Mobile marketing of the Brazilian Tourist Board: Case study of Brazil Mobile application

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Abstract

Mobile technologies are emerging as an important distribution platform for mobile tourism (m-tourism). The aim of this study is to investigate the mobile marketing of the Brazilian government to promote the country as an international tourism destination. This paper presents a preliminary analysis of travel guide application (app) for mobile devices named Brazil Mobile, launched by the Brazilian Tourist Board (EMBRATUR). Brazil Mobile app contains travel guides versions to various cities, which include the majority host cities for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. The research methods used were a literature review, and a content analysis of travel guide app related to six aspects: Accessibility; Information; Interactivity; Entertainment; Navigation, and Transactional. It may be possible to conclude that Brazil Mobile app offers basic content to travellers. Thus, it would become more interesting if could explore mobile marketing features as interactivity, customisation, transactional, and entertainment according to the tourists preferences.

Keywords: travel guide; mobile marketing; mobile application; Destination Marketing Organisations; Brazilian government.

1 Introduction

The advancement of technologies such as mobile devices with wireless connections to the Internet opens up new prospects for mobile commerce (m-commerce) and m-tourism (Schwinger, et al., 2005). On the other hand, location-based services are widely spread both the entertainment and business applications, comprising tourist-oriented information services (Koren, Stash, & Andreev, 2011). Consequently, for the host country of mega sport events, as World Cup organised by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in 2014, and the Summer Olympic Games in 2016, it is decisive to encourage the mobile marketing of the Brazilian cities, mainly the twelve host cities. Including the development of stronger relationships in the tourism sector using the Internet is one of the strategies of the Aquarela Plan 2020, endorsed by the Brazilian Tourist Board (EMBRATUR), responsible for promoting, marketing and support to the Brazilian services and tourism products in the international market (Brazil, 2009).

The adoption of smart phone rose rapidly in the past year to assume the mobile majority in 2012 in many international markets, counting the EU5 (United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain and Italy) and Canada (comScore, 2013). Then, with the increasing popularisation of travel apps, it is very important for the tourism industry and technology developers have a solid understanding of the landscape of mobile

applications that are on the market to offer new products (Kennedy-Eden, & Gretzel, 2012). The tourism potential of Brazil with its historical and cultural heritage and natural landscapes is unquestionable. However, the limiting factor for the visit of the nearly 500,000 foreign tourists during the 2014 World Cup (Brazil, 2009) focuses on the language adopted in the country, the Portuguese, the official language in eight countries in the world: Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe and East Timor. In order to meet the demand of international tourists and to be technologically competitive, EMBRATUR launched the travel guide Brazil Mobile app. In this context, the main objective of this research is to investigate the mobile marketing of the Brazilian government, from the adoption of mobile applications to promote the country as an international tourism destination.

2 Background

Destination Marketing Organisations (DMO) worldwide are increasingly investing into their online presence, from the implementing of some technologies and applications in e-destination marketing, to become strong and competitive destinations (Buhalis, & Wagner, 2013). Indeed, for these authors, the integration of apps as well as location-based services will become crucial for the future of online destinations. Therefore, Brazil Mobile app is part of the marketing campaign "Brazil is calling you! Celebrate life here. Brazil. Sensational!" which is being performed internationally since July 2010, through television spots, print advertisements, social media, mobile apps, etc. The goal of the EMBRATUR is to increase the flow of foreign tourists in the country and at the same time to raise awareness of new tourism destinations (Panrotas, 2010). According to Hyun, Lee and Hu (2009), in anticipation of fast-growing mobile development, DMO needs to envision how to maximise their current innovative competencies in embracing mobile technologies for destination marketing purposes.

With the spread of smart phones and tablets, mobile marketing has received a lot of investment. The Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) defines "Mobile Marketing is a set of practices that enables organisations to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or network" (PR Newswire, 2009). This definition covers two aspects of the taxonomy of mobile marketing: 1. The 'set of practices' includes activities, industry players, promotions, relationship management, customer services, loyalty, social marketing, and all the facets of marketing. 2. To 'engage' means to stimulate social interaction with organisation and community members, and be present at time of consumers expressed need. To be successful in mobile marketing, DMO must develop marketing strategies to cover all perspectives present in the complex definition created by the MMA.

Moreover, the popularity of mobile apps has attracted new entrants to the travel landscape as providers of maps (Google) and GPS (Global Positioning System) navigation services. Navigation resources give the user the opportunity to interact with the app by changing location information based on individual preferences, as personal taste, purchase, and several activities (Kennedy-Eden & Gretzel, 2012). Schwinger et al. (2005) state electronic commerce (e-commerce) and m-commerce have dramatically boosted the demand for services that enable ubiquitous access.

Thus, ubiquity offers opportunities and challenges in terms of time-aware, location-aware, device-aware, personalised services, etc.

In this scenario, DMO must be prepared to compete on mobile marketing. Furthermore, the Travel 2.0 Report on how travellers are engaging with destinations on the mobile Web indicates:

- 42% of travellers who use a smart phone to access a DMO site are looking for things to do in destination, 34% event information, 11% contact information and 5% accommodation;
- Nearly 70% of all mobile traffic to DMO sites comes from iOS devices (Apple Inc.).

The research based on Google Analytics data for web site visits from mobile devices for 42 tourism organisations also says DMOs can expect at least a 90% increase in mobile traffic this year and a 180% increase in tablet traffic (Fox, 2013).

