

Destination image through digital photography. Instagram as a data collector for UGC analysis.

Fabiana Baumann, Maria Sofia Lopes , and
Paulo Lourenço

Polytechnic of Leiria
ESTM / CiTUR, Portugal
fabiana.d.baumann@ipleiria.pt; maria.lopes@ipleiria.pt; paulolourenco@ipleiria.pt

Abstract

The photographic practice is an essential element in the tourist experience and DMO is no longer the main responsible for the visual content available on a destination. UGC role in destination image construction is getting more influential. The approximation of the projected and perceived image can lead to successful campaigns and tourists' positive feedback. At this case study we aim to compare DMO and Tourists' photos by its similarity/dissimilarity among different attributes. Content analysis is being used to segment the photos into different categories and compare them by the frequency. It was concluded in this case study that beside the similarity of the main categories, there are some subcategories' dissimilarities that might be worked in order to help DMO achieve better results on social media and to approximate tourists preferences to their visual marketing strategy.

Keywords: Content Analysis; Tourism Destination Image; Social Media; Digital Photography; Instagram.

1 Introduction

Visuals are the language of the digital era and social sharing has turned this information into something analysable. The destination image is now largely shaped by the content shared on the Internet and more specifically on social networks. DMOs (Destination Management Organizations) understand now that they do not have full control over their intended destination image and that they have to integrate tourists/UGC (User Generated Content) in their planning and strategy. This study is based on the image representations of these two actors so one can make a comparative study on digital content from these two different perspectives. Therefore, some invariant elements are assumed. It is decided to fix the role of the DMO as an emitter of the destination image (projected image), thus subjugating for the moment its role as a "reader"; and on the other hand, it is decided to fix the tourist as the receiver, the interpreter, but with an important extra - the tourist is able to materialize the perceived image through an immediate reflex in digital photography.

The aim was to create a new methodology to analyse UGC on Instagram and to create a list of attributes of a specific destination - Lisbon is being used as a case study - to understand the congruence of its frequency between the two sets of photographs.

3 Methods

3.1 Research questions

3.1.1 Which attributes determine the destination image of Lisbon according to the visual content produced by the DMO and UGC (Instagram users)?

3.1.2 What's the congruence between the two image sets regarding the frequency of the represented attributes?

3.2 Establishing categories

Stage 1 - was based on a qualitative content analysis. The subjects appear naturally from the analysis of a sample with 300 photos (Ji, 2011). This stage is free, the distribution of the categories cannot be pre-established by the evaluators.

Stage 2 - a list of categories was designed, based on the information gathered from the 1st Stage, and on the categories distribution used by Echtner and Richie (2003) and Stepchenkova and Li (2013). A list of subcategories was associated to some of them.

Stage 3 - a test was made to validate the division system among independent users. This test was based on a sample of 100 photos. The aim of this process is to see if the grid applies to the study (Krippendorf, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002, cited by Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013). From the results obtained, categories were then adjusted, taking into account the discrepancies between the evaluators and the categories with small number of occurrences. For this purpose, some categories were fused and some new subcategories were added (Donaire, J. Camprubí, R. & Galí, N., 2014).

Stage 4 - A final list of categories was established serving both Destination Management Organization (Facebook + Visit Lisboa Website Gallery = 409 photos) and user generated photos (Instagram = a sample of 431 was taken from a total of more than 34.000 pictures shared). Each photo can be evaluated in more than one category or subcategory, but cannot be evaluated in different subcategories belonging to the same category.

4 Results

4.1 Categories frequency analysis

The chi-square analysis allows a statistical comparison of each category for both DMO (Visit Lisboa) and tourists (Instagram), determining the agreement or non-agreement between the projected image and perceived image.

According to the final analysis of the results the most frequent categories are *Architecture & Building* (35.2%), *Attractions* (33.8%) and *Culture, Heritage & Tradition* (20.8%). In what concerns the categories *Attractions* and *Culture, Heritage*

& *Tradition*, there is no statistical significant relationship between the origin of the photo and the presence of these categories, which means that there are no relevant differences between the DMO and UGC photos, indicating that the projected image corresponds to the image perceived by the tourists. However, in the *Architecture & Building* case, one can see that although it is significant in both projected (28.6%) and perceived (41.5%) image, the tourists are the ones who most value this attribute.

