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Journal of Tourism and Services is an international reviewed scientific research journal, published by the University of Business in Prague since September 17, 2010 that publishes high quality, reviewed essays and analytical papers in English language with focus on tourism and service industry development. Together with scientific part and in order to promote the exchange of current and innovative ideas, the Journal also includes Reviews of Existing Work or Short Essays, Research Notes, and Research and Industry sections to address important topics and advance theoretical knowledge or thinking about key areas of tourism and services. The papers are approved by the Editorial Board and are blind peer reviewed by 2 independent reviewers. Each issue will also seek to include shorter non peer reviewed reviews of existing work or short essays aimed at stimulating debate, research notes to allow researchers to present initial findings and reflections or problems concerning fieldwork and research in general. The Journal is intended for international professionals, academics and students not only for reading but also as a space for publication and source of information for work. The Journal is published twice a year.

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Table of Content

Editorial

The present issue of the Journal of Tourism and Services contains scientific papers, research note, essay, industry news and press releases.

The contributions to this issue are authored by researchers and scholars from Bangladesh, Czech Republic, Greece, and Poland.

Klimis Ntalianis, Androniki Kavoura, Peter Tomaras and Athanasios Drigas illustrate the potential of collecting information related to a company's or an organization's services or products based on the comments made by the users in real time. They discuss the implication in relation to the creation of an online community of users sharing similar interests which are associated with a product or service.

Petra Koudelková´s paper aims to describe the corrupt behavior in the Czech Republic, especially in the sector of services and tourism, and to suggest the potential steps how to fight with it. These steps are mainly focused on the tourism sector.

Jindřich Ploch, Tomáš Děkan and Jan Zýka discuss the choice of technology for the analysis of passenger behavior and the allocation stage in a potential dangerous threat to civil aviation security. This article also describes airport security workers as a key element of protection against acts of unlawful interference in civil aviation. The anonymous questionnaire survey among security workers of an airport resulted in factors, which can be distracting and can negatively affect quality of the work and thus also performance and error rate.

Sara Sarwari, Tanvir Ahmed Minar and Waleed Khan Chowdhury focus on relationship marketing model as a way how to explore customer loyalty of five star hotels in Bangladesh. In their research the effect of relational bonds (financial, social and structural) on relationship quality and the ultimate effect of relationship quality on customer loyalty are examined. They also present and discuss empirical findings from a survey of 284 loyal guests in five-star hotels in Bangladesh and examine their perspectives as end users using structural equation modeling.

The research note of Iveta Hamarneh deals with the competitiveness in tourism and is the result of the first part of the project "Tourism Competitiveness of the Czech Republic Regions and the Possibility of the Marketing Measures Performance Evaluation Using the BSC Method". The author focus on theoretical background of competitiveness and introduction the main approaches to tourism competitiveness. The project is funded by the University of Business in Prague.

The essay of Joanna Zator-Peljan offers an overview of the recent trends describing cultural issues and intercultural management within the framework of the Polish-German relations.

I would like to wish to all members of the Editorial board, present and future authors, supporters, colleagues, and readers a great and sunny summer holidays!

Alžbeta Kiráľová
Chair of the Editorial Board

Scientific Papers

Corruption in Czech Services and Tourism

Petra Koudelková

Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

Abstract

According to Transparency International there is very high perception of corruption in the Czech Republic [31]. Results of many researches show that corruption is also widespread in the Czech Republic. There are various types of corruption and the most common ones are bribery, nepotism and lobbying in the Czech Republic. However, it should be pointed out that lobbing is not classed as corruption in West Countries. Corruption is deep-rooted in Czech society due its historical context. Corruption involves both buyer and seller and this means that corruption could have a serious impact on the quality of services and goods. The main purpose of this article is to describe corrupt behaviour in the Czech Republic, especially in the sector of services and tourism, and to suggest the potential steps how to fight corruption. These steps are mainly focused on the tourism sector.

Keywords: Corruption, Czech Republic, Tourism, Services, Anti-corruption fight

JEL Classificaition: O17

1. Introduction

In the past years, corruption has become a widespread phenomenon in many European countries [29, 32]. The Czech Republic, as one of the European countries, belongs to countries with widespread corruption and it has a high index of perception of corruption (CPI – Corruption Perception Index), [22]. According to Transparency International the Czech Republic is on the 53rd position in the CPI ranking. Denmark, New Zealand and Finland are placed on the top of the CPI ranking. The worst corruption perception is in Sudan, North Korea and Somalia. However, corruption is a problem for all countries [27].

Corruption is one of the reasons of public's distrust in in the key government institutions [17] which are important parties in the political process of tourism development [e.g. 7, 28]. Vice-versa, development of tourism could have important implications on public's trust in politics [26]. Impact of government on the tourism development is discussed object of academic researchers for many years. Political economy has central role for tourism, its development and planning [25]. More effectiveness in this role is local government [e.g. 8, 26, 10]. From this reason is necessary government keep the corruption on low level.

The main aim of this article is to describe various types of corruption in Czech tourism and demonstrate some recommendation which could help companies to fight corruption in the Czech Republic.

The term „corruption" is often used by people and media. However, the real meaning of corruption is not always very clear. There are many definitions and many types of corruption.

Nowadays, corruption is a complex phenomenon which is based on a new set of corrupt norms created inside institutions that make policies, effect administrative procedures, deal with behaviour of employees etc. Despite the fact that systemic corruption impacts governments, civil freedom, social cohesion and public economy there is almost no practical research showing specific evidence of systemic corruption in any particular cases [20, 19]

Corruption is often defined as an immoral activity [23], and it can also be viewed as a complex phenomenom which is characterized as a betrayal of trust, deception, and deliberate subordination of common actions to specific interests, secrecy, complicity, mutual obligation and camouflage of the corrupt act [1, pp. 1–2]. The whole European Union is attempting to combat this problem [33].

Transparency International uses the following definition: „corruption is defined as the misuse of public power for private benefit". The Czech Home Office provides a more detailed definition: "corruption can be characterized as the relationship between two subjects, both individuals and institutions, in which one party offers, or serves, the other party some form of remuneration for providing or committing to provide an unjustified favour. The providing party then expects some form of tangible or intangible favour for the favour that was provided. In the CEECs this process can be found in the state government, politics and business."

As stated above, there are many types of corruption and it is obvious that the typology isn't clear. The basic attributes of corruption might be classified as follows:

1) Corruption based on location [17]:
   - internal (amongst public servants),
   - political (entanglement of politics with the private and business sector),
   - state-level, firm-level, public sector and private sector,
   - mass media sector (manipulation of information)
   - and municipal level corruption (e.g. autonomous regions, majors, self-governments,...)

2) Corruption based on the form [3,23]:
- Nepotism (corruption behaviour which lies in favouring the family members within the employment, however when the company is given to family members to run and own, this is called “family business” and does not have traces of nepotism)
- Clientelism (favouring friends, relatives or interest groups, very often happens through favouring the companies that supported the given firm in the past – overall, this is a very widespread form of corruption)
- Bribery (another widespread form of corruption)
- Lobbing (very negatively perceived activity in the Czech Republic, used to be called “the clash of interests”, a definition which is now non-existent).

3) Corruption in context of globalization
4) Corruption in philosophical context

Then, we can distinguish different levels of corruption, see table 1. On both, on vertical level as well as on horizontal level are four specific stages (levels) where the corruption is situated.

1.1 Corruption in Czech society

The Czech Republic belongs to the post-communist countries which are known as the most corrupted countries. This is based on the historical context. Jordan stated, “Corruption was endemic to the Communist system of the Soviet bloc prior to its collapse in 1989, and Czechoslovakia was no exception. In the post-communist Czech Republic, corruption remains a deep-rooted problem”[14]. Many authors looked at the role of corruption in transitional economies including the Czech Republic [see e.g. 20, 17]. There was also some significant research in business and government areas. For example, in table 2 you can see 6 areas where the corruption was widespread in different years. These results are based on the research conducted by GfK agency in years 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006 and 2009.

Table 1

Level of Corruption according Alemann [2]

	Vertical level	**Horizontal level**
Low level	Local politics	Administration
Middle level	Regional politics	Agencies of economic development
Macro level	State politics	Military procurement
Mega level	International politics	Secret service

Source: Own table according to Alemann (1995) [2]

Table 2

Largest share of corruption in specific areas in the Czech Republic

Place	year 1998	year 2001	year 2002	year 2003	year 2006	year 2009
1	offices	offices	offices	offices	offices	political parties
2	judiciary	judiciary	health service	health service	police	offices
3	health service	police	police	police	Government	Government departments
4	police	health service	judiciary	judiciary	political parties	Government
5	service	Government departments	customs	customs	Government departments	judiciary
6	education	customs	ministry	ministry	business community	business community

Source: According to the research of GfK (2013) [24]

The above research shows that the most corrupted areas are offices, health service, police and judiciary in the Czech Republic. Service (means private services) was marked only once in year 1998. One could say that the sector of tourism isn't threatened group by corruption; despite of this the corruption is occurred.

Results of Transparency International's research show that [31]:

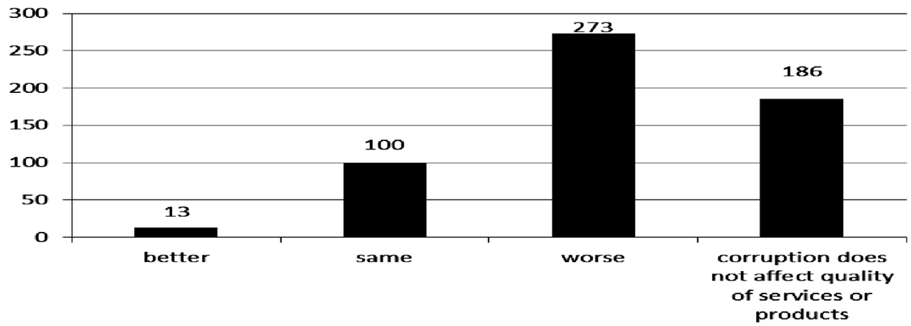
- 95% of the Czech population consider corruption to be widespread,
- Last year, 8% of respondents were asked for a bribe or bribery was expected from them, which is twice more than the European average,
- 12% of the population think that the government's effort to fight corruption is successful and
- Only 15% of Czech people are of the opinion that a successful prosecution can dissuade people from corruption[1].
- GDP per capital (2012) – 20,300 EUR in the Czech Republic
- GDP at current market prices (2012) - 152.9 billion EUR
- Czech Republic's shadow economy was 15.5% of GDP in 2013

Based on the above information it seems that corruption has deep roots in Czech society. Corruption and fraud is also perceived by the Edelman Trust Barometer as the main reason for distrust in both businesses and government institutions in the Czech Republic (Edelman, 2013).

The most common type of corruption (not only in the Czech Republic) is bribery. It is a trend across all areas and people view it as a big problem for society. There are many fights and “promised fights” against corruption. All politicians and political parties promise that they will introduce effective measures to fight corruption; however these statements are often only viewed as “campaign political promises” by public. This research was made by research agency Ipsos. Generally, people understand consequences that are linked to bribery and corruption; however more than 63 % of population fears to tackle corruption [21]. This percentage is still increasing. We can also look at the impact of corruption in the quality of offered goods and services. Smith tested this issue in year 2007 and the results of his research are shown in figure 1. The most of respondents stated that the quality is worse, 273, 100 respondents didn´t occurred any changes and 186 thought that corruption doesn´t affect quality any way.

Figure 1

Corruption and its impact on the quality of goods and services



Source: Smith et al. (2007) [30]

2. Possibilities of corruption in services and tourism

Tourism and services have a major impact on Czech economy. Tourists bring money to our national economy which helps to business development in the Czech Republic.

Table 3 shows a number of tourists who stayed in Czech hotels, motels, B&Bs and other accommodation facilities in years 2013 and 2014.

1http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/corruption/anti-corruption-report/docs/2014_acr_czech_republic_factsheet_en.pdf

Table 3

A number of tourists in years 2013 and 2014

	1/2013	2/2013	3/2013	4/2013	1/2014	2/2014	3/2014
Accomodation - total	8,598,123	10,460,38	1, 974,423	8,275,355	7,849,003	10,592, 460	15,841,344

Source: CZSO. Data from the year 2015 [9].

In addition, there are also ‘one day tourists’ who visit our country for a specific reason (for example: concerts, theatres, cinemas, friends, family, education and sightseeing). All of these tourists spend their money on transport, accommodation, food, souvenirs etc. Some of the shoppers come to the Czech Republic to buy specific luxury goods or expensive souvenirs. Therefore, tourism supports business growth in all economies and every country makes an effort to attract new tourists. This could be in a form of advertisement, leaflets, discounted offers, co-operation between travel agents and hotels, etc. Unfortunately, corruption is also associated with this sector.

In general, shops, hotels and other accommodation and catering facilities represent various types of businesses. Public is mainly aware of political corruption; however it is necessary to say that corruption can also be found on the firm-level. According to the research conducted in 2014, corruption is also widespread on the firm-level where the most common type of corruption is bribery and cronyism [17]. Also lobbying seems to be a widespread phenomenon in Czech firms. For Czech people lobbying is a big problem as it has negative meaning [15].

2.1 Description of the most widespread forms of corruption in the Czech Republic

There exists some form of corruption (clientelism, nepotism, bribery and lobbying) in tourism sector in the Czech Republic. This text describes the most widespread and well knows types of corruption in this sector.

First form is lobbying. Although lobbying doesn’t belong into the official form of corruption in west countries, in the Czech Republic is still perceived negatively. Lobbying is widespread and regarding its negative overtone many scholars place lobbing among corruption. Lobbying is associated mainly with the governance, governance influence tourism and service, and tourism and service is also influenced by trust in governance – this is important point for many tourist institutions and also for lobbyists, of course [7,hall]. The government should be the principal actor in the politic process of tourism development and controls the industry through formal ministries and other institutions. Unfortunately, the state may not always promote democracy, ensure equitable outcomes, work in the best interests of the society and further the objectives of sustainable tourism (many times it is because of lobbying of some stakeholders) [7]. As an example one could cite well know discussion of non smoking restaurants and regulations which are made by government.

Second form is clientelism (favouring friends, specific interest groups or companies that supported the given firm in the past). In tourism and services is seen especially in accommodation and cooperation of travel agencies and Hotels. If it is a legal form of cooperation, then we can talk about cooperation in pricing (at least two companies get special cooperation in pricing. Hotels and car hire - each other discount offers) [18]. In this case is it the bilateral agreement under pre-agreed conditions that must be met. Then both sides achieve some benefits.

In the illegal form – clientelism is favouring one organization compared to other competitors in the market. Often we can speak about the suppliers of drinks, food, the offer of accommodation, transportation and laundering for hotels, etc. Clientelism creates unequal competitive environment and the beneficiary company offers/sells its services/products at high prices with low quality. Commissions from the transaction are divided among people on both parties involved. In this case, suffer not only customers but also other competing businesses that do not have a chance to take hold in the market. There we find a large number of similar cases in the Czech Republic. These situations often involve consulting agencies that help these organizations get some type of grants and subsidy.

Nepotism (is very similar to clientelism but it is based on favouring family members). In this case, there may be a similar situation, as described above.

Favouring person is a family member. More often, however, are found on nepotism labour market, where the family member occupied specialist positions without having to have the experience or education. Clients often meet unprofessional work of these employees. Customers will then not return to these places.

Nepotism and clientelism could have a negative impact on business as the managers are usually people who do not have sufficient knowledge and experience. This means that they are not able to manage the business which can end up in bankruptcy. Another example could be illustrated with travel agencies that only offer specific hotels;

Bribery is than the most common type of corruption in the Czech Republic. It has been estimated that worldwide bribery involves some $1 trillion per year, or 3% of global income [4, p. 37]. In my opinion we can distinguish two main forms of bribery: direct (money, expensive presents) and indirect (special services=above standard services) [19].

In order to demonstrate that corruption has a negative impact on public and businesses we should also look at scientific literature. We can see two points of view on corruption in economic literature. Some of the researchers proclaim that corruption might be an effective tool to support national economies. Surely, corruption represents a serious problem, especially on the ethical level. This is shown by Kaufmann [16] and Fisman and Svensson [11] who conducted a survey in the Ugandan firms. According to them, increase of 1% in the bribery rate leads to reduction of 3% in business growth. However, one has to remember that there are always two sides to every coin.

3. Methodology

The research is based on secondary research of scientific literature. The research will use the quantitative content analysis of selected researches [5] and analysis of available secondary literature. The main goal is to study relevant text and apply it (together with the results of many researches) on the Czech conditions.

4. Discussion and methodological steps how to overcome corruption

Corruption is deep-rooted in Czech society. As public perceive corruption very negatively it represents a serious problem for our country. People are more conscious about corruption on the state-level rather than on the firm-level. However, we can see that corruption on the firm-level can have an impact on the quality of goods and services. According to the results of the research conducted in 2014, the vast majority of companies have no need to fight corruption (only about 15% of companies have some anti-corruption procedures), [17, 20]. It also seems that companies that set up some anti-corruption procedures do not punish their employees if they breach the anti-corruption policy. Therefore, I don't agree with authors who claim that corruption has a positive economic impact on business growth.

Many countries desire an expansion in tourism and Czech Republic too. The Czech Government always makes promises that they will implement effective tools to fight corruption. However, only 12 % of population believes these 'promises'. Only 15% of population believes that there are a sufficient number of successful prosecutions to discourage people from corrupt practices in the Czech Republic. Therefore, it would be appropriate if all companies have an anti-corruption policy that will form part of their business process. This is very important for hotels as their customers should receive a good level of service, so that they will come back in the future or refer the hotel or the travel agency to their friends and other people. Transport, hotels and travel agencies are the biggest players in the tourism market.

It is also important to remember that corruption involves both buyer and seller and their cooperation could make a serious reduction in corruption.

Many firms have their own rules anti-corruption fight. Unfortunately these statements are only “on the paper” and the rules aren’t respect [19].

4.1 Suggested methodological steps

The following points are the most important steps that companies operating in tourism should, in my opinion, follow to fight corruption:

1) Create a list of anti-corruption rules (the Firm Codex) for directors, managers and other employees.
2) Establish an anti-corruption obligation and present it to public. It is also important that the company follows their procedures and is committed to its obligations.
3) A number of employees is responsible for individual processes.
4) Contracts, reservations and orders must be transparent. All customers should be able to check if the details in these documents are correct.
5) Fair and transparent recruitment procedures
6) Using personnel agencies for recruitment
7) Strict disciplinary procedures for the breach of the Firm Codex, such as:-
   a. Dismissal
   b. Criminal prosecution
   c. Financial penalty
   d. Job restriction
   e. Public apology
8) Company managers should regularly review work of their employees.
9) Unexpected checks of managers’ work by their colleagues or top management.
10) Sufficient financial and non-financial evaluation

The above points represent recommendations which could help companies to fight corruption and make their business much more transparent for their employees and customers. Czech companies should concentrate on increasing the level of trust by providing transparent communication, but they should be aware that “anti-corruption” has become a popular hash-tag, and its popularity can decrease if its promises or content are not fulfilled [14].

5. Conclusion

Corruption is a problem (at least from the ethical point of view) in many countries. In post-communistic countries corruption is widespread and the fight against corruption isn’t adequate. Therefore, people in these countries are more aware of it.

According to Transparency International the Czech Republic is on the 53rd position in the CPI (Corruption Perception Index) which is not a very good position [31]. As profitable tourism can increase income to the State Budget the “ethical side” of business plays an important role in this sector.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are very important for Czech economy. Accommodation facilities and other tourist services form a major part of SMEs.

The aim of the article is to describe various types of corruption in the Czech Republic specifically in Czech tourism and services. Nowadays, people prefer honest companies which offer good service and high quality, and hold some ethic rules. This article also provides companies with ten methodological steps how to successfully fight corruption.

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Petra Koudelková
Charles University in Prague
Faculty of Social Sciences
petra.koudelkova@fsv.cuni.cz

Petra Koudelková is an Assistant Professor and Researcher at the Department of Marketing Communication and Public Relations at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. Her main field of research is marketing activities in small and medium-sized enterprises (including corruption behaviour and corporate social responsibility). In her educational activities she focuses on Marketing Communication in SMEs, Fashion Marketing, Marketing Research, and Project Management.

Non-Gatekeeping on Social Media: A Reputation Monitoring Approach and its Application in Tourism Services

Klimis Ntalianis

Athens University of Applied Sciences

Androniki Kavoura

Technological Educational Institute of Athens

Peter Tomaras

Technological Educational Institute of Athens

Athanasios Drigas

IIT-NCSR Demokritos

Abstract

Social media users can send messages, create stories, are co-creators of these stories and contribute to a message sharing for a group of people. This is a process that takes place in real-time. The privilege companies had with the traditional media to send messages in their one-way communication with the public is no longer the case. Users with a high number of message exchanges are in a position to exert strong, selective influence on the information passed within the network. Segmenting social media web pages and associating users' opinions to structural tokens is an issue that needs to be taken into consideration by companies and organizations. Sections with the interesting information in a web page need to be identified and an intelligent wrapper system to do so is proposed in this paper based on clustering and statistics which can take place automatically without human intervention while a new software tool is presented. The aim is to illustrate the potential of collecting information related to a company's or an organization's services or products based on the comments made by the users in real time. An online community of like-minded users may be thus, identified illustrating the way users on social media interact in real time and the influence they may have.

At a practical level, experiments are presented over Facebook content and in particular, metadata (comments) made on the hotel booking brand Booking.com. Implications are discussed in relation to the creation of an online community of users sharing similar interests which are associated with a product or service. They may reinforce trust and act as part of the marketing communication strategy of a company. This in turn may increase loyalty and reliability based on comments' replies provided on social media and applied in tourism and other services.

Keywords: Gatekeeping; Brand; Reputation Monitoring; Social Media; Wrapper Technologies; Facebook

JEL Classification: L82, L86, M15

1. Introduction

Gatekeeping -the process by which billions of messages that are available in the world are winnowed down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day [1, p. 1]-, prevented the emergence of mechanisms for sharing information. Nonetheless, the little or non-cost at all for communicating with users on social media and the fact that the gated could act as the sender of a message [2, p. 261] is the prevailing schema that exists in social media in the sense that social media users can also send messages, create stories, are co-creators of these stories and contribute to a message sharing for a group of people.

Gatekeeping may take place to hubs and nodes in digital networks which were initially designed to prevent the emergence of mechanisms for sharing information [2]. The fact that users in social media and customers of a company's or an organization's products and services have a word to say and are able to express their point of view, allows us to argue that this information sharing needs to be examined before being utilized. The profile of those sending this information and what kind of information this is, may give us insight from the comments' replies in real time web (RTW).

Companies need to take into consideration that social media surpass the privilege companies had with the traditional media to send messages in their one-way communication with the public [2], [3]. Taking as an example Twitter which enables real-time propagation of information to any number of users, it may transmit news and information directly at the time information is disseminated [2, p. 262]. More specifically, users with a high number of message exchanges are in a position to exert strong, selective influence on the information passed within the network [2, p. 262], [4].

Taking an example the tourist and travel industry, people interact with other travelers to obtain travel information, exchange opinions, experiences or may provide reviews associated with photos, videos, news, blogs; they don't just consume content but produce their own [5]; [6]; [7]. his tool can perform content crawling in tripadvisor.com or booking.com for example. What kind of information is this that is provided online via comments? Which is the profile of those sharing this information?

Bastos et al. (2013) argued that the intense activity of individuals is capable of generating highly replicated messages that may contribute to trending topics on social media. In fact, they bypass gatekeeping in social media [2]. They may influence large numbers of people and the users creating these messages perform as committed agents and they may reverse a majority opinion.

More specifically, Bastos et al.'s research on gatekeeping in political hashtags -keywords or strings of text prefixed with a hash symbol such as #FreeIran, #FreeVenezuela and #Jan25- which appeared on Twitter trending topics discussed in real time about Iran, Venezuela and Egypt, found that gatekeeping is occurring through mechanisms that are not necessarily reliant on social's network and users' connectivity which was not the most important factor in determining message retweet ability; rather, user activity and mention network seem to be the prevailing forces in message diffusion [2]. Companies and organizations in the hotel and hospitality industry may deal with such information in relation to their customers.

In regard to tourism, studies investigating the influence of social media on destination choice are in an exploratory stage [8]. Online user-generated reviews in the tourism industry is still largely unknown both to tourism researchers and practitioners [9] and social media usage among top destination marketing organizations is still largely experimental [10].

Companies need to take into consideration factors that affect their sales. Towards this direction, everyday a huge amount of interactions takes place on social media. In particular, several products and services are posted regularly by various companies, which, by this way, structure their communication and marketing strategies. As a more specific example, over 1 billion people are on Facebook while 3 billion likes and comments are generated daily from people who tell their friends which businesses and products they love. Social ad market may reach $11 billion by 2017, up from $4.7 billion in 2012 [11]. This information is shared using mobile devices as well. Facebook's share of revenue from mobile advertising reached 49 percent in the third quarter of 2013 [12].

Thus, social media apart from allowing the exchange of data, they may bring huge revenues via online shopping to the companies with the collection of information about the potential target groups associated with their specific interests [13]. The abovementioned information illustrates the tremendous capabilities that exist for the creation of an online community of users and potential buyers of products and services when a company decides to employ social media in its advertising and communication activities [14]. Social media provide such an innovative potential to companies with their two-way communication for sharing information and creating an online community of users. A system though is necessary which may group together information sharing from like minded people. Then, companies and organizations may effectively use such information for their advertising and communication activities.

The aim of this paper is two-fold: it aims to describe a scheme for online data gathering and describe a reputation management system that may collect information about comments made for the brand, product or service. The creation of such a scheme, allows for inferences to be made about its potential to segment and target statistically online communication in social media about a related product, brand, service, company. In addition, the company or the organization may be able to deal with emerging crisis issues and safeguard its image, an issue that is common in the tourism industry and services [15], [16], [17], [18], [19].

In the globalized world that we live, firms and organizations in different sectors, may employ social media in their marketing strategies, the creation of networks and synergies may also enhance their communication applying it in the tourism and services sectors [20], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25], [26]. Implementing new software systems or applications in organizations can be a difficult task; nonetheless, efforts are worthwhile for branding [27], [28], [29] employing the reputation monitoring approach which is examined in the next sections.

One of the innovative features of this paper is the unsupervised relevant content gathering submodule. In particular, unsupervised relevant content gathering is a very challenging task in almost all unstructured sites, including open social media. When the same task has to performed on rule-stringent social media like Facebook and Linkedin it becomes far more challenging. Another novelty of the proposed paper is the automatic analysis of the specific gathered data without human intervention for reputation monitoring. Few works have currently considered unsupervised data gathering and analysis for reputation monitoring.

2. Framework of the research

2.1 Social media monitoring tools for segmenting online communications

In 1995 Tim Berners-Lee stated: I had (and still have) a dream that the web could be less of a television channel and more of an interactive sea of shared knowledge. I imagine it immersing us as a warm, friendly environment made of the things we and our friends have seen, heard, believe or have figured out. I would like it to bring our friends and colleagues closer, in that by working on this knowledge together we can come to better understandings. In less than twenty years, this dream seems to have come to reality, using social media as its vessel [30].

On the other hand, despite the complexity of modern life compared with just a century ago, and even more starkly to 10000 years ago, much remains the same in terms of the challenges that humans -as a social species- have to deal with. Throughout history, people have had to face two core, recurring challenges [31]. One deals with the need to gain social acceptance and to establish supportive social connections with others. The second deals with the need to attain competencies and status.

These two evolutionary necessities have been related to the fundamental dimensions of social judgment, namely communion and agency, which are used to describe various psychological phenomena in personality, social psychology, and related disciplines. In other words, there are obvious benefits to people, companies, governments and so on in understanding what the public thinks about them, their products and/or services, but it is also in the interests of large public knowledge institutions to be able to collect, retrieve and preserve all the information related to certain events and their development over time [32].

In particular, opinions are central to almost all human activities and are key-influencers of our behaviors. Our beliefs and perceptions of reality, and the choices we make, are, to a considerable degree, conditioned upon how others see and evaluate the world [33]. Research has found that the word of mouth from relatives and friends is considered to be very important to the decisions a person makes [34], [35], [36] and this is an opportunity widely offered on social media and Facebook. For this reason, when we need to make a decision, we often seek out the opinions of others. This is not only true for individuals but also true for organizations. LinkedIn for example, a social media platform with over 130 million members worldwide, is the largest professional site in the world and many companies employ it and adopt it as a mandatory in-company communication tool; people may search the professional profile of other people in order to get information about them [37]. Social media platforms allow for information sharing about people and companies to influence one's reputation.

Opinions and their related concepts such as sentiments, evaluations, attitudes, and emotions are the subjects of study of reputation management, sentiment analysis and opinion mining. The inception and rapid growth of the field coincide with those of the social media on the Web because for the first time in human history, we have a huge volume of opinionated data recorded in digital forms. Since early 2000, sentiment analysis for reputation management has grown to be of the most active research areas in natural language processing. It is also widely studied in data mining, Web mining, and text mining.

In recent years, industrial activities surrounding reputation management and sentiment analysis have also thrived. Numerous startups have emerged and many large corporations have built their own in house capabilities, making reputation management a defining feature of online life for many internet users. Search engines and social media sites play a central role in building one's reputation online and many users are learning and refining their approach as they go -changing privacy settings on profiles, customizing who can see certain updates and deleting unwanted information about them that appears online.

