A Pictorial Analysis on Florence Official Instagram

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I am a graduate student studying Master of design of

sustainable tourism systems and would like to visualize

the outcomes of tourism research in the modern world.

Abstract

The destination image is realized as one of the underlying factors in destination management. This study aimed to explore the projected image of Florence as a tourism destination in Europe. The projected image was obtained through an analysis of the images of the official Instagram page of the metropolitan city of Florence (@visit_florence). The research used a sample of 1000 photos. Visual content analysis was adopted through photography and text data. The results showed that 679 photos (68%) of all 1,000 photos were associated with three destinations in Florence.

Key words: Pictorial analysis; Destination image (DI); projected image; Florence; Instagram

Abstract

Destination image is realized as one of the underlying factors in destination management. The aim of this study was to explore the projected image of Florence as a tourism destination in Europe. The projected image was obtained through an analysis of the images of the official Instagram page of metropolitan city of Florence (@visit_florence). The research used a sample of 1000 photos. Visual content analysis were adopted through photographic and text data. The results showed that 679 photos (68%) of all 1,000 photos were associated with three destinations in the Florence.

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Introduction

To benefitting from tourism industry, which is one of the "world's largest and fastest growing industries" (de Freitas, 2017), many of the destinations are opt to enter the tourism market. This situation has raised the competition among destinations (Drakulić-Kovačević, and et.al 2018) to get more share of the tourism market. Accordingly, destination marketing is becoming a more challenging duty for destination marketing organizations (Buhalis, 2000). Destination positioning has been admitted as an underlying goal for DMOs (C. M. Chen and et.al 2010). As a vital activity to enhance the attractiveness of a destination (Chacko, 1996), positioning can be defined as the process of creating a unique image in the minds of prospective travelers (Gill and et.al, 2005). For decades, destination positioning has been an attractive topic for researchers (Day, Skidmore, & Koller, 2002; Lin & Zins, 2016; Pike, 2012, 2017; Pike, Gentle, Kelly, & Beatson, 2018).

The results of mentioned research on destination locating have accepted its importance in the competitive advantage (Abreu Novais and et.al, 2018). However, destination positioning is widely acknowledged as a complex process due to the intangibility of tourism products (Fyall Garrod, 2005; Schwaighofer, 2013. For decreasing the perceived risk and successfully conducting positioning, destination marketers have been adopting "tangibilizing the intangible" (Reddy and at.al 1993) as a key strategy. Making prospective customers confident and comfortable about intangibles that cannot be pretested, organizations should go beyond the literal promises of specifications, advertisements, and labels to provide reassurance. Intangible promises have to be tangibilized in their presentation" (Hyötyläinen & Möller, 2007). Considering the growing penetration of the Internet as a primary source of information (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015) and especially social media platforms into our lives, destination management organizations are widely accepting social media for making a

distinctive image in the travelers' mind of their target visitors that may enable them to plan in higher levels of economically major strategies in the country.

Due to increasing number of social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, and Tumblr) that enable DMO to share photos and videos, more and more DMO use visual networks to shape their destination image. Pike (2002) indicated that a self-administered questionnaire was the main data collection tool in the destination image related studies. Accordingly, it can be demonstrated by the fact that it is a kind of ignorance on exploring projected image by data mining of visual media. We are sought to focus on Instagram data extracting which can be effective to more clearly determine destination projected image.

Researches have revealed that projected image based on Instagram are still in doubt, as it is not promoting the role of picture in competitive sphere. For example, studies carried out earlier on projected image have been focused on destinations' official websites (S. Choi et al., 2007), Flickr (Stepchenkova &Zhan, 2013), Pinterest (Song & Kim, 2016), and travel magazines (Hsu & Song, 2013). The aim of this study was to collaborating literature of defined images by exploring pictorial data produced by DMO of Florence on Instagram. To attain this goal, the following questions were developed: "what the powerful relations of destination image of Florence are as presented through destination marketing organization?' "And which urban attractions of Florence are most often provided in the DMO images?'

 (Scott & Laws, 2012) defined a place as a geographical area with well-defined boundaries, such as a country or a city. Identified tourist destination is involved in six elements: attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities, and ancillary services provided locally to meet the needs of visitors Buhalis (2000).

Generally, destinations in their promotional activities introduced as a place with friendly local people, outstanding views, modern infrastructure, suitable transportation, and high-quality accommodation at a range of prices (Ashton, 2015). Clearly, it can be stated that this makes it very often hard for people to make choice of which destination they would travel. For a destination to be placed in the evoked set (C. C. Chen & Lin, 2012) it is essential to be identified and differentiated from other destinations in the minds of the potential travelers (Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011). Entering a destination to the evoked set of a traveler will raised the probability of selecting that destination (Shanka, 2014).

