MARKETING AND BRAND DESIGN OF DESTINATION EXPERIENCES: THE ROLE OF ICT

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) with particular emphasis on internet have been rapidly adapted to tourism, where new opportunities for design and marketing strategies for destinations are being explored in both physical and virtual environments. Furthermore, the process of designing strong brands and facilitating positive and memorable experiences are central activities concerning destinations aiming to become more competitive. Accordingly, Destinations Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are now exploring ICT and new forms of human interactions with a view to offer new opportunities for visitors to engage in the process of co-creating enhanced destination experiences in a technology-based environment. Considering that ICT both contribute to the process of designing innovative destination experiences and support enhanced individuals' experiences before, during and after the trip, the purpose of this paper is to explore the role of ICT in the marketing and brand design of destination experiences.

Keywords: tourist experiences, destinations experiences marketing, brand design, ICT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The leisure and tourism sectors are witnessing a scenario where the process of providing the conditions for positive and memorable experiences to emerge is the focus within a competitive market (Andersson, 2007; Ellis and Rossman, 2008; Morgan, Lugosi, and Ritchie, 2010; Mossberg, 2007; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmidt, 1999; Walls, Okumus, Wang, and Kwun, 2011). Along with changes in contemporary societies, continuous transformations in tourism, both in scale and scope, have led tourist experiences to become more complex and varied in their forms (Sharpley and Stone, 2011). Hence, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are increasingly being called upon to find innovative ways to make a difference considering the proliferation of destination choices (Cooper and Wahab, 2001; Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003; Pike, 2004) and taking full advantage of the e-commerce opportunities existing in the globalized and digitized world (Hyun, Lee, and Hu, 2009; Neuhofer, Buhalis, and Ladkin, 2012). Thus, designing strong brands and facilitating rich experiences are central activities concerning destinations (Hyun and Cai, 2009; Hyun, Wells, and Huh, 2003; Morgan, Elbe, and de Esteban Curiel, 2009).

Indeed, new trends in technology and changes in software and internet infrastructures, as well as in human participatory culture involved in virtual environments, altered not only the ways people find information about destinations and purchase travel products but also how they experience, communicate and perceive destinations (Buhalis, 2003; Buhalis and Jun, 2011; Neuhofer *et al*., 2012; Poon, 1993; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Accordingly, ICT with particular emphasis on the internet have been rapidly adapted to the tourism industry, where new opportunities for design and online marketing strategies have been explored (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Hyun and Cai, 2009). Researchers stress that the challenges for destination marketing management therefore involve the transformation of the designed experience offerings into personalized experiences (Volo, 2009), incorporating the needs and interest of all stakeholders in a combined product offer (Hyun *et al.*, 2003; Manente and Minghetti, 2006; Pike, 2004).

The profound transformations in society resulting from the evolution of ICT led to innovative consumption experiences, which bring together physical and virtual worlds, boosting the involvement of consumers both in the consumption and production processes (Beça, Raposo, and Figueiredo, 2014; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010). In fact, individuals are no longer just consumers of contents but they also create and share information, due to the use of mobile devices on a daily basis, integrating the web 2.0 paradigm (Hyun *et al*., 2009). Hence, the internet is now seen as a source of information, user generated content and a platform for interaction (Doolin, Burgess, and Cooper, 2002; Neuhofer *et al*., 2012). In this sense, the proliferation of web 2.0 and social media drastically changed the marketing and design approaches for tourism (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Hyun and Cai, 2009). In this context, multi-sensory stimuli are being explored by destinations and by leisure and tourist organizations, both in physical and virtual environments, by using the potential of new technologies in the different moments of travel (Agapito, Mendes, and Valle, 2013; Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2003; Neuhofer *et al*., 2012). This idea contributes to the process of enhancing destination experiences, resulting in more positive outcomes (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010; Gretzel and Tazim, 2009; Kastenholz, Carneiro, and Marques, 2012; Tung and Ritchie, 2011).