In general, and in other less frequent categories, there is a significant difference between the destination's projected image and the image perceived by tourists, with the exception of the category *Food & Beverage*, where both sources have practically the same percentage of photos (approx. 7%), and *Green Spaces* category. Thus, if we compare the projected image (DMO) with the perceived image (Instagram), DMO gives a greater emphasis to the categories *Events, Arts & Performing Arts* (19.1% DMO, 10.4% Instagram), while tourists give a greater focus to *Way of Life* (12% DMO, 19.3% Instagram), *Tourism Facilities* (10% DMO, 18.8% Instagram); *Street* (3.7% DMO, 10% Instagram), and *Landscape* (18.3% DMO, 24.3% Instagram).

4.1 Subcategories frequency analysis

The categories were divided into subcategories to facilitate a better reading of the results and allow for a detailed analysis and quantification.

For DMO the main focus of the *Events, Art & Performing Arts* category is in *Events* (only 5.1% of the photos were associated with another subcategory), confirming that this category is focused on the events themselves (94.9%) and less on the art and shows - which are confined to only 5.1% of this group. Curiously, and in the tourists' case, the exact opposite happens - tourists prefer performing shows or *Street Art* (97.7%) to events (only 2,3%). In fact, 60% of tourists' photographs of *Events, Art & Performing Arts* are in the subcategory *Street Art*. In what concerns to *Landscape*, there were no significant differences between tourists and DMO regarding the subcategories.

In *Culture, Heritage & Tradition* category significant differences between DMO and tourists were detected in the distribution of the subcategories. In the DMO's case, the most frequent subcategory is *Other* (48.2%), where mostly churches can be find, while the image perceived by tourists in terms of culture, heritage and tradition is more represented in the *Tram* subcategory (35.6 %). Finally, in relation to *Attractions, Tourism of Lisbon* gives special emphasis to *Monuments* (34%) and *Museums* (34%), while tourists prefer *Monuments* (48.2%) and *Green Spaces* (32.8%).

5 Conclusions

The content analysis was applied to both DMO and UGC, representing both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The categories were created under a set of stages within a long process, carefully thought to guarantee the reliability of this study.

The main categories showed to have a similar weight on both groups of pictures, despite the higher importance of architecture on UGC. A fact that indicates that investing on a more significant promotion of the architecture would be a good strategy for the DMO. Tourists show that authenticity is one of their primary concerns and the Portuguese architecture is very distinctive. Street and Way of Life were also two enhanced categories, which corroborate this inclination.

The main findings show that while the DMO explores images of churches on their official visual content, tourists prefer to photograph monuments, especially when they are surrounded by green spaces. So it is believed that this is an image that they want to emphasize and therefore any promotion having these two elements will be more likely to be attractive than references to a church.

The category *Events, Art & Performing Art* is the one with a bigger contrast between the two groups. While in this case the DMO's concern is to promote their events, tourists don't perceive its importance and are rather more interested in a subcategory that was completely neglected by the DMO – Street Art. Whereas 97,7% of the images go to Performing Art presence, mainly due to Street Art, DMO hasn't showed any photo of this subcategory on its official platforms. It is believed that a strong investing on street art promotion; on the creation of specific urban routes or a stronger dissemination of urban art photos on social media, would attract more tourists.

The similarity between the official platforms and the photos collected on Instagram will represent in our opinion a successful line between tourists preferences and DMO strategy. There are although many limitations to this case study, since not all the tourists that visit Lisbon have Instagram; take photos or share them on social media; have Wi-Fi access; and there's not a direct comparison between two different Instagram accounts, since the DMO didn't have an official Instagram account at the time. We believe that this is an important step though for researchers though, that might help valuing the data that is being generated on social media. Further research could be applied on different destinations or on other methods to complement content analysis, such as to define tourists by their origin, age or to analyze number of likes/photo comments on Instagram.

6 References

- Donaire, J. Camprubí, R. & Galí, N. (2014) *Tourist clusters from Flickr travel photography*. Tourism management perspectives 11, 26-33. Accessed at July 30, 2015, <http://dugi-doc.udg.edu/bitstream/handle/10256/9745/Preprint-TouristClusters.pdf?sequence=1>
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2003). *The meaning and measurement of destination image*. Tourism, 14, 37–48.
- Instagram (2017) Accessed at August, 2017, <https://instagram.com/about/us>.
- Ji, S. (2011). *Projected and perceived destination images of Qingdao, China*. A thesis presented to the University of Waterloo, Canada. A thesis presented to the University of Waterloo in fulfilment of the thesis requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography.
- Stepchenkova, Kim & Kirilenko, (2014). *Cultural Differences in Pictorial Destination Images: Russia through the Camera Lenses of American and Korean Tourists*. Journal of Travel Research. doi:10.1177/0047287514535849