Over time, several major trends have indicated growth in activities related to online reputation management where online reputation-monitoring via search engines has increased-57% of adult internet users now use search engines to find information about themselves online, up from 47% in 2006 [38]. Online users present themselves in a transparent self-promotion way where databases of personal information have become tools for (personal) storytelling and narrative self-presentation [37, p. 200].

Obviously, reputation management is a very important service of high demand and its efficiency is heavily based mainly on two modules: (a) the data gathering and initial analysis module and (b) the Natural Language Processing (NLP) module. If data cannot be gathered and analyzed effectively, then any further processing cannot be performed. On the other hand, if data can be gathered then the success of opinion mining/reputation monitoring is exclusively based on the performance of the NLP module.

This paper focuses on data gathering/initial analysis [39] and several intelligent web tools and technologies have been proposed in the literature, including: the SM2 tool of Alterian [40], which is a social monitoring and analysis tool that integrates with the other marketing solutions of the Alterian toolkit. Brandwatch, is a social media monitoring tool that focuses on gathering, 'cleaning', analyzing and presenting data [41]. The application enables users to add their own filters of country, source, type, credibility and sentiment to analyze the data and allow the user to focus on the most relevant insights. As characteristically mentioned by Brandwatch [41]: Coverage of sites like LinkedIn and Facebook are notoriously difficult to retrieve data from, as both networks have a stringent set of scraping rules and privacy controls that prevent us from taking everything published on those platforms. For this reason in this paper we incorporate a middleware intelligent crawling architecture, which performs unsupervised relevant content crawling (pre-processing submodule) and tokens segmentation (content assessment submodule). Converseon [42], utilizes the concepts of listening by mining relevant data from the social media sphere, organizing the social media campaigns of the company and shaping its strategy in the market. Also, the toolkit supports the generation of reports and metrics regarding the performance of an organization in the market. Cymfony Maestro [43], which is a third generation social media monitoring tool, gives clients (near) real time access to a comprehensive and custom built archive of traditional and social media. My BuzzMetrics [44], makes feasible the gathering of data from social media, as well as filters out any noise from the monitored social conversations towards focusing on relevant topics.

Radian6, delivers one of the most popular social media monitoring tools in the market. Radian6 [45] enables organizations to become socially engaged enterprises by providing means for listening to social media, analyzing and measuring the raw data, producing insights based on NLP and engaging with the streams of posts in the social media sphere (engagement console). Moreover, the users of Radian6 are able to use a summary dashboard tool, in order to get in brief the status of their monitored topics. Last but not least, Sysomos [46], provides tools for monitoring social media conversations and themes, identifying key-influencers and gathering insight and intelligence to help shape the business decisions and strategies of the client's enterprise [47].

Even though very interesting and effectively performing on open social media, the most aforementioned tools and technologies fail on rule-stringent social media. As characteristically mentioned on the site of Brandwatch [48], coverage of sites like LinkedIn and Facebook are notoriously difficult to retrieve data from, as both networks have a stringent set of scraping rules and privacy controls that prevent us from taking everything published on those platforms. In fact, these tools have very limited performance on rule-stringent media. Furthermore, usually extensive human guidance is needed and raw-tag manipulations are necessary. In order to avoid human intervention and succeed in rule-stringent media, in this paper we propose a middleware intelligent wrapper system that automatically segments closed social media web pages into structural tokens, extracts and associates opinions to each token.

The proposed system is successfully applied to Facebook and the case of posted information and associated comments for the coffee brand Jacobs is examined. This system may be also employed for posted information on different products or services. In particular, video clip posts are commonly presented in HTML pages, mostly structured, but this structure is not known in advance. The most obvious problem in designing a system for web posts extraction is the lack of homogeneity in the structure of the source data found in social media [47]. The system may be applied to the tourism industry as well where comments may in fact change plans of visitors [49], [5], [7].

In our case, managing this task is made somewhat easier by the fact that social media sites do have some structure of their own. The post is presented in a part of a web page while its corresponding comments (opinions having to do with reputation) are placed in another part. This sort of structure is exploited in this paper to derive the structure of the data. In particular, a novel fully automated wrapper scheme is presented that is able to segment a web page into structural tokens and select the tokens of interest (e.g. posted information about a coffee brand and associated comments).

A key step towards retrieving the data of interest is to discover the sections contained in a web page and identify the ones holding the interesting information. To do that, our method is based on a clustering and statistics origin. The proposed system can operate without human intervention and training and it is tested in real-world social media sites. Segmenting data and information from users in such a way may prove to be an innovative tool for companies. Companies, via content segmentation and reputation monitor presented in this paper, may develop and segment online communities with special interests and like-minded users. Positive user's comments about the company may act as ambassadors for the company, create and reinforce an online community with the brand's connoisseurs who may boost clientele faithfulness and may be the antidote for posted comments made by users that harm the company's image. The proposed scheme may contribute so that monitoring may provide useful feedback to the companies in order to develop product modifications and innovation via information sharing and consumer opinion platforms.

2.2 The influence of social media on destination choice and their use in other tourism areas

Internet has been part of people's lives and especially in the tourism services, internet and mobile applications have a big influence. The use of new technologies, with the social media and microblogging platforms and mobile devices that connect people who share similar interests and experiences around the world, play a significant role in the pre and post trip tourism process of a visitor in a destination and its tourist services; in fact, the online comments made, consist of a user- generated content that may influence other visitors' choices that take place in real-time [50], [51], [52], [53].

Among studies for the influence of social media on visitors' choices, recent research has shown that Chinese travelers may search to get information about a destination through social media to a greater extent than visiting official websites [53]. The importance of social media on holiday visitors' choices has also been found on an exploratory research for the case of Athens, Greece where social media and in particular, Facebook was among the first choices of visitors when they searched for information about a destination [54], [55]. Another study about information and photographs posted on travel blogs, online communities and media sharing websites illustrated that there is influence of the receivers of such information in regard to their attitudes about the projected destination [56].

Social media influence the way travelers use and search information; travelers in fact become co-creators of information related to a destination and they play an important role in other people's decision making process with their active participation in social media [57]. If travelers attribute value to social media, then, social media may influence their media usage in relation to choices made for a tourism destination while demographic issues may play a role on social media usage [58], [51]. Nonetheless, more research should take place for social media usage, tourism and demographics. This is an issue that may be considered from those associated with tourism related activities and the implementation of social media. The adoption of tourist social media is used more in technologically-advanced markets where people are very familiar with information and communication technologies [59]. Women use Internet less frequently, are less confident, lag behind in the degree to which they are experienced with and motivated by technology that online communications use whereas men are interested in information technology environments to retrieve information and engage in online activities [60], [61], [62].

Social media with their user-generated content are important sources of information, available to all; they are considered to be credible and trustworthy since there are not hidden benefits, honesty prevail and influence the way visitors plan for, buy and consume tourist products especially when related with online travel agents [63], [64].

In addition to the influence of social media on such as destination choice, other tourism related areas rental companies, air ticket companies, restaurants, accommodation are among those ones that consistently use internet technologies [65]. Online booking facilities from airline companies bring people closer to their services [66]. Thus, airline companies may invest to the use of social media in order to receive feedback from online comments made from their existing and potential customers and continuously upgrade their services. In addition, restaurants as another tourism related area, that are an important travel product, may benefit from the use of social media because consumers use information technology when choosing a restaurant; in fact, choices and decisions made for restaurants may change at the same time that one is ready to purchase the service and the role of social media is significant [50]. Companies may thus, use online comments made on social media to better cater for potential and existing customers' needs. If they are able to respond immediately, the benefits may be greater.

2.3 Overview of the Intelligent Wrapper System

In this paper social media content retrieval is performed by an automatic wrapper-based mechanism. The proposed wrapper exploits the format of social media sharing web sites to discover the underlying structure in order to finally infer and extract multimedia files (posts) and corresponding associated comments from the web pages. The system first identifies the section of the web page that contains the multimedia file to be extracted and then extracts it by using clustering techniques and other tools of statistical origin.

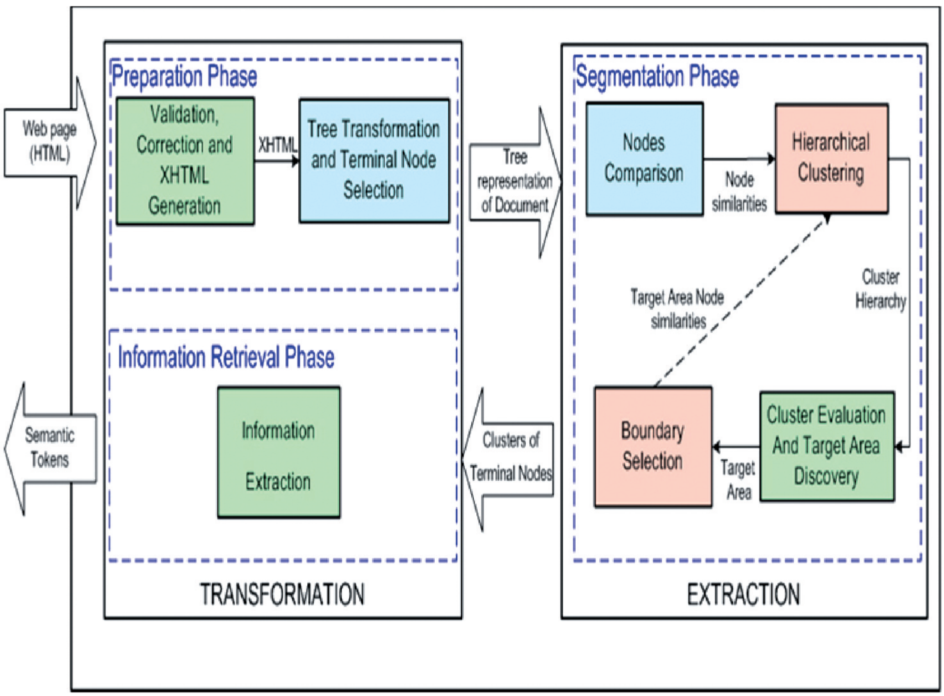
The proposed system is an evolution of STAVIES [67] and comprises of two modules: namely the transformation and the extraction module. These modules are further subdivided into components, each one responsible for a different task. The overall system architecture, which extracts the information from the data source, is composed of three distinct phases: Preparation phase, Segmentation phase and Information Retrieval phase (see Figure 1).

During the first phase, the web document is prepared for the extraction that will follow. This is done by inserting the HTML document into the Transformation module. This module parses the HTML document and transforms it into well-formed XHTML, correcting any existing irregularities that would misguide the extraction process.

Then the produced XHTML document is used to generate a tree representation of the initial web page (see Figure 2). The terminal nodes of this tree correspond to elements of the web page among (namely images, links and text) where the useful information resides, while the intermediate nodes correspond to layout descriptive elements. Therefore the terminal nodes are the ones needed during the extraction process. At this point it is also important to note that the selection of the terminal nodes is performed in a way that preserves their ordering in the web page. The ordering of the terminal nodes is critical because it constitutes one of the criteria used to infer the semantic relationships between elements of the HTML page, since lack of locality in the ordering of these elements is

Figure 1

Overall architecture of the middleware social media content retrieval system

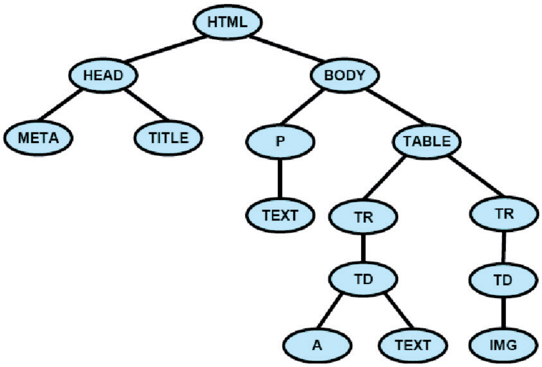


Source: owo Research

translated into semantic irrelevance. Users' belonging or not to an online or physical community associated with the company or a brand can be part of the segmentation phase for example. Once the terminal nodes have been selected, the second phase (see Figure 1 above (Segmentation phase) performs a clustering to identify the terminal nodes of interest and segment them into appropriate subsets. Finally the last phase concludes the operation by mapping the generated terminal node clusters to elements in the initial HTML web document. A plot of a sample target areas can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 2.

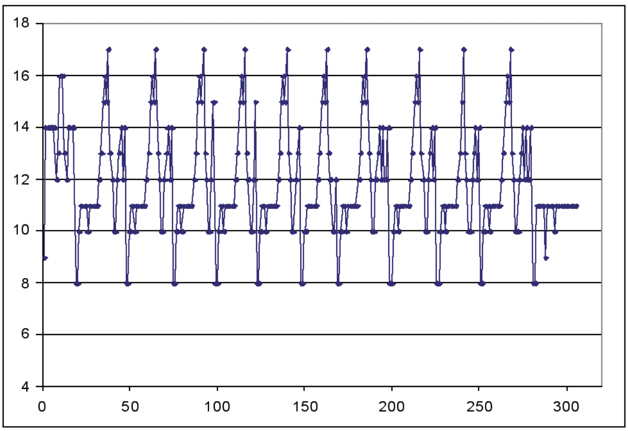
Tree representation of a web page, produced by an XHTML document



Source: owo Research

Figure 3

A plot of the "target area" for a sample web page. Each "semantic token" represents a wall post



Source: owo Research

2.4 Content Preparation and Segmentation

2.4.1 The Preparation Phase

The first component acting during this phase is the "Validation, Correction and XHTML Generation Component". Given a web document, like those shown in Figure 2, this component performs a syntactical correction to the source's HTML by transforming it into XHTML. The XHTML page is then fed into the "Tree Transformation and Terminal Node Selection Component", which generates a tree representation of the page. The root of this tree corresponds to the whole document. The intermediate nodes represent HTML tags (e.g. <table>, <ol>, <tr>, <p>, etc) that determine the layout of the page. Finally, the terminal nodes (leaf nodes) correspond to visual elements on the web page, namely images, links and/or text. Once the tree construction is completed, the terminal nodes are selected. The non-terminal nodes are not in our interest, since they represent layout descriptive elements.

2.4.2 The Segmentation Phase

First, the sections in the input page are identified and one of them is characterized as the target area, i.e. the area of the input page where the semantic tokens reside. The second step is to further segment the target area, thus, extracting the semantic tokens. Segmentation includes two steps: "Target Area Discovery" and "Target Area Segmentation".

Given the list of terminal nodes the "Target Area Discovery" process aims at selecting a subset of these nodes, by hierarchical clustering. The clustering outcome will reveal the region in the web document that contains the semantic tokens. During "Target Area Segmentation", a segmentation of the target area into further segments that represent the semantic tokens is performed. Each output cluster now represents a semantic token. A characteristic example is presented in Figure 4, where clusters (semantic tokens) corresponding to different information objects can be easily observed. By these clusters, the connection with like-minded people all over the world and not those who are related to one's list may emerge and is an issue that tourism companies need to take into consideration in order to create a dedication list of people [68]. The provision of network platforms and tools, which will enable travelers with similar interests and desires to automatically create communities of like-minded individuals, is a must. In such communities travelers are able to submit feedback in the form of criticism and helpful suggestions, contributing to a sense of community [3, p. 361]. Communication is encouraged by these tools and people express their point of view, which is an honest exchange of ideas.

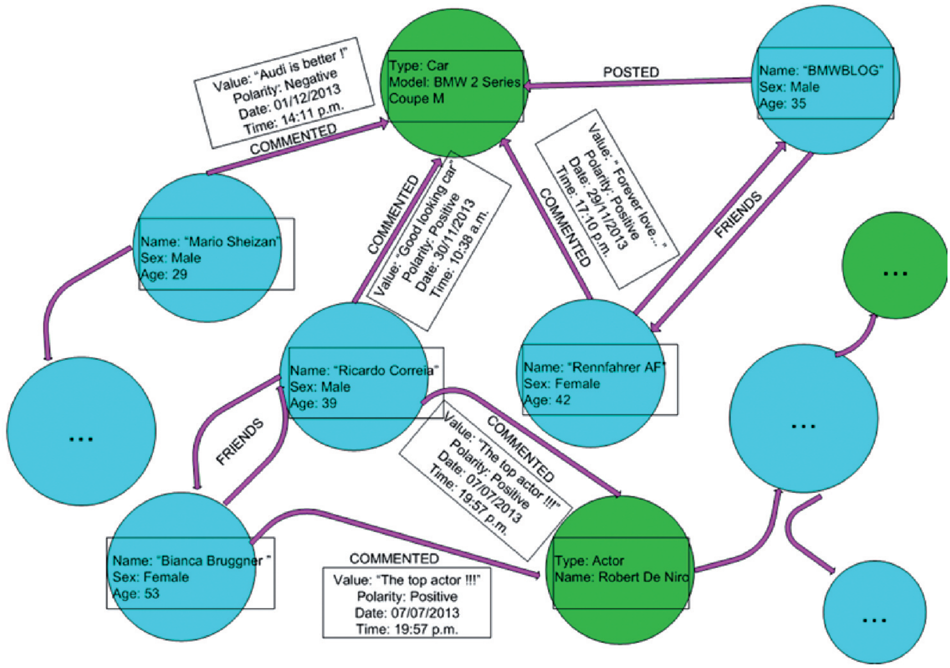
2.4.3 Efficient Storage for Fast Search and Retrieval of Big Data

In the previous section, the content segmentation phase has been described. However, if tourism-related pages are continuously partitioned and comments are picked up, extremely large amounts of information will be gathered in the passing of time. In other words, big data will be produced, a topic that has become a matter of concern not only for scientists but also for the average person. In agreement to this, a New York Times' article on 11 February 2012 [69], welcomed us to the Age of Big Data. But what is "big data"? Several discussions have been done in the literature, none of which concluded into a clear definition. Maybe one of the most successful approaches has been presented in Jacobs [70]: big data should be defined at any point in time as "data whose size forces us to look beyond the tried-and true methods that are prevalent at that time".

Compared to relational databases, graph databases are often faster for associative data sets and map more directly to the structure of object-oriented applications. Furthermore, graph databases are a powerful tool for graph-like queries, for example computing the shortest path between two nodes in the graph. Other graph-like queries can be performed over

Figure 4

General graph structure of an example situation regarding users and comments of a social network



Source: owo Research

a graph database in a natural way (for example graph's diameter computations or community detection). Some projects have been established in the past so as to design successful graph databases. Characteristic examples include [71] AllegroGraph, Bigdata, DEX, HyperGraphDB, InfiniteGraph, Neo4j, OpenLink, Oracle NoSQL Database, OrientDB, R2DF, Titan and VertexDB.

In this paper, Neo4j has been adopted, since: (a) it is open-source, (b) it stores data in nodes connected by directed, typed relationships with properties on both, (c) it is intuitive, using a graph model for data representation, (d) it is reliable, (e) it is durable and fast, using a native storage engine, (f) it is massively scalable, up to several billion nodes/relationships/properties, (g) it is highly-available, when distributed across multiple machines, (h) it is expressive, with a powerful, human readable graph query language, (i) it is fast, with a powerful traversal framework for high-speed graph queries, (j) it is embeddable, with a few small jars and (k) it is simple.

In our case, entities (e.g. hotels, destinations, tourism services, car rental companies) and their respective comments are considered. Figure 4 includes different posts and related users. In its central post, the car rental company 'BMWBLOG' has posted an available BMW model, which receives comments by other users. Then, according to Figure 4, fields of the graph database may include: entity Type, Model, Name, Sex, Age, Value (Comment), Polarity, Date, Time URL, number of comments etc.

One may notice influences on the aforementioned example. In particular, the interrelation between friends and relatives with the car rental company may lead to the creation of an online community, associating the company with its fans. In addition, the source of negative comments may be identified for the company and the examination of the source of these comments would be valuable information to them. Through Internet, customers can express their emotions and online feedback mechanisms may build trust and foster cooperation.

3. Empirical Part- Experimental Results

In this section we perform a preliminary evaluation of our system's performance in real-life scenarios. Evaluation has been performed on a large set of real web pages covering a variety of layout structures and templates. This set included Facebook and Linkedin. However, since Linkedin does not allow commercial video/image posts and for evaluation reasons, only results on Facebook are presented.

Towards this direction, first it should be mentioned that on December 2012 the Online Computing Group (Onlog) [72] has been established, which currently includes about 220 members and has liked several pages of top companies. For a period of three months, we have parsed the Facebook wall information of these members and of the top companies, discarding all other posts except of videos and images. Here it should also be mentioned that the intelligent wrapper could also parse the walls of the friends of all members of Onlog, totaling about 31,000 profiles and continue to the friends of friends (when content is open to non-friends).

In particular, in Figure 5, a typical page of www.facebook.com is depicted, where the proposed system has located and traversed an image post and the related comments, regarding hotels booking brand Booking.com. This post has received 1,101 likes, 6 comments (5 plus one answer comment) and 38 shares and refers to "Hotel Le Crystal Montreal" [73], [74]. More specifically, after entering into a page of multimedia items (images, videos etc), the semantic tokens segmentation agent detects that semantic token characterized by the keyword 'Comment'. Then, it retrieves all associated comments and relates them to the retrieved video/image.

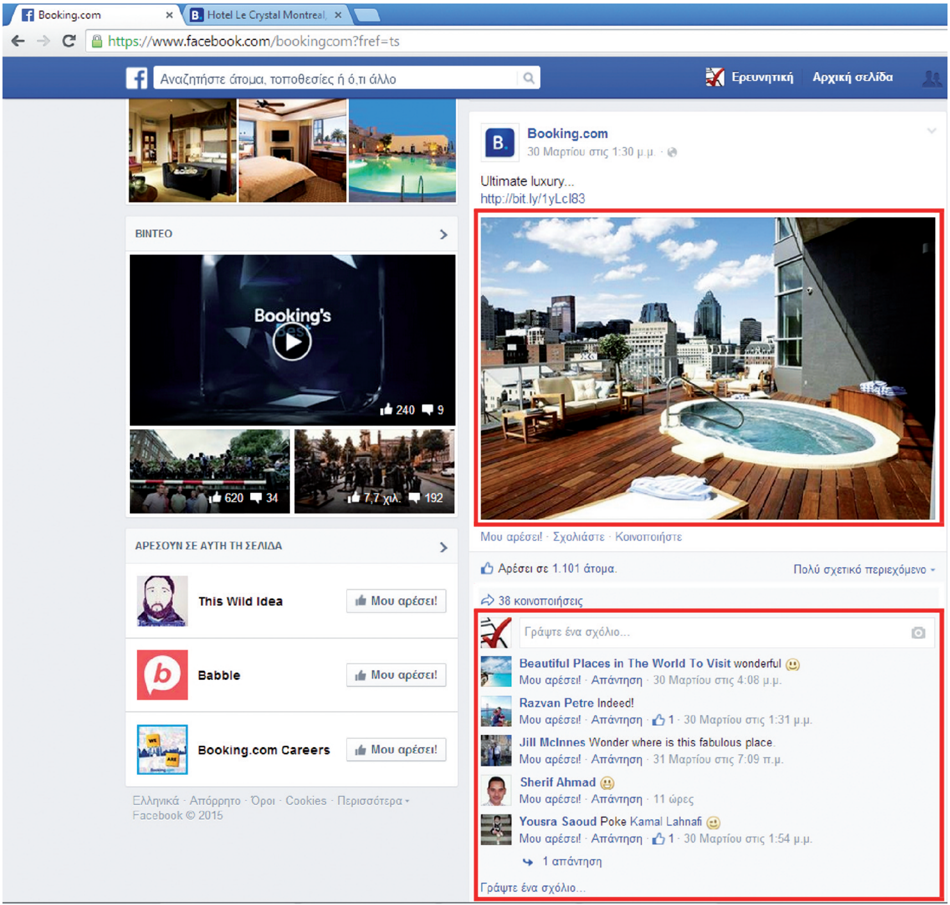
Another experiment has been performed with a Greek singer and illustrated similar results [47]. By this way, the proposed system can perform much better than other social media crawling tools, since it takes advantage of the already structured, annotated and organized content, posted on users' walls [75]. Other crawling tools cannot unsupervised collect relevant content in rule-stringent social media. Furthermore most of the other reputation monitoring tools need supervision during data analysis. Another side virtue of the proposed scheme is that it can group all videos/images of a brand and provide search by title, comment, opinion etc. or even summarize comments to build a complete profile evaluation report of the brand, something that even Facebook or Youtube do not currently provide. By this way the brand can be straightforwardly informed of any possible negative comments or useful and constructive remarks. For example, in Figure 5 there are several positive comments and some neutral (e.g. "Poke"). However in other posts there are also negative ones (for example, "Something is wrong with the link", "Money says : No !", "Never" etc). From the point of reputation management view, these comments should be properly addressed, so that no shadows are left over a brand's name. It is typical to note that the use of Twitter and social media sites like Facebook has become a central tool mobilization and information dissemination which helps to foster engagement. Social media can be used effectively by people who are already engaged in an action; such as action, an issue, an event may influence a person more and s/he will search out information from different media if the issue is perceived relevant and directly impacts on him/her [4]. Additionally, there are also irrelevant (spam) comments, e.g. someone posts the name of his/her country, another hotel, links to football players etc. Ideally, these comments should be filtered out and this is also a future direction of the proposed scheme.

In fact, the proposed model may also be employed in other areas of the tourism industry such as tourism management, tourism public policies, tourism evaluation etc. by segmenting, analyzing and summarizing relevant web pages. Furthermore, since there is a strong correlation between the level of influence from social media and changes to holiday plans where users trust more the online content for a destination that is created by other users than the one created from official tourism websites, travel agents and mass media advertising [49, p. 1] [7], managing this information would be very useful for companies in order to categorize positive and negative comments made in real time and be able to evaluate them.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that the average time to wrap a Facebook page of moderate complexity (small number of posts) with our system is less than 0.03 seconds whereas other pages of high complexity are being wrapped in less than 0.17 seconds in a machine with typical configuration (Core 2 Quad 2.3 GHz PC with 4GB RAM). A major

Figure 5

An image post from one of the largest hotel booking brands Booking.com contained in the results page with the related metadata (comments)



Source: https://www.facebook.com/booking.com [76] advantage of the algorithm, is its tolerance to the dissimilarities among the structural tokens especially since these dissimilarities occur very often in Facebook's pages. For example in the typical case of a Facebook page, where the structural tokens are the contained videos/images, their number may vary as well as the number of comments, contained links etc. Furthermore, our Neo4j database was populated with more than 35,000 videos/images and more than 200,000 comments. The search and retrieval time per query is less than 0.3 seconds on average and for the same machine. Finally, the proposed scheme can be applied in any social media and segment all kinds of posts (e.g. tourist services commercials, advertising posters of destinations, images of landscapes etc.) so that to support a full gamut of reputation monitoring applications. Detection of videos/images was just an example application for presentation purposes.

4. Conclusion–Future Work

In this paper, a novel fully automated social media content wrapper has been presented for reputation monitoring. In contrast to most of the existing tools, it does not require any human assistance or training phases, while its main contribution lies in the area of introducing a signal-wise treatment of the tag structural hierarchy of a web page. The importance of such a treatment is significant since it permits abstracting away from the raw tag-manipulating approach that other systems use. Evaluation of the system was performed on a large set of web pages covering a variety of layout structures and templates and coming from two different social media sites (Facebook and LinkedIn). Another virtue of the proposed system is that it can execute in real-time, requiring less than 0.18 seconds, even for web pages of high complexity, on a PC with typical configuration. In the future, the system's output could feed regular sentiment analysis and opinion mining tools to also provide reputation management capabilities.

Since there are users who may in fact influence the majority of online users based on the post of a comment or message, such as online comments made in the tourism industry for hotels, these types of users can be segmented in order to verify the validity and reliability of the comments made. The company or the organization may be able to categorize the comments made based on the use of specific positive or negative wording. In addition, the profile of those producing this information online can be defined at another level of analysis. Companies and organizations may calculate the numbers and impact of their actions in real time in regard to online generated content.

On the other hand, those involved in the creation of online content can be the most significant ambassadors for a company on social media platforms where the word of mouth is considered to be very important to the decisions made by others [34], [35]. Companies cannot directly control consumer-to-consumer conversations, their content, timing and frequency of the social media-based conversations occurring between them, which take place in real time; the magnitude of communication is big [3]. In fact, Mangold and Faulds argue that managers must learn to shape consumer discussions in a manner that is consistent with the organization's mission and performance goals with the provision of networking platforms and using blogs, social media tools and promotional tools to engage customers [3, p. 357]. The examination of these users' profile and their relation to the brand is further research that could take place.

It is worthwhile to examine loyalty and commitment towards a topic, a product, a company, a brand on social media for users who comment in RTW. Which is the engagement of these users in relation to the brand? Are they loyal and engaged to the brand? Have they made repeat purchases? Are they just fans of the brand? Are they faithful buyers of the brand? Do they belong to an online community associated with the brand that may illustrate their connection and identification towards the brand? We may monitor all public actions of a user versus a brand (e.g. If someone used Like, share, comment on a post of the brand; also in how many posts of the brand someone has done Like, share, comment; how many comments are made per post. In addition, these can be accumulated. The abovementioned paint a picture of the customer loyalty in the face of a brand.