By posing technology as an extension of human senses (Jütte, 2005; Rodaway, 1994), which contributes, on one hand, to the process of designing and marketing innovative destination experiences and, on the other hand, to enhancing individuals' experiences before, during and after the trip, the purpose of this paper is to explore the role of ICT in the marketing and brand design of destination experiences using a theoretical approach and short case studies.

2. ICT AND MARKETING CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCES IN TOURISM

Tourism studies have acknowledged the consumption of experiences as a key research topic (Woodside *et al*., 2000) since destinations are composite products (places, people and activities) which generate multiple experiences in their consumption, with tourists being considered as consumers (Buhalis, 2000; Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung, 2007; Quan and Wang, 2004; Williams, 2006; Woodside *et al.,* 2000). Experiences are recognized as a distinct economic offer, occupying a central role in society and holding a premium position, after commodities, goods and services (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Indeed, current research shows consumers' preferences for experiences, hence to be engaged, when interacting with products and services (Holbrook, 1999; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Jensen, 1999). In the context of tourism, the concept of *experiencescape* (Mossberg, 2007) constitutes the tourists' global consumption, which includes a destination as the consumption experience environment. Therefore, knowing how destinations and organizations can create conditions to enhance tourists' global experiences is crucial in order to develop effective marketing management strategies (Morgan, Elbe, and de Esteban Curiel, 2009; Mossberg, 2007; Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Volo, 2009; Tung and Ritchie, 2011).

On one hand, tourist experiences are characterized for being of a multi-phasic nature, comprising the phases of anticipation, travel to site, on-site activity, return home and recollection (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). On the other hand, consumers are increasingly more willing to be engaged and to co-create their own experiences in a quest of personal growth and value (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009; Neuhofer *et al*., 2012; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). These aspects result in increasing opportunities for the proliferation of technology-mediated destination experiences (Gretzel and Tazim 2009; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009). Against this background, the challenges for destination marketing management involve the design of experience offerings into personalized experiences (Volo, 2009). With the aim to enhance tourist experiences, resulting in more positive responses, virtual environments are being considered, in addition to physical environments, with respect to the optimization of the potential of ICT in the different moments of travel (Neuhofer *et al*., 2012).

Indeed, changes in society resulting from the development of new technologies altered the way in which the travel is planned (Buhalis and Jun, 2011; Hyun *et al*., 2009) and the tourism offer is designed (Mossberg, 2007; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), managed, experienced (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Pine and Gilmore, 1998), branded and communicated (Hyun and Cai, 2009). Hence, sensory stimuli (visual, aural, olfactory, gastronomic and tactile) can be managed in both physical and virtual environments thus influencing the perception of the overall tourist experience and the individuals' decision-making processes (Agapito, Valle, Mendes, 2012; Agapito *et al*., 2013; Cho, Wang, and Fesenmaier, 2002; Hyun and Cai, 2009). Cho *et al.* (2002:3) define virtual experience as ''an experience in a virtual environment using a computer mediated environment and is based upon the concept of telepresence'', i.e., a mediated environment, characterized by interactiveness - the degree to which the use of a medium can influence the form or content - and vividness - the ability to produce a sensorially rich mediated environment (Steuer, 1992). Accordingly, the sense of being in a mediated environment from interactive media, such as 3D virtual environments, should be richer than the experience provided by traditional media, and "virtual information can become more credible by improving the level of telepresence that makes consumers feel like having the actual experience" (Hyun and Cai, 2009: 44).

