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Understanding user participation in Australian Government Tourism Facebook Page

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Abstract

With Facebook being the largest social network site (SNS), can government use Facebook (FB) to increase citizen participation in delivering and promoting their services? This paper presents the case of government use of social media for tourism to provide a general understanding online government and user participation in the Tourism government FB page. This is a case study research into the government FB page of Tourism Australia. FB page wall posts and comments are analysed quantitatively using content analysis to determine what type of online participation is visible in these sites and what the agencies are trying to achieve. Further, the paper employed a spectrum of online engagement matrix to identify the type of engagement being attained by the page. Findings show that the page has successfully served as a platform for its audience to share their Australian experience and it is being used for the purpose of announcing, informing and involving type of online engagement. This is an example of a crowdsourcing endeavour where tourism experiences and stories and pictures are being sourced from public. The research contributes to gaining a better understanding of government FB phenomenon, in particular for Australian context.

Keywords: Facebook, Gov 2.0, Tourism, User participation, Australia

INTRODUCTION

Businesses and workplaces are adapting social media to leverage connectivity and mass collaboration (Cummings et al 2009, O'Reilly 2009). In this changing context, the expectations on governments to engage, work openly, be accountable and move more quickly on issues are growing. We are in the midst of a significant shift in the way we think about, and relate to, public services (Tapscott et al 2007). Since the open Government declaration in 2010, over the past 2 years the Gov 2.0 work plan Steering Group has overseen a range of initiatives with the strategic goal of enabling and supporting the adoption of Government 2.0 principles across government (Steward 2012). To encourage the take up of social media, the Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) has set up a Gov 2.0 ICT excellence award and Australia.gov.au now has a section on social media with links to all government social media initiatives (DoFD n.d. & Steward 2012).

Government 2.0 is essentially making the government information more accessible and usable, allowing more consultative, participatory and transparent government (Richter et al 2011). It's also characterized as citizen driven (Dimaio 2009). User generated content and collaboration between many users are central to the social phenomenon of Web 2.0 (Clarke 2008, McLoughlin & Lee 2007). Numerous technological tools are available to allow this user content creation as demonstrated by large number of niche groups (collections of friends) who can exchange content of any kind (text, audio, video) and tag, comment, and link to both intra-group and extra-group "pages" (McLoughlin & Lee 2007). In this way, users are not limited to consume but they can also contribute information (Dabbagh & Reo 2011). With so many things that web 2.0 has to offer, the Government 2.0 Task Force argues the need of the government to adopt the culture of web 2.0. In its report (DoFD 2009) the taskforce highlights the culture that characterizes web 2.0: (1) it facilitates connection between people who might not even know each other by contributing their knowledge to solve particular problem, (2) it allows data to be distributed to anyone on the internet with minimum cost. Facebook, with over 900million users, has become an integral application for businesses and organisations (Facebook 2010). With such exploding number of users and the potential it has to offer, can government use Facebook to increase citizen participation in delivering tourism services? This paper investigates the Facebook (FB) page created and run by Tourism Australia and analyse the content to see user engagement. This paper also investigates the level of user engagement using online community engagement spectrum (IAP2 n.d.) to gauge out citizen participation in the site.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TOURISM

Sheldon (1997) and Werthner & Klein (1999) argue that tourism is information-intense industry (cited in Xiang & Gretzel 2009). Potential travellers normally will look for as much information as possible before they start

holidaying because often they are situated far from the holiday destination. Such nature of tourism makes it a search product instead of experience product (Beime & Curry 1999). In that sense, searching and perusing tourism related information help customers make judgment and choices over tourism products. Hence understanding the role of technology and consumer behaviour in disseminating and accessing travel information is very important.

The feature of social media allows consumers to share their travel experience by posting comments, opinions, even pictures and videos. These postings then can serve as valuable information for other potential travellers (Xiang & Gretzel 2009).