In fact, engagement may have an impact on brand image brand loyalty relationship when people buy products and associate with brands; an examination of an idea competition on a student's university Facebook fan page, found that a higher level of engagement can diminish the predominant link of brand image on brand loyalty [75]. Thus, the personal engagement of a person with a brand establishes loyalty relationships which mean that customers are willing to re-purchase a product or a service and be committed to it [76]. Strong emotional responses in the trust encourages people to make positive comments about their service providers; if the user senses resonance and can imagine him/herself in the situation described, s/he may perceive it as more credible, trustworthy and persuasive. That is why, the identification of the existence of a sense of belonging is significant and the identification of users' engagement with a brand and the comments made may be further examined.

These users are the ones who may contribute to bring the online community together that companies aim to create. The so called 'ambassadors'' point of view is significant and companies and organizations may incorporate them to their marketing strategies in order to communicate with people on social media. This is true because it was found that "the top ten most-followed users in Twitter were not corporations or media organizations but individuals who communicate directly with their followers via messages" [2, p. 268]. Consumer review comments on social media may in fact serve as a new element of the marketing communication mix. Social media that nowadays play an important role in a company's media strategy need to be integrated in the company's communication programme taking into consideration that the creation of bonding and engagement with customers may increase loyalty behavior. Then, this information may be useful for marketers and advertisers. The implementation of a sense of community belonging through social media platforms has a lot to offer because it may establish solid relationships between customers and businesses but also among customers and among businesses while loyalty response may be greater; this can be part of further research.

The provision of as much information as possible from the companies is the case. This latter, is especially true when consumers feel they know a lot about the companies and they can provide insightful comments. Thus, companies should provide as much information as possible which is a key element for the loyalty. Information which is emotionally related to users may minimize the use of negative comments made online by users [3, p. 363]. Thus, the amount of information shared by companies on social media would be another significant issue to be examined in relation to the users' active participation and opinions for reputation monitoring. The implementation of new technologies is a necessity in tourism services and marketing [77]. Ongoing research on social media may shed light on the way they may be used effectively as part of the communication made.

Mobile applications may adopt the proposed system so that tourism companies and tourism marketers may use the online comments gathered to understand the image visitors but also tourists have for their products and tourism services on offer. If discrepancies exists between what is on offer and what the visitor expected to find and the comments that are gathered under specific themes illustrate that this is the norm for those commenting online, then the company may provide alternative ways to come closer to the visitor. Businesses may benefit from the use of mobile devices that combine social media and context marketing [78]. The gathering of information related to visitors' comments related to businessmen's companies and tourist services may lead these companies in a successful interaction with the people.

The use of the proposed system may help those associated with tourism to develop their branding strategies based on comments made from the people [79], [78] but also to differentiate their activities based on comments they receive onsite. Employment skills through higher education may allow entrepreneurship initiatives to take place [80] that may allow professionals to work in tourism related businesses taking into consideration and interacting with visitors.

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Klimis Ntalianis
Department of Marketing,
Faculty of Management and Economics,
Athens University of Applied Sciences,
Ag. Spiridonos, 12210, Aigaleo, Greece
http://www.ma.teiath.gr/el/personnel/faculty/227-ntalianis-cv
kntal@teiath.gr

Klimis Ntalianis is an Associate Professor at the Athens University of Applied Sciences, Department of Marketing. He has participated as editor in the proceedings of 3 International Conferences, he has translated and was responsible for the scientific redaction of two Computer Science books, he has written more than 130 scientific papers & deliverables. His main interests include multimedia processing/security and social computing.

Androniki Kavoura
Department of Marketing,
Faculty of Management and Economics,
Technological Educational Institute of Athens,
Ag. Spiridonos, 12210, Aigaleo, Greece
nkavoura@teiath.gr
http://www.ma.teiath.gr/el/personnel/faculty/27-kavoura

Androniki Kavoura is an Associate Professor and Head, Department of Marketing, Technological Educational Institute of Athens, Greece. She has participated as editor in the proceedings of 2 International Conferences. Her published work in numerous journals is associated with the role of communication in the marketing and advertising of services, cities, regions with the use of social media and other electronic means. She is member of the Editorial Board of many journals in tourism, communication, advertising, business and marketing.

Peter Tomaras
Department of Marketing,
Faculty of Management and Economics,
Technological Educational Institute of Athens,
Ag. Spiridonos, 12210, Aigaleo, Greece
ptomaras@teiath.gr
http://www.ma.teiath.gr/el/personnel/faculty/30—-cv

Peter Tomaras is Professor and a member of the academic personnel of the Technological Educational Institute of Athens, Greece in the Marketing Department. He is the author of four Marketing books and coauthor in two more. His main research interests are in the fields of the Marketing and Marketing Research.

Athanasios Drigas
IIT-NCSR Demokritos,
Neapoleos, Aghia Paraskevi, 15310, Greece
https://www.iit.demokritos.gr/el/people/drigas-athanasios
dr@iit.demokritos.gr

Athanasios Drigas is Senior Researcher at IIT-NCSR Demokritos. He has been member in several committees for design and coordination Network & ICT services & activities, and also in several committees of international conferences & journals. He has also received several distinctions for his scientific work (articles, projects, patents).

Design the New Concept of Security Check at Airport with Comprehends Trend of Passengers Behaviour Analyses

Jindřich Ploch

University of Business in Prague

Tomáš Děkan

University of Business in Prague

Jan Zýka

University of Business in Prague

Abstract

This article discusses the choice of technology for the analysis of passenger behaviour and the allocation stage in a potential dangerous threat to civil aviation security. The choice of technology is based on the result of the multi-criteria analysis and selected criteria requirements of the principle of operation, efficiency and other important features for the applicability of the technology to process passengers and baggage handling at international airports. The applicability of the results there are included technologies for non-contact monitoring of extrasensory manifestations of the human body indicating which is detected an abnormal behaviour. These are based on different principles and activities and on different parameters monitoring. The result of the analysis is designed to project the Air Transport Department of University of Business in Prague. The goal of this project is the modification process security checks at airports incorporating behavioural analysis as one of input indicators for the robustness of the control. This article also describes airport security workers as a key element of protection against acts of unlawful interference in civil aviation. Then there will be described factors of working environment affecting their convenience. The anonymous questionnaire among security workers of an airport forms source of valuable data for the research part of the article. In that part the respondents reported factors, which can be distracting and can negatively affect quality of the work and thus also performance and error rate.

Keywords: Behavioural Analyses, Security Checks, Aviation Security, Environmental factors, Airport Security Staff, Working Environment, Workplace

JEL Classification: R41

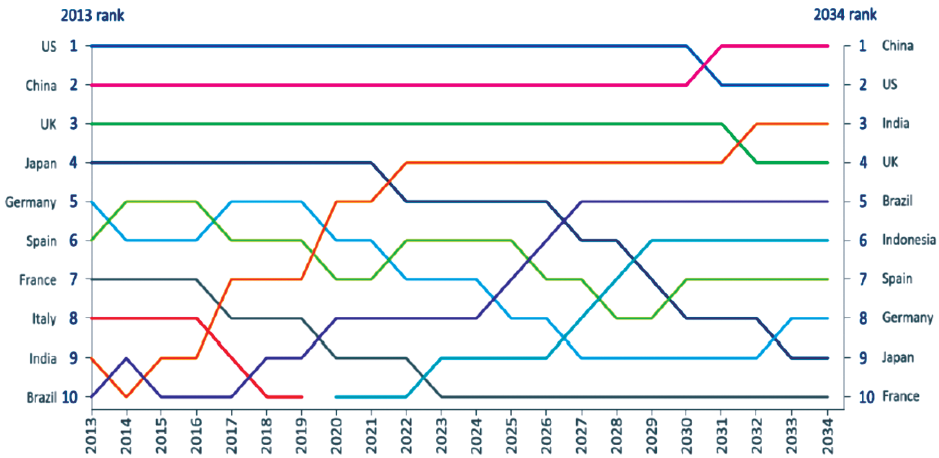
Introduction

The basic feature of the civil aviation sector in addition to a significant upgrade of the fleet and resource management along with air corridor encountered a permanent growth of its volume in the past decade. Qualified predictions of international organizations and aircraft manufacturers from 2014 have shown that a similar trend growth in air traffic is expected to continue over the next twenty years that means until 2034. In the past however air travel has experienced a series of unlawful acts against civil aviation and the growing number of risks has affected aviation safety. These factors created the need for the active identification of potential risks and at the same time for implementing measures to suppress their formation or at least minimize the damage when they are enforced. The predicted growth of volume in air traffic is representing a greater number of passengers with different aims and objectives of the planned routes which means a likely increase of potential risks to air transport.

Published forecasts also point to the expected replacement of the areas producing the largest number of passengers (Fig. 1) which may be associated with a variety of behaviours, new abnormal reactions, or adverse intends. They must adapt perfectly to a given situation and timely prepare the security checks at airports.

Figure 1

Changes in Airline Market Forecast



Source: [7]

The long-term trend of security checks at airports constituted a special technical control facility providing the possibility to discover the presence of dangerous objects on the body of the passenger or in the luggage. Such checks are time-consuming the necessary equipment is expensive and self-control is unpleasant act for passengers in the check-in process. At international level there was advocated the simplification of formalities requirements (that is the process of checking passengers) and sophisticated methods of executors of possible illegal acts have led in recent years to the need for the creation of sources of information allowing the definition of the circle of potentially dangerous passengers ensuring their identification prior to the security check and the determination of the required security level of. The third direction facing repression of risks during security checks at airports, the method of analysis of the responses and passenger behaviour (behavioural analyses) during the process of their clearance. This issue analyzes discussions of the human factor in the process of security inspections which was chosen as an internal problem of supporting the scientific task. This was solved the by the Air Transport department of the University of Business in Prague which contains the preparation for the establishment of an appropriate mathematical model the content of the text that follows.

1. The Current Form of Security Checks at Airports

The current form of security control at airport is well known to everyone, who ever travelled by air nowadays. According to the existing form of passenger identification the passenger must walk-through the metal detector and its hand luggage transported through the X-ray machine. In case of some undefined object indicated during this control, special personal control will continue. With respect to the constantly increasing number of items that are prohibited on board of the aircraft, the government of the airport can require more security checks and install additional equipments to identify dangerous objects or to determine the unfavourable intention.

In regard to a previous dangerous situation among forbidden items are

Figure 2

Liquids Scanner EMA

Source: www.ceia.net

lined up liquids and gels nowadays. As an example of new technology which serves to identify the nature of the liquids and gels EMA scanner (Fig. 2) can be presented.

The current trend of application of these new security controls is engaged in the development of new technologies for faster, more reliable and less discriminatory implementation of security controls. But the concept of security controls indicates that the primary objective of these controls is still identifying objects that could potentially jeopardize the safety of air transportation.

2. The Perspective Form of Security Checks at Airports

We can suppose that the current form of security checks at airports, with respect to great advances in detection technologies, has no~~t~~ chance to be principally changed. But the main problem is connected with the situation, that the same character of check is realized. It is not differentiated whether an elderly lady travelling on vacation is being checked or a person who intends to perform some illegal act.

The modern concept of security checks at airports should therefore be based on identifying potentially dangerous persons not on the principle of identification of potentially dangerous objects as it is the case ~~of~~ today. Modern approach to implementing security controls at airports should therefore be based on the identification of potentially dangerous persons who are subsequently subjected to thorough safety inspection. This modern way of bringing together several key benefits are:

- new ideas on the implementation of control significantly increases the efficiency;
- the use of these principles is that thorough safety checks are carried out at random but targeted at a specific person with a degree of suspicion which significantly speeds up the flow of passengers at security checkpoints;
- decrease negative the view of passengers to check their own safety especially in terms of discrimination and ethical rules.

2.1. Behavioural Analyses

Analysis of the behaviour of the passengers on the ground implementation of security controls is one of the possible options for profiling passengers prior to performing security checks. This analysis involves monitoring the behaviour manifestations of the human body that indicate some non-standard behaviour. This manifestation can be presented by a more reddened check, excrete sweat, egg pulse rate, etc. The maximum efficiency of such an analysis is essential to the monitoring of those expressions that cannot be trained and they cannot be affecting. These human expressions are called extrasensory. The behavioural analysis of passengers at the airport could therefore be the base for the modern concept of security checks at airports. Based on this analysis passengers are assigned a degree of potential danger and on the basis of this level would then a thoroug~~h~~ physical security control~~s~~ be made. Despite the risk to almost zero at a specific passenger and the passenger would not perform safety inspections of exempt [11].

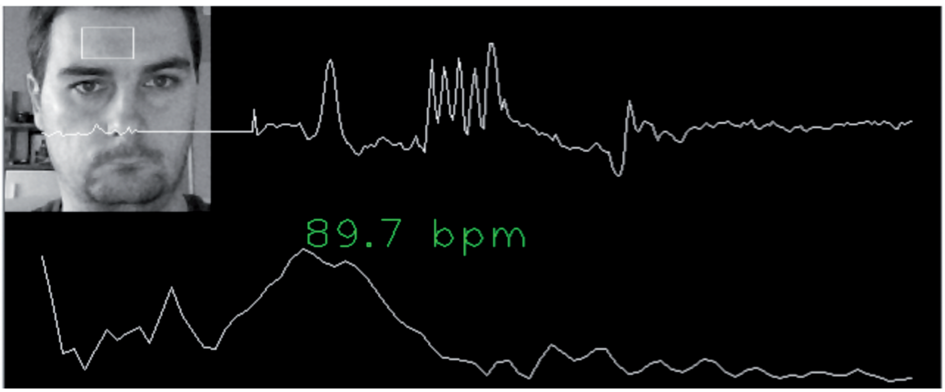
2.2. Application behavioural analysis at airports

Analysis of the person´s behaviour is successfully used today in various sectors. It is used during police interrogation or as a special tool during interviews for important work positions. For the security control at airports behavioural analysis is till now a rather specific matter. Here are the main reasons:

1) At the airport it is necessary to monitor a large number of passengers who are waiting in line to perform safety checks or move freely around the airport. But behavioural analysis has not been used en masse till now. It means that such a type of analysis has not been used for one person monitoring only, it has been a part of a large amount of people. For security checking at airports such type of monitoring must ensure the required efficiency and reliability of result for the supposed type of analysis.
2) To obtain the required maximum efficiency, it is necessary to analyse physical symptoms (for example measuring heart rate, blood pressure, etc.), which was monitored by the contact method. But when we want to apply the behavioural analysis in international airport conditions, it is necessary to monitor these symptoms by noncontact methods, especially with a modified camera system. These physical symptoms

Figure 3

Non-Contact Measurement of Heart Rate



Source: UoB Research

must be tracked on uncovered parts of the human body and even in the winter season, in the period when passengers have clothes draped almost around the entire body except the head or face.

All processors which are adapted at the airport are set so, to be able to accommodate the largest volume of passengers in the terminal area, especially in peak hours and dates. The security checkpoints course should reflect this situation. With respect to this situation, the analyses of chosen people´s behaviour should take place only in a few seconds, when catching the smooth flow of passengers at a particular part of the airport.

These specific requirements for analysing the behaviours of travellers at the airport can be fulfilled, when the training program for security is modified. According to this program every individual employee must be able to make out security checks of passengers with nonstandard behaviour. The speed and reliability of this analysis can be achieved by applying modern technologies which are able to detect behaviour directly during security checks at the airport.

When applying the behaviour analysis in the process of security checks, it is a question if is the possibility to prepare a final analysis, which applies the results as outcome. The Possibility for a final analysis exists, when reverse recordings of people, who managed to commit an offense from Video Camera Counting Technology CCTV. All terrorists there showed clearly signs of strange behaviour, which unfortunately remained unnoticed by anyone. As an example the attempt to commit a terrorist attack in 2001 can be described. The British citizen Richard Reid, known as the Shoe Bomber, on the line from Paris Charles de Gaulle airport to the American Miami, placed explosives in the construction of his shoe. From the airport CCTV recording was possible to see his unusual behaviour. The climax of this strange behaviour was especially clear in the moment, when he was waiting for the security check. R. Reid progressed in the queue of passengers, and just prior to performing the checks he stepped back from the queue and joined to the end of the queue.

Figure 4

The Design of Shoes With Explosives

Source: www.fbi.gov/shohe_bomb

We can identify non-standard behaviour of a person when using other indices as well. People are usually confused by the movement of the airport terminal and they are sweating excessively. All this is evidence of imminent danger, but unfortunately it is not used for finding hidden explosives. When using behavioural analysis of such a person by his or her behaviour, we can see a clear impetus for a thorough security including checks of shoes by X-ray equipment which would reveal the explosive [1].

Application of behavioural analysis for security checks at airports requires also legislation, which would compensate a fundamental lack of this concept. As already mentioned a well-trained person is able to commit the supposed illegal act to the aircraft, but there is no expression, now being referred to as “forbidden for air transportation.” Normally such a person can hurt other people by a part of common wear such as trousers belt, shoelaces, etc. Currently the concept of security controls enables such a person to be admitted for transportation. The modern concept of applying behavioural analysis supposes that such person will be identified on the basis of extrasensory manifestations of the human body indicating abnormality. The fundamental problem arises when the analysis of the behaviour of a specific person as “potentially dangerous” for admission to the flight exists, but on the other hand when we do not find a forbidden object here. And there it is no reason not to let a person get on board. As a solution could be a new concept of security checks at airports with application of behavioural analysis, and its thorough integration into standards of security controls in the EU states, or worldwide.

2.3. Unfair Intentions Versus Fear

Using behavioural analysis at airports brings another important factor that needs to be taken into account. A considerable percentage of the passengers may have similar extrasensory manifestations of organism as in unfair intentions and some have no intentions whatsoever. Aerophobia or fear of flying carries with its certain manifestations of the human body that could be used interchangeably with potential threats when behaviour analysis is applied in many cases. In fear of flying there appears a number of extrasensory manifestations of the human organism such as sweating, increased heart beat, shaking hands, confused behaviour, higher body temperature, etc. Aerophobia unfortunately is not an exceptional case. Global statistics show that 15 to 20% of passengers suffer from this “problem”. To confirm the possible applications of behavioural analysis in the process of security checks at airports and a possible effect on the outcome of this analysis due to aerophobia a British university conducted research on monitoring and comparing the expressions of the human body on people with malicious intentions and for people with a fear of flying. The results of this research confirmed that the manifestations of the human body for fear of flying are based on different manifestations of physical processes when compared with unfair intentions. This research focuses on observation of these human expressions so that these are not confused with symptoms due to fear of flying.

At the Air Transport Department of the University of Business in Prague a scientific research project is being carried out, dealing with the issue of behavioural analysis in the process of security checks at the airport. The main objective of this project is to create a new concept of security checks at airports, which will contain positive elements of both traditional and modern planned concepts of these at airports. Investigators of this project have identified main objectives:

- adjustment processes for implementing security controls with behavioural analysis application;
- to create a new airport security checks training program for security staff, including training how to recognize non-standard behaviour;
- invention and application of technology to facilitate and accelerate the process of analyzing the behaviour of passengers at the airport;
- modification of working environment for service personnel.

The Air Transport Department project team also suppose that the resulting concept of security checks at airports will be applicable to other spheres of critical infrastructure such as power plants, banks, etc.

2.4. Technology for Behavioural Analysis of Passengers at the Airport

As it was mentioned a proper and effective evaluation of behavioural analysis is a rather time consuming matter. Its evaluation depends on many factors which the monitored person can directly or indirectly affect. One way to increase efficiency and speed up the flow of passengers through security checkpoints at airports is the application of technology for the analysis of behaviour. These technologies for analysis are not today and have already been successfully used in various industries [8].

Many research projects deal with the development and subsequent application of a specific technology to analyze the behaviour of passengers at the airport. These technologies are based on the latest psychological findings and can relatively quickly identify any irregular passenger. These technologies are currently not on the high level of development yet and have reach be proved by results of analyses. This project included technologies WeCU, Malintent, RTPM and voice or image analysis. These technologies are planned to be introduces into certain passenger check-in processes from the arrival at the airport to the security control [4].

3. Multiple-Criteria Decision Analysis

To apply behavioural analysis for accelerating the flow of passengers during the security check multi-criteria analysis was prepared. This technology is based on extrasensory manifestations of the human organism enabling thus to identify the passenger who has a certain probability of having ulterior motives.

The first step for the proposed solution is to determine the individual criteria for the process of analysis. These criteria were based on cooperation with Prague Airport, the Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic and other partner institutions for this project. For illustrative purposes the Table 1 shows the ten most important criteria that have been established for the calculation analysis.

Table 1

Selected Criteria

K1	Analysis Time
K2	Reliability
K3	Health Safety
K4	Possibility of using with disabled passengers
K5	Transparency
K6	Ethics
K7	Time Analyses Evaluation
K8	Complexity of the Operation
K9	Conclusiveness
K10	Human Factor

Source: UoB Research

Looking at the defined individual criteria it is obvious, that not all of them represent the correct variant of equal importance. Therefore the next step is to calculate the Multiple-Criteria Decision Analysis, which helps us to define the importance of these criteria in the form of so-called "Weights". To determine the importance of the criteria ten-point scale with volume ranking criterion was chosen. To illustrate the fact the Table 2 shows the above mentioned evaluation criteria.

Table 2

Weights of individual criteria

	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	K10	Σ
Points	9	10	9	2	8	7	8	3	10	9	**75**
Weights	0,120	0,133	0,120	0,027	0,107	0,093	0,107	0,040	0,133	0,120	**1**

Source: UoB Research

The final step for the calculation of multi-criteria analysis is to obtain actual values of individual criteria. For the calculation of the analysis the “Method of partial utility function” was chosen, which is the resulting agreement with the selected criteria for specific technology determined by a formula:

$$\sum_{i=1}^{10} K_{vah\,i} \cdot V_i^j$$

The final calculation of multi-criteria analysis can then be found in the Table 3 where the bottom line is the number which indicates compliance with those criteria. The higher number means that the technology matches better the criteria.

Table 3

Calculated Multiple-Criteria Decision Analyses

Critéria	Units	Weight	X^0	X^*	WeCu	Voice	Malintent	RTPM	Video
K1	sec.	0,120	60	10	0,000	0,600	0,800	0,800	1,100
K2	%	0,133	30	99	0,725	0,725	1,000	0,000	0,870
K3	0	0,120	0	1	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,250	0,000
K4	0	0,027	0	1	1,000	1,000	0,000	1,000	1,000
K5	0	0,107	0	1	0,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
K6	0	0,093	0	1	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
K7	sec.	0,107	60	5	0,909	1,000	0,000	1,000	1,000
K8	0	0,040	0	1	1,000	0,500	0,000	1,000	1,000
K9	0	0,133	0	1	0,000	1,000	1,000	0,500	1,000
K10	0	0,120	0	1	1,000	1,000	0,500	0,250	0,250
					0,474	**0,775**	**0,623**	**0,596**	**0,785**

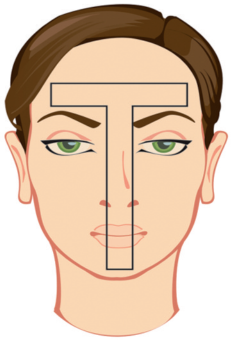
Source: UoB Research

From the above calculation it is therefore evident that the most appropriate technologies for application in creating a new concept of habitat security control technology is based on video analysis.

Currently the possibility of applying the thermal imager which can monitor the temperature distribution in the facial area, specifically in the area of the so-called T-zone is currently tested. In this areas all stress situations lead to increasing intensity of blood flow and hence to the change in skin temperature. These symptoms are relatively easy to identify and moreover vary and therefore are interchangeable in case of with primary manifestations of colds and common diseases such as influenza, tonsillitis, etc.

Figure 5

Location of t-zones in the face



Source: [8]

Performed Multiple-Criteria Decision Analysis has benefits also for other sub-task problems of this project. The planned tasks include the determination and calculation of the sensitivity of the system.

4. A Person and Environmental Factor

It can be said, that if all the organizational measures during security check are applied, we can effectively minimize the risk of failure. But in practice at the airport, all compliance and control measures are always the responsibility of the person on duty, in our case a security officer.

People ´s behaviours are partially influenced by activities at the surrounding workplace. In order to enable worker's to perform their particular tasks in the appropriate quality, it is extremely important to build for them an optimal working environment and conditions. The working environment is the basis for the existence of human activities in a working system. In a broader sense, we can allocate the components as Formality, Activities, Relations and Security.

Figure 6

Components of working environment

Source: [14]

The formal aspects that represent workplace equipment are: layout, colour scheme, using flowers, unambiguous border of the workspace, lighting, noise, microclimatic conditions, etc. [10].

Character for the positive activities can be present as satisfactory remuneration, motivation from superiors, personal progress and support for continuing education, and others.

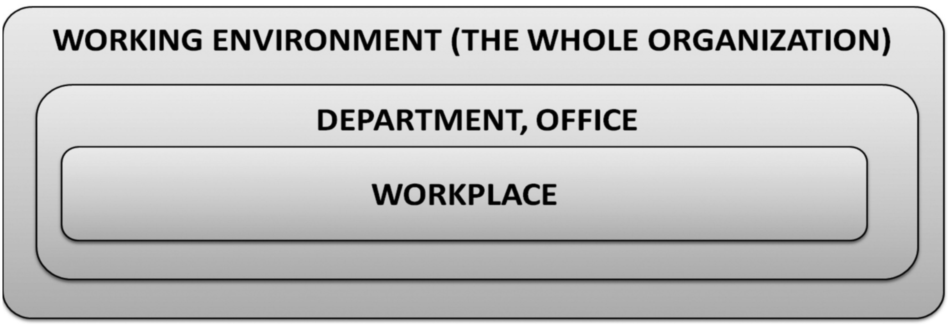
Since every employee work within a special organizational chart, the social relations are not less important and sometimes they are even one key aspects of the work environment. They represent the relations between co-workers, subordinates or superiors. What must not be forgotten are informal relations. Managers have formal authority to facilitate the enforcement of its decisions. This authority is a legitimate ability to influence the situation in organization. It is not associated with a person as a manager, or his or her professional abilities only, but mainly with his or her working position in the organization. On the other hand, there exist an informal social authority, which represents a natural knowledge and the respect of colleagues and subordinates.

Security aspects most commonly represent employees´ security and the property of the organization.

These individual characteristics are not completely separate; on the contrary there exist some correlations. In a strict sense working environment is often understood only within the limits outlined by the formal aspects, i.e. technical and material background. The working environment can then be viewed in a specific sequence from general to specific. This perspective has the form, expressed on the fig. 7.

Figure 7

Workplace within the organization



SOURCE: [14]

4.1. The Role of Security Officer

Under the term "security check at the airport" is understood the summary of various measures which can prevent the usage of weapons, explosives, or other objects to commit unlawful acts. Therefore the security check means checks of passengers, cabin, checked in baggage, cargo, mail, on-board equipment, etc. These checks include, for example, screening, physical inspection and body search.

Security staff ensures civil aviation security. Security officers perform security checks according to national and international regulations. They also do safety-binding activities in the range of authorization according to the airport operator, resulting from the Civil Aviation Law. The workers use a variety of detection techniques (X-ray equipment, metal detectors ...), and carry out physical checks to identify any prohibited items in passengers' luggage, cargo and mail.

Although nowadays modern technical means, specified for the detection of prohibited and potentially dangerous objects make work for the Security staff easier, it is still the worker who makes final decisions and who is influence by the level of security in civil aviation.

4.2. Impact of Working Environment on the Security Staff Performance?

Inside the professional community it is known that many teams are focused on facilitating the process of security check. They try to realize modern technologies for more effective process of passengers check-in and try to simplify their journey through the airport. Self-check-in kiosks represent advanced means for detecting prohibited items. Number of scientific research projects are dealing with the acceleration of the flow of passengers or systematic modify workplace for security workers. Paradoxically the critical element in security checking system is security staff workers who control and make the final decisions.

Meeting the needs and making employees work, more comfortable should be one from the basic goals of - the airport operator. They should, identify employees´ needs, evaluate them and improve their work. Therefore, the focus of this research work should be directed as was mentioned in Chapter above to the formal and safety aspects, activity and relationships at the workplace. But what can represent the discomfort for security staff? It can be for example high or low temperature at the workplace, unpleasant noise, lack of rest, unexpected shift work, bad motivation from the boss, short breaks, uncomfortable chairs, financial evaluation, colour design of the workplace, relationships with co-workers, etc,

The relationship of the negative factors between the working environment and rate of performance/error of security staff is a part of dissertation work. Before carrying out these research activities, a short pilot study was realized that aimed to identify negative influences that workers themselves deem significant.

4.3. The Pilot Study

4.3.1. Objectives And Methods of the Pilot Study

The aim of the pilot study survey was to obtain a partial analysis of the social environment of security staff at the airport. It wanted to point out gaps in the working environment, i.e. stressors that affect employees working comfort. The questionnaire comprising thirty questions was used as the instrument for data collection. About one half of the questions were created specifically for the purpose of identifying stressors of workers. The other half consisted of questions from a European research project, named BEMOSA. This project aimed to increase the ability of airport security workers to correctly recognize potential security risks with respect to the actual personal profile of each worker. Identification of the personalities of employees and their combination give us the possibility to realize the condition for optimal working group preparation. The questionnaire included facts concerning present age, gender, length of security staff work. Nevertheless the key part of the questionnaire was designed to obtain the factors, which negatively affected workers´ jobs. Interviewees want to learn about their working conditions. The questionnaire deals with safety procedure problems, relationships with colleagues and supervisors, suggestibility of views of others. Questions were focused on qualitative and quantitative data. Most of them were open questions, but closed questions were used, too.