Consequently, new media are rapidly gaining attention in narrating travel experiences (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Lee, and Tussyadiah, 2011). Location-aware technology are characterized by its relatively low price and availability, such as mobile phones, which are part of daily life and a primary means for communication and information when travelling (Ferreira, Alves, and Quico, 2014a; Hyun *et al*., 2009). The anticipation and recollection stages of tourist experiences, in addition to the in loco activity, are seen as involving specific particularities that influence the

type of use of consumer-generated media and mobile technologies by tourists who use them with the purpose of narrating their travel experiences. These forms of contemporary travel writing help tourists to enhance, share and add meaning to their experiences, thus contributing to the process of cognitive and emotional attachment to brands and destinations. Thus, apart from being cultural and social constructions, these stories of encounters with locals, other tourists and places go beyond the gaze, putting together all the bodily experience by including the non-visual senses along with sight (Pan and Ryan, 2009; Gretzel *et al*., 2011).

The process of combining Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) technologies with the internet facilitates ease of access to up-to-date and reliable information, adapted to the different phases of the trip and to the diverse visitors' needs and motivations (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Hyun *et al.*, 2009; Neuhofer *et al*., 2009; Pan and Ryan, 2009; Vaz and Campos, 2013). These forms of initiatives can contribute to enhance the destination experience both to all visitors and residents (Hyun *et al.*, 2009; Kastenholz *et al*., 2012). With this view, some studies point out that traditional forms of communicating the benefits of destinations should be revised, and ICT could assist in promoting destination experiences based not only on visual stimuli and sight-based verbal descriptions but also on non-visual stimuli (Agapito, Valle, and Mendes, 2014; Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2003; Gretzel *et al.,* 2011; Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). Indeed, the process of stimulating the senses is a tool with the potential to trigger intense emotions, thus boosting brand attachment (Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2003). Collaborative marketing strategies using new technology may result in sensory-based, creative communication events, such as the development of multi-sensory routes addressed at diverse tourist profiles (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Pan and Ryan, 2009) or the use of local gastronomy to promote interactive sensory experiences for tourists (Daugstad, 2008; Quan and Wang, 2004; Sidali, Kastenholz, and Bianchi, 2013; Silkes, Cai, and Lehto, 2013). Accordingly, recent research in tourism suggests the importance of multi-sensory stimuli in the marketing of appealing tourist experiences, resulting as important markers for recollection (Mossberg, 2007; Ooi, 2005; Tung and Ritchie, 2011). This occurs while encouraging responsible tourist experiences with respect to local resources (Agapito *et al.*, 2014; Saxena, Clark, Oliver, and Ilbery, 2007) and accessibility by taking into account impaired people in this process (e.g. visual/hearing impairment, mobility impairment) (Abranja *et al*., 2010; Richards *et al*., 2010; Small *et al.,* 2012).

Within the context of cultural tourism, the impact of technology in museum visits, for example, has been particularly highlighted (Beça, Raposo, and Figueiredo, 2014). Thus, participatory culture and Web 2.0 services are central, named in tourism studies as m-Tourism 2.0 (mobile tourism), which derives from the concept of web 2.0 adapted to tourism (Buhalis, 2003). Accordingly, the use of the internet and mobile and technological devices are being tested and used in museums for enhancing visitor experiences by considering different needs and profiles in the process. For example, Beça *et al.* (2014) developed and tested a prototype device in the Museum of Aveiro (Portugal) that integrates the idea of participatory culture and web 2.0 services aiming to enrich tourist experiences. The idea is to boost all the phases of the experience: visitors can download the application to their mobile phones through the museum website before the visit and have access to contents and comments; during the visit they can explore different sensory-informed content and file information, as well as share comments through web 2.0 services in real time; and, after the visit, visitors have a means to share stories and relive the visit. The development of these types of engines requires participatory sessions with respect to contents, usability and design. Furthermore, the process of exploring m-Tourism 2.0 contributes to word of mouth that can be decisive in the process of choice of places to visit, since it transforms a merely contemplative visit into an interactive and participative one (Beça *et al*., 2014; Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan, 2008). Indeed, online reviews (e.g., travel blogs and platforms, such as Booking.com or Trip Advisor) have been posed as reliable and relevant source of information for travelers, with possible implications in their decision-making processes (Lopes, Abrantes, and Kastenholz, 2013; Sparks and Browning, 2011).

