In sum, this means that the community managers cannot help but live in the venues themselves.

4.4. The customer segments

Home4Creativity's offering is addressed to two main categories of clients: the ones who simply access one of the services offered (especially those related to business training) but don't experience co-living, and others who do co-live in the venues for short or long periods of time. The latter are potentially from all over the world; at the moment in fact, 60% of these clients come from abroad and, in particular, northern Europe and South America. On average, they first find out about the Home4Creativity offering (mostly while surfing the Internet searching for a place where they can combine business and pleasure), then they realize that it's located in Italy and in the end, they discover where, precisely, the venue is located. In short, guests tend not to choose a destination but rather, a specific life experience.

These tourists, in turn, can be divided into two segments as follows:

- digital nomads (e.g. creative freelance workers or digital entrepreneurs) who (alone or with their family) can work anywhere and want to do it in inspiring and restorative places, experiencing "something different". They usually want to slow down and/or get new "thrills" on both the professional and the personal level since these aspects are very closely intertwined. They are tourists, but not conventional ones, and they are aware of that. They tend to experience fairly lengthy stays (on average, from 5 weeks to 6 months) just because they are seeking a transformation. Moreover, they are very open to discovering new cultural contexts and aim to experience the most hidden and authentic sides of destinations. In this sense, Home4Creativity's venues can be seen as "systems which enable transformative processes". The company's founder describes them in these terms: "Such a guest often feels the need to come back to us once again, and then once more time again, just to regenerate. Moreover, some of them have even become our business partners, especially for training programs but also for business incubation. They are journalists, consultants, venture capitalists, opinion leaders, and so forth";
- the company identifies the second segment as "inspired travelers". Their stays are shorter (on average, a couple of weeks). They are curious and open-minded travelers who usually create their touristic experiences on their own by mixing sources of information and providers. They are in search of "a different holiday" and come to the Home4Creativity venues without having a clear idea of the kind of experiences they will have. In the founder's words, "Day by day, they realize they are in a sharing context and really enjoy it. At a certain point, they start perceiving their fellow guests as friends, as a new family. We want them to experience an enriching holiday based on sharing and relationships."

4.5. A complex hybrid formula

As for the company's business model, the founder herself is aware that the company does not get paid, in real terms, for all of the transformative effects that they are able to generate on their guests. Aside from that, if we take a careful look at the price listing, we realize that some activities (e.g. the accommodation services, the coworking services, some tourist experiences) actually have a specific rate, while others do not. Moreover, some of the paid activities can be included in kind of a flat rate in case of long stays.[6]

However, what is more interesting in the Home4Creatitvity formula is the hybridity of value regimes, because, in order to compensate the hosts, the guests can either pay a price for services or give their work hours, artistic skills, or entrepreneurial ability in return. This is what makes this business case quite unique.

More specifically, the case involves:

- either a market-based exchange (e.g. room accommodation with a market price), although within a very particular comprehensive scheme, which shows an inner collaborative nature; or
- a quasi-market exchange (Dalli and Fortezza, 2016), based on a bartering deal between Home4Creativity and its guests. This means that the parties involved in the exchange must decide and agree each time, from square one, on how the tourist experiences and services provided by the company can be compensated.

Actually, in order to properly manage such bartering deals, specific "calls to action" are launched periodically on the company's website. They describe in detail how the exchange works and what the operational conditions are for it to take place, so, for example, also how long the stay can be, based on what is required in return by the company. In more detail, there are three typical "calls" as follows:

- the one for artists (e.g. photographers, sculptors, musicians, and so on) in which tourist stays are bartered for one or more works of art or artistic performances meant to furnish the company's venues[7] or to further enhance the guests' touristic experience;
- the one for other types of workers (e.g. plumbers or accountants) in which the tourist stay is similarly bartered for professional skills required to fulfill the specific needs of one of the company's venues;
- the one for people who have an innovative product or business idea and

[6] For example, the "philosophical talk" is a for-free activity for stays of at least one week.

