

Special issue on ENTER2016

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Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are playing a pivotal role in travel and tourism. Research in this field contributes to the continuous development of strategies and tactics to support the industry competitiveness and the satisfaction of travellers. The papers published in this volume are extended versions of selected research papers among the many contributions presented at ENTER2016, Information and communication technologies in Tourism Conference, which took place in Bilbao, Spain, on February 2–5, 2016. Organized by the International Federation for IT and Travel and Tourism (IFITT), ENTER offers a unique platform where researchers and practitioners can engage in cutting edge topics at the intersection of ICTs and tourism.

While far from being inclusive of all research areas in the field, the collection of six articles in this special issue provides an excellent selection of the latest research on applications of ICT in travel and tourism. The contributions span from contextual and sequential recommendation processes, to social media behaviour and return on investment; two contributions explore happiness prediction within travellers' forums and the issue of travellers' digital connectedness.

The topic of recommendation system is particularly popular in the tourism and ICT literature (e.g. Fesenmaier et al. 2006). Recommendation systems support the decision making process of travellers (Gretzel 2011) towards helping them in making (better) decisions based—for example—on their expressed preferences (Ricci 2002). The first paper featured in this special issue deals with '*Selective Contextual Information Acquisition in Travel Recommender Systems*' and moves

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from the concept of Context-Aware Recommendation Systems to propose a new method for parsimonious and personalized context data acquisition (Braunhofer and Ricci this issue).

The second research presented in this special issue, builds on the recommendation system knowledge and literature and proposes a solution to design tourist city trips advising on interesting places to be visited. Moving away from mere space and time variables (e.g. Gavalas et al. 2012) the research titled '*Recommending a Sequence of Interesting Places for Tourist Trips*' presents a model maximizing travellers' satisfaction (Wörndl this issue) during the visit experience. The social media Foursquare.com was used to retrieve georeferenced point of interests (POI) and the elaborated methodology and system allowed to combine them according to users' preferences.

Georeferenced information is also the basis of the third research presented in this special issue. The article titled 'Understanding Tourists' Photo Sharing and Visit Pattern at Non-first Tier Attractions via Geotagged Photos' investigates travellers' behaviours related to Hong Kong temples thanks to social media geo-tagged photos. The diffusion of geographic information systems (GIS) and global position systems (GPS—Leung et al. 2012) is allowing travellers to share digital photos and can be used as a proxy for understanding travellers' patterns within a destination (Lau and McKercher 2006). The research presented by Leung and colleagues (this issue) discusses travel patterns of travellers from different countries in relation with four popular Hong Kong temples as they appear from popular social photo sharing platforms.

The fourth contribution included in this special issue, analyses one important—yet dramatically under-researched issue related to social media is the one of return on investment (ROI—Buhalis and Mamalakis 2015). Despite the overall amount of research in the field of social media in tourism (e.g. Leung et al. 2013) there is a lack of clear ROI measurement for travel and tourism suppliers. The research presented by Wozniack and colleagues (this issue) titled '*The Return on Tourism Organizations' Social Media Investments—Preliminary Evidence from Belgium, France, and Switzerland*' is based on data of 150 tourism organizations from three different countries (Belgium, France and Switzerland); the study provides numbers and figures about how much destinations' financial and human resources allocation to social media activities.

In the fifth contribution featured in this special issue titled '*Predicting Happiness—User Interactions and Sentiment Analysis in an Online Travel Forum*', user generated content has been analysed to determine emotional contagious effect (Neidhardt et al., this issue). Moving from a series of discussions in a travel related forum, authors analysed conversations among 9881 individuals with social network analysis, text mining and sentiment analysis. The experimental setting of the research concluded that sentiment scores of the users are interrelated. The study confirms previous findings in the field (e.g. Chmiel et al. 2011) highlighting the network effect on users' emotions.

The last research presented in this volume, discusses the influences and consequences of being digitally connected and/or disconnected to travellers. This research relates with an emerging stream of literature (e.g. Paris et al. 2015) which

is discussing the effects of connectivity in tourism experiences. The article titled '*The influences and consequences of being digitally connected and/or disconnected to travellers*' presented by Tanti and Buhalis (this issue) proposes three concepts related to travellers and connectivity behaviours: (1) 'actively connected', (2) 'selective', (3) 'self imposed total disconnection'.

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Guest Editors

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