3 Methods

This paper proposes an analysis of Brazil Mobile app that contains versions of travel guides for the following cities: Belo Horizonte, Brasília, Cuiabá, Curitiba, Florianópolis, Fortaleza, Manaus, Natal, Porto Alegre, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and São Paulo. Only one of these, Florianópolis, is not a host city for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. The research methods used were a literature review related to key themes as DMO, mobile marketing, mobile app in tourism, and a content analysis of travel guide app. The app analysis methods were adapted from authors, as Díaz-Luque and Corrêa (2012), who analysed the official web sites of the host cities of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and Kennedy-Eden and Gretzel (2012), who proposed a taxonomy of mobile applications in tourism, defining seven categories: Navigation; Social; Mobile Marketing; Security/Emergency; Transactional; Entertainment, and Information. Concerning this classification, the authors emphasise that some apps are not exclusively in one category because of the complexity of the app.

For this case study, the analysis was focused on six aspects such as Accessibility (free or paid access, operating system); Information (DMO, Tourism attractions, Travel industry players, and Useful information; Interactivity (social networks, web sites for sharing video, photos, comments, and advices); Entertainment (games, quizzes, music, etc.); Navigation (map services, GPS), and Transactional (m-commerce as reservations, and sales). These six selected aspects contain several categories available in other travel apps because normally destinations offer various types of information to satisfy the tourist demands. For DMO, the idea is to develop a complete application. Consequently, the visitor may find relevant information in a single app.

4 Preliminary Results

First, it considered the general accessibility of Brazil Mobile app. Download of app is free and it is accessible exclusively to users from iOS platform of Apple's operating system. That could be a good strategy considering almost 70% of all mobile traffic to

DMO sites comes from iOS devices (Fox, 2013). However, it is necessary to underline that 79.3% of all smart phones are operating on the Android system from Google Inc., according to the latest International Data Corporation (IDC) Worldwide Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker Report (IDC, 2013). Though the application is easy to use, there is some explanations about how to use it in the item "Get to know the Guide". Travel guide app content is available in three languages: Portuguese, English, and Spanish. There is also a conversation guide with audio showing relevant information to help tourists in different situations (Knowing people; Compliments; Restaurant/Bar; Shopping; Asking for information; Hotel; Airport/Bus Station; Taxi; Verbs).

Concerning Information aspect, it was analysed content related to EMBRATUR as e-mail (braziltour@embratur.gov.br), and location with its complete address. The second type of information investigated was about Tourism attractions. Brazil Mobile app offers four options of attractions to tourists: Heritage and Architecture (theatre, cathedral, museum, palace); Cultural Attractions (festival, cultural centre); Open Air Attractions (botanic garden, park, square, beach, waterfall, sport activities), and Leisure and Shopping (nightlife, public market). There is a brief description about each tourism attraction as well as information on location, web site of the place or event mentioned, hours of operation and ticket prices according to the kind of attraction. Note that some tourism attractions bring photographs to illustrate. Travellers can see other pictures in the Picture Gallery and they can download photos, but not upload new photos.

In addition to a list of tourism attractions, tourists need information about travel companies for the development of certain activities at the destination, but surprisingly, there is not information on the app about hotel, restaurant / bar, travel agency, car rental, etc. Thus, that results in the impracticality of any form of business transaction. As EMBRATUR is an agency of the Brazilian federal government, it is impossible to sell products and services. Nonetheless, it does not prohibit it from offering the possibility to book and/or to buy from subcontractors. After all, the concentration of information and services in a single application facilitates trip planning.

About types of data that can help the traveller, the app provides Useful information. To begin, it presents a synopsis of each city and information about climate (weather and temperature). Associated to security and emergency aspects, it is available data as area code and telephone numbers of the Fire Department, Police Department, and Emergency Service. On the other hand, the app offers airport and bus station information (official name, location / address, and switchboard telephone number).

With respect to Interactivity, one of the most important features of mobile marketing, Brazil Mobile app disappoints. The unique way to interact with the organisation is using e-mail. Therefore, the app ignores many resources for establishing contact on the Internet such as social networks (Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Myspace, Orkut), blogs, Tumblr, web sites for sharing photos and videos (YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Instagram, etc.), and TripAdvisor.com. The weak interaction also influences the navigation element. For example, there are maps to show the location of tourism attractions, though you cannot create itineraries or routes to reach the place. Another

critical point is the lack of entertainment services to tourists as games, quizzes, music, etc.

5   Initial Conclusions

For the reason that the mobile travel apps provide relevant information for planning the trip and for making decisions during the journey, the adoption of these technologies is already valued as essential to ensure competitiveness among online destinations. Nevertheless, thinking about the definition of mobile marketing from MMA, Brazil Mobile app should improve some aspects to cover all perspectives offered by mobile marketing, and to become more complete and interesting.

For example, on the aspect of Interactivity, there is no way of tourist interact with the DMO, or even with other visitors. However, today travellers living in the age of sharing on social networks making comments and uploading videos and photos. Moreover, thanks to the GPS feature, tourists can discover new places to visit and enjoy different travel experiences. With regard to Information, there is only basic content. Missing important information as a list of events or indications on industry players, which is crucial to help tourists to book a flight or a hotel. In this case, as well observed by Jao (2013), while mobile offers the promise of ease and convenience, travel fragmentation continues to plague the travel experience and to let smart phones crowded.

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