[7] For instance, in the venue located in the Calabria region, each of the six work tables of the coworking space were crafted by a different artisan who spent a period of time on-site, thus paying for his/her stay with his/her professional skills.

decide to bring it into one of the company's venues in order to be incubated, based on the professional skills that can be put together within the Home4Cretivity's professional network. The company's goal here is to help the project's proponent to translate his/her idea into a real and sustainable business. In order for this to happen, the company makes a preliminary assessment of the proponent's idea through a business model canvas; if the feedback is positive, the proponent can stay, completely gratis, for an agreed-upon number of weeks in a Home4Creativity's venue so that the project can be successfully developed. In the end, if the product or business project actually takes off, Home4Creativity gets a 5% capital share in the new venture.

5. Final remarks

In tourism, the digital and the sharing economy revolution are leading to new significant market opportunities, even for (new or pre-existing) small and micro entrepreneurs. This applies, in general, to "common people", as well.

From this point of view, the most-often cited domain is that of privately-rented accommodations, which actually appears to be too narrow and not properly the most interesting one in a "collaborative" perspective. In fact, first of all we should ask ourselves how long the wake of the entrepreneurial development or boost induced by Airbnb's dramatic rise is or will be. We should also consider two other points as follows:

- it's a global company (Airbnb) that actually gets the most out of the striking success of this supposedly peer-to-peer rental system. In fact, what seems to be just a web platform supporting people-to-people interactions is a value net integrator, which proactively manages and addresses the value processes and enhances the overall value proposition;
- more and more often the Airbnb's venue hosts aren't really micro-entrepreneurs or "common people" but, instead, are well-established and even large companies (e.g. property management companies) which just use the Airbnb system as a different and very profitable business channel.

As Belk (2014b) remarks, this is not really "sharing", but rather "pseudo-sharing". At any rate, the Airbnb case offers a clear example of how powerful the peer-to-peer processes – if properly triggered – can be. This is all about the importance of leading "agents" (Figueiredo and Scaraboto, 2016) and of the "infrastructure level" (off and online) as crucial points (Kozinets, 2002; Scaraboto and Figueiredo, 2017; Perren and Kozinets, 2018) for systemic value creation enabled by the sharing economy, not only in the tourism sector.

In this sense, those platforms and digital contexts that creatively combine and cross different exchange paradigms and options are expected to be one of the most significant novelties in terms of value creation in the next few years. This is related to the growing "hybridization" (Scarabato and Figueiredo, 2017) of consumption which basically translates into:

- the combination of several consumption practices (e.g. ordinary purchases and sharing, renting and bartering, and so forth) and, accordingly, value regimes (e.g. market exchange and social exchange), within a renewed set of choices;
- the shift from one practice and/or value regime to another, based on contextual factors.

For all these reasons, the Home4Creativity case stands out as a very special one.

It only apparently shows strong similarities with some of the most intriguing and/or known models in the sharing economy domain, such as:

- co-housing (Jarvis, 2011): in both cases, people share (to a certain extent) a living experience. However, the Home4Creativity model of co-living:
  - has a different latent purpose (i.e., leading to positive transformations in the guests' life perspective);
  - is time-limited;
  - implies a random selection of the people to live with;
  - shows a higher degree of sharing compared to co-housing, where each participant individually owns his/her house and just shares some spaces and activities with the others. The co-living model of Home4Creativity, instead, involves its participants in an all-encompassing and systematic shared life experience;
- couchsurfing (Andriotis and Agiomirgianakis, 2013; Decrop et al., 2018; Molz, 2013): in both cases we can speak of "intense sharing", because human relationships are crucial for value creation. However, the Home4Creativity sharing experience:
  - is longer;
  - has a broader scope since it is not limited to the tourism domain;
  - is for-profit, even though this is not the exclusive company's mission;
- co-working (Fortezza et al., 2016): this is an important part of Home4Creativity's offering system, above all due to the company's preeminent customer segment, i.e., digital nomads. The way co-working activities are organized here is in line with the one of the most advanced co-working hubs at the international level, where people do not merely share common spaces and facilities in order to save money, but they also share ideas, business projects, and new ventures based on a networked perspective on value creation. However, Home4Creativity's model shows some important additional features, such as co-living (Neuhofer

et al., 2014) and (shared) tourist experiences;
- the renting Airbnb model: here the only aspect in common with Home-4Creativity's formula is the peer-to-peer renting.