FACEBOOK USE BY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FOR TOURISM

Social networking Site (SNS) research is not yet mature enough to identify findings that may yield general, theoretical contributions to the Information Systems field. Facebook (FB) is a SNS (See Boyd & Ellison 2007). In a recent study, Wilson, Gosling & Graham (2012) conducted a comprehensive literature search on Facebook research identifying 410 relevant articles. They also found that Facebook research uses diverse and fragmented research methods and perspectives but much remains to be done". They sorted FB research papers into five broad categories: Descriptive analysis of users (24%), motivations for using Facebook (19%), identity presentation (12%), the role of FB in social interactions (27%), and privacy and information disclosure (18%). Their research also found very limited examples of government use of FB. To contribute to this gap, the aim of this paper is to assess government use of FB to communicate travel experiences. Research on social interactions (27% of articles) examined the positive and negative effects of Facebook on relationships between groups and among individuals (e.g. students-faculty, employee-management, business-customers, doctors-patients, and between romantic partners). Business and marketing researchers explored models for engaging with customers through Facebook which are relevant for government as well. Other researchers study the overlapping social spheres (e.g. family, friends, and employers) and how this overlap could create tension (Binder et al, 2009 cited in Wilson et al 2012). A user whose Facebook friends encompass family members, employers and college friends may have difficulty presenting information that is appropriate across all social spheres simultaneously (Lampinen, Tamminen, & Oulasvirta, 2009 cited in Wilson et al 2012). What about government information sharing practices in FB? There has been no research that looked at implications for government for overlapping social spheres. This research-in-progress paper builds deeper understanding of communicative practices on FB wall by looking at organisation and user posts to contribute towards future research on social spheres.

There is an influx of non-academic articles and reports and these tended to cover the corporate and business spheres (e.g. (Luke 2009, Buttel 2010) while discussion on government use of Facebook tends to occur in blogs and government-specific websites (for example DoFD n.d., Klapper 2009, Jansen Communications 2010, Thomler 2010, Steward 2012). There is very little academic research on the use of social media by Australian government, though papers on the use of social media by government do exist (e.g. Collins 2009, Samuel 2009, Alam & Walker 2011, Alam et al 2011 and Alam & Lucas 2011). Alam et al (2011) found that Australian tax office FB page was being used for broadcasting tax compliance information. The case study highlighted the fact that social media shouldn't simply be used because others are using it or for information broadcasting purposes. Alam & Walker (2011) assessed six different Australian government FB pages such as Defence (Army, Navy & Air Force), Australian War memorial, Australian Tax office and Tourism. Initial analysis of the pages showed how agencies are using FB pages for recruitment, promoting historical collections, compliance and crowdsourcing travel experience respectively. Tourism Australia proved to be most promising amongst the 6 agencies and warranted further research. This paper is part of author's ongoing research into Tourism FB page (Alam & Walker 2011 and Alam et al 2012). In a recent publication (Alam et al 2012) on this site, the authors presented qualitative interview data and behavioural statistics for the Tourism FB page. Initial findings showed that users were mostly aged between 13-34 years and females were more active than males. The user base was made up of people from all over the world from different cultures and languages. The FB page was managed by a permanent employee; however moderation duties were shared between four people within the agency. The paper concurred with Wigand (2010) and concluded that the FB page showed continuing relationship with both short term (e.g. promoting an event) and long terms goals (e.g. promoting Australia). This paper presents the content analysis of the FB wall posts and other elements of the page to contribute to understanding the government FB phenomenon for promoting tourism and sourcing travel experiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a single case study approach as this enabled an exploratory interpretive investigation into what is a unique situation. In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin 2003). Yin (2003) argued that case studies are good for when the available or existing knowledge base is poor, in essence, "when the boundaries between phenomenon and

context are not clearly evident". Case studies are good for contemporary events that are in a formative stage. Following Yin (2003) this research uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate in-depth the online Tourism FB page and its content. Data analysis is widely regarded as an interpretive process and is primarily concerned with textual analysis. This study carried out content analysis of the online Facebook page and comments left on the wall during November 2010.