Obtained data were collected at the beginning of 2014 at unidentified European airport. A week deadline then was allowed to complete the questionnaire. The research sample was obtained using stratified random selection. Originally 80 questionnaires were distributed but in fact 40 completed questionnaires were returned by respondents.

Respondents were informed about both the aim of the research before filling in the questionnaire, as well as of the rules that were primarily established in their interest. Participation in the research was voluntary. The questionnaire was completely anonymous. It did not determine the name, address, ethnicity, religion, or other personal information, that enable to identify the respondent.

4.3.2. The Analysis of the Questionnaires

By analyzing questionnaires there can be obtained the quantitative and qualitative data. The main findings include the following:

- **Workers are demotivated/stressed by financial penalties for their mistakes.**

  92.5 % respondents answered that the case of employee deficiencies or misconduct is immediately reflected in the financial evaluation. On the other hand, there is no motivation for employees, who work well, e.g. in the form of financial remuneration?

- **Two thirds of security workers have not enough time for leisure activities.**
  70 % respondents do not have sufficient time for their friends, hobbies, etc. It can be caused for example by work shifts.
- **Workers must plan their holiday too long ahead.**
  92.5 % of workers are forced to plan their vacation a long time ahead and for 73% of them this caused problems in their personal life.
- **The space for rest is not sufficient for four to ten workers.**
  58 % of respondents identified as inadequate facilities for rest provided by the employer.
- **Six out of ten security workers were directly or indirectly bullied.**
  62.5 % of respondents said that they had experienced bullying in the workplace.
- **Workplace seems to six out of ten workers too small.**
  60% of respondents said that they considered their work to be inadequate in terms of space.

Respondents also answered qualitative questions concerning comfort. Key factors can be identified by cluster analysis of answers. These factors cause problems to security staff assigned the work:

- **The temperature is the dominant stress factor for employees.**
  Full 80% of respondents complained of excessively high or low temperature and thermal fluctuations of different workplaces within the airport.
- **More than half of employees were complaining about light intensity.**
  55 % of respondents answered that they are bothered by the amount of the monitors that distract them by illuminating advertisements.
- **Four out of ten workers are annoyed by noise.**
  This problem was mentioned by 42,5 % respondents
- **Besides the noise, there is a surprising problem - odour.**
  It bothers 40 % of respondents.
- **Approximately every tenth worker stated air conditioning among stressors.**
  The lack of regulation, maintenance of filters or cold air blowing directly on workers is the problem.
- **Other factors that affect the comfort of workers**
  Better background for rest, sanitary facilities separate from the public, regular shifts, but also spaciousness and amenities of workplaces (e.g. more comfortable office chairs). Of course, several complaints were heard even about low wages, lack of staff or supervisor.

5. Sensitivity Analysis

When a new security check concept at international airports or its major modifications are proposed, it is necessary to take into account the sensitivity of the whole new system. Sensitivity of the system subsequently refers to the possible failure. In case of some non-standard events the system reveals or realizes the failure. For these non-standard events we can apply failure detection technology, human error detection technology and of course their combinations. Such a system can be malfunctioning. On the other hand any of its parts should not ensure the correct function of all system. The system error should occur "only" in such systems as economy, convenience and others. In case that the system is used as a security part at a checkpoint, then this system could fail some detection technologies. It appears in the cases when an error is , caused by the human factor, is designed as an abnormal situation and it reflected slowdown in the passenger flow, passing through this security check. In this case actual effectiveness is not necessary for implementation.

As was mentioned in the previous text the Air Transport Department of the University of Business in Prague, there are certain activities of its scientific research that create a new concept of security checks at airports, based on modern trends, which are applied in the world. The basic of this concept was described in the text above. If we look at this security controls concept, which is presented as a system, then we find that this system consists of several parts which provide the function, corresponding to economy operations, aesthetics, and further operations, and of course they deliver a direct impact on the desired level of security. If we execute the system decomposition into parts which have a direct impact on the functionality of the system, then we obtain the following elements:

- Technology for the analysis of passenger behaviour.
- Technology for the detection of prohibited items (interconnecting frame detector, handheld metal detectors, ray detector of liquids and gels etc.).
- Communication interface for the operating personnel (output from the x-ray devices and behaviour analysis).
- Service staff (including the working environment and information on training programs).

All these elements must therefore be backed up in the system so that in case of failure or malfunction of the system operability is ensured without compromising effectiveness, i.e. without reducing the possibility of committing an illegal act. It means that in case of failure of some of the technologies this activity is replaced with the activities of the operating personnel and staff; in case of misconduct the error is detected by some of the technologies. If this occurs, we do not expect the total collapse of the system, i.e. of human error and technology at the same time. In this case the system is inoperable.

For a moment of downtime for analyzing passenger behaviour, these processes for profiling passengers before performing security checks are carried out by one of the present personnel security checks. This replacement / backup profiling passengers is obviously more time consuming than using this technology but due to an adapted training program they are able to perform this analysis without the use of technology. As previously announced, this temporary situation will result in a reduction in the required level of security checks but “only” a slowdown in the flow of passengers at the security checkpoint because it is more time-consuming to implement behavioural analysis. In a similar way, they can be backed with other technology used in security checks at airports, for example. A detection device which can always temporarily replace staff at security redemption for a reduction in capacity of the habitat.

As already mentioned, the method advances can function in reverse, than in the previous case, namely, when the technology creates a backup for errors caused by the human factor. Examples of such situations can be mentioned the control contents of the container using a scanner of liquids and gels, which is capable of determining the composition and the nature of the contents of the vessel.

Thus the estimated sensitivity of the system is obviously a better idea for the system functionality, and for use in real operation it is useless. For this reason it is also one of the subtasks of the described project to build a simple program that on the basis of inputs on the nature of the system elements and their share of system operability determines failure or malfunction of system operability and provide an ideal backup for dysfunctional elements so that system failure probability (likelihood of committing an illegal act) is maintained at the desired level. The model for the assembly of this program may be just the multi-criteria analysis and in particular the established criteria of this analysis. These criteria can then be used as indicators of the effectiveness of the system and then can be assigned weights as a share of the efficiency.

Conclusion

Security checks at airports are among the passengers very unpopular parts of the handling process. This is mainly due to queues arising in checkpoints areas and also due to several processes that can be degrading and, for some cultures, also unacceptable. The fact that the security checks require a relatively long time in terms of the activities carried out almost unchanged, it may result into a very narrow view of the whole issue of possible omissions outcome to imperfections in the system. It is also one of the main reasons why in the world there start to appear a number of new projects that take into account the new modern concept of security checks at airports. The University of Business in Prague through the air transport department try to link to these trends and to contribute their ideas to improve these security controls. The concept which the University of Business prepares is focused on the changing views on the passengers by connecting behavioural analysis with the primary objective of security controls; is shifts from search for potentially dangerous objects to search for potentially dangerous persons. It means the trend that is also held by the International Air Transport Association.

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Doc. Ing. Jindřich Ploch, CSc.
University of Business in Prague
Air Transport Department
Spálená 14, 110 00 Prague
Czech Republic
www.vso.cz
ploch@vso-praha.eu

Jindřich Ploch has been working as a Rector of the University of Business in Prague and also as a head of the Air Transport Department and in the position a Senior Associate Professor with specialisation with Aviation Law, Civil Aviation Authority and Aviation Security.

Ing. Tomáš Děkan
University of Business in Prague
Air Transport Department
Spálená 14, 110 00 Prague
Czech Republic
www.vso.cz
dekan@vso-praha.eu

Tomas Děkan has been working as a member of Air Transport Department at the University of Business in Prague with specialisation with Airport Operations, Ground Handling and Aviation Security. He has been study the Ph.D. program at the University of Pardubice.

Ing. Jan Zýka
University of Business in Prague
Air Transport Department
Spálená 14, 110 00 Prague
Czech Republic
www.vso.cz
zyka@vso-praha.eu

Jan Zýka has been working as a member of Air Transport Department at the University of Business in Prague with specialisation with Air Traffic Services, Air Transport and Aviation Security. He has been study the Ph.D. program at the University of Pardubice.

Relationship Marketing Model - A Way to Explore Customer Loyalty of Five Star Hotels in Bangladesh

Sara Sarwari

Stamford University Bangladesh, Department of Business Administration

Tanvir Ahmed Minar

Stamford University Bangladesh, Department of Business Administration

Waleed Khan Chowdhury

Graduate Student, Virginia International University

Abstract

Building up loyalty through relationship marketing as in the case of a five star hotel has been found to be a long term investment for a hotel. While keeping customers loyal, however, is a key objective of relationship marketing, there is little agreement on which antecedents could be used to achieve this aim. In response, this study develops a model of relationship marketing based on a review of the literature to empirically investigate in one single model: (1) the affect of relational bonds (financial, social and structural) on relationship quality (2) the ultimate affect of relationship quality on customer loyalty. Furthermore, it presents and discusses empirical findings from a survey of 284 loyal guests in five-star hotels in Bangladesh and examined their perspectives as end users using structural equation modeling (AMOS 21).The findings of this study revealed that though financial and social bonds have an effect on relationship quality but there is no relations between structural bonds and relationship quality. The result also shows that relationship quality is a necessary determinant of customer loyalty. Findings also imply the need for service firms in general, and hotels in particular, to strategically lever on the key antecedents of a relationship quality and customer loyalty including relational bonds, in pursuit of a more competitive advantage and long-term profit.

Key words: Relationship Marketing, Relationship Quality, Customer loyalty.

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

Today academics and practitioners are paying more attention to relationship marketing because of economic advantages are associated with retaining existing customers as well as recruiting new ones (Anderson et al., 1994; Price and Arnould, 1997; Verhoef, 2003; Ndubisi, 2007). In order to remain competitive, firms indeed need to build and enhance customer relationships that deliver value beyond that provided by the core product (Zineldin, 2006). For hotel businesses, loyal customers are more profitable because they are more attached to the hotel and thus easier to serve than those who are non-loyal (Tepeci, 1999). Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) maintain that a small increase in loyal customers can result in a substantial increase in profitability. Further, Kim and Cha (2002) argue that the longer a customer stays loyal to a hotel, the more profitable it is for the hotel.In this study the researcher tries to figure out how both the hoteliers and customers of the five star hotels are benefited by using relationship marketing and the common characteristics of relationship marketing that lead to create customer. Here five-star hotels have been chosen because different research indicates that greater use of relationship marketing practice occurs in these hotels than it does in midrange or budget hotels (Kim and Cha, 2002). Though many hotels declared themselves as a five star hotels in Bangladesh, but actual scenario is different. Only three hotels named, Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel, Radisson Blu Water Garden hotel and Westin hotel follow the most of the regulations of five star hotels. Among these three hotels, Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel (established in 1981) and Radisson Water Garden hotel (established in 2005) are chosen for this study. This study will help managers of these hotels to deal with more different types of guests, with relevant information and can improve their relationship marketing programs and can increase the percentage of repeated visitors every year. This study provides insights into an effective relationship marketing program by investigating specific relationships between the relational bonds —financial, social and structural with relationship quality and also investigates the specific relationships between the relationship quality (trust, commitment and satisfaction) with customer loyalty.

1.1 Financial Bonds

Financial bonds are referred to as frequency marketing or retention marketing, where the service provider uses economic benefits to secure customer loyalty (Berry and Parsuraman, 1991; Berry, 1995). Researchers agree that one motivation for consumers to engage in relationships with service providers is to save money (Peltier and Westfall 2000). Non-monetary, time savings are also proposed as ‘financial’ bonds, even though no money is involved (Lin, Weng, and Hsieh, 2003). An example of financial bonds is a hotel chain providing free or discounted travel services to frequent guests through loyalty programs (Berry and Parsuraman, 1991). In Bangladesh, five star hotels try to provide discounts to those customers who always prefer their hotel to stay and during their check in, this kind of financial bonds are mostly provided. Berry and Parsuraman, (1991) and Berry (1995) point out that the problem associated with financial bonds is that they are the easiest type of bond for competitors to imitate.

1.2 Social Bonds

Social bonds represent personal ties between the consumer and organization, i.e. interpersonal interactions, friendships and identifications. Berry and Parasuraman (1991) and Berry (1995) referred to social bonds as intermediate level of relationship marketing in securing customer loyalty, where the service provider goes further than price incentives to build lasting relationships with the customer, building social bridges. Liang and Wang (2005) also point out that firms deliver their friendship or gratitude by giving gifts to their customers, which serves to build stable relationships and enhance relationship quality. In Bangladesh five star hotels provide different types of gift for their loyal customers such as, as a member of Global Hotel Alliance, Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel provide their customers with different types of traditional saris like Mosline, Jamdani. That's why the author prefers social bonds for this study.

1.3 Structural Bonds

Structural bonds are considered the highest level of relationship marketing as companies can consolidate their relationships with customers through adding structural bridges in addition to the financial and social bridges (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991, Berry, 1995). For example, the Scandic hotel chain introduced WAP-based technologies (i.e. web based communication) to improve communication with their customers (Louvieris, Driver, and Powell-Perry, 2003). Frequent guests were provided with a WAP-enabled device, on which to access reservation and other information, which provided value-adding services for customers that were not readily available elsewhere. In Bangladesh, though the hoteliers can't provide WAP facilities, but try to provide the respected and renowned persons with personalized services.

1.4 Relationship Quality

Relationship quality has been used as one of the relationship outcomes in the proposed model in this study. Relationship quality has been viewed as "an overall assessment of the strength of the relationship and the extent to which it meets the needs and expectations of the parties based on a history of successful encounters or events" (Smith, 1998, p.78). In other words, relationship quality refers to how much the relationship will meet customers' needs, perceptions, goals and desires (Wong and Sohal, 2002) While there is no consensus on the dimensions or components comprising relationship quality construct, there is general agreement that customer satisfaction with the service provider's performance, trust in the service provider, and commitment to the relationship with the service firm are key components of relationship quality (Palmer and Bejou, 1994; Dorsch et al., 1998; Smith, 1998, Hennig-Thurau, 2002; Palmatier et al., 2006; Wang et al. 2006). As pointed out by Garbarino and Johnson (1999), these three dimensions (or evaluations) can be used to summarize a consumer's knowledge and experience with a particular service provider and lead to subsequent consumer actions. Recently, Palmatier et al. (2006) identified that trust, commitment and satisfaction are the dimensions of relationship quality that most often studied, as relationship quality is a composite measure of relationship strength. In accordance with Smith (1998) and De Wulf et al. (2001), the proposed model treats these dimensions as interrelated rather than separate variables because it is hard for the customers to make fine distinctions between these three conceptually distinct dimensions (DeWulf et al., 2001). As these three dimensions form the basis for in depth understanding of relationship quality in this study, they are discussed separately below:

1.4.1 Trust

Trust is an important factor in affecting relationship commitment and customer loyalty. If one party trusts another, such a party is willing to develop a positive behavioral intention toward the other party. Accordingly, when a customer trusts a business or brand, that customer is willing to form a positive buying intention towards the business. Trust influences loyalty by affecting the customer's perception of congruence in values with the service provider, and such value congruence is significantly related to the customer's satisfaction and loyalty. Trust as an element of customer loyalty has an influence on building customer loyalty (Aydin & Ozer 2005: 146; Chen & Xie 2007: 64; Du Plessis 2010: 91–92).

1.4.2 Satisfaction

Roberts-Lombard (2009: 73) defines customer satisfaction as "the degree to which a business's product or service performance matches up to the expectation of the customer. If the performance matches or exceeds the expectations, then the customer is satisfied, if performance is below par then the customer is dissatisfied". There is a direct link between perceived quality and total satisfaction (Balaji 2009: 54–55). The perceived quality is based on those first expectations, and the choice that the customer made is then evaluated to determine satisfaction (Grounaris, Tzempelikos & Chatzipanagiotou 2007: 68). If a customer feels that he has a satisfying relationship with the business, he may perceive the business to have a high level of service (Rootman 2006: 77).

1.4.3 Commitment

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), commitment stems from trust, shared values and the belief that it will be difficult to find partners that can offer the same value. Relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment, and the commitment level has been found to be the strongest predictor of the voluntary decision to pursue a relationship (Ibrahim & Najjar 2008: 14).Customers who are committed to a relationship might have a greater propensity to act because of their need to remain consistent with their commitment (Liang & Wang 2005: 66). More committed customers tend to form a positive overall impression of the total duration of the relationship, including different transactions, positive and negative, and these customers exhibit strong intentions to stay in the relationship (Du Plessis 2010: 96).

Finally, commitment operates in the same manner as trust, in that certain levels of commitment are required to initiate the relationship, and as the relationship evolves, so does the existence of commitment. Commitment is then formed through behavioural, attitudinal and affective influences (Davis-Sramek, Mentzer & Stank 2008: 443–445; Du Plessis 2010: 94–95; Evanshitzky & Plaassmann 2006: 63).

1.5 Customer loyalty

Several authors have suggested that loyalty is a phenomenon related to relationships (i.e., Jacopy and Kyner, 1973; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995). Therefore, it is considered as the most important part of relationship marketing (Palmer, 1994); and central to the paradigm of relationship marketing (Hart et al., 1999). The significance of this concept arises from the idea that maintaining a customer is more profitable than winning a new one because: (1) the cost of serving loyal customers is less (2) fewer loyal customers are price sensitive, and (3) loyal customers spend more with the company (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Dowling and Uncle, 1997; Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998; Tepeci, 1998; Noon et al, 2003). Customer loyalty is also one major driver of success in the hospitality industry (the context of this thesis). Pullman and Gross (2004) acknowledge that loyal customers are the key to success for many services, particularly those in the hospitality setting. Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) also maintain that a small increase in loyal customers can result in a substantial increase in profitability. Further, Kandampully and Suhartano (2000) claim that the significance of customer loyalty is likely to become a necessary prerequisite for the future survival of hotel organizations. Furthermore, Tepeci (1999) found that loyal customers are more profitable for hospitality firms, because they are easier to serve than non-loyal customers. From a customer perspective, Reichheld (1996) maintains that customers are willing to invest their loyalty in businesses that can deliver superior value relative to competitors. Similar to this, Yang and Peterson (2004) also acknowledge that there is a tendency for customers to avoid searching, locating, and evaluating purchase alternatives, which predisposes them to be loyal to one company. That is, when customers become loyal, they tend to avoid such processes that consume the time and effort required to be accustomed to new vendors.

2. Problem Formulation

Given that the development and sustainability of loyalty is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve in a competitive environment, and remains ambiguous regarding its underlying determinants (Liang and Wang, 2005), authors have attempted to develop distinct models suited to investigate relationship marketing in a range of contexts. In reviewing these models, it has been found that relationship quality and customer loyalty (the final goal) are the most critical variables (Gwinner et al., 1998, Shamdasani and Balakrishnan, 2000; De Wulf et al., 2001; Hennig–Thurau et al., 2002; Kim and Cha, 2002; De Wulf et al., 2003; Lin et al., 2003; Hsieh et al., 2005; Liang and Wang, 2005; Wang et al., 2006; Palmatier et al., 2006). That is, relationship quality as measured by trust, satisfaction, and commitment, provides the best assessment of relationship strength (DeWulf et al., 2001), and achieving customer loyalty is the aim of relationship marketing (Too et al., 2001). There is no agreement, however, among relationship marketing authors about the antecedents that best capture the characteristics of a relational exchange that influences performance (Palmatier et al., 2006). In other words, which antecedents (when they are associated with relationship quality and loyalty in one single model) provide a completed understanding for successful relationship marketing? Whilst there are a number of variables that could be useful as antecedents to relationship quality that ultimately evokes customer loyalty, researchers have considered relational bonds – financial, social and structural- as the cornerstone in relational exchange between service providers and customers (see Berry and Parsuraman, 1991; Berry, 1995; Liljindar and Strandivik, 1995; Smith, 1998; Peltier and Westfall, 2000; Arantola, 2002; Lin et al., 2003; Hsieh et al., 2005; Liang and Wang, 2005; Palmatier et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2006). Any relationship attempting to develop customer values through partnering activities is likely to create a greater bonding between consumer and marketer, and the more the relationship is enhanced through such bonding, the more committed the consumer becomes. Hence, the customer is less likely to switch to other competitors (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995).

Accordingly, the following questions set out the problem of this study:

1. What is the significant influence of relational bonds on relationship quality of customers of five-star hotels in Bangladesh?
2. Is relationship quality important in determining the loyalty that customers have with five-star hotels in Bangladesh?

3. Method

The samples of the study— loyal guests of two five-star hotels in Bangladesh — were purposively chosen. Here loyal guests were chosen on basis of those who have stayed three nights or more a year on that hotel and revisited the same hotel almost every year. Here almost 80% of them were male and only 20% percent of them were female. Among the guests 60% of them were business travelers and 40% were for other different purposes staying at those hotels.

Five-star hotels were selected because, as previous research indicates, five-star hotels use relationship marketing practices more frequently than mid-range or budget hotels (Kim and Cha, 2002).Questionnaires were given out to the guests who were staying on those hotels. Using this procedure, 400 questionnaires were distributed in two hotels (Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel, Radisson Water Garden hotel), i.e., 200 questionnaires per hotel.

The questionnaire was developed using 5-point Likert type scale, where for relational bonds, relationship quality and customer loyalty, the author use strongly agree to strongly disagree (1= strongly disagree,2= disagree, 3= neither/nor, 4= agree, 5 = strongly agree). A total of 17 items (i.e., four items for financial bonds, five items for social bonds, eight items for structural bonds) were adapted from previously tested scales. The 17-items measuring relational bonds came from Lin, Weng, and Hsieh (2003). A total of 24 items (i.e., four items for trust, four items for satisfaction, five items for commitment and eleven items for customer loyalty) were adapted from previously tested scales. The 4-items measuring trust come from Roberts et al. (2003), the 4-items measuring satisfaction come from De Wulf et al. (2003), and Hsieh and Hiang (2004), the 5-items measuring commitment come from Morman et al. (1992), Morgan and Hunt et al. (1994), and Roberts et al. (2003), while the 11-items of loyalty were taken from Too, Souchon, and Thirkell (2001). The instrument was pre-tested to ensure that the questions were clearly understood and there was no ambiguity in questions.

Data for the research were collected using a quantitative, survey-based methodology. This approach is important when causal relationships among the underlying theoretical constructs need to be examined. The questionnaires were given to the guests through the front desk at each participating hotel chain (Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel, Radisson Water Garden hotel). Using this method, all the guests were given a questionnaire when they checked in, and returned them again when they checked out. In this case, the guests had the chance to fill out the questionnaire at any time during their stay. According to Zikmund (2003), this method is called drop-off, because the researcher traveled to the respondents' locations to drop-off the questionnaires, and picked them up after they had finished.

To test the hypotheses of this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 21.0 program was conducted. SEM is a multivariate statistics technique often used to confirm the causal relations among latent variables. As a requirement of using the estimation methods of SEM (i.e., maximum likelihood and test of model fit), the sample size should be large enough and 200 respondents is suggested as the minimum sample size for SEM (Hair et al. 1995). As part of the analysis, validity and reliability of the constructs were examined.

4. Problem Solution

In order to conduct the SEM, all the data is examined the outliers and normality to do the further SEM tests for the causal relationship. The result is shown in Table 1. All modulus of Skewness are less than two and Kurtosis is less than eight. This means all the data meet the statistical hypothesis of single variable normality. In addition, the modulus of Mardia critical ratio (63.559) is equal to 63 and fit the multiple normality model and means all the data are appropriate for the SEM test (Kline, 2010).

Before testing the structural model, following Anderson and Gerbing's work (1988), measurement models are tested to ensure stability of the scales used and to improve fit. Determining whether each indicator's estimated pattern coefficient for its proposed underlying construct is significant assessed convergent validity. Among the 17 items from relational bonds (financial, social and structural), 12 items were selected as their factor loadings were significant. Constructs reliability was confirmed by testing Cronbach's alphas for all composite constructs (Nunnally, 1978) - Financial bonds, 0.63; social bonds, 0.60 and structural bond 0.79. The 24 items from relationship quality (trust, satisfaction and commitment) and customer loyalty were selected as their factor loadings are significant. Constructs reliability was also confirmed by testing Cronbach's alphas for all composite constructs (Nunnally, 1978) – Relationship Quality 0.76 and Customer loyalty 0.75. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the relational bonds (financial bonds, social bonds and structural bonds), relationship quality and loyalty was used to test the adequacy of the measurement models. The results shown in Table 2 indicate a reasonable overall fit between the model and the observed data for the relational bonds (exogenous constructs), relationship quality (exogenous & endogenous constructs)

Table1

Test of the Outliers and Normality

Variable	min	max	skew	c.r.	kurtosis	c.r.
cl6	3.000	5.000	-.331	-2.276	-.783	-2.692
cl7	3.000	5.000	.189	1.302	-.982	-3.378
cl9	3.000	5.000	.912	6.271	.137	.472
cl11	3.000	5.000	.568	3.907	-.751	-2.583
trst1	3.000	5.000	-.310	-2.133	-.683	-2.350
trst2	3.000	5.000	-.075	-.517	-.362	-1.246
trst3	3.000	5.000	-.194	-1.334	-.637	-2.193
trst4	3.000	5.000	-.169	-1.163	-.761	-2.618
stsfc2	3.000	5.000	-.189	-1.301	-.606	-2.084
stsfc4	3.000	5.000	-.184	-1.263	-.560	-1.925
cmt1	3.000	5.000	-.451	-3.101	-.722	-2.485
cmt2	3.000	5.000	-.191	-1.317	-.573	-1.970
cmt3	3.000	5.000	-.104	-.718	-.437	-1.504
cmt4	3.000	5.000	.058	.397	-.104	-.357
cmt5	3.000	5.000	-.305	-2.096	-.758	-2.609
fb4	3.000	5.000	.297	2.044	-.855	-2.940
stb3	3.000	5.000	-.173	-1.194	-.738	-2.539
stb4	3.000	5.000	.141	.970	-.719	-2.473
stb5	3.000	5.000	-.014	-.097	-.574	-1.974
stb7	3.000	5.000	-.279	-1.921	-.866	-2.978
sob1	3.000	5.000	-.374	-2.574	-.694	-2.387
sob2	3.000	5.000	.206	1.418	-.734	-2.523
sob3	3.000	5.000	-.049	-.335	-.759	-2.612
sob4	3.000	5.000	.068	.467	-.720	-2.478
sob5	3.000	5.000	-.185	-1.269	-.779	-2.680
fb1	3.000	5.000	.092	.636	-.693	-2.383
fb2	3.000	5.000	-.561	-3.859	-.651	-2.240
fb4	3.000	5.000	.297	2.044	-.855	-2.940
Multivariate					63.559	13.533

Source: Author

model and the loyalty model (endogenous construct). The chi-squares ($\chi 2$) are significant ($p < .05$), a finding not unusual with large sample sizes (Doney and Cannon, 1997). The ratios of chi-square to degrees of freedom (df) were less than and equal to 3. The values for GFI, CFI, TLI, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were also acceptable (Hair *et al.*, 1995).

Table 2

Fit Statistics for Measurement Models of Relationship Quality and Loyalty

	$\chi 2$	X2/df	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Relational Bonds Measurement Model	262.671 $p < .05$	3.64	.878	.876	.844	.09
Relationship Quality Measurement Model	108.201 $p < .05$	1.66	.945	.898	.878	.04
Loyalty Measurement Model	128.066 $p < .05$	3.04	.926	.846	.800	.08

Source: Author

Table 3

Modification indices of Constructed model

Fit indices	**Results**
$\chi 2$ (Chi-square)	731.660
P value	P=0.000
Degree of freedom (df)	314
Chi-square/df	2.33
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	0.834
Root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.069
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)	0.804
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.825

Source: Author

According to Table 3 and Graph 1, the results of the hypothesized structural model demonstrated that the data reasonably fit the model; $\chi 2$ =731.660, df =314, $\chi 2$/df = 2.33, GFI= .83, CFI = .82, TLI =.80, RMSEA = .06.