Home4Creativity's model conveys a wide sense of opportunities in value creation[8] that go far beyond the one of mere house renting and not necessarily displays a prominent or exclusive business nature in contrast to a social nature or viceversa. It hugely expands the ways of creating value for users who are now more open-minded, more flexible and more and more interested in finding new ways (mainly based on "access") of satisfying their needs. In general, this is an extremely hot topic in the consumer behaviour field (Dalli and Fortezza, 2019; Figueiredo and Scaraboto, 2016; Kozinets, 2002; Scaraboto, 2015), but it's also a very promising one in the tourism field, where it has, so far, been mostly neglected.

Home4Creativity's formula shows three main drivers of interest as follows:
- what the value delivered to tourists consists of: Home4Creativity's offering is a multilevel combination of services and packaged-experiences that is cleverly designed to bring transformative effects in different life domains at the same time. This is a flourishing topic in tourism literature, since people are more and more often looking for positive transformations when choosing a destination as a source of happiness (Lehto, 2013; Chen et al., 2016; Kirillova and Lehto, 2016);
- how value is created and delivered: Home4Creativity's value scheme is fully based on a latent and comprehensive collaborative orientation since the daily people-to-people interactions (between the venue's community manager and guests, as well as among guests) are crucial to making guests feel good, empowered, "regenerated" (Fritz and Sonnentag, 2006);
- how value is assessed and paid back: some of Home4Creativity's offering features are for-free and others are paid activities. On average, the service activities (all paid activities) act as a sort of "pretext" for sharing time and significant life experiences. The payment options range from payment for relatively ordinary purchases (of services and packaged-experiences) to bartering or sharing. This allows many more options in the relationship between the company and its guests, putting the model midway between the domains of market and non-market, the domain of price and non-price (Kozinets, 2002; Dalli and Fortezza, 2019).

[8] It also recalls another crucial aspect of the rising sharing economy business schemes, that is to say user segmentation and the creative framing of customer needs (Dalli and Fortezza, 2019; Guyader, 2018).

In conclusion, although our research is limited to a single case, we believe it offers new significant insights for interpreting the evolving and complex connections between the sharing economy domain and the tourism domain with special regard to smaller companies. At the present time, the relationship between tourism and sharing seems undeniably too narrow, as it only considers forms of "pseudo-sharing" (e.g., Airbnb), which could cut out small entrepreneurial activities, or forms or "pure sharing" (e.g., Couchsurfing), which basically exclude business opportunities. A hybrid value proposition, instead, can open up huge business opportunities in a sector where people-to-people interactions and authenticity are increasingly important drivers for tourist satisfaction and tourist happiness (Fortezza, 2014).

In more general terms, the Home4Creativity case study also goes well beyond the anachronistic dichotomy between market and non-market to shed light on the different nuances of the sharing phenomenon, providing a more complete idea of it.

We propose the following interesting subsequent research steps:

- consider the demand side in order to verify the aforementioned effects by analyzing the guests' point of view;
- consider the perspective of local residents and businesses in order to verify the real added value that such a formula can generate for places.

Fulvio Fortezza
Università degli Studi di Ferrara,
fulvio.fortezza@unife.it,

Domenico Berdicchia
Università degli Studi di Ferrara,
domenico.berdicchia@unife.it

Giovanni Masino
Università degli Studi di Ferrara,
giovanni.masino@unife.it,

References

Andriotis, K., & Agiomirgianakis, G. (2014). Market escape through exchange: home swap as a form of non-commercial hospitality. Current Issues in Tourism, 17(7), 576-591. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.837868

Arcuri, A. G., & Veludo-de-Oliveira, T. M. (2018). The crossing of physical boundaries: de-materialization and the move towards de-collecting. Consumption Markets & Culture, 21(4), 396-415.

Arnould, E. J. (2013). Rudiments of a value praxeology. Marketing Theory, 14(March), 129-133.

Arsel, Z. (2015). Assembling markets and value. In R. Canniford & D. Bajde (Eds.), Assembling consumption: Researching actors, networks and markets (pp. 32-41). London, UK: Routledge.

Bardhi, F., & Eckhardt, G. M. (2012). Access-based Consumption: The Case of Car Sharing. Journal of Consumer Research, 39(December), 881-898.

Bartolazzi, F., Forlani, F., & Fortezza, F. (2008). Caratteri e potenzialità degli eventi come "esperienze mediterranee": Il caso "Palio de lo Daino". Mercati e Competitività, 4, 71-99.