Destination Image

The word image normally refers to a compilation of beliefs and impressions based on information processing from a variety of sources over time, resulting in an internally accepted mental construct (MacKay, 1997). Defined word of destination image is "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination" (Crompton, 1979). Due to the important role of destination image in destination planning (Martín-Santana, Beerli- Palacio, & Nazzareno, 2017). Previous studied have revealed that there is an importance to know the understanding destination images with corresponding models developing relationships between satisfaction, loyalty and other relevant variables (Baloglu, 1997, Beerli & Martin, 2004, Garcia 2002 and 2006, Jenkins, 1999, sirgay & Su 2000, Chi 2008, Tsai 2007).

Destination image is composed of three components: cognitive, affective, and conative (Agapito and et.al 2013). The cognitive image refers to the attitude of a traveler about the destination's attributes. The conative image is represented by a traveler's behavior (Zhang et al., 2014).

Destination image is classified as supply side, autonomous (independent), or organic (demand side) (Saraniemi, 2011). Induced is an attempt from DMO to attract the attention of potential tourists

through marketing materials such as brochures, videos, and most recently the Internet and social media (Xu & Ye, 2018). Autonomous is referred to as independent information sources that provide general insight (e.g., documentaries, movies) about a destination (Bricker & Donohoe, 2015. Due to the recent promotions of information technology and social media platforms, significant power has been shifted from suppliers to consumers (Akehurst, 2009). This force is reflected through user-producer content. On the other side the old-driven media content, which professionals, these users, produce refers to media content that is generated and published by individuals. Users must have three features: 1) published on a publicly accessible net- work, 2) a certain level of creative effort to publish content, and 3) published by nonprofessionals who often do not have an institutional context Rodgers and Wang, 2010).

Travelers use photography to capture relationships with local people, other tourists, destinations, and cultures to narrate a story. Travel photos are thus lenses through which visitors' affective feelings and images for a destination can be studied and identified S. Pan, Lee, and Tsai (2014). The projected image is created by the marketing activities of destination organizations, while the perceived image is shaped by travelers' actual experience sharing (Song & Kim, 2016).

Generally, projected destination image is divided into two groups: textual and visual. Textual content such as a weblog is related to text-based content shared by DMO (X. Li & Wang, 2011). Textual content is considered as a "rich, authentic and unsolicited" (B. Pan, McLaurin, & Crotts, 2007). Pictorial content refers to visual content created and published by DMO mainly on the Internet. By increasing importance of social media, researchers believe that destination organizations must expand their marketing activities from official destination websites to social media (Oriade, 2017). Along with the increased number of social media and users, tendency to use media that are more visually centered is increasing at a remarkable rate (Strähle, 2017). The digital

age has spawned a dazzling set of new customer relationship-building tools, from Web sites, online ads and videos, mobile ads and apps, and blogs to online communities and the major social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest. Instagram racks up an estimated 85 million unique monthly visitors. To get customers more involved with the brand, Virgin America launched a digital marketing campaign offering the opportunity to upload a photo to Instagram from the flight. "According to Skift.com, Destinations now approach Instagram users and other social influencers to get publicity through those accounts (Philip Kotler and et.al, 2017).

In addition to individual use, Instagram has also become a familiar marketing tool among brands (Björk, & Sjöström, 2017). Given the importance of visual concept as intrinsic characteristic of tourism phenomena, so that this makes companies to try for a competitive trend among other service providers in tourism and this is not carried out unless these destination organizations apply image contents into the marketing outputs.

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to identify the representative characteristics of the projected image of Florence on official Instagram page of the city. Considering that samples include photographic and textual data, visual content analysis and content analysis were taken to analyze data. Applying content analysis for images refers to "breaks a picture into a number of attributes (or categories) guided by what is illustrated on a photo and takes these representations at face value" (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013). In order to conduct this research, main the official page of Florence on Instagram was identified (@visit_florence). By defining the official page, early step of search was conducted by evaluating of 1,000 sample photos. Selected photos were shared by DMO of Florence on Instagram. There are some online tools in web enabling the social media platforms to analyze the

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subsectors of the page. In this case, popsters.us toolpage.org were used to identify and categorize the hashtags and other metrics (Picture, 1).