4.1 Relational Bonds and Relationship Quality

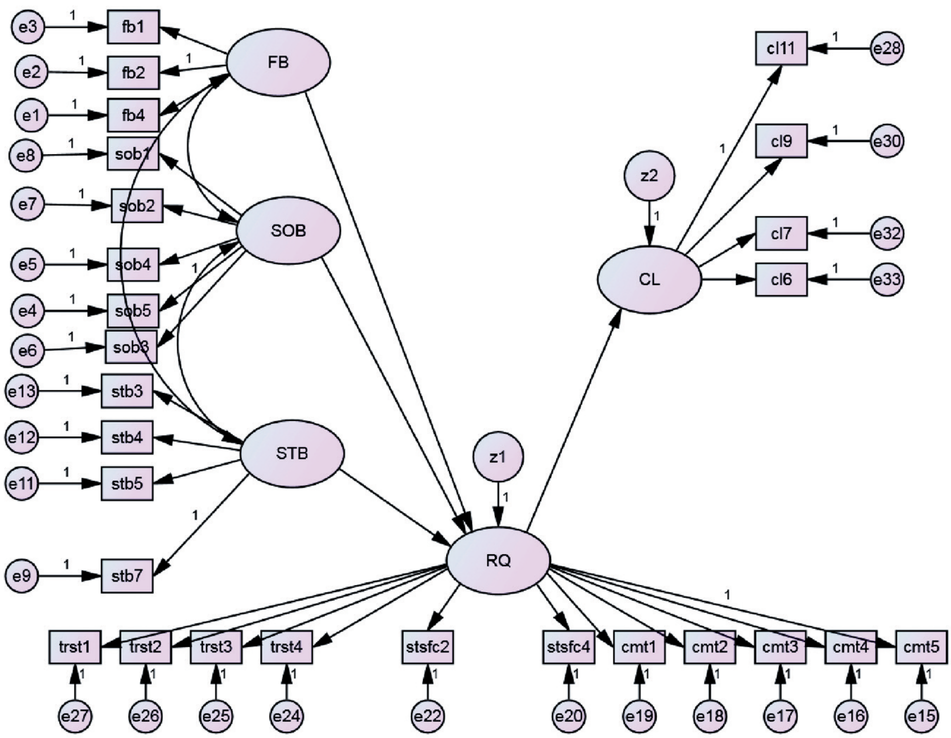
The Beta coefficients for the path between each of three bond types and relationship quality were – financial β = .61 ($p < .05$); social β = .18 ($p < .05$); structural β = .20 ($p > .05$). While in all two cases (financial bonds and social bonds) the directions of relationships are identified to have a statistically significant positive impact on relationship quality only structural bonds didn't have any impact on relationship quality due to its statistical insignificance.

4.2 Relationship Quality and Customer Loyalty

The Beta coefficient for the path between relationship quality (trust, satisfaction and commitment) and loyalty are β = 1.05 ($p < .05$). Here relationship quality backed by trust, commitment and satisfaction are identified to have a statistically significant positive impact on loyalty and relationship quality that means relationship quality strongly explains the variability of the loyalty.

Graph 1

The Hypothesized Structural Model



Source: Author

5. Findings

While past research explain the importance of building strong bonds as a key objective of relationship marketing, the direct impact of those bonds on customer loyalty is remain neglected in five star hotels in Bangladesh. This study empirically developed the understanding regarding the importance of relational bonds, particularly financial bonds as crucial in maintaining customers' loyalty in five star hotels in Bangladesh. The findings confirmed a strong positive relationship between financial bonds and relationship quality. Though these bonds are easy for the competitors to imitate but most of the loyal customers in five star hotels in Bangladesh build their trust, become satisfied and committed to the hotel on the basis of these financial bonds.

In case of social bonds, though the study did not intentionally focus on business travelers, it might have been the case that the study sample had a greater proportion of loyal business travelers (60%). These individuals frequently do not make their own hotel bookings and in some cases firms have policies where people will stay. As such, there might not be a relationship between the consumer and the hotel. That's why there is a moderate relationship between social bonds and relationship quality.

There is no significant relationship between structural bonds and relationship quality. In Bangladesh most of the five star hotels don't provide any structural bonds at all except for some really special guests. That's why most of the customers of these hotels don't prefer these bonds as an antecedent for relationship quality.

As was expected, relationship quality is found to be a strong determinant of loyalty. The results indicate that the more guests of five star hotels have a higher level of relationship quality with their hoteliers, the more they are likely to be loyal to them. These findings are in agreement with the argument made by Crosby et al. (1990) that relationship quality is the best predictor of a customer who is looking for future contact with a service provider. In this case, this study confirms that relationship quality is also an important variable in predicting the future of the relationship between customers and service providers. Accordingly, this study provides additional support for a number of previous studies such as Wang et al. (2006), who demonstrated that relationship quality, has significant effects on customer loyalty. Shamdasani and Balakrishnan's (2000) findings also suggest that if service providers can enhance the level of relationship quality experienced, then they can ensure their customers loyalty. Within the particular context of hotels, Kim and Cha (2002) found that relationship quality is critical for hoteliers attempting to increase share of purchases through hotel usage, frequency, cross selling, and to achieve positive impact of relationship continuity and WOM. This study confirms that this linkage is better captured when relationship quality is linked to customer loyalty. Furthermore, this study provide additional support to those who found a positive relationship between each dimension of relationship quality separately and customer loyalty, including trust (i.e., Lau and Lee (1999), satisfaction (i.e., Choi and Chu, 2001), and commitment (Too et al., 2001).

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical implications

- This study has extended the research on relational bonds - financial, social and structural - by investigating their influence on relationship quality. This linkage reflects the necessity for understanding whether these three relational bonds enhance relationship quality within this context. The results of this study therefore demonstrate that relationship quality between customers and service providers can be achieved by employing financial and social bonds.

- Although the relationship between relational bonds and relationship quality has been investigated in previous research, evidence on this linkage within the context of the hospitality industry is new specially in five star hotels, this study find out how relationship quality including trust, commitment and satisfaction work well together in evoking customer loyalty — the purpose of relationship marketing.

6.2 Managerial Implications

- From a managerial perspective, this study highlights the importance of service developing and maintaining relationship activities that achieve customer loyalty, particularly at five-star hotel chains. Specifically, managers should be aware that employing both financial and social bonds are necessary to enhance the quality of relationship that customers have with them. They also should keep in mind the need to increase the benefits obtained from financial and social interactions, as customers may be aware of the benefits that other competitors offer. If they neglect to do this, then it will not be easy for them to build relationship quality with their customers.
- They should also consider the structural bonds as an determinants of customer loyalty and try to emphasize on this bond so that by getting more benefit, customer will be more loyal to the hotel.

7. Limitation of the study

The most important limitations of this study is related to the criteria used in selecting loyal guests (the sample of this study). Guests who had stayed three nights or more a year with a hotel chain were identified as loyal. This criterion was used because there is no consensus among academics and the industry on definite standards to identify loyal customers. For example, Kim and Cha (2002) used twenty nights to identify loyal customers at five-star hotels, while Bowen and Shoemaker (1998) considered those visiting the hotel at least three times as loyal. In the industry, some hotels consider guests who stay 50 qualifying nights as loyal (i.e., Holiday Inn hotel), while others are defined as loyal after staying one night (i.e., Hyatt hotel). Given that there is no agreement in the academic literature nor industry reporting on what constitutes loyal guests at five-star hotels, some may caution as to whether the criteria used in this study is definitive.

8. Conclusion

Although the study is developed to provide an effective relationship marketing program, several profitable areas for future research remain. For example, it would be informative to study the differences between five-star hotels and small hotels. De Wulf et al. (2001) argued that the degree of social exchange and the possibilities for interpersonal communications in retail settings are generally greater in smaller stores than bigger ones. By adapting this argument to the hotel context, other research could see whether customers in small hotels (i.e., 3-star) perceive more interpersonal relationships than they do in five-star hotels.

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Sara Sarwari
Department of Business Administration
Faculty of Marketing
Stamford University Bangladesh
744 Satmashjid Road, Dhanmondi
Dhaka 1209
sarasarwari@yahoo.com
www.stamforduniversity.edu.bd

Sara Sarwari is an Assistant professor of Stamford University Bangladesh. She is currently doing her PhD from Dhaka University. Her research interests are relationship marketing, customer loyalty, relationship quality. She has almost five national and international articles on these topics.

Tanvir Ahmed Minar
Department of Business Administration
Faculty of Marketing
Stamford University Bangladesh
744 Satmashjid Road, Dhanmondi
Dhaka 1209
tanvir.minar@gmail.com
www.stamforduniversity.edu.bd

Tanvir Ahmed Minar is an Assistant professor of Stamford University Bangladesh. He has been engaged at this university from 2005. He focuses on the area of internal marketing as well as the international marketing and participates in a range of academic activities with specialized contributed papers.

Waleed Khan Chowdhury
Virginia International University
11200 Waples Mill Rd, Fairfax, VA 22030
w.k.chowdhury@hotmail.com
www.viu.edu

Waleed Khan Chowdhury is a graduate student at Virginia international university specializing in marketing management. He serves as a Congressional Intern at the United States Congress and also works as the Graduate Teaching Assistant to the Dean of School of Business at VIU.

Competitiveness in Tourism Sector

Iveta Hamarneh

University of Business in Prague

Abstract
The aim of this paper is to introduce the concept and definition of competitiveness in general and in connection to the tourism sector as well. Also the paper presents the first part of the results of the project „Tourism competitiveness of the Czech Republic regions and the possibility of the marketing measures performance evaluation using the BSC method“. This part is focused on theoretical background of competitiveness and introduction the main approaches to tourism competitiveness. Integral part of this paper is also simple outline of tourism competitiveness factors which later on will be evaluated in the region Czech Paradise. The project is funded by the University of Business in Prague.

Keywords: Competitiveness, Competitiveness of Tourism, Tourism Competitiveness Factors

JEL Classification: L83

1. Introduction

Tourism is recognised as one of the key sectors of development in all countries and a major source of income, jobs and wealth creation. It also plays a wider role in promoting the image and international perception of a country externally as well as influencing complementary domestic policies. This range of influence and importance creates challenges in measuring competitiveness in tourism. Understanding country competitiveness in tourism is a major consideration for policy makers and a major challenge for professionals in providing evidence to inform decision making. Various indicators have been developed by different organisations and the theorists over the years to address particular aspects of competitiveness but there has remained a lack of an overall measurement framework for competitiveness in tourism for the use of governments.

For understanding of competitiveness in tourism it is important to define and describe competitiveness in general. We can distinguish a competitiveness delimited at the level of individual entities - enterprises (micro-level), the competitiveness delimited by the unit at the regional level, the sector (meso-level) or the country (macro-level).

It is important to understand the factors that determine the competitiveness of the tourism industry. Industry stakeholders and government need to understand where a destination´s competitive position is weakest and strongest. The development of a model of destination competitiveness allows tourism stakeholders in both the private and the public sector to identify key strengths and weaknesses of their destination from the visitor perspective, highlight opportunities for tourism development and develop strategies to counter possible threats to future tourism.

2. The concept and definition of Competitiveness

Before we begin to discuss competitiveness in tourism sector, we should start by defining of competitiveness quite precisely. Different organizations, economists or management theorists have framed different definitions. The comprehensive and universally accepted definition of competitiveness does practically not exist, which is related with a variety of benchmarks against which it relate, or the time interval in which we evaluate. We can talk about a competitiveness delimited at the level of individual entities - enterprises (micro-level), the competitiveness delimited by the unit at the regional level, the sector (meso-level) or the country (macro-level).

A broad notion of competitiveness refers to the inclination and skills to compete, to win and retain a position in the market, to increase market share and profitability, and eventually to consolidate commercially successful activities. [10] The World Economic Forum (WEF) produces one of the best known competitiveness indices – the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI). The WEF defines national competitiveness as "the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. The level of productivity, in turn, sets the level of prosperity that can be earned by an economy". [12] The WEF definition links micro (firm-level) to macro (country-level) competitiveness.

Another examples are definitions of the others international institutions dealing with long-term assessment of the competitiveness at the country level. Nations and enterprises are in the "business" of managing a set of competencies and skills to reach prosperity for one and profit for the other. The combination of both concepts leads to the following condensed definition of competitiveness presented by the International Institute for Management Development in Lausanne (IMD): "Competitiveness analyzes how nations and enterprises manage the totality of its resources and competencies to increase the prosperity (of its people) or profit". [11]

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines competitiveness as “a measure of a country´s advantage or disadvantage in selling its products in international markets. The OECD Secretariat calculates two different measures of competitiveness based on the differential between domestic and competitors´ unit labour costs in manufacturing and consumer prices both expressed in a common currency”. [6]

The framework describing a firm´s capacity to compete, grow and be profitable is relatively uncontested, but applying the same concept to countries or regions has been subject to much debate. The implicit analogy between firms and nations has been widely criticized because a country cannot go out of business and because competition between countries can benefit both, while competition between companies in the same sector is more likely to be a zero sum game. [13]

Definition of competitiveness at firm level (micro-level) is sometimes regarded as relatively simple as possible. However, there are many different approaches that are related to the whole range of possible situations on the market or various timeframes. According to the team of authors cooperating in the Research Centre for the Competitiveness of the Czech Economy at the Faculty of Economics and Administration at Masaryk University, the competitiveness of a company can be define as “a company’s ability to offer its customers such products and services that they are willing to pay so much that the company is more profitable than its rivals. To achieve a competitive firm must be able to external and internal changes, which in the long run will lead to the growth of its profits, sales, market share, hence its image and the value of its brands“. [18]

Between the macro and micro level stands the specific level referred as the meso level, which can be generally called a system. This system is neither a simple aggregation of firms nor a scaled version of nations. Systems can be distinguished according to the various criteria. The key is broken down by territorial and sectorial criteria. [18] From territorial point of view we can distinguish urban and regional competitiveness. Urban competitiveness is defined as “the ability of an urban economy to attract and maintain firms with stable or rising market shares in an activity, while maintaining or increasing standards of living for those who participate in it”. [19] Along the same lines we propose a definition of regional competitiveness which integrates the perspective of both firms and of residents: Regional competitiveness can be defined as “the ability to offer an attractive and sustainable environment for firms and residents to live and work”. [7] Sustainable in this definition is not used in the purely ecological-environmental sense, but in the sense of a region´s capacity to provide and attractive environment in both the short- and long-term.

Similarly, in recent work on regional competitiveness Porter has emphasized the key role of export-oriented clusters as the basis for a high regional standard of living. Porter defines clusters as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field". [16] He refers to the California wine cluster as a good example. It includes hundreds of commercial wineries as well as several thousand independent wine grape growers.

In relation to the competitiveness it is necessary to introduce the notion advantages which are the components that allow for a higher profitability in relation to the competition. They can be classified as comparative advantages and competitive advantages. The comparative advantages arise from the possibility to obtain certain inputs at a lower cost such as natural resources, manpower or energy. Competitive advantages are based in production technology and in human know-how. Competitive advantages are established through investments in human resources and technology as well as through the selection of technology, markets and products.

3. Competitiveness in tourism sector

During the last decade there has been a growing interest in tourism literature (and in practice as well) in the notion of the „competitive destination". In the preceding decades competition in tourism was very often identified with the price component and was frequently restricted to the micro-level. [20] It cannot be denied that for a destination as well as for a firm, price is a vital element of competitiveness. However, since the beginning of the 1990s the tourism sector and tourism scientists have been aware that besides comparative advantages and price, many other variables determine the competitiveness of a tourism firm or destination.

Tourism destination is essentially a system defined territorially and from the sectorial perspective. We can distinguish several types and levels of tourism destination: a country, a macro-region consisting of several countries, a province or another administrative entity, a localized region, a city or town, a unique locale with great drawing power. [17] "A local tourism destination is a physical space in which a tourist spends at least one overnight. It includes tourism products such as support services and attractions and tourist resources within one day's return travel time. It has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. Local destinations incorporate various stakeholders often including a host community, and can nest and network to form larger destinations". [1]

In relative terms, very few tourists visit a macro-region or country. Tourists are interested in regions and towns. These are „tourism clusters" which can be defined as „a group of tourism attractions, enterprises and institutions directly or indirectly related to tourism and concentrated in a specific geographical area. Competition in tourism is mainly between clusters and not so much between countries". [20]

Competitiveness in tourism can be described as the elements that make a destination competitive...” its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations”. [17] OECD defines competitiveness of tourism as following: “Tourism competitiveness for a destination is about the ability of the place to optimise its attractiveness for residents and non-residents, to deliver quality, innovative, and attractive (e.g. providing good value for money) tourism services to consumers and to gain market shares on the domestic and global market places, while ensuring that the available resources supporting tourism are used efficiently and in a sustainable way”. [8]

It is important to underline that competitiveness of tourism has several dimensions: economic, socio-cultural and environmental. However, not all competition models (see Table 1) dealt with this dimensions.

Table 1

Models of competitiveness in tourism

Model of competitiveness in tourism	Description
The competitive forces and generic strategies of Porter (1980)	Porter proposes the model of the five forces for investigating the competitive environment: the treat of entrants, the power of suppliers, the power of buyers, the treat of substitutes and competitive rivalry. The combination of the two basic competitive advantages (lower costs, differentiation) and the scope advantage gives tree generic strategies (Overall cost leadership, Differentiation, Focused or niche strategy) to arrive at a better economic performance in terms of higher return on investment or higher value added.
The Porter diamond, or the determinants of competitive advantage (1990)	Based on the Porter model, competitive advantages of a destination emerge in a dynamic system consisting of four interdependent determinants: factor conditions; demand conditions; related and supporting industries/activities; market structure, rivalry, organization and strategies.
The Poon concept	Innovation – Introduction of new products – is far more important than low costs, differentiation of focus. The Poon concept of competitive strategy has two dimensions: a micro- and a macro-level. She deals with competitive strategies for industry players and strategies for tourism destinations. Poon identifies

	four strategies that tourism destination need in order to enhance the development of a new and sustainable tourism (principle of responsible travel, making tourism a leading sector, the plea for a transformation of the role of NTOs from promotion to product development deserves attention, public-private partnership at destination).
The WES approach	The competitive position of a destination results from the performances of that destination with respect to a number of factors: macro-economic factors, supply factors, transport factors, demand factors, tourism policy.
The Bordas demand model	The Bordas model is typical demand (marketing) model, and does not fit into the general concept of competitiveness. In this marketing model for long-haul destinations there are two key elements: perceived value of the destination (where image is the central point), perceived cost (for example the economic costs, the physical effort, the psychological costs). There are three important drawbacks to this model: it is a one-sided model - that is only demand-oriented, the model is still a gross concept without any test, and some variables are difficult to measure.
The conceptual model of destination competitiveness of Ritchie and Crouch	The Ritchie and Rouch model is the most comprehensive model. The starting point of the model is the thesis that destination success is determined by two different kind of advantages: comparative (reflex the resource endowments of the destination, provided either by nature of by the overall society within the destination resides – human, physical, historical and cultural resources; knowledge; capital; infrastructure; tourism superstructure)and competitive (are those that have been established as a result of effective resource deployment (maintenance, growth and development, efficiency, effectiveness and audit = how well the destination utilizes the available resources, or destination´s ability to add value to the available resources. The components of the model are: global (macro-) environment; competitive (micro-) environment; qualifying and amplifying determinants; destination policy,

	planning and development; destination management; core resources and attractors.
The price-competitiveness approach of Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao	Tourism price competitiveness is essentially a matter of the prices of the goods and services that tourists buy, expressed in some common currency. Price competitiveness in tourism is influenced by several factors: exchange rates, inflation and overall price levels, labour prices, productivity performance of tourism industries, tax levels and structures, infrastructure charges, fuel prices and taxation.
The Dwyer-Kim model	The key elements of the Dwyer-Kim model are: core resources (endowed – e.g. cultural; created – e.g. events, shopping) and supporting factors; situational conditions (economic, social, cultural, political, legal etc.); destination management factors (public sector and private sector activities); demand conditions (the three main elements being awareness, perception and preferences)
Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI	The WEF has developed TTCI. The TTCI aims to)measure the factors and policies that make it attractive to develop the T&T sector in different countries. The TTCI is composed of 14 pillars of T&T competitiveness. The pillars are organised into three sub-indexes: regulatory framework; business environment and infrastructure; human, cultural and natural resources. These indices are based on „hard" data and on surveys of expert opinion.
Indicators for Measuring Competitiveness in Tourism (OECD)	The OECD´s work identifies a set of indicators that can be applied within an overall framework to assess country competitiveness. The key indicators have been developed to address common challenges in the analysis of competitiveness in tourism in member and partner countries and are organised around four categories: indicators measuring the tourism performance and impacts, indicators monitoring the ability of a destination to deliver quality and competitive tourism services, indicators monitoring the attractiveness of a destination, indicators describing policy response and economic opportunities.

Source: Own processing on the basis of [4]; [8]; [20]

It is necessary to say that the competition analysis models are of a different nature. The starting point and/or the line of approach are not the same. However, each of them has the merit of emphasizing one or more particular aspects: [20]

- The Porter (1980) model emphasizes the competitive forces of enterprises and of destinations, and the related generic competitive strategies.
- The Porter (1990) model emphasizes the home environment and related determinants.
- The Poon concept emphasizes innovation, responsible travel and making tourism a lead sector.
- The WES approach emphasizes macro-economic factors and tourism policy.
- The Bordas model emphasizes marketing orientation, perceived value and perceived costs.
- The Ritchie and Rouch emphasize destination management and destination policy, planning and development.
- The price-competitiveness approach of Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao emphasizes the price components.
- The Dwyer-Kim model has particular attention to demand conditions and destination management factors.
- The aim of the TTCI is to provide a comprehensive strategic tool for measuring the factors and policies that make it attractive to develop the T&T sector in different countries." By providing detailed assessments of the T&T environments of countries worldwide, the results can be used by all stakeholders to work together to improve the industry's competitiveness in their national economies, thereby contributing to national growth and prosperity. It also allows countries to track their progress over time in the various areas measured.
- The OECD approach is to create a limited set of meaningful and robust indicators useful for governments to evaluate and measure tourism competitiveness in their country over time and to guide them in their policy choices. The aim of the framework is not to produce an index or a ranking of the most competitive countries, but to provide a tool guide for countries to analyse tourism competitiveness and inform policy.

Based on the models that we dealt with in the previous sections and discussion, we will formulate key group of factors for a competitive destination:

- Factor conditions (factor endowments – natural resources; cultural and historical resources, capital and infrastructure resources, human resources, factor prices, destination image);
- Tourism demand (visitors portfolio, perception of the destination, demand monitoring system);
- Residents (quality of life, attitude of local population towards tourism, hospitality, tourism economic effects);

- Resources performance (a strategic tourism policy, the marketing of a destination, public-private partnership, destination management).
  And according to presented models of competitiveness in tourism (see Table 1), formulated group of factor for a competitive destination and described theoretical background of competitiveness we will suggest the concept of the measurement of the tourism competitiveness in the Czech Republic at the regional level.

4. Conclusion

Over the last two decades, tourism has played an increasingly important role in the economic growth of many countries. Tourism is an important driver of economic, social, and cultural development in both developed and developing countries. The identification and evaluation of tourism competitiveness is a very common research problem of many scientific studies and articles dedicated to tourism economics. As tourism markets grow, and the concept of tourism evolves, the aforementioned research problems become more significant.

Competitiveness can be defined and measured at different levels of economic analysis. Therefore, researchers use the concept of competitiveness in many different, often overlapping ways using different measures, indicators and analytical methodologies.

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Ing. Iveta Hamarneh, Ph.D.
University of Business in Prague
Head of Department of Tourism Economy
Spálená 14
110 00 Prague 1
Czech Republic
Iveta.hamarneh@vso-praha.eu
http://www.vsopraha.eu

Iveta Hamarneh is a head of the Department of Tourism Economy, University of Business in Prague. She focuses on the area of International Tourism and Geography of Tourism. She has been a member of the Association of scientific experts in tourism and a member of the Working group on research and education.

The Recent Trends Describing Cultural Issues and Intercultural Management within the Framework of the Polish-German Relations

Joanna Zator-Peljan, PhD.

European University College of Business, Poland

Abstract

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore Poland in terms of a potential international collaboration. In the recent years more and more foreign concerns or investors are becoming aware of the fact that the Polish market is worth considering, and attempt to open their branches in Poland.
The author of the presented paper analyzes chosen Polish-German travel writings and regards them as a kind of a guide book that informs foreigners about Poland within the framework of the so called intercultural as well as managerial matters.

Keywords: Polish-German relations, Polish-German cooperation, Polish-German stereotypes

JEL Classification: Z1

1.1 Introduction

There has been an increasing interest in Poland as a destination. Tourists and managers from all over the world visit the Vistula land and admire its landscape: the beautiful seaside, the mysterious mountains and the developing cities (Warszawa, Wrocław, Kraków, Poznań or Sopot) that aim to transform their communistic appearance into a modern, capitalistic one: "In 1989, Poland became the first country to leave communism peacefully (...). Solidarity then formed the world's first post-communist government. Within a few months, the Polish paradigm was emulated across all of Eastern Europe" [18].The author of the following investigation concentrates on travel literature as extended guide books that – in contradistinction to the regular travel guide books focusing on landscape, hotel and food description - reveal the issues connected with the Polish mentality. According to the Polish-Austrian essayist Radek

Knapp it is impossible to experience the Polish culture by concentrating on the selected travel guide books: “After reading this you will know everything except one thing: what is Poland like and who we really are. Unfortunately, it is impossible to experience a certain country by studying a travel guide. This is only possible as a result of some unexpected experiences that will prepare us to the journey itself. Taking into consideration this fact one can say that Poland is unique” [16]. A significant role in this paper plays the exploration of the mentality definition within the framework of different issues connected with this area such as e.g.: images of one’s own culture in comparison to other countries (the so called interdependence between the self and the other). The presented paper should be viewed as an attempt to perception way of the Polish culture. Such knowledge may be considered as a specific travel guidebook concentrating on the mentality aspect. The purpose of this article is to examine the Polish mindset aiming to understand it and to mention the variety of the so called “Slavic soul” [16] while focusing on Poland.

1.2 Desk research as a study method. Stereotypes as the background of the Polish - German relations

The author of the following essay decided to choose desk research as a study method. The main focus of this method is to analyze various data within the scope a particular area. The above-mentioned data may concern chosen scientific publications, the results of research (such as e.g. surveys, interviews, etc.) conducted by polling institutes or the existing national as well as international media. Desk research is classified as a stand-alone research technique. On the other hand, it may also be considered as an initiation of a further study. The presented paper contains a desk research relating to some selected aspects of the Polish-German cultural and managerial relations in terms of the chosen publications classified as travel literature.

The phenomenon of stereotypes is at the heart of our understanding of the current Polish-German cultural and managerial relations. The joint past reveals plenty of stereotypic attitudes towards the other from the perspective of both neighboring nations. These issues have already been investigated by diverse scientists, e.g. [2], [24], [34], [18] or [8]. The variety of stereotypic way of thinking or behavior in terms of Poland and Germany could be perceived as a material for a separate paper. Therefore, the authors of this investigation aim to give only a brief description of the stereotype term.

The first publication that examined the theme of stereotypes was Public Opinion by Walter Lippmann published in 1922. The book may be considered as revolutionary due to the fact that Lippmann was the first scientist that defined thestereotypeterm: „For the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture" [21]. According to Lippmann's theory, stereotypes can be perceived as "pictures in our heads" [21] that tend to be uneasy to modify. Lippmann's stereotype definition encouraged other scientists to analyze the problem and to develop their own perspectives of the above-mentioned issue – e.g. Scollon und Wong-Scollon (2005) describe stereotypes in the following way: "Stereotyping is simply another word for overgeneralization. The difference, however, is that stereotyping carries with it an ideological position. Characteristics of the group are not only over-generalized to apply to each member of the group, but they are also taken to have some exaggerated negative or positive value" [30]. On the other hand, it is arguable that stereotype research mainly focuses on negative aspects [39] „Even members of groups who typically enjoy advantaged social status may at times be confronted with a negative stereotype on particular dimension" [39]. Moreover, Juang and Matsumoto understand stereotypes as a way of orientation that is necessary while experiencing a foreign reality [14] "Stereotypes can be either positive or negative. For example, a common positive stereotype is that Asians are hard-working, the model minority. Another positive stereotype is that Germans are industrious and scientifically minded. Stereotypes can be generally true or completely false" [14].According to Scollon und Wong-Scollon (2005) negative stereotypes can be viewed as a barrier to successful intercultural communication as well as mutual business relations [30]. These stereotypes describe a particular foreign reality in a negative way that is not always possible to be modified: „If we forget the deeper reasons why these rhetorical strategies are used, we can easily move into negatively stereotyping members of other groups who are working from different basic assumptions about the most respectful way to treat strangers. The result is an overall negative impression of members of the other group" [30]. Furthermore, the negative stereotypes may discourage prospective business partners from conducting business with a chosen nation.

1.3 Problem solution

1.3.1 The images of the Polish-German relations in terms of the chosen essays

The following paper section concentrates on an imagological analysis of the Polish-German cultural as well as managerial relations. First of all, the authors aim to clearly identify the meaning of two terms: essay and imagology. An essay is understood as "a term of French and English origin (…) supplementing German terms such as Versuch, Entwurf, Fragment, Abhandlung and Aufsatz, all of which had been employed since the mid-

18th century” [10].An essay intends to have influence on the readers’ opinions – therefore it may be defined as a “(…) relatively short literary composition in prose, in which a writer discusses a topic, usually restricted in scope, or tries to persuade the reader to accept a particular point of view” [33]. The further term explanation leads to the following conclusion: “Essay is a short piece of writing that usually focuses on author’s point of view. There are various elements that essay may consist this include: learned arguments, political manifestos, literary criticism, experiences, reflections, recollections and observation on daily life of the author of the essay. Many of the essays are written in prose” [33].

The scientific exploration carried out in the matter of imagology presents a certain definition of the above-mentioned aspect – imagology deals with an image analysis pertaining to a particular issue (e.g. foreign reality, culture, ways of behavior, economic situation, etc.) described in a chosen essayistic publications. The above-named definition is mentioned by such researchers as e.g.: [5], [9], [7], [15], [22] or [20]. According to Klin, the existing stereotypes can be modified by essayists who perceive the surroundings in their individual way: “Stereotypes that show literary images are always modified by the authors” [15]. For this reason imagology can be viewed as a “dialog of civilization” [19]. On the other hand, a number of studies [26]; [3]; [25]; [29] have found that various images in terms of essayistic publications play a significant role while creating the public opinion.