Belk, R. (2007). Why Not Share Rather Than Own? The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 611(1), 126-140. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716206298483

Belk, R. W. (2014a). You Are What You Can Access: Sharing and Collaborative Consumption Online. Journal of Business Research, 67(August): 1595-1600.

Belk, R. W. (2014b). Sharing Versus Pseudo-Sharing in Web 2.0. Anthropologist, 18(April), 7-23.

Belk, R. W. (2010). Sharing. Journal of Consumer Research, 36(February), 715-734.

Botsman, R., & Rogers, R. (2010). What's Mine Is Yours: How Collaborative Consumption Is Changing the Way We Live. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Chen, C-C, Huang, W-J, Petrick, J. F. (2016). Holiday recovery experiences, tourism satisfaction and life satisfaction – Is there a relationship? Tourism Management, 53, 140-147.

Corciolani, M., & Dalli, D. (2014). Gift-giving, Sharing and Commodity Exchange at Bookcrossing.com: New Insights from a Qualitative Analysis. Management Decision, 52(April), 755-776.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dalli, D., & Fortezza, F. (2016). From Ownership to Sharing, Through Barter Communities. Motivations, Behaviors, and Value at Zerorelativo.com. In L. Petruzzellis & R. S. Winer (Eds.), Rediscovering the Essentiality of Marketing. Proceedings of the 2015 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) World Marketing Congress. New York, NY: Springer International Publishing.

Dalli, D., & Fortezza, F. (2019). The New Face of Bartering in Collaborative Networks: The Case of Italy's Most Popular Bartering Website. In R. Belk, F. Bardhi & G. Eckhardt (Eds), Handbook on the Sharing Economy. Edward Elgar (forthcoming).

Decrop, A., Del Chiappa, G., Mallargé, J., & Zidda, P. (2018). Couchsurfing has made me a better person and the world a better place": the transformative power of collaborative tourism experiences. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 35(1), 57-72.

Dunn, E. W., Gilbert D. T., & Wilson, T. D. (2011). If money doesn't make you happy, then you probably aren't spending it right. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 21(April), 115-125.

Figueiredo, B., & Scaraboto, D. (2016). The Systemic Creation of Value Through Circulation in Collaborative Consumer Networks. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43(4), 509-533.

Fortezza, F. (2014). Marketing, Felicità e Nuove Pratiche di Consumo. Fra sharing, baratto e accesso. Milano: Franco Angeli.

Fortezza, F., & Pencarelli, T. (2011). Experience marketing: specific features and trends.

The Wish Days case study. Journal of Marketing Trends, 6(May).

Fortezza, F., Berdicchia, D., Masino, G., & Moriconi, S. (2016). Spazi di coworking e fattori abilitanti al marketing nelle PMI. Impresa Progetto - Electronic Journal of Management, 1, 1-21.

Fortezza, F., Dusi, A., & Pencarelli, T. (2018). How Marketing Works in the Experience Economy: The Case of the Experience Gift Box Providers. In T. Pencarelli & F. Forlani (Eds.), The Experience Logic as a New Perspective for Marketing Management (pp. 111-123). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77550-0

Fritz, C., Sonnentag, S. (2006). Recovery, Well-Being, and Performance-Related Outcomes: The Role of Workload and Vacation Experiences. Journal of Applied Psychology, 4, 936-945.

Giesler, M. (2008). Conflict and Compromise: Drama in Marketplace Evolution. Journal of Consumer Research, 34(April), 739-753.

Guttentag, D. (2013). Airbnb: disruptive innovation and the rise of an informal tourism accommodation sector. Current Issues in Tourism, 18(12), 1192-1217. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.827159

Guyader, H. (2018). No one rides for free! Three styles of collaborative consumption. Journal of Services Marketing, 32(6), 692-714. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-11-2016-0402

Habibi, M. R., Kim, A., & Laroche, M. (2016). From Sharing to Exchange: An Extended Framework of Dual Modes of Collaborative Non-ownership Consumption. Journal of the Association for Consumer Research, 1(2), 277-294.

Hofmann, E., Hartl, B., Penz, E. (2017). Power versus trust – what matters more in collaborative consumption? Journal of Services Marketing, 31(6), 589-603. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-09-2015-0279

Huneke, E. M. (2005). The face of the un□consumer: An empirical examination of the practice of voluntary simplicity in the United States. Psychology & Marketing, 22(July), 527-550.