2.1 Gamification: virtual destination experiences

Gamification is a recent global trend in tourism, which uses game design elements in non-game contexts and is characterized as a "process of game-thinking and game mechanics to engage users and solve problems" (Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011, p.xiv). In the context of tourism, the use of games can be related to location-based online or offline mobile games, aiming to lead to a rise in brand awareness with marketing purposes (Xu, Tian, Buhalis, and Weber, 2013). Some projects of location based transmedia storytelling, using diverse communication platforms, have been recently released. They connect storytelling and games along with locative media, allowing participants to explore locations (Ferreira *et al*., 2014a).

The first social platform using GPS was the "Great American GPS Stash Hunt", released in 2000. It is now widely known as Geocaching (Ferreira *et al*., 2014a), which encloses more than two million active geocachers (geocaching.com). This platform connects both virtual and physical worlds based on the interaction between groups of people and places, and it conveys narrative and sensory-based information. The challenge is to find caches that can be physical or treasure enigmas to solve (Ferreira *et al*., 2014a; Xu *et al.,* 2013). Some examples of location-based games are: *REXplorer*, which humorously showcases the history and culture of Regensburg, in Germany (Ballagas, Kuntze and Walz, 2008); *WhaiWhai*, which is based on enigmas to solve (http://www.whaiwhai.com/en); and *Strayboots,* which mixes the ideas of scavenger hunt and walking tour (https://www.strayboots.com/). In Portugal, *TravelPlot* (http://www.travelplot.com/en/) explores the mechanic of seeking out a hidden treasure and social networks (Ferreira *et al*., 2014b), while *Viseu Mobile* (Figure 1) allows visitors to manipulate virtual objects in a real context, using augmented reality by pointing the phone towards the intended focus (http://viseumobile.esenviseu.net/en/).

Figure 1 – Viseu Mobile

Source: http://viseumobile.esenviseu.net/en/).

Other types of games are not location-based, functioning more as an advergame that engages specific segments of users while promoting destinations by gaming (Çeltek, 2010). Examples of these are: *Smile Land*, which aims to promote different places in Thailand (Figure 2); *Agent UK*, which was part of the release of the 007 movie *Skyfall* and engaged social media followers of

Visit Britain in specific missions; and *Brazil Quest*, a game placed in the host cities of the 2014 World Cup (Ferreira *et al*., 2014a).

Figure 2 – Smile Land

Source: http://viseumobile.esenviseu.net/en/

2.2 The role of ICT in destinations' brand design and communication

According to Lacerda (2004), people live in a world surrounded by information, structures, services, products, people and buildings with different kinds of messages and meanings - each one with a specific identity. The evolution of technologies, economic changes and globalization dynamics stress the urgency in studying organizations' needs and the way they communicate, with respect to their identity as a resource and its contribution to the recognition and clarification of the messages addressed to the stakeholders and society in general. That is the reason why the process of destination branding is central to communicating a destination's unique identity and to differentiate it from competitors (Govers and Go, 2009).

Indeed, brand identity reflects the contribution of all brand elements (name, symbol, logo and work mark) to the awareness and image of the product (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1998), which is also the case for destinations (Qu *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, researchers claim that the concept of visitor experience should be incorporated into the process of branding (Blain, Levy, and Ritchie, 2005) since it "conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination", and it also serves to "consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience" (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998:103). However the brand not only generates value to the consumer but also to all the stakeholders involved (Govers and Go, 2009). In fact, a marketing approach to tourist experiences of destinations should center on carefully facilitating rich, positive and diversified experiences by achieving balance in preserving endogenous resources, residents' quality of life, tourism providers' benefits and tourists' quality of visit; consequently, it is also aimed at local, sustainable development (Manente and Minghetti, 2006).