A number of essays concerning the Polish-German relations has been published in the recent years. There can be mentioned such authors as e.g.: Knapp, Huelle, Kneip, Gauß, Soboczynski, Stasiuk, Tielsch, Wojciechowski, etc. They refer to various aspects of the Polish-German neighborhood – from describing the general daily routine to focusing on very detailed aspects. The authors of this investigation, as already mentioned, concentrate on the issues connected with the Polish-German relations within the framework of the business environment.

Knapp points out that the so called new Poland does not have a lot in common with its previous image of a communistic nation: “The situation is delicate. It seems that Western Europe is not only interested in us, but, what is more, recently it startsto be like us. After diving off the coast of the Seychelles and bungee jumping in the Grand Canyon there is the turn of our Slavic cities and landscapes. Forsome unexplained reasons Poland has become trendyand it seems to be in good taste to praise it” [16]. Knapp emphasizes the certain Polish character traits that were helpful when the communism ended. They are still viewed as essential while conducting business in Poland: “It seems that Lech Wałęsa or Solidarity did not inflict any mortal blow to the communist regime. They were only an extended arm of the Polish nation possessing certain character traits which are deadly for each regime and dictatorship.Moreover, it is called an innate distrust of authority, and especially their own government, on the other hand - almost unbelievable ability to make chaos wherever there was peace" [16]. It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the existence of the Polish-German mutual economic relations. For this reason, Knapp attempts to show the importance of the so called cultural background in terms of business cooperation with the Poles: "One can say everything about the Poles and it will be correct. Poles feel the happiest ones when they complain. On the other hand, they are born poets and enjoy talking a lot. They look suspiciously at childless marriages, but at the same time listen to the priests, who are not allowed to have children" [16]. The author also mentions the so called Slavic soul: "It is not possible to describe it, one can only experience it" [16].

Many essayists [17]; [23]; [31] take into consideration the rapid modifications of the Polish cities' images a sign of local as well as foreign business development – the writers concentrate on such Polish cities as Warsaw; Cracow or Wrocław. What is more, Kneip focuses on the so called "European face" [17] of Wrocław and compares it to Berlin: "In this city no difference between Germany and Poland can be observed. The picture that I see has a European face" [17].

Furthermore, Möller's observations of the Polish reality reveal differences within the scope of inhabitants conducting business – in Poland it can be a young as well as an elderly person [23]. On the contrary, it is not common in Germany to give the most relevant positions to the younger generation:"Poland is – as distinct from Germany or Japan – dominated by the younger generation. Young people preside over the most significant posts and huge amount of money. At the age of thirty it is possible to work as department manager or project manager (...).Meanwhile I wonder when I see a sixty year old German driving a Mercedes or a BMW. When it comes to expensive cars in Poland, their owners are usually less than fifty years old, and sometimes even less than forty" [23].

According to Urban the negative stereotype concerning the Polish economy (the so called stereotype of Polnische Wirtschaft) should not be associated with Poland anymore [36]. The above-mentioned stereotype describing the Polish business environment as a "mess with no structures" [36] is viewed as a description of Poland's communistic past and does not concern the Polish capitalistic reality: "(...) communism in Poland had always been oppressive and lawless since it did not respect even its own laws (...). To a greater or lesser degree communism corrupted everybody. The inevitability of living in lies created a lot of moral dilemmas" [27].

1.3.2 Individual Changes in the Polish Society. The new Poland as a Consumer Society.

After much discussion about infrastructural modifications based on essayistic texts one can arrive at a conclusion that all the chosen writers consider the constantly changing image of the Polish society as relevant when it comes to turning into a consumer society. Particularly with regards to the above-mentioned infrastructural changes the establishing of the comfortable lifestyle in Poland is regarded as a very important factor while becoming a part of the integrated Europe. This part of the article offers an investigation into the new Poland with reference to imagological differences and similarities between the Polish and the German nation.

According to [23] there is a significant difference between Poland and Germany while considering the age of wealthy inhabitants – in Germany all important posts belong to the representatives of the so called old generation [23]. In contradistinction to it in the post communist Poland the most relevant positions are dedicated to young people [23]. “Poland is – as distinct from Germany or Japan – dominated by the younger generation. Young people preside over the most significant posts and huge amount of money. At the age of thirty it is possible to work as department manager or project manager” [23]. A similar situation pertains consumer goods and the new habits of consumption – these facets are also associated with the members of the young generation [23]. The essayist points towards status from Polish and German perspective – in his opinion the social status of young Polish people is comparable to the one of German elderly inhabitants [23]: “Meanwhile I wonder when I see a sixty year old German driving a Mercedes or a BMW. When it comes to expensive cars in Poland, their owners are usually less than fifty years old, and sometimes even less than forty” [23]. The essayist explains his theory in this way: “The Polish people born before 1960 are the losers of the system change in 1989. They do not really have a chance to find a good employment. They will never be able to spend their holiday in Scharm el Scheik. It is a place where young Polish generation meets old German generation” [23].

Möller also concentrates on the fact that the post communist governments of the new Poland prefer contacts with the USA and admire this country [23]. The author provides the following explanation of this situation: the Polish adore the United States and Americans because they associate this country with freedom – there is no other nation in the whole Europe that focuses on liberty so strongly [23]. Möller carries out the following explanation of this aspect: Poland and USA are combined with each other by means of the joint history – many Polish inhabitants emigrated to America or Australia in the last hundred years [23]. This facet draws a distinction between Poland and Germany or Poland and other countries such as Ireland, Italy, etc. [23]. Möller considers the German society as significantly different – there can be observed a rather “anti-America-hysteria” [23].

Soboczynski attempts to build bridges between the new Polish image as consumer society and its ethics [31]. The essayist supports the statement that ethics in the new Poland is not considered as an important value and describes his experience gained in Warsaw: infidelity belongs to everyday lifestyle of the Polish – it is quite common to visit many various beds at night and after that sit in the church as if nothing had happened [31]. The writer highlights the two uncommon proposals that he received from both female and male prostitutes while spending a night in the European Hotel (Hotel Europejski) in Warsaw: “After the long evening at Le Madame’s I heard that something was being pushed under my hotel room door. Suddenly I was awake and afraid of something dangerous. I turned on the light and saw two cheaply printed piece of paper. The first one was from Magda who wanted me to call her to spend a nice evening together (…). The second piece of paper showed Piotr (…). He also offered some nice hours together” [31].

Soboczynski also tries to engage his readers’ attention to another phenomenon that in his opinion exists in the new Polish society - the cult of materialism [31]. According to Soboczynski Poland is developing into a society that worships mammon – a plenty of Polish businessmen put a lot of emphasis on themselves and their activities trying to present themselves on the top of the world and act as gods of the young capitalism [31]. The infrastructural growth has affected citizens‘ behavior: they started to pay attention to branded articles that are no longer considered as too expensive for them [31]. The author challenges the statement that Polish women look particularly beautiful and elegant – instead of this he regards them as a “shining and sensual kitsch of a catholic-rooted society” [31]. Worth mentioning is Soboczynski’s opinion that such behavior is treated as characteristic in societies that eventually obtain the result they were hoping for – in this case it is combined with changing the communistic reality into capitalistic country: the young capitalism offers a diversity of attractions: marvelous piece of clothing, luxurious cars and houses, a possibility of exotic trips all around the world, great job opportunities, etc. – it depends on particular person how she or he takes advantage of all the above-quoted goods [31].

Andrzej Stasiuk’s book (2008) under the title Dojczland can be counted as another example of imagological point of view concerning Polish-German relations. The writer presents his observation in a particularly ironic way – starting from the title that is a Polish phonetic transcription of the word Deutschland (Germany). Stasiuk dissects the topic of Poland as a consumer society and comes to a conclusion that consumption has also a plenty of advantages [32]. The author missed particular aspects of the young Polish capitalism during his trip to Germany – one of them was connected the Polish shops that are – in contradistinction to German shops - opened on Sunday [32]: “I did not even have a minibar in my hotel room. And it was Sunday. Everything was closed in the main street (…). In one of the shop windows I discovered a bottle from Burgenland. But the guy in that shop concentrated on cleaning up and fully ignored my shy request (…)” [32].

Kneip (2006) also hints at the post-communist rapid change in Poland – there can be noticed a following constant exchange: the old life becomes the new one, the unknown countries and its traditions are treated as well-known ones, the exotic inhabitants from other countries are no longer contemplated as strangers [17]: Poland as a country "welcomes me at the end of the century in an anxious way" [17]. The author describes the uncertainty of Poland while attempting to be a part of united and modern Europe, the speed of infrastructural and individual changes that cannot be stopped or limited anymore and the new western traditions which are constantly being added to the Polish everyday life [17].

Kneip adverts to the fact that the former communist era and the current infrastructural development are affiliated with each other [17]: "Everywhere - in the streets, flats, shops, hospitals, on the farms – I was a witness of quarrel and contradiction. I was a witness of two systems fighting with each other. But we need more time to see the winner" [17]. Kneip observes the above-mentioned situation in various spheres of life: "There is a certain difference that can be pointed out in private and in professional life, it can concern the little ones and the big ones, it occurs on each corner of this country. (...) On a train one can see mobile phones and notebooks next to old schoolbags and shoes. In the streets old Polish Fiats drive next to brand-new German BMWs" [17]. Kneip regards the present situation in Poland intently and comes to a conclusion that the flats and houses, the cars, the piece of clothing, and the whole present lifestyle of the Polish can be contemplated as nothing else but a perfect copy of western cultures, their everyday life and traditions [17]: "Young Poles run into a massive debt just to be able to welcome the new reality with a new suit, a briefcase and sunglasses. The others do not reveal if they became rich in a legal or in an illegal way during the chaos connected with the end of communism and the beginning of a new era" [17]. Kneip also bespeaks the look of the new buildings in Poland – they are not incident to the previous ones anymore [17]: "The houses on the left and on the right side of streets follow the western style, people pay attention to all the modern glass facades of the banks that are seen in each town and city – various architectural experiments are a trend nowadays" [17].

Another issue that reminds of being a part of the western world is also viewed in Poland – mobile phones that are being heard everywhere – on a bus, on a train or in the streets. A former luxury article has become very popular and commercially available to everyone [17].

Wojciechowski's (2002) viewpoint stands in contrast to the aforementioned attitudes. The essayist does not concentrate on infrastructural development in Poland too much – he prefers to focus on individual changes analysis in the new Polish society. The writer points towards the issue of Polish mentality that in his opinion has not modified to welcome the era of consumer society [38]: "Poland is a country where borders, landscapes and policy are easier to change than individual and collective identities. When it comes to the most important issues - the good and the bad ones - the Poles are now not different than they were two or three hundred years ago" [38]. According to Wojciechowski Polish people constantly hold together in a way that they did in the time of communism when friendship and harmony were considered as significant values [38]: "… They talk politics and protest in the same way, they work and get drunk in the same way. And in the same way they worship the Socratic ethical principle that encourages them to be faithful to themselves" [38]. The fact of not following certain rules may in Wojciechowski's point of view discredit Polish citizens – a person who constantly changes his attitude towards various aspects of life cannot be trusted [38].

1.4 Conclusions

What this all amounts to is that being a new member of the European Union is usually associated with a plenty of modifications concerning a particular country. According to the analyzed publications of the well-known and respected Polish and German writers such as Steffen Möller, Adam Soboczynski, Andrzej Stasiuk, Matthias Kneip and Krzysztof Wojciechowski one can come to a conclusion that Poland is undergoing radical changes. The presented imagological perspective focuses on two significant aspects: the infrastructural development and the individual changes in the so called new Polish society that can be beheld as a consumer society. The above-mentioned authors try to examine all aspects combined with the new reality to present the Polish and the German readers the possibly most objective point of view. While analyzing the infrastructural modifications of Polish cities they regard the beauty and the ugliness of such cities as Warsaw, Wrocław or Cracow, etc. The authors explain why so many young Poles are given the best positions in their professional life and can afford expensive consumer goods. The essayists emphasize the fact of copying the western countries when it comes to infrastructure and mentality. In the above-quoted essayistic publications Poland is treated as a country that is constantly between two different worlds: between the fading communistic era and the modern consumer society where materialism, certain image and branded articles play a very important role. The old and the new reality are described as two opponents that continuously fight with each other and the winner is perpetually regarded as unknown.

Worthy of mention is the fact that the imagological perspective is only one of possible perspectives dealing with Polish-German relations after Poland joined the European Union. On the other hand it can be considered as a significant viewpoint that influences the Polish and the German public opinion: each book that was presented in this article, was published in Poland and in Germany.

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Joanna Zator-Peljan, PhD.
Dean of English Philology Department
European University College of Business, Poland
ul. Niedziałkowskiego 18
61-579 Poznań
j.zator@pwsb.pl
http://pl.pwsb.pl/

Joanna Zator-Peljan is a Dean of English Philology Department as well as lecturer at European University College of Business, Poland. She is an author of numerous publications (books and articles) concerning intercultural communication in business, xenology, literary studies, imagology and didactics relating to teaching of foreign languages. In 2014 she became an editor of Global Management Journal (http://globalmj.eu/about/), an international journal that is published once a year by the scientific publishing of European University College of Business.

10th International Conference on Topical Problems in Tourism, Jihlava, Czech Republic

The International Conference on Topical Problems in Tourism was held in February 25th – 26th 2015 at the College of Polytechnics in Jihlava. The conference was focused on Tourism: Development - Transformation - Future Prospects. The paper of Doc. Ing Alžbeta Kiráľová, Ph.D. titled Intercultural Competence of Tourism Graduates – Precondition of Employability?, as well as the paper of Ing. Iveta Hamarneh, Ph.D. titled Corporate Social Responsibility and its Application in Tourism of the Czech Republic, and the paper of Ing. Jana Kalousová and Jitka Drmolová titled Global Trends in Consumer Behavior in Tourism were published in the conference proceedings.

(ak)

The 4th International Conference - Current Trends in the Spa Industry, Hotel Industry and Tourism, Tábor, Czech Republic

The conference organized by the Silesian University in Opava was held on 9th – 10th April 2015 in Tábor (Czech Republic). The paper „Developing Countries and its Importance in International Tourism“ of Ing. Iveta Hamarneh, Ph.D., and the paper of Ing. Jana Kalousová titled Hotel Guest as Fundamental to Successful Businesses in Terms of Globalization was published in the conference proceedings.

(ih)

AdCamp 2015 - the 6th International Conference on Destination Marketing and Tourism Services Marketing, Zlín, Czech Republic

In the 6th AdCamp conference, held on 15 - 16th April 2015 in Zlín (Czech Republic), were emotions in tourism. Two teams of students from the University of Business in Prague who participated in the competition were accompanied by Ing. Iveta Hamarneh, Ph.D. The team of Master students was awarded by the second prize in their category.

(ih)

Conference on Comparative Regionalism: Challenges of Regional International Politics, Economy, Society, Environment, Communication, Budapest, Hungary

The Conference on Comparative Regionalism was held in April 13th – 17th, 2015 in Budapest, Hungary. It was organized within the Framework of the 5th International Week in Kodolanyi Janos University of Applied Sciences. Mgr. Viktor Šafařík from the University of Business in Prague presented a paper titled "Prague, Vienna and their Surroundings: Comparison of the Tourism Development Trends". The conference was aimed at involving those who are interested in comparative regionalism, international politics, economy, culture and tourism. The presenters included researchers, teachers and PhD students in geography, economics, environmental management, tourism, tourism studies and transport policy, sociology, education, health, psychology, human services, history, international development, planning studies, public policy, and social policy.

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International workshop „Competitiveness in Tourism", Prague, Czech Republic

The international workshop „Competitiveness in Tourism" was held on May 11th , 2015 at the University of Business in Prague. The workshop aimed to present the main outcomes of the scientific research project titled "Tourism Competitiveness of the Czech Republic Regions and the Possibility of the Marketing Measures Performance Evaluation Using the BSC Method". The project FRV4/2013 was financed by the Fund for Development of Science of the University of Business in Prague. The workshop was opened by Ing. Iveta Hamarneh, Ph.D., Head of Department of Tourism Economy, who welcomed all participants. Doc. Ing. Alžbeta Kiráľová, Ph.D., Vice-Rector for International Collaboration and External Affairs hosted the workshop that was divided into three sections. The first section was opened by Ing. Iveta Hamarneh, Ph.D. who´s presentation was focused on the Competitiveness in Tourism. Ing. Michal Brože from the United Nations Information Centre in Prague presented the Millennium Development Goals, Ing. Jana Berková from the CzechTourism Agency introduced the main activities of the CzechTourism, and Mr. Mohamed Oussama Ben Yedder from the Tunisian National Tourism Office in Prague focused his presentation on the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities of Tunisia from the point of view of tourism development. Mrs. Karla Svobodová from the TMI s.r.o. Airline representation, GSA Malta Tourism Authority introduced Malta as a year-round tourist destination. The second section was opened by Ing. Iveta

Hamarneh, Ph.D. and she introduced the main activities of the Fund for Development of Science and Research Centre which were founded at the University of Business in 2012. In frame of the second section the main outcomes of the project "Tourism competitiveness of the Czech Republic regions and the possibility of the marketing measures performance evaluation using the BSC method". The outputs were presented by Ing. Petra Benešová and by the students of the University of Business Markéta Ušiaková and Martina Lancingerová who actively participated in the project. The third session was devoted to guest students who spent their Erasmus mobility at the University of Business. The mixed groups of students presented their home countries (Portugal, Uzbekistan, Slovenia, Germany, Russia, Azerbaijan and Mongolia) with focus on competitiveness and tourism development together with the students from the University of Business in Prague.

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Press Releases

Rome, Italy/ Madrid, Spain, 21 November 2014
PR No. 14080

World Committee on Tourism Ethics praises initiatives on Accessible Tourism

The fourteenth meeting of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics meeting in Rome, Italy (17-18 November 2014) commended the efforts of UNWTO and its partners to advance Accessible Tourism for All. The Committee firmly supported the “Montreal Declaration – A World for All”, the outcome document of the recent World Summit on Destinations for All, and participated actively in the 1st Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe held in San Marino on 19-20 November.

Besides the issue of accessibility, the Committee also debated the ethical implications of the promotion of fair models of all-inclusive holidays, the impact on tourism of unfounded ratings on travel portals and the effect of the rise of sharing economy in tourism.

“Tourism makes a great contribution to economy, although in occasions it can be damaging at a local level, our Committee pays special attention to this. The tourism sector is undergoing great changes (online booking systems, user generated ratings, the use of ICT and social networks in tourism); topics which we have to understand and reflect in our initiatives”, said Pascal Lamy, chair of the Committee.

Welcoming the Members of the Committee, the Minister for Culture and Tourism of Italy, Dario Franceschini, said “In these difficult times, characterized by economic and financial instability, natural disasters and unpredictable socio-political events, we are all aware that development can only be addressed with a shared ethical framework”.

“I would like to thank the outstanding support received from the Italian Government in advancing the important agenda of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics. It is the fourth time that the Committee meets in Rome thanks to the excellent cooperation established with Italy and to the support of the Rome Centre for the Promotion and Dissemination of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. This collaboration shows the commitment of Italy to promote a more sustainable and responsible tourism development”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

The Committee further backed the “Be a Responsible Traveler” anti-trafficking campaign by UNWTO, UNODC and UNESCO in cooperation with the private sector, to stand against human trafficking and illegal trade in wildlife, cultural artifacts and drugs. In the sphere of Child protection, the Committee acclaimed the participation of UNWTO in the forthcoming Global Study on the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism and will follow up with attention the progress of this research.

As the organ responsible for promoting and monitoring the implementation of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the Committee applauded the growing number of companies and trade associations that have adhered to the Private Sector Commitment to the Code. By November 2014, a total of 356 signatories from 51 countries had committed to promote and implement the Code in their business operations.

The World Committee on Tourism Ethics is the independent body responsible for promoting and monitoring the implementation of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. Its 14th Meeting was held in Rome, host city of the Centre for the Promotion of the Global Code of Ethics in Tourism, under the chairmanship of Pascal Lamy.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place in Istria, Croatia, on the occasion of the 100th Session of the UNWTO Executive Council.

Note to editors:

The UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) is a set of principles designed to guide the development of tourism in a way that maximizes the socio-economic benefits of the sector, while minimizing any negative impacts. It was adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001.

The World Committee on Tourism Ethics, a subsidiary organ of the UNWTO General Assembly, reports directly to the Assembly. Members are elected in their personal capacities and not as officials of governments or representatives of their countries.

Committee Chairman: Pascal Lamy (Former Director General of the World Trade Organization); members: Mr. I Gede Ardika (Former Minister of Tourism of Indonesia), Mr. Yoshiaki Hompo (Former Commissioner of Japan Tourism Agency), Ms. Fiona Jeffery (Former Chair of the World Travel Market), Mr. Khelil Lajmi (Former Minister of Tourism of Tunisia), Mr. Jean Marc Mignon (President, International Organisation for Social Tourism), Ms. Tanja Mihalic (Head of Institute of Tourism, University of Ljubljana), Mr. Ron Oswald (General Secretary, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers´ Association), Mr. Eugenio Yunis (Executive Vice President, Federation of Tourism Enterprises of Chile); alternate members: Mr. Hiran Cooray (Chairman, Jetwing), Ms. Suzy Hatough (Director of Dar Al-Diafa for Tourism Human Resources Development Consultancy) and Ms. Gunnur Ozalp (Secretary-General, Association of Turkish Travel Agents).

Contacts:

UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 3 December 2014
PR No. 14081

San Marino Declaration calls for universal accessibility in tourism

Achieving universal accessibility throughout the tourism value chain is the main call for action of the San Marino Declaration of Accessible Tourism, adopted at the First UNWTO Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe (San Marino, 19-20 November 2014).

The First UNWTO Conference on Accessible Tourism in Europe addressed how to advance quality, sustainability and competitiveness in accessible tourism with a special focus on cultural heritage and the use of smart technologies. Increased accessibility in tourism benefits people with disabilities and special needs while entailing important economic opportunities for the sector.

"Accessible Tourism for All ranks high amongst the ethical challenges we have identified and which require our permanent attention and guidance", said the Chairman of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, Pascal Lamy, opening the Conference. "Advocating for and advancing universal access in travel and tourism is both a question of rights and a question of ethics, a matter of quality and respect, of freedom and non-discrimination", he added.

Echoing the legitimate right of access to tourism activities by people with disabilities, as established by the United Nations, the San Marino Declaration on Accessible Tourism was adopted unanimously, calling for all stakeholders to ensure universal accessibility in all the components of the tourism value chain. This includes the physical environment, the transportation system and information and communications channels, as well as to strengthen and engage public-private partnerships and other forms of cooperation among entities working in the field of universal accessibility.

UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai stressed that "People with disabilities and special needs should be able to actively take part in tourism just as any other traveller. Great strides have been made to advance universal accessibility, particularly in Europe, but there are still many opportunities to be seized. Accessibility for all depends much on the will of all players to work together, and we at UNWTO remain committed to advancing this fundamental agenda and implementing the necessary changes alongside our partners."

While referring to the morphological features of the hilly mediaeval town of San Marino, the Minister of Tourism, H.E. Mr. Teodoro Lonfernini, pointed out that "San Marino is doing its best to make its territory accessible to as many visitors as possible, while also trying to enable an authentic travel experience to people with special needs", adding that "if a country like the Republic of San Marino can achieve that, many other States should be able to follow the same path".

The Conference was jointly organized by UNWTO and the Government of the Republic of San Marino in collaboration with Village for All (V4A) and the ONCE Foundation of Spain.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Geneva, Switzerland/ Madrid, Spain, 4 December 2014
PR No. 14082

ILO, UNWTO to promote reliable and comparable statistics on tourism employment

Improving the measurement of employment in tourism is critical to support decision making in a sector which represents nine per cent of global GDP and is a proven tool to advance sustainable development.

GENEVA/MADRID - The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Tourism Organization of the United Nations (UNWTO) have co-launched a new report which provides statistical instruments and best practices in an effort to advance towards a harmonized international framework for collecting and analyzing tourism employment data.

The report, entitled Measuring Employment in the Tourism Industries – Guide with Best Practices, shows that statistical data are indispensable tools for evidence-based decision-making, planning, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes. Reliable and comparable statistics on tourism employment are thus fundamental to understanding tourism labour markets, devising effective job creation policies, promoting employment opportunities, planning workforce needs and developing human resources through education and relevant training.

With data on tourism-related employment still fragmented, of poor quality and lacking international comparability, both employment in tourism and the economic value of tourism in terms of employment remain inadequately measured and insufficiently studied.

The UNWTO/ILO publication aims to fill this gap and enhance the development of reliable and comparable employment statistics for the tourism sector. It provides statistical instruments developed through international cooperation, as well as best-practice examples of measuring tourism employment from countries that have developed a comprehensive set of employment indicators, including Austria, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

“Unemployment is today one of the major challenges facing our times. Enhancing the quality and comparability of tourism employment statistics can significantly improve the capacity of stakeholders to monitor tourism labour markets and promote productive activities, as well as the effective use of qualified labour, the principal factor in ensuring sustainable tourism development and its continued contribution to economic growth and employment worldwide", said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai.

"We trust that this pioneering guide will enhance the production of reliable and internationally comparable statistics on employment in the tourism industries. Stakeholders need such data to inform effective tourism employment and education policies and programmes and realise the full potential of the sector for generating employment, income and decent work. With the renewed commitment to securing sound development outcomes in the post-2015 scenario, the UN System is all the more challenged to provide effective tools to serve these ends and this guide is a good example of inter-agency collaboration for this purpose", said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.

The joint publication is one of the outputs of an ILO/UNWTO Agreement signed in 2009 which aims at enhancing capacity to measure employment in tourism and improving the international comparability of employment-related tourism statistics.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 15 December 2014
PR No. 14084

3rd Global Summit on City Tourism: Looking for New Paradigms

The ongoing urban and travel revolutions create a unique opportunity to make of city tourism a strong driver of smarter, more sustainable and inclusive cities. According to the conclusions of the 3rd Global Summit on City Tourism held in Barcelona, Spain, on 9-10 December, the new paradigms for city tourism must address key issues: community engagement, better research and data to guide planning and management, public-private partnerships, the creation of clusters and the streamline of technology, innovation and sustainability.

Tourism has become a central component of the economy, social life and the geography of many cities in the world and is ideally positioned to contribute to seize the opportunities stemming from urbanization. The 3rd Global Summit on City Tourism: New Paradigms in City Tourism Development debated what takes to build new paradigms in city tourism. The Summit focused on four keys areas: the changing environment, knowledge and technology, measurement and how to make city tourism benefit the city and its surroundings.

Participants stressed the need to develop products which are market driven and research based, alerting to the lack of research to properly measure city tourism, its impact and trends. Furthermore, participants highlighted the need to make a city enjoyable to all: citizens, tourists and investors and spread the benefits of city tourism to its surrounding thus multiplying its impact and managing congestion.

The development of clusters that engage public and private players from all sectors was pointed out as central to the new paradigm for city tourism development; a development that needs to be mindful of the fact that tourism is a policy instrument for social cohesion and cultural preservation, beyond its fundamental contribution as an economic activity. Participants also alerted to the need of discussing the new business models emerging within the so-called sharing economy and assess its integration into the planning and development of tourism.

Opening the event, UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, stressed the importance of engaging local populations in the whole process of city tourism development "We should always keep in mind that tourism happens in a community and that a city that is not good for its citizens will never be a good tourism destination. A city that is good for its citizens is good for tourists; a city that is loved by its citizens will be loved by its visitors".

Ms. Isabel Borrego, Secretary of State for Tourism of Spain, said "City Tourism is a priority for Spain as it is capable of delivering on two of our key strategic objectives: overcoming seasonality and increase average spending".

The 3rd Global Summit on City Tourism: New Paradigms in City Tourism Development was organized by UNWTO, the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism of Spain and Turisme Barcelona, with the collaboration of the Government of Catalonia, the Barcelona City Council and the Barcelona Provincial Council.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 17 December 2014
PR No. 14085

UNWTO and UNESCO to organize first World Conference on Tourism and Culture

The First World Conference on Tourism and Culture will bring together, for the first time, Ministers of Tourism and Ministers of Culture from around the world, experts and stakeholders from both sectors to explore new models of partnership between tourism and culture (Siem Reap, Cambodia, 4-6 February 2015).

Cultural tourism can contribute to inclusive economic growth, social development and cultural preservation. The first UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture will provide an unprecedented global platform for policymakers, experts and practitioners in tourism and culture to meet and identify the key challenges and opportunities for stronger cooperation between these highly interlinked areas.

Over the course of two days, participants will explore different roles and mandates on five key topics – governance and partnership models, cultural preservation, living cultures and creative industries, cultural routes and urban regeneration through cultural tourism.

Confirmed speakers include King Simeon II, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, John Delaney, Senior Vice President of Seabourn, and Elizabeth Becker, award-winning author and former correspondent for the New York Times.

UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, said "This milestone event will provide a unique opportunity for tourism and culture stakeholders from all regions to discuss how to further harness the power of tourism and culture to alleviate poverty, create jobs, protect heritage and promote international understanding, contributing to the post-2015 development agenda".

Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General: "Culture shapes our identity and is a means to foster respect and tolerance among people. It is also a way to create millions of jobs and improve people's lives, a path to strengthen mutual understanding. Safeguarding cultural heritage must move forward with sustainable tourism, which is the core message of this Conference. This vision guides our efforts to promote culture as a driver and as an enabler of sustainable development, and is especially important at this time of change, when countries are shaping a new global sustainable development agenda to follow 2015."

Hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia in Siem Reap, home of UNESCO World Heritage Site Angkor Wat, the Conference will count on the presence of His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Baromneath Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia, and Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 18 December 2014
PR No. 14086

International tourism on track to end 2014 with record numbers

International tourism is set to hit a new record by the end of 2014 with over 1.1 billion international tourists travelling the world in one single year. During the first ten months of 2014, the number of international tourists grew by 5% according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, rising above expectations.

Between January and October 2014, the volume of international tourists (overnight visitors) reached 978 million, 45 million more than in the same period of 2013. With an increase of 4.7%, international tourism continues to grow well above the long-term trend projected by UNWTO for the period 2010-2020 (+3.8%), and is set to end the year at over 1.1 billion.

By region, the strongest growth was registered in the Americas (+8%), followed by Asia and the Pacific (+5%) and Europe (+4%). By subregion, North America (+9%) and South Asia (+8%) were the star performers, as well as Southern and Mediterranean Europe, North-East Asia and Northern Europe (all +7%).

“In view of this trend, international tourism is set to end 2014 with record numbers”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. “These are remarkable results considering that different parts of the world continue to face significant geopolitical and health challenges, while the global economic recovery remains rather fragile and uneven”, he added.

“More importantly, we see a growing political commitment to the tourism sector in many countries. This is encouraging, not in the least because tourism is one of the sectors that is best able to deliver on employment at a moment when job creation need to be a priority to all”, he added.

The Americas: the best results of the last decade

The Americas (+8%) led growth during the first ten months of 2014, rebounding significantly on last year’s subdued results. This is the region’s best performance since 2004, when international tourism also rebounded strongly, following the 2003 SARS outbreak. All subregions – North America, the Caribbean, Central America and South America – doubled the growth rates of 2013, with particularly positive results in North America in view of the extraordinary performance of Mexico and the United States.

International arrivals in Asia and the Pacific increased by 5% (through October), consolidating the region’s growth trend of recent years. The best results came from South Asia (+8%), led by India (+7%), and from North-East Asia (+7%) where major destinations such as Japan and the Republic of Korea registered double-digit growth. Arrivals in Oceania grew by 6%

owing mostly to the increase of arrivals in Australia and New Zealand. In South-East Asia (+2%), growth slowed down compared to 2012 and 2013 as a result of the decline in arrivals registered in Thailand.

Europe, the most visited region in the world, posted a 4% increase in international tourist arrivals through October, with strong results in Northern Europe and in Southern Mediterranean Europe (both +7%), where established destinations such as Greece, Portugal, Spain and Malta recorded robust growth. International tourism grew at a more modest pace in Western Europe (+2%) and was stagnant in Central and Eastern Europe (0%), in stark contrast with the last three years, during which arrivals grew at an average of 8% a year.

International tourist arrivals in the Middle East are estimated to be up by 4% (in the first ten months of 2014), rebounding on the declines registered since 2011. All destinations in the region with data available report positive growth, with Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia all substantially improving their performance as compared to 2013.

Africa's international tourist numbers grew by 3% (through October) with North Africa consolidating its recovery (+2%). Subsaharan Africa's arrivals were up by 3% despite the challenges of the Ebola Disease Outbreak in a few West African countries. Data for Africa and the Middle East, nonetheless, should be read with caution as it is based on limited and volatile data for these regions.

UNWTO will release preliminary 2014 full year results for international tourist arrivals by 27 January 2015.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 23 December 2014
PR No. 14090

Towards global statistics on city tourism: the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), European Cities Marketing (ECM) and MODUL University Vienna join forces

UNWTO, ECM and MODUL University Vienna agree to develop a common framework and methodology to compare city tourism data on a global level.

As part of the UNWTO Cities Project, and in the framework of the Istanbul Declaration (2012) on City Tourism, UNWTO, ECM and MODUL University join forces to promote the sustainable development of city tourism as a driver of economic growth.

The three partners will each provide specific expertise to this common goal, which is key to improve planning and decision making by private and public tourism stakeholders in cities worldwide. The project will count on essential research, insights and tools to benchmark city performance developed by European Cities Marketing's as well as on TourMIS, a platform for tourism associations to exchange data on overnight stays, hotel capacities and occupancy rate hosted by the MODUL University Vienna.

UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, welcomed this new partnership. "City tourism has become a strategic element in urban planning and management; thanks to this agreement with ECM and MODUL University Vienna, we will be able to work on systematic data collection on city tourism all over the world", he said

Commenting on the partnership agreement, ECM President Ignasi de Delàs added: "We are thrilled to partner with UNWTO and MODUL University Vienna, and extend our expertise in benchmarking and measuring city tourism on the global level. This is a milestone in the history of the expertise developed within European Cities Marketing."

Karl Wöber, President of MODUL University Vienna concluded: "At present, 115 cities enter their information in TourMIS on a monthly or annual basis and I am really honoured to extend the TourMIS database. We will certainly provide guidance to cities willing to participate in the Global City Tourism Benchmarking report so that they can meet the required standards."

ECM, MODUL University Vienna and UNWTO aim to regularly publish a Global City Tourism Benchmarking Report. The partners will furthermore form a group of international experts to observe and comment on the progress of the project and provide guidelines on how to further integrate indicators on the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism into the current system of city tourism measurement.

European Cities Marketing is a non-profit organisation improving the competitiveness and performance of leading cities of Europe by providing a platform for convention, leisure and city marketing professionals to exchange knowledge, best practice and widen their network to build new business. European Cities Marketing is promoting and linking the interests of 110 members from more than 100 major cities in 36 countries.

Contact information
Flavie Baudot
+33 380 56 02 00

MODUL Research is a subdivision of MODUL University Vienna that aims to bridge the two domains of basic and applied research. MODUL Research engages in research projects that provide workable solutions to problems that private firms, industry associations, groups in civil society, and governmental organisations have identified as important.

Contact information
MODUL Research
TourMIS
Prof. Karl Wöber, President

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 29 December 2014
PR No. 14091

Tourism leaders of the Americas to gather in Haiti

Haiti will host UNWTO's annual regional gathering of tourism authorities, the UNWTO Commission for the Americas. The 58th Meeting of the Commission reflects Haiti's preparedness to seize the growing tourism momentum in the region to further open sustainable development opportunities through tourism.

The meeting, to be held for the first time in Haiti (19-22 May, Port au Prince) , will serve as an occasion for the country to showcase its recent progress in infrastructure projects, ranging from roads to airports, in support of positioning Haiti's destinations on the international tourism map.

"The Minister of Tourism of Haiti, Stephanie Villedrouin, has been paving the way to generate new tourism opportunities to generate jobs and support the country's economy, against the backdrop of political support by President Martelly, for tourism as a driver of improved livelihoods in Haiti", said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. "As we transition towards the new Sustainable Development Goals after 2015, this meeting could not have been announced more timely, underscoring the potential of tourism as a natural ally for socio-economic progress", he added.

Especially for the world's Small Island Developing States (SIDS), tourism has been singled out as a key activity for economic progress and social cohesion. In 2013, 41 million international tourists visited the SIDS, generating US$ 61 billion in foreign earnings. Island States have a natural competitive tourism advantage, for half of which the sector accounts for more than 40% of the value of all exports of goods and services. International tourism is both a primary source of foreign exchange earnings with an important economic impact, equating more than 20% of GDP in several of the SIDS.

The Americas accounts for a 16% share of international tourists worldwide (168 million) and a 20% share of receipts (US$ 230 billion). In 2013, international tourist arrivals to the Americas increased by 3% while export earnings from tourism grew by 6%.

Haiti was able to substantially increase international arrivals and tourism revenues, growing 20% and 32% between 2012 and 2013, respectively.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

New York, USA / Madrid, Spain, 14 January 2015
PR No. 15001

UN General Assembly: Sustainable tourism is a tool for poverty reduction and environmental protection

A milestone resolution recognizing the contribution of sustainable tourism to poverty eradication, community development and the protection of biodiversity has been adopted by consensus by the United Nations General Assembly.

Emphasizing the need to optimize the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits stemming from sustainable tourism, particularly in developing countries, the resolution entitled "Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection" calls upon the UN System to promote sustainable tourism as an instrument that can contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The resolution, significantly broader in scope than previous ones on the subject, builds on a 2012 UN resolution on ecotourism and draws on a report prepared by UNWTO. In line with UNWTO recommendations, it underlines the importance of appropriate national policies, guidelines and regulations for promoting sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, and encourages UN Member States and regional and international financial institutions to support sustainable tourism projects, enabling the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting cooperatives and facilitating access to inclusive financial services, including microcredit initiatives for the poor, local and indigenous communities.

The resolution was adopted by consensus and sponsored by an impressive total number of 107 Member States, including Morocco, which, as on previous occasions, was the lead sponsor and in that capacity had steered the whole negotiating process to a successful conclusion.

"UNWTO welcomes this remarkable acknowledgement of tourism's ability to advance sustainable development across the world", said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai. "The wide-ranging support to this resolution mirrors the increasing awareness of the vital role tourism plays in a sustainable future for all and opens the doors for supportive national policies and international financing for sustainable tourism."

The resolution places sustainable tourism firmly on the UN post-2015 agenda as it requests UNWTO and other United Nations agencies to develop "… recommendations on ways and means to promote sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, as a tool for fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development …" to be submitted to the seventy-first session of the UN General Assembly in 2016.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 22 January 2015
PR No. 15003

UNWTO Awards to recognize innovation and excellence in tourism

Tourism initiatives and scholars from around the world will once again be recognized for their outstanding contribution to the sector at the UNWTO Awards Ceremony to be held at the International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR) in Madrid, Spain, on 28 January 2015.

Since 2003, the UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism have honored tourism initiatives and individuals for their contribution to tourism through knowledge and innovation, in line with the principles of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The 11th edition of the UNWTO Awards will celebrate remarkable achievements in the following categories:

UNWTO Ulysses Prize for Excellence in the Creation and Dissemination of Knowledge

Dr. Eduardo Fayos-Solà from Spain has been named the winner of the 11th UNWTO Ulysses Prize for Excellence in the Creation and Dissemination of Knowledge for his significant contributions to the practical application of tourism knowledge. Dr. Eduardo Fayos-Solà has dedicated his career to advancing the theory and practice of tourism policy and governance from various positions in academia, the private sector, government, and international organizations. Among his many accomplishments, he served as an adviser to the first democratically elected parliament of Spain on public policy matters, including tourism, and was the driving force behind the creation and implementation of Spain's first Tourism Policy Plan.

UNWTO Ulysses Awards for Innovation

The UNWTO Awards recognizes achievements in tourism innovation in four sub-categories: Public Policy and Governance, Enterprises, Non-governmental Organizations, and Research and Technology. Below are this year's finalists, in alphabetical order:

UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Public Policy and Governance

Domestic Tourism Promotion Initiative “Y tú, qué planes?”,Commission for the Promotion of Exports and Tourism - PromPeru (Peru), Fragrances and Tastes of Lošinj, Mali Lošinj Tourist Board (Croatia)

The Use of Open Innovation in Co-Creating Vienna’s Tourism Strategy 2020, Vienna Tourist Board(Austria)

UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Enterprises

Inspira Santa Marta Hotel, Hotel Santa Marta S.A. (Portugal)

Isoitok Camp Manyara, The African Footprint Co ltd (Tanzania)

Routes the Coffee Cultural Landscape, Chamber of Commerce in Armenia, Quindío (Colombia

UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Non-Governmental Organizations

Conserving Wildlife and Empowering Communities in Namibia, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (Namibia)

Promotion of Local Culture in the Sundarbans Impact Zone in Bangladesh through Cultural Ecotourism and Entrepreneurship, Relief International – UK (Bangladesh)

Taste of Fethiye, The Travel Foundation (Turkey)

Visit Amsterdam, See Holland, Amsterdam Marketing (The Netherlands)

UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Research and Technology

Building a Community of Conscious Globetrotter Making a Positive Impact through Ethical and Responsible Tourism, Freeedom – Explore Experience Empower (Australia), China Tourism Economy Monitoring and Early Warning System, China Tourism Academy (China)

Key Figures : Amsterdam as a Convention Destination, Amsterdam Marketing (The Netherlands)

Visit Europe iPad App, European Travel Commission

The winners and runner-ups of the UNWTO Ulysses Awards for Innovation will be presented during the UNWTO Awards Ceremony to be held on 28 January 2015.

Prior to the Ceremony, the Awards Symposium to be held on 27 January will bring together the current and previous UNWTO Ulysses Prize Laureates as well the finalists of the UNWTO Awards for Innovation to share their experiences.

Contacts:

UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi

Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 22 January 2015
PR No. 15004

INVESTOUR – creating business opportunities for Africa

Now in its sixth consecutive year, the Tourism Investment and Business Forum for Africa (INVESTOUR), to be held next week at the International Tourism Fair (FITUR), will bring together a record number of African tourism projects, potential investors and business partners, opening new opportunities for sustainable tourism in the region (29 January 2015, Madrid, Spain).

Tourism is increasingly recognized as an important driver of socio-economic development in Africa, a region which has seen tourism demand jump from 26 million international tourists in 2000 to 56 million in 2014. A joint initiative of UNWTO, FITUR and Casa África (representing the Spanish Government), INVESTOUR is a yearly platform promoting business and knowledge exchange between African tourism projects and international partners.

The Forum will be opened by UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, Minister of Industry, Energy and Tourism of Spain, José Manuel Soria, and Director-General of Casa África, Luis Padrón,. The Secretary of State for Tourism of Spain, Isabel Borrego Cortés, will close the event.

Debates during INVESTOUR 2015 will focus on investment in human capital and the impact of Africa's image on foreign direct investment (FDI) in the tourism sector. The Forum will count on the participation of 22 Ministers of Tourism from Africa and the Middle East and experts from the African Development Bank and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Training and Development Institute, among others.

The Forum includes a business-to-business (B2B) segment, matching representatives of African tourism projects with potential international partners. Last year, the B2B session gathered 134 projects from 32 African countries, which met with 34 companies.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 27 January 2015
PR No. 15006

Over 1.1 billion tourists travelled abroad in 2014

International tourist arrivals reached 1,138 million in 2014, a 4.7% increase over the previous year, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. For 2015, UNWTO forecasts international tourism to grow by 3% to 4%, further contributing to the global economic recovery.

The number of international tourists (overnight visitors) reached 1,138 million in 2014, 51 million more than in 2013. With an increase of 4.7%, this is the fifth consecutive year of above average growth since the 2009 economic crisis.

"Over the past years, tourism has proven to be a surprisingly strong and resilient economic activity and a fundamental contributor to the economic recovery by generating billions of dollars in exports and creating millions of jobs. This has been true for destinations all around the world, but particularly for Europe, as the region struggles to consolidate its way out of one of the worst economic periods in its history," said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, opening the Spain Global Tourism Forum in Madrid.

By region, the Americas (+7%) and Asia and the Pacific (+5%) registered the strongest growth, while Europe (+4%), the Middle East (+4%) and Africa (+2%) grew at a slightly more modest pace. By subregion, North America (+8%) saw the best results, followed by North-East Asia, South Asia, Southern and Mediterranean Europe, Northern Europe and the Caribbean, all increasing by 7%.

As in recent years, the growth in international tourism receipts in 2014 is expected to have followed that of arrivals fairly close (the 2014 results for international tourism receipts will be released in April 2015). In 2013, international tourism receipts reached US$ 1,187 billion, US$ 230 billion more than in the pre-crisis year of 2008.

Positive outlook for 2015

For 2015, UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals to grow between 3% and 4%. By region, growth is expected to be stronger in Asia and the Pacific (+4% to +5%) and the Americas (+4% to +5%), followed by Europe (+3% to +4%). Arrivals are expected to increase by +3% to +5% in Africa and by +2% to +5% in the Middle East.

"We expect demand to continue growing in 2015 as the global economic situation improves even though there are still plenty of challenges ahead. On the positive side, oil prices have declined to a level not seen since 2009. This will lower transport costs and boost economic growth by lifting purchasing power and private demand in oil importing economies. Yet, it could also negatively impact some of the oil exporting countries which have emerged as strong tourism source markets," added Mr Rifai.

The positive outlook for 2015 is confirmed by the UNWTO Confidence

Index. According to the 300 tourism experts consulted worldwide for the Index, tourism performance is expected to improve in 2015, though expectations are less upbeat than a year ago.

Europe consolidates its position as the most visited region in the world

Europe (+4%), the most visited region with over half of the world's international tourists, saw an increase of 22 million arrivals in 2014, reaching a total of 588 million. Thanks to these results, tourism has been a major contributor to the European economic recovery. Northern Europe and Southern and Mediterranean Europe led growth (both +7%), while results were more modest in Western Europe (+2%). Arrivals in Central and Eastern Europe (0%) stagnated after three years of strong growth.

International tourist arrivals in Asia and the Pacific (+5%) increased by 13 million to 263 million. The best performance was recorded in North-East Asia and South Asia (both +7%). Arrivals in Oceania grew by 6%, while growth slowed down in South-East Asia (+2%) as compared to previous years.

The Americas was the best performing region in relative terms with growth of 7%, welcoming an additional 13 million international tourists and raising the total to 181 million. Growth was driven by North America (+8%), where Mexico posted a double-digit increase, and the Caribbean (+7%). Arrivals to Central America and South America (both +6%) grew at double the rate recorded in 2013 and well above the world average.

International tourism in the Middle East (+4%) shows signs of rebound with good results in most destinations. The region attracted an additional 2 million arrivals, bringing the total to 50 million. Africa's international tourist numbers grew by an estimated 2%, equivalent to an increase of one million arrivals. The region reached 56 million tourists. While arrivals to North Africa were weak (+1%), Sub-Saharan Africa saw international tourist numbers rise by 3% despite the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in a few West African countries. Data for Africa and the Middle East should be read with caution as it is based on limited and volatile data.

Demand from traditional source markets picks up

A pickup in expenditure on international tourism from traditional source markets compensated for the slowdown of the large emerging markets, which had been driving tourism growth in previous years.

The total number of trips abroad from China is estimated to have increased by 11 million to 109 million in 2014. Expenditure was up by 17% in the first three quarters of 2014, a strong result but slower than in previous years (40% in 2012 and 26% in 2013, respectively). China is the world's largest outbound market since 2012 with a total expenditure of US$ 129 billion in 2013.

Among the other two main emerging markets, the Russian Federation (-6%) clearly lost strength in 2014, while Brazil still grew by 2%, despite the appreciation of the US dollar against the Brazilian real and slower economic growth. Beyond the top ten, some smaller emerging markets saw expenditure grow substantially, with Saudi Arabia, India, the Philippines and Qatar all reporting increases of 30% or over.

A pickup in demand from traditional source markets compensated for the slowdown of the large emerging markets. Expenditure from the United States, the second largest outbound market in the world, grew by 6%. Noteworthy is also the rebound of France (+11%), Italy (+6%) and the United Kingdom (+4%).

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 28 January 2015
PR No. 15007

Prime Minister of Spain receives UNWTO/WTTC Open Letter on Travel and Tourism

In recognition of tourism's ability to create jobs and socio-economic growth, the Prime Minister of Spain, Mariano Rajoy, has accepted the UNWTO/World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Open Letter on Travel and Tourism (Madrid, Spain, 27 January 2015).

Prime Minister Rajoy accepted the Letter from UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, and the President and CEO of WTTC, David Scowsill, on the occasion of the Spain Global Tourism Forum held in Madrid.

"Tourism is a State policy in Spain", said Prime Minister Rajoy stressing that the sector accounts for 10.9% of Spain's GDP and generates one in 9 jobs, and as such "is a strategic sector for both the present and the future of our economy".

Spain is the third most visited country in the world, and the second destination in terms of foreign earnings from tourism. With tourism representing 25% of all new jobs created in Spain in 2014, the sector remains firmly positioned as one of the country's most important economic sectors.

"Spain's remarkable tourism success would not have been possible without support from the highest political level. By accepting the Open Letter, Mr. Rajoy re-affirms the Spanish Government's incredible backing of the tourism sector, which I trust will continue making the sector a key driver in the country's economic and social development", said Mr. Rifai on the occasion.

David Scowsill said: "Spain will host WTTC´s 15th annual Global Summit on 15-16 April in Madrid, where WTTC members – the Chairmen and CEOs of the world's leading travel and tourism companies - will convene with government ministers and other industry leaders to debate and recommend policies which drive travel and tourism growth. The hosting of this Global Summit underlines Spain's prioritization of tourism. With the investment and enthusiasm Spain is showing the sector, it is one which will continue to underpin the country's economy for the long term".

The UNWTO/WTTC Open Letter calls on Heads of State and Government around the world to acknowledge tourism's key role in delivering more sustained and balanced socio-economic growth and to prioritize the sector higher in national policies in order to maximize its potential.

In 2014, Spain received 65 million international tourist arrivals – a new historic record and the highest growth (+7%) in the last 14 years.

Note to editors:

The UNWTO/WTTC Open Letter outlines Travel & Tourism's value as one of the world's largest generators of jobs, a powerful driver of socio-economic growth and development and a key player in the transformation to the Green Economy. To date, the Open Letter has been received by 71 Heads of State and Government.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 29 January 2015
PR No. 15008

11th UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism announced

A project promoting domestic tourism in Peru, an initiative for travelers to immerse in the Maasai community in Tanzania, an innovative marketing project from Amsterdam and an application promoting European tourism were the winners of the 11th UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism (Madrid, Spain, 28 January 2015).

The UNWTO Ulysses Awardees for Innovation, distinguished in four categories, were:

a) UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Public Policy and Governance: Domestic Tourism Promotion Initiative "Y tú, qué planes?", Commission for the Promotion of Exports and Tourism - PromPeru (Peru)

b) UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Enterprises: Isoitok Camp Manyara, The African Footprint Co ltd (Tanzania)

c) UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Non-Governmental Organizations: Visit Amsterdam, See Holland, Amsterdam Marketing (The Netherlands)

d) UNWTO Ulysses Award for Innovation in Research and Technology: Visit Europe iPad App, European Travel Commission

“If innovation is the spark, then knowledge is the fuel that drives tourism”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, opening the Awards Ceremony. “The finalists honoured tonight are outstanding examples of forward-thinking initiatives in sustainability, social inclusion and technology in the tourism sector, and are as such key contributors in turning tourism into a force for good across the globe, a goal we must all be deeply committed to“, he added.

Dr. Eduardo Fayos-Solà was presented with the UNWTO Ulysses Prize for Creation and Dissemination of Knowledge. Dr. Fayos-Solà has dedicated his career to advancing the theory and practice of tourism policy and governance from various positions in academia, the private sector, government, and international organizations. Among his many accomplishments, he was behind the creation and implementation of Spain’s first Tourism Policy Plan.

The UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism are the flagship awards for the global tourism sector, recognizing knowledge creation, dissemination and innovative solutions. The winners were announced at the Awards Ceremony which, for the second consecutive year, took place at the International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR) in Madrid, Spain.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 3 February 2015
PR No. 15010

Investour 2015: Africa needs a stronger brand

Branding and promotion, foreign direct investment, human resources development and visa facilitation were among the key topics in focus at the VI Investment and Tourism Business Forum for Africa (INVESTOUR). 16 Tourism Ministers from Africa and the Middle East and experts from different areas attended the yearly Forum, held on the occasion of the International Tourism Fair (FITUR). The debates focused particularly on the need to work towards a stronger Brand Africa (Madrid, Spain, 29 January 2015).

Between 2000 and 2014, international tourist arrivals to Africa more than doubled, from 26 million to 56 million. Despite a challenging 2014, the region still grew 2% compared to 2013, and the future outlook remains positive with 134 million arrivals forecast by UNWTO for 2030.

INVESTOUR, a joint UNWTO, FITUR and Casa Africa initiative now in its sixth year, has become a central platform for companies and African tourism authorities to promote investment and commercial opportunities in the continent. This annual event is also a key forum to debate some of the most pressing issues affecting tourism in Africa.

“Supporting Africa´s tourism is supporting the region´s economic growth and employment, bringing immense opportunities for development”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. “In order to fulfil Africa’s tourism potential, key challenges such as infrastructure development, travel facilitation and the full usage of modern technologies to maximize marketing and services needs to be addressed. INVESTOUR facilitates fruitful partnerships that helps transform these challenges into opportunities for a brighter future in Africa and a more inclusive growth for all”.

“We always hear that the future holds many opportunities for Africa, and the future is now“, said the Minister of Industry, Energy and Tourism of Spain, José Manuel Soria López, in reference to the many tourism prospects in the region. Luis Padrón, Director General of Casa África, was equally positive, highlighting the region’s democratic and economic advancements. “I am sure that cooperation and the ´know how´ of the Spanish companies, many of them world leaders in tourism, can be of great support for joint projects in Africa”, said Mr. Padrón.

Participants concluded that while governance across the region is steadily advancing, the sector needs further recognition in national agendas in order to secure much needed financing, namely for investment in infrastructure, training and statistics. Other issues highlighted were the need to increase visa facilitation across the region, the pressing need to efficiently promote positive stories about tourism in Africa and the urgency of building a strong brand for Africa.

Attending the Forum were the Ministers of Tourism of Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Iraq, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Seychelles, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Secretary of State for Tourism of Guinea-Bissau, alongside experts from the African Development Bank (ADB) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Training and Development Institute among others.

As in previous editions, the business-to-business (B2B) session brought together 140 tourism initiatives from 34 African countries to meet with 20 companies from around the world.

Contacts:

UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 5 de febrero de 2015
PR No. 15011

Middle East & North Africa: Tourism adapts to challenges and gains new momentum

The tourism sector in the Middle East and North Africa has been largely able to adapt and recover in recent times and even bounce back over the past year. Against this backdrop, several tourism ministers of the region, Spanish authorities and private sector representatives focused on future tourism prospects at the third Ministerial Round Table on Tourism Development in the MENA Region, during the Madrid International Tourism Fair (29 January, FITUR Madrid).

Jointly organized by UNWTO and Casa Árabe, the public consortium headed by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Relations, this annual Forum has consolidated into a key platform for the exchange of best practices and identification of strategic areas to address in order to further strengthen tourism development in the region.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Ignacio Ybañez Rubio, underscored tourism as a tool for international understanding and expressed the need for a new Euro-Mediterranean agenda, with stability as a key element for sustainable tourism development: "Tourism is a driver of development - there is no better proximity policy than stimulating tourism as it means exchange of experiences and know-how."

UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, said that "Spain has a critical role in bringing Europe and the MENA region closer together, while tourism is one of the most important vehicles for the comeback of the region; this is already happening, creating jobs and eliminating poverty".

The Director General of Casa Árabe, Eduardo López Busquets, welcomed the celebration of this third edition, highlighting the importance of tourist development for the stability and prosperity of the region and, with it, for the stability and prosperity of Spain and the EU.

According to the most recent UNWTO data, after three successive years of decline, international tourist arrivals to the Middle East grew by 4% and by 1% to North Africa in 2014. Mainly depending on peace and stability, future tourism prospects for the Middle East are positive (between 2% and 5% in 2015). According to UNWTO forecasts, by 2030 the MENA region could receive 195 million tourist arrivals (almost triple the present volume of 70 million tourists) benefiting both established and emerging destinations.

Tourism potential and challenges

Experts trust in a strong pent up demand for tourism to the region from both intra and inter-regional generating markets, which will continue to be released as uncertainty fades away and consumer confidence returns.

Participating Tourism Ministers pointed precisely to the critical contribution of political stability for tourism to prosper and contribute to socio-economic progress, including the need for political will to support tourism (Morocco), consolidation of democracy (Tunisia), an active civil society (Lebanon), as well as the benefits of trans-border cooperation in the MENA region (Jordan and Oman).

A more stable political framework is conducive to successfully addressing challenges which include the removal of barriers to growth, strengthening the sector's resilience, adapting to changing consumer patterns and technological changes, as well as developing new business models and maximizing tourism's social and economic benefits, while minimizing possible negative impacts.

Note to editors:

The third Ministerial Round Table on Tourism Development in the MENA region was attended by HE Rula Ma'ayah, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Palestine, HE Lahcen Haddad, Minister of Tourism, Morocco, HE Michel Pharaon, Minister of Tourism, Lebanon, HE Adel Fahad El Shershab, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Iraq, Maitha Al Mahrouqi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Tourism of Oman, Ms Wahida Jaiet, Director General of ONTT, Tunisia, and Mr Abdelrazzaq Arabiyat, Managing Director of Jordan Tourism Board.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 6 February 2015
PR No. 15012

UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture gathers Ministers of Tourism and Culture for the first time

Over 900 participants, including over 45 Ministers and Vice Ministers of Tourism and Culture, international experts, speakers and guests from 100 countries, gathered at the UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture in Siem Reap, Cambodia, to explore and advance new partnership models between tourism and culture (4-6 February 2015).

Tourism, moving more than one billion people across international borders each year, offers immense possibilities for socio-economic development in destinations around the world. Cultural tourism has proven to increase competitiveness, create employment opportunities, curb rural migration, generate income for investment in preservation, and nurture a sense of pride and self-esteem among host communities. Yet, in order to effectively promote and safeguard the very heritage cultural tourism relies on, a sustainable, multi-stakeholder approach is crucial.