Jarvis, H. (2011). Saving Space, Sharing Time: Integrated Infrastructures of Daily Life in Cohousing. Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space, 43(3), 560-577. https://doi.org/10.1068/a43296

Kirillova, K., Lehto, X. Y. (2016). Aesthetic and Restorative Qualities of Vacation Destinations: How are They Related? Tourism Analysis, 21, 513-527.

Kozinets, R. V. (2002). Can Consumers Escape the Market? Emancipatory Illuminations from Burning Man. Journal of Consumer Research, 29(June), 20-38.

Laamanen, M., Wahlen, S., & Lorek, S. (2018). A moral householding perspective on the sharing economy. Journal of Cleaner Production, 202(20), 1220-1227.

Lehto, X. Y. (2013). Assessing the Perceived Restorative Qualities of Vacation Destinations. Journal of Travel Research, 52(3), 325-339.

Molz, J. M. (2013). Social Networking Technologies and the Moral Economy of Alternative Tourism: The Case of Couchsurfing.org. Annals of Tourism Research, 43, 210-230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2013.08.001

Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D., & Ladkin, A. (2013). Co-creation Through Technology: Dimensions of Social Connectedness. In: Z. Xiang & I. Tussyadiah (Eds.), Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism. Cham: Springer.

Ozanne, L. K. & Ballantine, P. W. (2010). Sharing as a Form of Anti-consumption? An Examination of Toy Library Users. Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 9(November-December), 485-498.

Ozanne, L. K. & Ozanne J. L. (2016). How alternative consumer markets can build community resiliency. European Journal of Marketing, 50(3/4), 330-357. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-12-2014-0802

Ozanne, L. K. & Ozanne J. L. (2011). A Child's Right to Play: The Social Construction of Civic Virtues in Toy Libraries. Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, 30(Fall), 264-278.

Perren, R. & Kozinets, R. V. (2018). Lateral Exchange Markets: How Social Platforms Operate in a Networked Economy. Journal of Marketing, 82(1), 20-36.

Piscicelli, L., Cooper, T., & Fisher, T. (2015). The role of values in collaborative consumption: insights from a product-service system for lending and borrowing in the UK. Journal of Cleaner Production, 97, 21-29.

Scaraboto, D. & Figueiredo, B. (2017). Holy Mary Goes 'Round: Using Object Circulation to Promote Hybrid Value Regimes in Alternative Economies. Journal of Macromarketing, 37(2), 180-192.

Scaraboto, D. (2015). Selling, Sharing, and Everything in between: The Hybrid Economies of Collaborative Networks. Journal of Consumer Research, 42(June), 152-176.

Schau, H. J., Muñiz, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How Brand Community Practices Create Value. Journal of Marketing, 73(5), 30-51.

Siggelkow, N. (2007). Persuasion with Case Studies. Academy of Management Journal, 50(1), 20-24.

Tussyadiah, I. P. (2015). An exploratory on drivers and deterrents of collaborative consumption in travel. In: I. P. Tussyadiah & A. Inversini (Eds.), Information & communication technologies in tourism, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Wilhelms, M. P., Merfeld, K., & Henkel, S. (2017). Yours, mine, and ours: A user-centric analysis of opportunities and challenges in peer-to-peer asset sharing. Business Horizons, 60(6), 771-781.

Zhang, T. C., Jahromi, M. F., & Kizildag, M. (2018). Value co-creation in a sharing economy: The end of price wars? International Journal of Hospitality Management. 71(April), 51-58. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.11.010

Recensioni

Recensione del libro «Straight up. Percorsi strategici per nuove imprese», Mc Graw-Hill Education, Milano, 2016 di Elita Schillaci e Marco Romano