To categorizing photos, a desktop version of Instagram was applied. Photos were loaded and saved in a file using keyword shortcut in google chrome. Finally, all photos were scanned and based on a previous study (Kuhzadi & Ghasemi, 2019) were categorized into 10 groups:

1. Art Object/Statue, 2. Food/Restaurant, 3. Nature Landscape, 4. Urban Landscape,

5. Religious Building/Object, 6. Traditional Art Work/Object, 7. Historic Building,

8. Transport/Infrastructure, 9. Ordinary Scene and 10. Other (Fig. 1).

| Target Page | Photo | Inclusion | Extraction | Hashtag Comments | Classification | • Set up • photo | Visual Analysis |

Picture ١. Analyses procedure

Results

At last, 1,000 posts were derived for analysis. Considering the posts, there were no videos at all. The pictorial analysis of the 1,000 pictures of @visit_florence as an official page of Florence on Instagram with 101,000 followers led to the following outcomes. To understand the relevant aspects of the projected image of Florence, all the illustrated images from the official page of Florence on Instagram were scanned and categorized into 10 subcategories based on previous studies. All showed that among DMOs' photos, Religious buildings photos with 421 photos ranked first. Metropolitan city of Florence is mainly characterized by its monumental centers and is home to a

number of cathedrals in city center. Most favorite hashtags used for describing Florence as a tourism destination were associated to religious buildings (e.g., cathedral, Baptistery, Duomo). It seems to be very motivational for tourism destination organizer to conduct more for tourism groups intended to go to these places in destination marketing era (Table 1).

Table 1: Frequency of categories

Categories	Frequency
Religious building/object	421
Art Object/Statue	127
Food/Restaurant	11
Nature Landscape	43
Urban Landscape	38
Traditional Art Work/Object	172
Historic Building	149
Transport/Infrastructure	15
Ordinary Scene	22
Other	2

The second research question centered on the geographical distribution of the DMO photos. Location of 861 photos have been shared in caption by hashtags (e.g., #Florence). Microsoft excel was used for specific locations. In addition to the location, the extracted hashtags included some general words such as #photo (657) ", #visitflorence". Analysis showed that #photo, #florence #visitflorence and #sunset respectively had the most hashtags used in the page. In 20 December 2018, a post with 98 comments received 6533 likes at the same date for those three main attractions, as it is useful when you need to measure the total statistics of comments in a page for the analyzed period. The popsters.us analysis indicated that #florence ranked first among others (#visitflorence and #photo) in category of (relative activity by type of hashtags). There is an ever-increasing number of desire by travelers who get familiar with tourism attractions of Florence before coming to a destination. Although the figure of individuals engaged in declared that, it must be much more than current statistics. Moreover, destination-marketing organization is highly motivated by the

selected images sent by tourists. The strategy of the organization would be directed to another way to popularize other potential attraction that already have not reflected the importance of attractions. There will be also discussed more in recommendation part of the research.

The graphs showed the average activity of posts that were published on different days of the week, comparing to the post made is Saturday with index of 16%.

Furthermore, average activity of posts that are issued at different hours of the day, comparing to posts that were released at another time. This index can be used for planning the best time for publishing of all posts. The index is 4.6% at 9 am, and it is 6.3% at 9 pm, an average posts at 9 am is more than 1.37 times more popular than one published at 9 pm.

Engagement Rate (ER) is another metric that shows how much followers were engaged to the published posts. In other words, it displays the percentage of followers who have been active in publications. ERpost = (likes+shares+comments [+dislikes for YouTube])/count of followers. In 20 December, the figure is 6.5399.

For Hashtags ER, it shows the average ERpost of all posts with a particular hashtag. It will help to evaluate the activity of posts in response to a particular hashtag. It is useful for calculating the efficient of the ad tags, chosen categories or competitive analysis. The relevant figure analyzed by popsters.us is Night with 3.23. Rainbow and Uffizi were respectively ranked second and third.

Recommendations

The study made an effort to explore the destination image of Florence. It dedicated to limit to the projected destination image of Florence city on Instagram. So then to get more sophisticated, further research on sustainable marketing of social media is recommended to include other types of destination image along with the call for more environmental and societal responsibility that today's marketers are being called on to develop sustainable marketing practices. Additionally,

including other Internet sources such as official websites and social media (e.g. Tumblr, Flickr, and Pinterest) and conducting comparative study in parallel between projected and perceived image can help other DMOs of Italy to identify the potential lacks between supply-side vs demand-side of projected and perceived images of the places. In this case, in writer's point of view it would be highly recommended for DMOs to scrutinize the requirements of the host community to meet the needs of tourists subsequently. Diverse methods of tourism marketing is needed to target the core benefits of the destinations. This is not conducted only by coordination of all social allies and authorities in the community. Indeed, two sides of supply and demand must be bilaterally responded to the intrinsic points of the aboriginal people living and entertaining tourists.

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