Moreover, similar to the process of branding organizations, the process of branding a destination should create links between the destination and their audiences, and it should responsibly incorporate the fast environment mutations existing in society in the process of building the destination identity (Gover and Go, 2009; Olins, 2006). Along with the needs of the product offering, designers have to know "how to move in the collective memory of people, their culture, behaviors, emotions and needs, to understand their history, desires and dreams",

and also to "understand the culture and the behaviors of the organizations, and the needs of their services or products" (Lacerda, 2004: 285). Indeed, design is responsible for tangibilizing the external factors that influence the individuals' perception of tourist experiences, with special focus on the sensory stimuli (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile) (Agapito *et al*, 2013; Bitner, 1992; Heide and GrØnhaug, 2006). The aim is to craft satisfactory environments where unique, positive and memorable experiences are more likely to emerge leading to positive outcomes, such as destination loyalty (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Thus, non-visual stimuli along with visual images are tools that bond humans and are the support to the relations between physical, intellectual and the social worlds. These "communication tools can differentiate qualitatively the way we communicate, the way the services or products are transmitted to people" (Lacerda, 2004: 285).

Against this background, ICT have contributed to innovative forms of branding destinations (Govers and Go, 2009; Hyun and Cai, 2009) since the rise of advanced ICT has dramatically changed marketing communication planning (Peltier, Schibrowsky, and Schultz, 2003). Instead of merely transferring the branding elements to the online environment as they are used in traditional media, DMOs now have the opportunity to build virtual brands that are mediated by the internet. The potential of the interactivity and vividness characteristics offered by this medium can be optimized (Hyun and Cai, 2009) by exploring virtual experiences based on the web environment contributing to the destination image formation (Cho *et al.*, 2002).

Specifically, websites are being increasingly explored by DMOs and tourist organizations as a central means of communication with respect to brand identity and values associated to it, allowing visitors to virtually experience the destination (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Doolin *et al*., 2002; Hyun and Cai, 2009; Kim and Fesenmaier, 2008). The websites are increasingly becoming more interactive and sensory-informed since technology potentiates the use of other multimedia resources besides words to describe destinations and experiences, such as: interactive logos, webvideos, audiobooks, advergames, sensory maps, virtual tours and interactive platforms for posting testimonials (Agapito *et al*., 2013; Cho *et al*., 2002; Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2003).

2.3 Short case studies

In Brazil, São Paulo Turismo developed a pioneer project, based on the concept of experience economy applied to tourism by creating the "map of sensations" (Figure 3), where attractions spots are described in terms of their sensory and emotional features, which were collected in a research based on residents' and visitors' testimonials. This map encourages visitors to live sensory-informed experiences, offering a new perspective of the metropolis. The project is permanently updated due to its interactive nature, which allows visitors to share their experiences (Agapito *et al.*, 2013). The site of the project gives the opportunity to explore São Paulo sensations with the help of an audio book, through which it is possible to capture, for example, the sounds, colors, textures, scents and gastronomic features of local settings (http://www.mapadassensacoes.com.br/mapadassensacoes/).