In questi ultimi anni, anche a seguito della crisi economica iniziata nel 2008, che ha determinato numerosi fallimenti di imprese, specie quelle più piccole, con conseguente significativa riduzione della base produttiva del nostro Paese, si è fortemente accresciuto l'interesse per il fenomeno della creazione di nuove imprese . Lo stesso legislatore, storicamente disattento all'esigenza di stimolare la nascita di nuova imprenditorialità, dal 2006 ha approvato una serie di normative a sostegno delle cosiddette start up innovative, in modo da far decollare nuove iniziative imprenditoriali, farla andare avanti in modo veloce, tenace, diretto, ossia adottando la prospettiva "Straight Up". "Straight Up" è il titolo e il filo conduttore dell'interessante e stimolante lavoro monografico di Elita Schillaci e Marco Romano, esperti del fenomeno imprenditoriale associato alla creazione di nuove imprese e studiosi di economia e gestione delle imprese nell'Università di Catania. Gli Autori hanno organizzato il volume cercando di rispondere a quattro quesiti di fondo che a loro avviso occorre porsi affrontando la tematica: Who, Why, How, What. E' infatti opportuno domandarsi innanzitutto chi (Who) e perché (Why) si avvia una nuova iniziativa economica e quindi necessita approfondire il profilo dell'imprenditore, il vero soggetto protagonista senza il quale le imprese non nascerebbero. Le caratteristiche soggettive dell'imprenditore, le sue motivazioni, le sua ambizioni, i tratti psicologici condizionano fortemente anche il come (How) e il cosa (What), impattando sulle modalità positive e realistiche di generazione dell'impresa nel contesto ambientale, dando vita ad un business plan ove esplicitare e formalizzare l'idea imprenditoriale. L'analisi del profilo del nuovo imprenditore viene svolta nei capitoli introduttivi (capp. 1,2,3) del volume ove si mette in risalto innanzitutto il ruolo dell'intenzione nel processo imprenditoriale, collegandola alla personalità del soggetto ed alle sue motivazioni che condizionano il modo in cui l'imprenditore reinterpreta gli stimoli esterni e valuta la fattibilità dell'iniziativa. Emerge l'importanza della volontà e del locus of control interno, ossia la convinzione degli individui che quanto loro accade sia controllabile attraverso i propri sforzi, sulla base di una elevata autostima e senso di indipendenza che li rende fiduciosi di poter condizionare l'ambiente esterno, piuttosto che di esserne condizionabili, riuscendo a orientare le proprie capacità nel risolvere problemi specifici (selfefficacy). Un secondo aspetto indagato attiene i tratti della personalità, ove si mette in luce l'importanza di possedere una personalità inclusiva delle cinque dimensioni richiamate nel modello delle "Big Five" di Costa e McCrae (1985), ossia: il nevroticismo e la stabilità emotiva, l'estroversione, l'apertura, l'amabilità, la coscienziosità e il commitment. Nella formazione della personalità e nello sviluppo dell'intento imprenditoriale, di rilievo è inoltre la famiglia di origine e la rete relazionale del soggetto, che possono alimentare la capacità di cogliere opportunità di business e la fiducia nelle proprie risorse per la buona riuscita dell'iniziativa. La famiglia di origine determina condizioni ambientali favorevoli o ostili alla decisione di un individuo di avviare un progetto imprenditoriale. Per questo, lo studio approfondisce la teoria del copione familiare avvalendosi dell'analisi transazionale che fa discendere le motivazioni di fondo per l'avvio di una start up nei bisogni arcaici insoddisfatti dall'imprenditore, che tende a riproporli nella vita adulta come sostituti di bisogni più evoluti, come l'autoaffermazione, il potere, il bisogno di sfida dei Genitori e che alimentano varie forme di "fame": fame di stimoli, fame di riconoscimento, fame di struttura. Le motivazioni a creare nuove imprese sono altresì spiegate ricorrendo ai concetti di *need for achievement* (Mc Clelland, 1973), bisogno di affiliazione (Maslow, 1954), bisogno di potere (Hillman, 2002), *locus of control*, propensione al rischio , Hybris imprenditoriale (ossia ambizione di superare i propri limiti), necessità di indipendenza, bisogno di cambiamento sociale. La genesi imprenditoriale, secondo gli Autori, dipende inoltre dalle caratteristiche socio-economiche e culturali dei contesti territoriali e dell'ecosistema che interagisce con il progetto di creazione della nuova impresa. Contesti qualificati come "territori imprenditoriali", se in possesso di risorse tangibili, cognitive ed emotive capaci di favorire l'imprenditorialità, oppure come "*Wrong Place*", se sprovvisti