The research methodology followed a two-pronged approach: firstly, carrying out quantitative content analysis of the Facebook page for Australia Tourism page specifically looking at the wall posts and discussions. and secondly, use the online engagement framework to understand the level of engagement from information available on the Facebook pages. Other than wall posts, discussion boards, notes, video postings and other contents were also studied and analysed to see if the use of Facebook aligns with the purpose of the creation of Facebook page by Tourism Australia. This paper also identifies what types of online engagement are present in the Facebook page, using spectrum of online engagement matrix (IAP2 n.d.).

Content Analysis of FB wall posts

The research carried out a quantitative content analysis of the Facebook page posts and user comments for Tourism Australia page specifically looking at participation in this site. Inductive approach was used since it is recommended when there is not enough former knowledge about the situation being studied or if this knowledge is fragmented (Lauri & Kyngas 2005 cited in Elo and Kyngas, 2008). In inductive approach, categories are derived from the data in inductive content analysis (Elo and Kingas, 2008), that is the process moves from specific to general, that is particular instances are observed and then combined into a larger whole or general statement (Chinn & Kramer 1999 cited in Elo and Kyngas, 2008). This paper records most recent 300 wall posts on Australian Facebook Page on November 4, 2010. A research assistant carried out the initial coding and to increase validity the second author verified the coding of the posts. The posts were then coded into five categories:

1. Giving information - the person doing the posting wishes to inform their readers about some fact or event, show them a picture, point them to a web location or answer a question.
2. Requesting information - the person doing the posting is requesting information or posing a question that will (hopefully) elicit a response. Posts that seek information regarding Australia such as best place to visit, what mobile operator to choose, good place to study etc.
3. Positive comment - the person doing the posting has something positive to say about a previous post or about the topic under discussion.
4. Negative - the person doing the posting has something negative to say about a previous post or about the topic under discussion.
5. Miscellaneous - anything not fitting into the above four categories. Mostly unintended communication e.g. self-introductory, looking for friendship, not Australian experience. This was an issue for the tourism page which will be discussed below.

Further the analysis was broadened by looking at the overall FB page structure and design elements. The discussions were analysed for overall total number of discussion threads and brief look at content was carried out to gain an understanding of what is being discussed, the participation and engagement among participants. These matrices hence was quantitatively and qualitatively analysed and it assisted in examining both citizen and organisation engagement. Due to page limit, this paper will present the quantitative analysis but will draw on other qualitative analysis to make conclusions.

THE CASE OF AUSTRALIAN TOURISM FACEBOOK PAGE

Australia Facebook is an interesting case because of its rapid growth in terms number of fans compared to other Facebook pages run by Australian Government. Since April 2010, the number of Australian Tourism Facebook Page has increased from just over 370,000 to over 938,000 fans (as of November 4, 2010) to 1, 661,993 fans (as of July 1, 2011). As of June 2012 the fan count stands at 3.1 million users.

The Facebook Australia is created by Tourism Australia to serve as a hub for people who are planning to visit, have visited, or simply have a great love for holidays in Australia (<http://www.facebook.com/SeeAustralia>). It provides general information, tips on travelling to and/or working in Australia, and images and video that represents the Australian experience. On the info page the administrator encourages fans to share their experience of their visit in Australia with comments, photos and videos. This paper records and examines the page content including wall posts, discussions, photos and videos. The following sections present the findings and discussions of each aforementioned page contents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Wall Posts

The wall is the centre of a Facebook page profile where one can update his status and share other contents such as photos, videos, notes and other application (Facebook 2010). Australia Facebook page can be viewed by any one on Facebook and anyone who has become a fan can write on this page, as a result, moderation is important. The Facebook page states that a brand might suffer as a result of inappropriate content being posted on its page (eModeration n.d.).

