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Report of Workshop 1 – New Technologies, New Tourists

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1. Introduction

The goal was to address the following questions:

- What is the role that new technology tools can have in demand/supply patterns?
- How can micro SME's benefit from the new technologies?
- What is the real viewpoint of modern day tourists on these new technologies?
- What are the main trends of customers' online behaviour?
- What should be done to ensure customer loyalty and satisfaction?
- Are there any market drivers that the tourism stakeholders are ignoring?

2. Issues identified

- Customer demand is changing and becoming more complex
- A major online trend is towards customer generated packages and content [Travel 2.0]
 - Growth is explosive
 - There is increasing demand for dynamic and personalised packaging
 - Customer feedback and content is the new way for customers to select accommodation – who needs official classification and grading schemes?
 - Customers/users can provide more extensive content than was ever possible previously + more complex profiling of the product – including feedback on sustainability issues, staff working conditions, etc
 - Tourism businesses should monitor and learn from this content – a superb and immediate form of customer satisfaction research
 - Intelligent recommendation systems have a key role to play in helping customers select offers that meet their needs and wants; these can be human or online
 - Any customer may have multiple profiles; systems need to take account of this.
- The “experience economy” means that customer attention moves away from destinations towards sites where advice can be obtained on the best locations to enjoy experiences
- SMMEs, who individually cannot be part of the commercial value chain, have the opportunity to be included in that chain by working together to aggregate their services into integrated offers – this can be a role of DMOs, marketing associations, etc

- Technology provides the means for dynamic aggregation and for inclusion of a diversity of suppliers, in particular of SMEs fostering their sustainability (economic, social and ecological)
- The concept of the DMS needs to be extended to enable full B2B cooperation – involving a partnership of all stakeholders
- The market and technological changes will require new organisations, new business models and new ways of thinking
 - Role of travel agents – must become agents of the customer
 - DMOs must find a new role in the light of the explosion in user generated content – do they have role?

3. Conclusions and recommendations

1. Improve our understanding of trends in user generated content
2. Recognise the power of user generated content to enhance existing product information and provide guidance on quality
3. Support technology that will enhance the reliability of user generated recommendations
4. Facilitate the aggregation of SME/micro business offers in a way that will reflect the full diversity of the destination's offers
5. Encourage and facilitate DMOs and other players (e.g. trade marketing associations) to develop full e-business platforms that:
 - enable all tourism businesses (including SMEs, intermediaries and carriers) to cooperate in packaging and selling integrated products and experiences, directly or through travel industry distribution channels
 - offer real-time availability to enable personalised dynamic packaging, based on multiple user profiles
6. Encourage suppliers to monitor User generated content to guide them on required product quality improvement
7. Facilitate organisational change within the tourism industry and destination organisations, reflecting market and technological change.