di questi caratteri. Dopo l'inquadramento degli aspetti connessi sul chi e sul perché creare una nuova impresa, il volume approfondisce un aspetto spesso sottovalutato negli studi e nella pratica delle start up, che secondo gli Studiosi, stanno divenendo, in Italia e non solo, " una nuova forma di assistenzialismo 3.0 che, più che stimolare progetti innovativi e sani, induce i fondatori a mirare al grant di un premio, o alla vetrina di un contest, che può regalare un illusorio e quanto mai effimero risultato di breve periodo, senza avere in alcun modo a che fare con il sano processo di costruzione di una nuova azienda". Si tratta delle ragioni che portano le imprese a non superare la cosiddetta *Death Valley* (valle della morte), ossia la fase iniziale del ciclo vitale della start up, determinando il prematuro fallimento dell'iniziativa. Queste possono risalire ad un eccesso di autoreferenzialità dell'imprenditore, al timing sbagliato, alla sovrastima dei ricavi e a *business model* inattendibili, alla sovrapposizione tra scenario familiare e aziendale (nelle start up familiari), a debolezza finanziaria, ad asimmetrie temporali tra manifestazioni economiche e liquidità, a sovraesposizione nello *star system* delle startup, ad eccessivi investimenti strutturali, alla vanità della scienza, che spesso non tiene conto della distanza con il mondo dell'impresa ed a crisi di flussi di energia e di intenzionalità soggettiva degli aspiranti imprenditori. Il messaggio degli Autori è tuttavia positivo e, mutuando il pensiero di Einstein, sottolineano come dalle possibili crisi o dai fallimenti si possa imparare, si possa uscire senza drammi, "superando se stessi senza essere superati". Successivamente (cap. 5) il volume illustra il percorso che conduce i fondatori dall'idea alla creazione di una nuova impresa, sottolineando come le opportunità e le idee non esistano a priori, ma vanno create, così come l'imprenditorialità nasce da un atto creativo che richiede conoscenza, immaginazione, capacità innovativa e contesti stimolanti, oltre che capacità di cogliere elementi di casualità. In questo percorso, la leadership imprenditoriale gioca un ruolo decisivo nel convertire la visione in realtà, condividendo la visione stessa con altri soggetti e attivando processi di *company building*, al fine di creare e far crescere una start up. Il tutto assicurando il timing adeguato a far nascere, sviluppare e rendere sostenibile la nuova impresa nelle fasi evolutive del ciclo di vita. Per quanto attiene, infine, alle modalità operative per avviare una start up, il libro propone ampio spazio di approfondimento alle tematiche del business plan, che identifica lo strumento principe ed insostituibile per supportare gli aspiranti imprenditori per passare dall'idea all'azione. L'approccio adottato dagli Autori è tuttavia critico rispetto alle impostazioni tradizionali, alle quali si contesta soprattutto la pretesa di assegnare al business plan la capacità di definire in anticipo la maggior parte delle variabili critiche per il successo, prima ancora di raccogliere i fondi e di mettere in pratica l'idea. Spesso, infatti, la manualistica sui *business plan* reifica un approccio pianificato alla formulazione ed alla realizzazione delle strategie, ignorando inspiegabilmente gli apporti della letteratura manageriale che, sulla scorta di Mintzberg (1978), ha da tempo chiarito come gran parte dei progetti strategici realizzati discendano dalla sintesi dialettica tra strategie deliberate ed emergenti e come sia preferibile adottare impostazioni processuali ed incrementali nel passare dalle idee alle azioni. Al riguardo, gli Studiosi sottolineano opportunamente (p.128) che "i business plan come percorsi razionali, programmatici e sequenziali, a cui i metodi della pianificazione strategica ci hanno abituati, sono ben lontani da quanto nella realtà e nella vita operativa e quotidiana delle imprese si realizza". Per questo, pur non negando l'utilità dello strumento, essi suggeriscono di evitare sprechi di tempo e di energie per produrre piani eccessivamente analitici, inefficaci, inservibili e soprattutto velocemente obsoleti, caldeggiando la predisposizione di business plan veloci, leggeri, non vincolanti, atti ad attrarre i potenziali investitori e a cogliere opportunità inaspettate ed emergenti. Si allude a documenti agili, frutto di processi di *lean business planning*, che comunque devono saper rappresentare gli aspetti chiave di una nuova iniziativa d'impresa: vision e finalità del fondatore, team imprenditoriale, opportunità di mercato, target di clienti potenziali, caratteri dell'arena