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Summary of the Conclusions of the Congress 2012

(Abstract of the final presentation of the Congress by Mr. Frederic Pierret, conducted by the Conference Secretariat)

Inherent functions of web 2.0

Behind the term of Web 2.0 we can find a concept that is little vague and a bit trend with a vast variety of both technique and tools. Trying to categorize, one could say that Web 2.0 can cover seven types of functions.

1. The first function is primarily delivering information; it is a fairly standard tool on the web and posts on sites sharing videos or photos.
2. The second function is the promotion of information that was issued, in other words: to increase visibility of the websites now becomes a key task. The abundance of webpages leads to the result that if not promoted properly they will not show up in the first results in search engines and stay invisible for users. This is where social networks become important for viral marketing.
3. Interaction with customers and followers is the third function of web 2.0. Increase their satisfaction or convince them of a destination's attractions are an extremely important issues and stand for the two-way communication as one of the core characteristics of web 2.0.
4. Fourth function is to provide services to customers and tourists using mobile applications and smart phones.
5. Wireless networks become an integral part of web 2.0 and represent the fifth function. The availability of wireless networks enables tourists to use their social networks and stay in touch with others or simply are being used to provide a service to tourists.
6. The sixth function of web 2.0 stays for the new channels of marketing and commercialization via internet sales: stays, accommodation and packages or any touristic product can be sold on the web which was shown clearly by the example of Canada)
7. Finally, the seventh function: web2.0 should be used by destination managers. It should be used as a really powerful source of information about the market and the demand as shown by the examples delivered by Mr. Cantoni. That information serves as basis to develop marketing campaigns and implement key selling points.

Reflections on the content of the web

1. After listing the functions of web 2.0 a second observation becomes obvious. What kind of information? A lot of effort is being put on information prior to the travel, but what happens during the stay? Nowadays part of the information is being distributed via mobile applications.
2. In this sense it is worth to come up with a second observation about the truthfulness. It is obligatory to follow the golden rules of marketing and not provide faked information or cheat. The example of Mr. Ziegler put emphasis on this important issue without forgetting about the necessary promotion, development and maintenance of the brand or product on

a permanent basis.

3. The third observation is related to the two-way communication and the dialogue with customers: What kind of dialogue are we referring to? The dialogue can be established in different ways: that can be by quick replies to comments, in particular of negative feedback. Those fast replies play an important role in this context as well as the quantity of comments received, regardless if positive or negative. Just as one of the speakers stated: "It is better to have a lot of comment, even if not all of them are positive feedback" than not to have any reaction at all. Mr. Zieglers explanations on client's feedback with regards to evaluation of hotels were of great value. On one hand it relates to the risk of a possible distortion of the market based on customer comments and on the other hand it does not necessarily mean to fall silent. In other words giving the customers the power to comment results in even stronger involvement of the destination managers. We also witnessed the example of dialogue between communities. Mrs. Turino, our Italian expert showed best practices applied in the case of "Montoro Sunski" on how to build communities. It is not an easy task and probably not yet investigated into detail but contains sophisticated techniques.
4. The fourth observation is, just like we mentioned on different occasions, that the web 2.0 is a tool (although an important one, but still only a tool). This means it cannot be employed in an effective or rightful manner if not implemented in a strategic marketing approach. An example has been delivered by France Montagne. It is obvious that behind those tools there are more means and the web 2.0 may seem cheaper than other means of marketing and promotion, but this is not to say to not dedicate less effort in terms of funding, time, workforce, energy and emotions that is to say that saving in this respect should not lead to a cut in funding for other means of promotion and marketing.
5. The fifth observation is based on the fact that web 2.0 does not cover the entire field of marketing and promotion. We have been reminded by our colleague from Vall Nord that brochures and leaflets are useful in particular for those not involved in the new technologies or conventional mobile phones.
6. The sixth observation opens floor for even more debate and that is thanks to our Icelandic speaker: Does the web 2.0 allow segmenting sufficiently? We were talking about risks and chances of the single message and the segmentation and panellists from Andorra and France Montagne that there do exist ways to customize communication with the adequate tools and appropriate channels.
7. The seventh observation has to do with: What is the impact of all this? Impact in terms of demand, attendance and customer loyalty. A Mr. Laurent Vanat's presentation has been very revealing in this regard: it is possible to quantify the impact in equivalence of the communication, to quantify the cost equivalent to the communication that we can save to some extent via the web. But what is its overall impact? Without judging whether the answer is feasible or not and on what terms, it is true that online communication nowadays is imperative in the world of tourism, at the risk of being out of the market.

Other considerations to take into account

During the two days of presentations and the following, there have been interesting questions and insights that are worth remembering:

1. The first big question is referring to investments which we had the chance to see in the examples of Revol Stoke and Slavapadina, which just recently started in Serbia
2. Within the topic of investments we have been seeing examples of quality such as the case of Asia. The investments should be supported by with a strong political will. My opinion on mountain tourism is that without the political support, neither public or private investments can lead to a sustainable development of mountain destinations.

3. The second big topic is the concept of deseasonalisation, which has been brought up by the Minister of Tourism of Algeria, the Minister of Tourism Lesotho our colleague from Korea yesterday morning and to more or less extend in the presentations from China and Korea. Nowadays it became one of the mayor concerns for all mountain destinations to consider the development of tourism all year long because we know that it is a crucial point as it conditions the return on investment and profitability of facilities.
4. Another topic that has been raised several times throughout the Congress is related to quality standards. This matter which is of international relevance reveals its importance in particular in mountain destinations. It has to counteract other uncontrollable factors such as climate, environment and weather conditions during the stay.
5. The fourth observation is also on a recurrent theme: tourism in mountain destinations is always the result of collaboration between all stakeholders, regardless being public or private.
6. The fifth issue has been discussed more discreetly but we have seen it in the examples of Canada and China. It is the question of urban planning. We touched this topic two years ago already en Ordino. There are two differing concepts in Europe: the Swiss approach is based on constructing accommodation facilities on a low attitude and provide a great capacity of cable cars to transport customers to the peaks and provide diversificated offers for the summer and winter reason (the fact that the accommodation facilities are situated on a low level below alpine attitudes makes those low attitude a good environment for summer activities). The other extreme is the French concept where accommodation facilities where build close to the ski slopes, a model developed in the 70ies, which benefits winter activities but is a disadvantage during summer season due to the high altitude.

Other topics that were discussed and can serve as a basis for future discussions:

1. First topic is the potential of CRM and viral marketing. Regarding CRM, the Customer Relations Managements it is obvious that in general mountain destinations are slightly more advanced than other destinations, in particular costal destinations with regards to loyalty, relations and management technologies which include the application of virual marketing which is the main source of contacts for CRM systems.
2. The second topic addressed by Mr. Ziegler is the data supplied by officials of a destination and the providers of services in the destination. That is to say those actors that directly provide information about the destination which in many cases are incomplete or not conform to the reality. This is why we have to conduct a serious reflection of the role of those actors that manage a destination or accommodation facilities, which like to maintain the control about the information provided about their product at all times.
3. The third and final issue refers to a bold question, but was raised by our Icelandic panellist with regards to the saturation of information on destinations in the internet. Will the internet collapse in a couple of years? Will there be a surplus of information to such extend that the clients refuse to be informed? This objection has been raised as well by our Korean panellist.

Mr. Pierret concludes his closing speech with reference to the high quality of speeches and thanked Mr. Lugi Gaido and Peter Keller, the scientific committee of the Congress for the selection of the speakers and their work and dedication.