Over the course of two days, the First UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture brought together Ministers, leading experts and stakeholders in the two fields to highlight the need to create a new framework for collaboration between tourism and culture, which includes active participation of host communities, visitors, the public and the private sector.

"We need cross cutting policies to promote the sustainable development of cultural tourism", said Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, opening the meeting. "This Conference represents an important contribution to advance the future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the link between tourism and culture", he added.

"Cultural heritage tells mankind's story; it tells our story. Carefully managed, tourism can protect and enliven this heritage, generate new opportunities for local communities, and foster tolerance and respect between peoples and nations", said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai opening the Conference. "It is up to us to work together to harness the sheer force of one billion tourists, turning it into one billion opportunities to contribute to inclusive economic growth, social development and advancement of the post-2015 sustainability agenda around the world. I trust this Conference will allow us to strengthen our partnerships and work closer together as architects of such a sustainable future", he added.

"Every tourist must be a custodian of world heritage, an ambassador of intercultural dialogue. This is why safeguarding cultural heritage must move forward with sustainable tourism", said Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, in her message to the conference. "This vision guides our efforts to promote culture as a driver and as an enabler of sustainable development.This has never been so important at this time of change, when countries are shaping a new global sustainable development agenda to follow 2015".

In his key note address to the Conference, King Simeon II, former Prime Minster of Bulgaria, said: "As one of the three living heads of state from World War II, I must share with you what first came to my mind when reading about culture coupled with tourism: peace, harmony, mutual understanding. Promoting peace and understanding among people, securing thus a better standard of living, bonds of friendship in a world with far too much aggressiveness, hatred, inequality and prejudice, is vital. We need to ensure that cultural tourism is on the international community's agenda for sustainable development in view of the new Sustainable Development Goals."

In his key note address, HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Chairman of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities stressed the efforts of the Saudi Commission in "promoting cultural heritage on various levels including its linkage to tourism, to the national economy and the development of the nation."

In message to the Conference, the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, stressed that "the power of culture diversity has been acknowledged as an integral component for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and will remain an essential element of the post 2015 Sustainable UN Development Agenda. In this context, tourism plays an essential role in helping people of different cultures understand each other and eliminate cultural barriers".

The Ministerial Dialogue, moderated by Andrew Stevens from CNN International, focused on how tourism and culture administrations can work together to develop a governance framework for sustainable cultural tourism, which contributes to the socio-economic development of host communities, promotes cross-cultural exchanges, and generates resources for heritage conservation. Ministers stressed the importance of creating common institutional structures to plan and manage cultural tourism, ensure community engagement and empowerment and cooperation with the private sector.

The technical sessions focused on cultural preservation, cultural routes, tourism and creative industries, and urban regeneration through cultural tourism.

On the occasion of the Conference, the Agreement on the Establishment of the International ST-EP (Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty) Organization was signed by Cambodia, Ethiopia, Peru, Paraguay and the Republic of Korea in the presence of the UNWTO Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the ST-EP Foundation, Amb. Dho Young-shim.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 18 February 2015
PR No. 15014

Governments recognize benefits of visa facilitation

Visa facilitation has experienced strong progress in recent years, particularly through the implementation of visa on arrival policies according to UNWTO's latest Visa Openness Report. This largely reflects an increased awareness among policymakers of the positive impacts of visa facilitation on tourism and economic growth.

According to the Report, 62% of the world's population was required a traditional visa prior to departure in 2014, down from 77% in 2008. In the same year, 19% of the world's population was able to enter a destination without a visa, while 16% could receive a visa on arrival, as compared to 17% and 6% in 2008.

The Report also shows that the most prevalent facilitation measure implemented has been “visa on arrival”. Over half of all improvements made in the last four years were from “visa required” to “visa on arrival”.

“Visa facilitation is central to stimulating economic growth and job creation through tourism. Although there is much room for improvement, we are pleased to see that a growing number of governments around the world is taking decisive steps in this regard”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

Countries in the Americas and in Asia and the Pacific have been at the forefront of visa facilitation, while Europe and Middle East have more restrictive visa policies. Overall, emerging economies tend to be more open than advanced ones, with South-East Asia, East Africa, the Caribbean and Oceania among the most open subregions.

“UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, and easier visa procedures will be crucial to attract these travellers, especially tourists from emerging source markets like China, Russia, India and Brazil”, added Mr Rifai.

Research by UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) shows that the G20 economies could boost their international tourist numbers by an additional 122 million, generate an extra US$ 206 billion in tourism exports and create over five million additional jobs by improving visa processes and entry formalities. The same research carried out for the APEC and the ASEAN countries indicates that visa facilitation could generate important gains for both groups, including the creation of 2.6 million jobs in APEC and 650.000 jobs in ASEAN.

Note to Editors:

Data on visa policies by country is collected by UNWTO on an annual basis since 2008 and validated through surveys and communication with the Organization’s Member States.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 26 February 2015
PR No. 15016

UNWTO report identifies common criteria for 4 and 5 star hotel classification

The new UNWTO report Hotel Classification Systems: Recurrence of Criteria in 4 and 5 Star Hotels, identifies the common criteria among 4 and 5 star hotels, providing valuable insights for destinations wishing to revise existing or establish new hotel classification systems.

Benchmarking international accommodation standards can help destinations establish hotel classification systems which are more relevant and useful to consumers, hotels, intermediaries and destinations alike. Against this backdrop, the new UNWTO report Hotel Classification Systems: Recurrence of Criteria in 4 and 5 Star Hotels compares criteria recurrence in 30 European destinations and six destinations in other regions.

Prepared jointly by UNWTO and Norwegian Accreditation (NA), an agency of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries of Norway through its QualityMark Norway programme, the report reveals that despite the existence of many types of classification systems across the globe, there are more similarities than differences, both between geographic groups and between 4 and 5 star categories.

The report also provides a general overview of the existing types of hotel classifications, their benefits and challenges, and offers general guidance on areas to consider when setting up an official classification system.

Findings also suggest that more regular reviews of hotel classification systems can be useful to keep them up-to-date with rapidly evolving consumer needs, particularly with regards to technology and accessibility.

This is the second joint UNWTO/Norwegian Accreditation report on the topic of hotel classification, following Online Guest Reviews and Hotel Classification Systems: An Integrated Approach, published in 2014.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 3 March 2015
PR No. 15017

Tourism development in Africa challenged by wildlife crime

Wildlife watching tourism is one of the most important tourism segments in Africa, according to new UNWTO research released on the occasion of World Wildlife Day. In view of tourism’s potential in advancing inclusive growth across the continent, poaching and illicit trade in wildlife pose a serious threat to the future of Africa’s socio-economic development, the publication warns.

In support of international efforts to tackle unprecedented levels of poaching and to strengthen the role of tourism vis-à-vis wildlife crime, UNWTO is spearheading efforts to increase knowledge on the economic value of wildlife watching in Africa. Towards Measuring the Economic Value of Wildlife Watching Tourism in Africa, provides a first overview of this segment, its economic impact and the current involvement of tourism in anti-poaching measures.

“Poaching is not only destroying precious ecosystems, it also poses a serious threat to socio-economic development. The loss of biodiversity is directly linked to lost development opportunities in the African tourism sector, which provides livelihoods for millions of people”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai in his message on the occasion of World Wildlife Day.

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon said “Illegal wildlife trade undermines the rule of law and threatens national security; it degrades ecosystems and is a major obstacle to the efforts of rural communities and indigenous peoples striving to sustainably manage their natural resources.”

According to UNWTO’s findings, wildlife watching represents 80% of the total annual sales of trips to Africa, with safari as the most popular product. The species most threatened by poaching such as elephants and rhinos, are among the most popular in wildlife watching tours.

The research also brings further insights into the economic significance of wildlife watching tourism. Alongside generating crucial income for protected areas through entrance fees, a typical wildlife watching tour costs on average US$ 433 and captures an additional US$ 55 in out-of-pocket expenses per person, per day. In addition, tours often include locally hired services such as accommodation, transportation, tour guides and cultural performances, creating important job opportunities for the local population.

Tourism authorities are only involved to a minor extent in anti-poaching efforts and there is room for improvement, the paper indicates. Around 50% of the participating tour operators are funding anti-poaching initiatives and/or engaging in nature conservation projects, however only a few are so far proactively informing and engaging their customers on the issue.

“Given its economic importance, the tourism sector can and should play a key role in raising awareness among both policy makers and tourists on the devastating impacts of wildlife crime, and help finance anti-poaching initiatives. UNWTO remains deeply committed to mobilizing the international tourism community on this critical issue, which requires our immediate action“, added Mr. Rifai.

In order to advance knowledge of the economic importance of wildlife watching and its potential to directly contribute to conservation efforts, the paper recommends a number of actions for national tourism authorities, including increased involvement in anti-poaching initiatives, systematic integration and evaluation of available data, and capacity building for a more consistent monitoring of protected areas visitors and receipts.

Towards Measuring the Economic Value of Wildlife Watching Tourism in Africa builds on a survey of 48 African tourism and conservation authorities from 31 countries, as well as 145 international and African-based tour operators. The survey has been complemented with available statistics, case study reviews and in-depth interviews with governments and international organizations.

Note to editors:

Wildlife watching tourism relates exclusively to non-consumptive forms of wildlife-based activities such as observing and sometimes touching or feeding of animals, in contrast to consumptive forms like hunting and fishing.

Towards Measuring the Economic Value of Wildlife Watching Tourism in Africa was prepared by UNWTO in collaboration with the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS), and released on the occasion of the second annual World Wildlife Day (3 March).

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Berlin, Germany / Madrid, Spain, 3 March 2015
PR No. 15018

The Travel and Technological Revolutions: UNWTO Secretary-General at ITB 2015

In his ITB 2015 opening address, UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai highlighted how new technologies are changing society and shaping the tourism sector, shifting power from governments and companies to citizens and consumers. Rifai recalled that with power comes responsibility and highlighted tourism´s capacity to overcome prejudice in an often divided world (ITB Berlin, Germany, 3 March 2015).

Speaking at the opening of ITB Berlin, UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai underscored how the travel and the technological revolutions are shaping our society and how technology is changing the tourism sector. On the latter, he highlighted three main trends: the emergence of new business models, the call for accountability and the need for shared responsibility.

“Collaborative consumption is breeding new business models as individuals have found ways to profit by sharing their assets, be they real estate, vehicles or skills. While we must welcome innovation, we must also underline the need for the sector to find progressive solutions to safeguard consumer rights and quality standards and to ensure a level playing field for all businesses to thrive competitively”, said Rifai.

New digital platforms directly connecting consumers with companies and destinations are additional game changers. While consumers are increasingly easier to reach, they also have access to more information and opportunities to voice their opinions: “Today’s consumers can be the whistle-blowers for unethical practices or the biggest ambassadors for great experiences”, noted Rifai. “Going beyond words or slogans, destinations and companies must find ways to adapt and build their brand on concrete and relevant actions”.

“With the power brought in by technology comes also a bigger responsibility – a shared responsibility towards the planet and people” alerted Rifai.

“Over one billion tourists travel across international borders each year; I trust that this is a movement of hope; of opportunities to build a better world; a world of respect and understanding as we can never hate the one who has hosted us. We are thus part of a much bigger, transformative force that can instigate real change in the world; let’s take this power and act with responsibility”, concluded Mr. Rifai.

In 2014, international tourism grew once again above expectations. With a rise of 4.7% and a new record of 1,138 million tourists travelling the world in one single year, tourism delivered positive news amid a slow and uneven global economic recovery and geopolitical challenges.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 4 March 2015
PR No. 15019

UNWTO strongly condemns the destruction of cultural heritage

UNWTO is appalled by the systematic destruction of cultural and religious artefacts in Syria and Iraq, the last of which in the Mosul Museum in Iraq. On behalf of the international tourism community, UNWTO joins UNESCO in urging immediate action to safeguard the world’s cultural heritage.

“As stated by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, the recent systematic destruction of Iraq’s unique cultural heritage is intolerable and must come to an end immediately”, said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

“The world´s diverse cultural heritage tells mankind’s story; it tells our story. It gives a sense of pride and self-esteem to local communities, and motivates millions of people to travel and discover the world each year. As such, cultural artefacts are a source of understanding, tolerance and respect between peoples and nations. These inexcusable acts of terrorism are attacks on these values and the international community must stand united in condemning them”, he added.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 5 March 2015
PR No. 15020

Visa facilitation, infrastructure and marketing: key priorities for Silk Road Ministers

Visa facilitation, infrastructure development and marketing were the priorities identified by the 5th UNWTO Silk Road Ministers' Meeting at ITB to advance transnational routes (ITB Berlin, Germany 4 March 2015).

Participating countries reported on the measures taken to promote Silk Road tourism with a clear focus on visa facilitation, while calling for a more collaborative approach to marketing, namely e-marketing and cooperation with tour operators. Ministers recognized that in spite of the progress achieved in recent years in the area of travel facilitation, this issue remains high on the agenda as it constitutes one of the major obstacles for tourism development along the Silk Road.

"It is the shared history and culture of the countries along the Silk Road that links them together. We need to enhance these links by promoting transnational route development and facilitating travel" said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai in opening the meeting. "UNWTO remains firmly committed to working closely with our Member States to maximize the opportunities for tourism to boost trade and inclusive development across the Silk Road", he added.

UNWTO updated participants on the implementation of the Silk Road Action Plan 2014/2015, including the actions undertaken at major international fairs such as ITB Berlin, JATA Tourism Expo Japan and WTM London. The Meeting also highlighted the importance of the inscription of the first Silk Road heritage corridor on the World Heritage list – a milestone which culminates ten years of extensive research by UNESCO and partners.

Building upon the conclusions of the recent UNWTO/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture held last February in Siem Reap, Cambodia, the Meeting further emphasized the need for Tourism and Culture to work closely together to build a sustainable future for the Silk Road and ensure that tourism makes a strong contribution to safeguard the region's unique cultural and natural heritage.

In this respect, participants condemned the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq, one of the Member States of the Silk Road, recalling UN Security Council Resolution 2199 (2015) adopted on 12 February which condemns "the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria and calls upon "all Member States to take steps, in cooperation with Interpol, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other international organizations, to prevent the trade in items of cultural, scientific and religious importance illegally removed from either country during periods of conflict.

The meeting was attended by 22 Ministers of Tourism as well as

UNESCO, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and the Turkic Council.

The UNWTO Silk Road Task Force will meet next month in Seoul, Republic of Korea to continue work on projects and priorities outlined at the Ministers' Meeting.

Contacts:

UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 8 March 2015
PR No. 15021

International Women's Day: Tourism sector can do more to step it up on gender equality

On the occasion of International Women's Day, UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, calls upon the tourism sector to step up policies and businesses practices that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

The UNWTO/UN Women Global Report on Women in Tourism shows that tourism can offer significant opportunities to narrow the gender gap in employment and entrepreneurship as women are nearly twice as likely to be employers in tourism as compared to other sectors. The Report also shows that women are well represented in service and clerical level jobs, but poorly represented at professional levels and earn 10% to 15% less than their male counterparts.

Rifai recalled that "though in most regions women make up the majority of the tourism workforce, they tend to be concentrated in the lowest paid and lowest status jobs and perform a large amount of unpaid work in family tourism businesses".

Governments and the private sector have a major role to play in promoting policies that step up equality and women's empowerment. "There is a particularly important opportunity to promote empowerment through entrepreneurship as tourism has almost twice as many women employers as other sectors", he added.

On the occasion of one of the biggest tourism fairs in the world, ITB Berlin, held 4-8 March, UNWTO's event on Community Empowerment through Creative Industries and Tourism stressed the role that tourism can play in building better livelihoods for women, particularly in rural areas.

"The growth rate of this sector requires us to look beyond its economic value and identify how to make it a force for positive transformation. We need not to curb this growth but to harness it – this does not happen by itself – we need to focus our activity in fostering the integration of the most vulnerable into the tourism value chains", said Rifai opening the event.

The UNWTO/UN Women Global Report on Women in Tourism includes detailed recommendations for national tourism administrations and the private sector in the areas of employment, entrepreneurship, education, leadership and community development.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 18 March 2015
PR No. 15023

UNWTO strongly condemns attack in Tunisia

UNWTO is deeply saddened and shocked by the attack in the Bardo Museum in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. UNWTO conveys its heartfelt sympathy to the families of the victims who lost their lives or were injured, and expresses its solidarity to the people and the Government of Tunisia and to the governments of all nationals who were killed.

"This act of violence deserves the condemnation of the international community. As part of the global tourism family, we are shocked by these horrible attacks. The relatives and friends of the victims are in our thoughts and we once more convey our solidarity with the people and the Government of Tunisia" said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

"Tourism is a lifeline for the economy of Tunisia and we will continue our support to ensure that tourism continues to provide development opportunities to its people," he added.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 1 April 2015
PR No. 15026

UNWTO supports Tunisia' tourism

UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, participated last Sunday with other international dignitaries and UN representatives in the support march held in Tunes. On the occasion of his visit to Tunisia, Mr Rifai discussed the contribution of tourism to the country's socio-economic development with President Beji Caid Essebsi and Prime Minister Habib

Essid and agreed a new cooperation programme with the Minister of Tourism of Tunisia, Salma Elloumi Rekik (Tunes, Tunisia, 28-30 March 2015).

Meeting with President Beji Caid Essebsi and Prime Minister Habib Essid, Mr Rifai recalled the role of tourism in creating prosperity and jobs in Tunisia and the importance of having the sector supported at the highest political level, expressing his full confidence in the fast recovery of tourism to Tunisia. Both dignitaries reiterated their full believe and support to tourism.

"Tourism employs 400.000 people in Tunisia and is a key driver of the economy. With the political support I have testified today and a national tourism policy coordinated among all Ministries I trust that we will see a swift recovery of tourism to Tunisia and the sector playing a fundamental role in this new era of country", said Mr Rifai.

"We are determined to move forward and there is a political will to revive this sector, as shown by the numerous measures undertaken by the Ministry of Tourism. In addition to the promotional activities such as the organization of the support march and meetings with the foreign tour operators, we will also focus on domestic tourism and tourism from the Maghreb to overcome this situation", said the Minister of Tourism of Tunisia, Salma Elloumi Rekik.

UNWTO and Tunisia agreed on a new cooperation framework which includes the areas of communications, education and training and hotel classification. "Tunisia is open to receive all tourists. Tunisia is and will continue to be a leading tourism destination" said Rifai. "It is time to look into the future and consolidate the sector by investing in quality and human resources development and UNWTO is very pleased to be here to support Tunisia in this regard", he added.

Tunisia will also host the 5th edition of the UNWTO Tourism and the Media Conference during the last quarter of 2015.

Contacts:

UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 13 April 2015
PR No. 15028

UNWTO and Basque Culinary Center organize the 1st World Forum on Food Tourism

Gastronomy and tourism are natural allies and mutually reinforce one another. The many links between gastronomy and tourism and the opportunities for closer cooperation between both areas will be explored at the 1st UNWTO World Forum on Food Tourism, jointly organized by

UNWTO and the Basque Culinary Center (Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain, 27-28 April 2015).

The 1st UNWTO World Forum on Food Tourism will provide a valuable platform to exchange experiences, enhancing the understanding of food tourism and how to successfully manage this growing tourism segment worldwide.

Topics such as the concept of food tourism, current trends, and the links between gastronomy and tourism branding are to be debated with international experts such as the former chef, best-selling author and television personality Anthony Bourdain, Executive Director of the World Food Travel Association, Erik Wolf, and renowned Spanish chef Pedro Subijana.

The event will also feature several workshops where participants will have the opportunity to interact closer with food and tourism professionals from across the globe and learn more about branding, strategy and key success factors for food tourism destinations among other topics.

"Getting a taste of local cuisine has become an essential part of the travelling experience, and as such gastronomy presents a vital opportunity to enrich the tourism offer and stimulate economic development in destinations all around the world, not the least in rural communities. I trust that this Forum will further strengthen the ability of food tourism to create local job opportunities and spur renewed interest in traditional cultural heritage", said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

The Spanish Secretary of State for Tourism, Isabel Borrego, encourages participation in this important event, as Spain is a country to savour, with many exquisite and typical regional dishes. The "tapas", the "pintxos", some of the best wines in the world and an avant-garde cuisine have made Spain one of the most prominent destinations for Gastronomy tourism in the world.

Mrs. Borrego also reminds that the Spanish diet is synonymous with the Mediterranean diet, which has been inscribed in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2013, consisting of a combination of nutrition and other factors related to the Mediterranean culture.

The 1st World Forum on Food Tourism is jointly organized by UNWTO and its Affiliate Member the Basque Culinary Center, the first Faculty of Gastronomic Sciences in Spain that also incorporates a Food, Gastronomic Science and Entrepreneurship Research and Innovation Centre, in collaboration with Basquetour, the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa and the Donostia-San Sebastián city-council.

Contacts:

UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 15 April 2015
PR No. 15029

Exports from international tourism rise to US$ 1.5 trillion in 2014

International tourism receipts increased by US$ 48 billion in 2014 to reach a record US$ 1,245 billion. An additional US$ 221 billion was generated from international passenger transport, bringing total exports from international tourism up to US$ 1.5 trillion.

Receipts from international visitors spending on accommodation, food and drink, entertainment, shopping and other services and goods reached an estimated US$ 1,245 billion (euro 937 billion) in 2014, an increase of 3.7% in real terms (taking into account exchange rate fluctuations and inflation). International tourist arrivals increased by 4.4% in 2014, reaching a total 1,135 million, up from 1,087 million in 2013.

Aside from international tourism receipts (the travel item of the Balance of Payment), tourism also generates export earnings through international passenger transport services (rendered to non-residents). The latter amounted to an estimated US$ 221 billion in 2014, bringing total exports from international tourism up to US$ 1.5 trillion, or US$ 4 billion a day on average.

"International tourism is an increasingly significant component of international trade as seen in export earnings from international tourism and passenger transport, which reached US$ 1.5 trillion in 2014" said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai. "In a scenario with decreasing commodity prices, spending on international tourism grew significantly in 2014, proving the sector's capacity to stimulate economic growth, boost exports and create jobs", he added.

International tourism (travel and passenger transport) represents 30% of the world's exports of services and 6% of overall exports of goods and services. As a worldwide export category, tourism ranks fourth after fuels, chemicals and food, ranking first in many developing countries.

International tourism receipts grew in all regions

Europe, which accounts for 41% of worldwide international tourism receipts, saw an increase in tourism earnings in absolute terms of US$ 17 billion to US$ 509 billion (euro 383 billion). Asia and the Pacific (30% share) saw an increase of US$ 16 billion, reaching US$ 377 billion (euro 284 bn). In the Americas, (22% share), receipts increased by US$ 10 billion to a total of US$ 274 billion (euro 206 bn). In the Middle East (4% share), tourism receipts increased by an estimated US$ 4 billion to US$ 49 billion (euro 37 bn) and in Africa (3% share) by US$ 1 billion to US$ 36 billion (euro 27 bn).

By subregion, Northern Europe, Southern and Mediterranean Europe, North-East Asia, Oceania, South Asia, Caribbean, Central America, South

America and the Middle East showed fastest growth in relative terms, all recording +5% or over in receipts.

Top earners: China and the United Kingdom move up in the top ten

In the top ten ranking by tourism earnings, China climbed from 5th to 3rd place following a 10% increase in earnings to US$ 57 billion in 2014. The United States (US$ 177 billion) and Spain (US$ 65 billion) maintained first and second positions in the ranking. The United Kingdom (US$ 45 billion) moved up two positions to 7th, boosted by the lasting effects of the Olympics and the appreciation of the UK pound (increasing receipts calculated in US dollar terms). France, Macao (China) and Italy occupy the 4th to 6th positions respectively, while Germany, Thailand and Hong Kong (China) complete the top ten.

Top spenders: spending by advanced economies picks up

In terms of outbound tourism, the world's top spender China continued its exceptional pace of growth with a 28% increase in expenditure in 2014, reaching a total of US$ 165 billion. While the two other major emerging markets among the first 10, the Russian Federation (-6%, 5th largest) and Brazil (+2%, 10th largest) lost strength, various advanced economy source markets picked up in growth. The world's second largest spender, the United States posted a 7% increase. The United Kingdom spent 4% more and moved from 5th to 4th in the ranking. France increased expenditure by 11%, retaining the 6th position, and Italy by 6%, climbing from 9th to 8th. Germany (3rd), Canada (7th) and Australia (9th) take the remaining places of the top ten.

Please note that the above data is preliminary and subject to revision.

Contacts:

UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 29 April 2015
PR No. 15032

UNWTO expresses its full support for Kenyan tourism

During a recent visit to Kenya, UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, expressed the organization's full confidence in the country's tourism sector and its capacity to recover (25 April 2015).

In solidarity with Kenya and its people, and on behalf of the international tourism community, UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai visited the country to highlight the economic importance of the Kenyan tourism sector, and convey his confidence in its strong resilience.

"Kenya is a true tourism success story and a long-term tourism leader, not only in Africa but globally. Over the years, the Kenyan tourism sector has become a backbone of the national economy and demonstrated a remarkable capacity to recover and regain momentum, which is why I have full confidence in its ability to bounce back even stronger. The world must hear from Kenya now. Kenya, with Africa, will move forward", said Mr. Rifai.

On the occasion, Mr. Rifai met with the President of Kenya, Mr. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, to explore further areas of cooperation between Kenya and UNWTO, as well as the importance of domestic tourism, increased regional cooperation, and the need for more precise travel advisories.

Mr. Kenyatta confirmed the Government's commitment to keep advancing the tourism sector also in these trying moments, and highlighted the importance of co-existence and working closely with neighboring countries to stabilize and promote East Africa.

"Terrorism is not a Kenyan issue, it is a global issue. We just happen to live on the front line. We will not change our plans but rather work towards eradicating the problem and to protect our people", said Mr. Kenyatta.

Mr. Rifai also met with the Cabinet Secretary for East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism, Phyllis Kandie, and the tourism task force, to further explore how UNWTO can assist public and private sector efforts to recover and consolidate Kenya's tourism sector. At a joint press conference with Mrs. Kandie, Mr. Rifai reiterated UNWTO's strong support to Kenya:

"Sometimes when we live in a country we do not see how the world sees us. The world has great respect for Kenya, as do the international tourism community. I want to assure you that we will do our part to help restore full confidence in this incredible destination", concluded Mr. Rifai.

Contacts:
UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

Madrid, Spain, 11 May 2015
PR No. 15033

UNWTO and ATM Ministerial Forum address intra-Arab tourism

Visa facilitation, open skies, the need to adapt to market needs and the role of events in the promotion of intra-regional tourism in the MENA region were the focus of the debate at the 2015 UNWTO & ATM Ministerial Forum on Intra-Arab Tourism: Addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 5 May 2015).

A joint UNWTO/ATM initiative, the Ministerial Forum was held under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Social Development and Chairman of the National Council of Tourism and Antiquities of the United Arab Emirates.

"We can all benefit from a common strategy, an Arab tourism strategy, and the United Arab Emirates are committed to support such a strategy", said Sheik Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, opening the Forum.

"International tourism to the Middle East grew by 5% in 2014 after three years of consecutive decline. These are very encouraging results and show that tourism in the region continues to progress despite its many challenges", said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

The Arab market can play a particular role in progressing tourism in the Middle East as it tends to spend more, stay longer and be more resilient in times of crisis due to its greater knowledge about the reality of the region. Participants agreed that although tourism in MENA reveals a diverse picture with the Gulf Council Countries (GCC), North Africa and the Levant destinations presenting different tourism development levels, there are important opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation.

Areas of opportunities identified by participants include visa facilitation and easier land border crossings through enhanced use of technology, growing youth and cruise markets, and the development of thematic routes. Furthermore, participants highlighted the importance of a bigger focus on the domestic market and the opportunity to use upcoming mega events, namely sports events, to change the international image of the region and implement new measures such as visa facilitation.

Alongside these opportunities, participants stressed that challenges remain, including the lack of air lift and open skies policies making air travel within the region still comparatively expensive, talent management and the need to promote job mobility, as well as the importance of knowing the Arab tourism market better and adjust product development accordingly.

Participants also agreed that there are important opportunities to work together as a multi-destination to attract tourists from other regions of the world.

Globally, around 80% of the world's 1.1 billion international tourists travel within their own region. In contrast, only 42% of international tourist arrivals to the Middle East originate in other countries in the region, despite the extraordinary growth of international tourism in the Middle East over the last two decades, and the increasing level of outbound travel from MENA to other world regions.

Speakers at the Ministerial Forum, moderated by CNN International's Becky Anderson, included H.E. Mr. Zayed R. Alzayani, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Bahrain; H.E. Mr. Nayef H. Al-Fayez, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan; H.E. Mr. Michel Pharaon, Minister of Tourism, Lebanon; Mrs. Nada Roudies, Secretary-General, Ministry of Tourism, Morocco; H.E. Mrs. Maitha Al Mahrouqi, Undersecretary of Tourism, Oman; H.E. Mr. Issa Mohammed Al Mohannadi, Chairman, Qatar Tourism Authority; Mr. Abdellatif Hmam, Director General, National

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Contacts:

UNWTO Senior Media Officer: Marcelo Risi
Tel: (+34) 91 567 81 60

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2. shorter non peer reviewed reviews of existing work or short essays aimed at stimulating debate;
3. research notes to allow researchers to present initial findings and reflections or problems concerning fieldwork and research in general;
4. industry news.

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