competitiva, principali operations, investimenti necessari e relativi fabbisogni finanziari, fatturati, costi e rendimenti, oltre che un cronoprogramma di massima delle attività. Documenti i quali, piuttosto che assicurare la segretezza a tutti i costi dell'iniziativa, devono essere predisposti per favorire la condivisione ed il confronto, sebbene riservato, delle idee con il gruppo imprenditoriale e gli stakeholder chiave (i compagni di viaggio), al fine di conseguire il vantaggio competitivo ricercato, propedeutico al successo economico, finanziario e sociale della start up. Il processo imprenditoriale *Straight up* deve essere pertanto diretto, flessibile, in grado di generare ed accogliere un numero elevato di opzioni strategiche nel percorso di interazione con il contesto esterno, assecondando l'impostazione dell'approccio lean, di azione e reazione per prove ed errori, che mantiene flessibile la start up, garantendo processi evolutivi di apprendimento organizzativo e di generazione di nuova conoscenza. Le principali azioni chiave sono: a) identificazione e specificazione preliminare del modello di business dell'iniziativa, avvalendosi di strumenti concettuali ed operativi, come ad esempio il *Business Modell* Canvass; b) avviare un processo di confronto ed interazione con l'ambiente esterno e con gli attori sociali rilevanti, in modo da verificare la validità ed il realismo delle ipotesi inizialmente formulate; c) sviluppare i nuovi prodotti in modo agile, sperimentando via via sul campo la possibile trasformazione delle idee innovative in prodotti industrializzabili e collocabili sul mercato. Dopo aver ben illustrato il ruolo critico della fase di presentazione dell'opportunità imprenditoriale ai compagni di viaggio desiderati ed agli stakehlders, anche mediante efficaci *namiming* e infografiche, il testo propone (capp. 7 e 8) una serie di approfondimenti metodologici ed operativi su come il business plan va redatto, fornendo la strumentazione necessaria a sviluppare i processi di pianificazione strategica, economica, finanziaria corredati da quelli di controllo delle performances. Lo studio si conclude con l'analisi dei fattori fiducia e condivisione nelle start up. Sulla scia di Simmel (1989), la fiducia viene definita come "l'ipotesi di un comportamento futuro abbastanza sicuro per potervi fondare un agire pratico". Essa va ricercata e costruita anzitutto nella cerchia degli amici e familiari per reperire i fondi iniziali necessari all'avvio dell'iniziativa. Con il progredire della start up, la fiducia è la risorsa indispensabile per ampliare la rete dei finanziatori, specie non bancari, tradizionalmente non propensi ad entrare nel circuito del finanziamento nella fase iniziale del ciclo di vita dell'impresa, considerato troppo rischioso. La ricerca di capitali stabili di rischio va pertanto indirizzata ad altri soggetti, quali i *business angels*, gli investitori istituzionali, i *venture capitalist*. Particolarmente importante è il coinvolgimento del pubblico, che richiede fiducia collettiva sia da parte delle istituzioni che da parte dei risparmiatori. Questi ultimi possono contribuire anche direttamente, mediante strumenti di *crowfunding*, a sostenere finanziariamente iniziative imprenditoriali con ricadute significative in termini di creazione di valore territoriale. Un ruolo strategico per costruire la fiducia è attribuito agli incubatori, agli acceleratori ed ai Parchi scientifici e tecnologici. Si tratta di attori specializzati (incubatori) deputati a fornire servizi per la nascita e lo sviluppo di start up, servizi che possono essere erogati anche con maggiore rapidità da parte degli acceleratori, o che riferiscono soprattutto allo svolgimento di processi di ricerca finalizzata a valorizzare i territori ove operano, fornendo risorse di conoscenza indispensabili per la genesi di nuove imprese. Servizi in cui la componente fiduciaria, come nel caso del reperimento fondi, rappresenta la risorsa critica per l'avvio e lo sviluppo di start up di successo. In definitiva, per la ricchezza dei temi trattati, per i supporti metodologici ed operativi forniti e per la chiara esposizione di concetti non sempre semplici, il libro è particolarmente indicato per professionisti, studenti di management e, soprattutto, per aspiranti imprenditori, fornendo un quadro ampio del fenomeno imprenditoriale letto allo scopo di mettere nella giusta luce i protagonisti delle start up (gli imprenditori e le loro aspirazioni e motivazioni a creare l'impresa), l'oggetto (la nuova impresa) e le modalità di agile e pratica realizzazione.

Tonino Pencarelli
Università degli studi di Urbino