Figure 3 – Map of Sensations – São Paulo

Source: http://www.mapadassensacoes.com.br/mapadassensacoes/

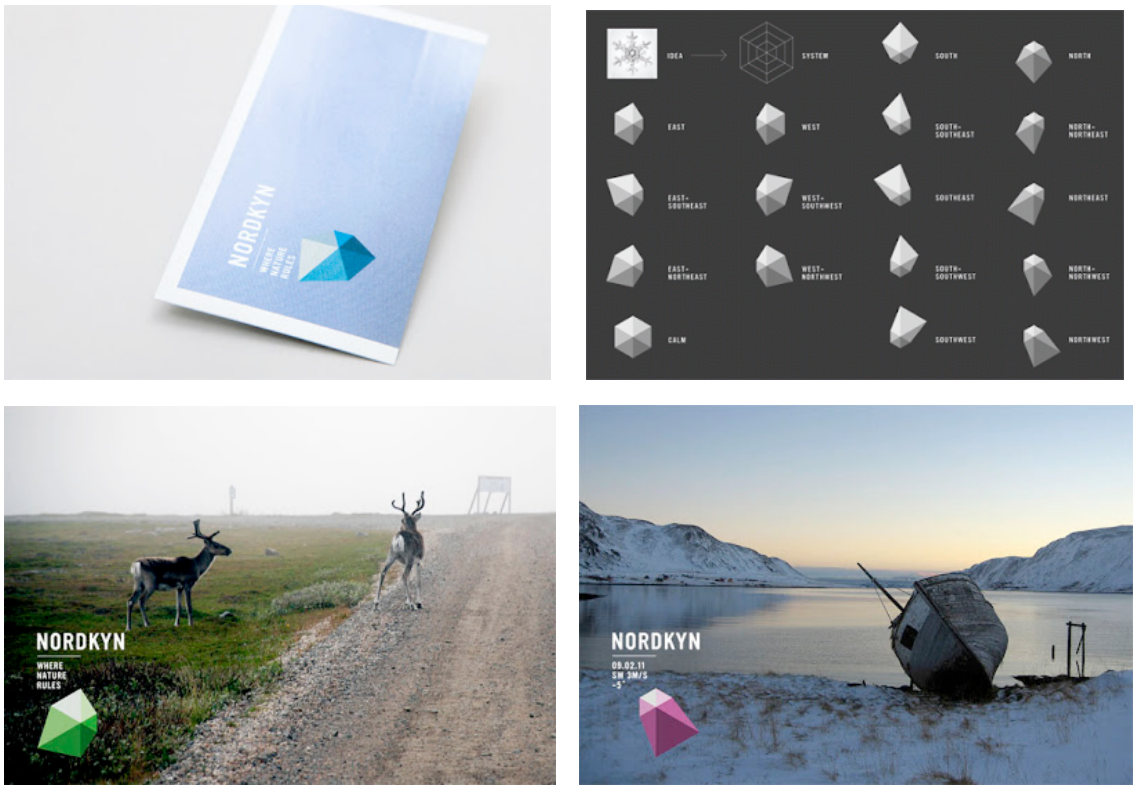
Other official tourism websites use tools such as the *Google Street View*, which is associated with *Google Maps*, allowing visitors to virtually experience destinations, such as in the case of Israel (Figure 4). Visitors can have a 360 degree tour through the cyberspace, visiting three central cities – Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa – and experiencing the sacred paths and spots for pilgrimage (http://vt.goisrael.com/). Also, they use a similar technique to the *Art Project* from the Google Culture Institute, which files images and information from museums, a process that makes it possible to register images from the more inaccessible and narrowed streets of the Old City (Rafael and Almeida, 2014).

Figure 4 – Israel Wonders

Source: http://vt.goisrael.com/

The process of branding Nordkyn, a cape in the northernmost point of Norway, is an example of the role of technology in the process of building the destination's brand identity in a dynamic way (Figure 5). This example took into account the unique sensory qualities of the destination. The logo was based on the concept "Where Nature Rules" and on weather condition statistics available from the Norwegian Meteorological Institute. Accordingly, the logo updates every five minutes with the temperature, and the shape of the logo is determined by the wind direction. A logo generator was developed through which visitors can download the logo with respect to the specific weather conditions of a particular moment (http://www.visitnordkyn.com/).

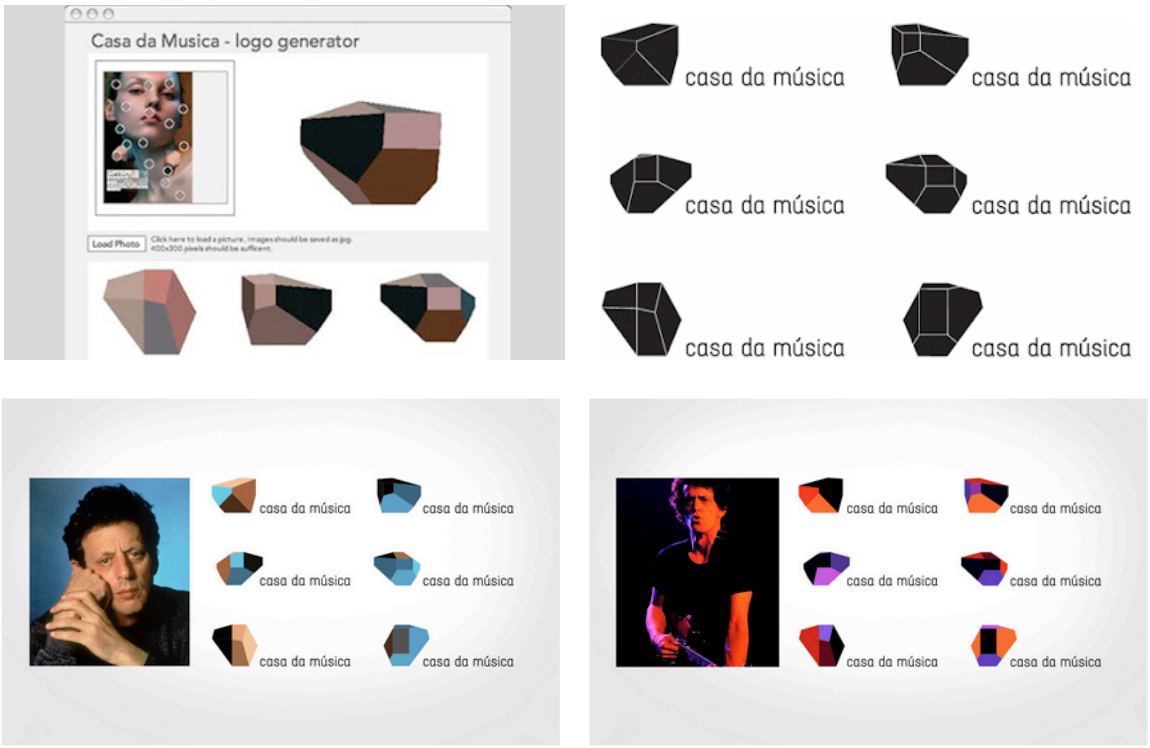
Figure 5 – Nordkyn brand identity



Source: http://identidade-visual.blogspot.pt/

The concept of flexible visual identity was also used by Stefan Sagmeister in the cultural sector with Casa da Música, which is the building most visited in Oporto, Portugal (Porto Business School, 2013). The logo color changes according to the context in which it is used, and the symbol shape relates to the crystal-based form of the building, presented in perspectives taken from six different angles. A custom built software – "logo generator" – produces a distilled version of any visual into a logo of Casa da Música, enclosing the core information of the original one (Figure 6). For example, the president of Casa da Música can have a business card with a customized logo created from his portrait (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URmKSyKAK5w).

Figure 6 – Casa da Música graphic brand



Source: http://www.sagmeisterwalsh.com/work/project/casa-da-musica-identity/

3. CONCLUSIONS

The development of ICT offered multiple challenges in tourism. This process resulted in changes in the dynamics of the design and marketing of consumption experiences, enabling consumers to engage in the process of co-creating their destination experiences in the context of a technology-based environment (Gretzel, Fesenmaier and O'Leary, 2006, Mosseberg, 2007; Neuhofer *et al*., 2012; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). These facts give rise to implications in the design and marketing management of destination experiences (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Govers and Go, 2009; Gretzel, Yuan, and Fesenmaier, 2000; Hyun and Cai, 2009). Against this background, this paper proposed to explore the role of ICT in the marketing and brand design of destination experiences.

Indeed, DMOs are taking a central role in the development of combined strategies in management and marketing destinations, taking into account the needs and interests of all stakeholders, with emphasis on the design of a composite product offer, branding and communication strategies (Hyun *et al.*, 2003; Pike, 2004). Moreover, since the environment involving destination experiences can now be both physical and virtual, DMOs are called to direct efforts to the sustainable planning of the physical and virtual settings, in which positive and memorable experiences are more likely to emerge, leading to positive outcomes, such as tourist loyalty (Agapito *et al.*, 2013; Cutler and Carmichael, 2010; Kastenholz, *et al.*, 2012; Tung and Ritchie, 2011).

Against this background, this paper allowed the highlighting of some research topics that have important implications in the marketing and brand design of destination experiences and which require further investigation within the context of tourist experiences, such as: i) technology is a source of innovation and offers opportunities for the co-creation of enhanced destination experiences, resulting in destinations' competitive advantages that are increasingly more related

to the use of ICT (Neuhofer *et al*., 2012; Poon, 1993; Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003); ii) the access to the internet and the proliferation of content-generated media has altered the way in which travel is planned, providing new e-commerce opportunities (Buhalis & Law, 2008); iii) destinations' websites or mobile phones with GPS technology can bring great benefits, by providing experiences before, during and after travel, offering games as an alternative to sightseeing experiences and allowing individuals to experience limited-access locations (Ferreira *et al*., 2014a; Hyun *et al*., 2009); iv) multi-sensory information might be useful in designing personalized location-based technologies, derived from geographical information systems (GIS) (Agapito *et al*., 2014; Vaz and Campos, 2013); v) in general, the use of games in the context of tourism have the use of social media in common, which transformed the way consumers find and share information, giving brands the opportunity to reach the worldwide audience (Buhalis and Jun, 2011; Ferreira *et al.,* 2014b; Xu *et al*., 2013); vi) destinations have the opportunity to more responsibly address the multi-sensory nature of the tourist experience in order to design accessible experiences for all by exploring the potential of ICT (Abranja et al., 2010; Agapito *et al*., 2013; Richards et al., 2010; Small *et al.*, 2012); vii) brands are augmented with the use of online resources, taking advantage of the electronic word of mouth (Buhalis, 2003; Buhalis and Jun, 2011; Neuhofer *et al*., 2012); viii) the evolution of technology, economical changes and globalization call for the study of visual brand identities of destinations and the way they are communicating, with the aim to analyze its contribution to the recognition and clarification of messages addressed to the diverse stakeholders and society in general (Govers and Go, 2009; Lacerda, 2004).

With respect to the implications to the marketing of destination experiences, the final remarks point out some practical uses of ICT in the different moments of tourism trips. In the pre-trip phase, the destinations' websites can explore all the senses, rather than only visual stimuli, in order to communicate their experiential offerings in a rich and collaborative way. This idea includes the use of advergames, interactive brand identities, virtual tours, webvideos, audiobooks and sensory maps, for example, with access to generated user-content that can assist tourists in the decision-making process and in the planning of the trip (Gover and Go, 2009; Gretzel and Fesenmaier, 2003; Hyun *et al*., 2009). *In situ*, experiences can be enhanced through multisensory-informed content devices, by exploring mobile applications and using technologies such as GIS and GPS, as well as encouraging visitors to share their experiences in real time and to participate in geocaching activities and contests (Agapito *et al*. 2013; Ferreira *et al*., 2014a; Hyun *et al*., 2009). The post-trip is a vital stage since many tourists continue to enjoy the pleasure of their choice after returning home, through sharing stories with family and friends and reliving the experience (Crouch *et al.*, 2004). At this stage, sharing stories on blogs and websites or using repositories platforms for sharing videos and photographs, as well as participating in the branding process and communication of the destination, can be encouraged by DMOs (Gretzel *et al.*, 2011; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009).

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