The Australian Facebook page applies post moderation, the only type of moderation available on Facebook and only applicable to wall, photos, discussions, notes and comments (eModeration n.d.). The Australia Facebook page created a set of rules that govern what kinds of postings are allowed on the page. Posts that contain violence, racism, hate, advertisement, irrelevance (off topic) will be deleted and offensive users will be blocked from the page.

First recent 300 wall postings were recorded (as of November 4, 2010). These postings were coded into five categories: Requesting information, Giving information, Positive Comment, Negative and Miscellaneous. These categories are selected as they represent the kinds of postings expected from Facebook page administrator as the page should provide visitors or fans with general information, tips on visiting and working in Australia and video or images that captures Australian experience. Table 1 shows the percentage of each category of the postings.

Table 1. Percentage of each posting category

Code	Number of Posts	Percentage
Requesting Information	59	19.6%
Positive Comment	56	18.7%
Giving Information	105	35%
Miscellaneous	79	26.3%
Negative comment	1	0.3%

As Table 1 demonstrates, the majority of postings (35%) are picture uploads or expressions of fan wanting to visit or live in Australia. Examining closer to photo section, majority are taken from various locations in Australia, depicting panoramic scenes of bay, sunset, beach, waterfall, desert, lake, ranges, mountain and valley. Images of flora and fauna of Australia are second largest part of the image postings. They are mostly birds, although some are images of dogs, kangaroos, koalas, dingo, crocodile and turtle. For flora, most images are flowers. Some pictures are also images of city landmarks such as universities, cathedrals, sky crappers. There are total of 18572 (as of November 9, 2010, 20.30 pm) photos uploaded on Australia Facebook Page. Expressions of fan wanting to visit or live in Australia range from asking which city is best to visit to what mobile operator one would recommend during their visit in Australia. One posting example is: "NEWCASTLE~NSW listed in the Lonely Planet Guide 2011 as one of the best cities to visit...."

Images postings on the wall have twofold effects: first, the images serve as showcases of the beauty and diversity of Australia. Beirne and Curry in (Beime & Curry 1999) argue that images are very important since they represent and convey the overall view of the destination to potential tourist's mind. And since tourist are normally have limited knowledge of places they have never visited before, images of destination places plays significant role in helping them making decision and choices. Second, the images seem to prompt other fans to upload their pictures expressing their experience in Australia. They may do it for many reasons, sharing their experience, helping to promote Australian tourism or simply exhibiting their photographs. Whatever the reason, more pictures upload leads to more images available to promote Australian tourism.

Second largest portion of postings falls into miscellaneous category. These postings do not belong to the type of postings that the administrator encourages fans to share. They are comments that are not related to what the administrator labels as 'Australian experience' with the majority postings of fan's self introductory and looking for friendship. The number of such postings has raised concern of one fan whose comment expresses her worry that the page has turned into more like a dating site than a travel page. However, these off topic comments might not be considered to have negative effects on Australia Facebook Page as these comments are not removed by administrator.

Third category is positive comment which reflects positive feelings of fans towards their experience during their visit or their stay in Australia. These comments make up 18.7% of the total postings. 12%. Postings that seek for information make up 7.6% of overall postings.

Since 2009 Australia administrator has created album of favourite fan photos. The first collection was liked by over 15,900 fans and received over 2100 comments. From 9 July 2010, Australia regularly creates weekly album of favourite fan photos. Each of these albums is liked by thousands of fans and received hundreds of comments. As previously discussed, vast number of photos uploads is likely to be triggered by earlier photo uploads. Encouraging comments from other fans and the regular weekly rating (as favourite) by administrator encourage even more photo uploads. These photos serve as powerful campaign for Tourism Australia since they captivates "Australian Experience".

Discussions Page

As of November 4, 2010, the discussion page has 328 topics. These topics are ranging from tips on traveling (best place and best time to visit), studying, and getting jobs to tips on snake season. First early topics were posted by Australia administrator, but the majority were posted by fans. Observation on discussion page indicates change in the role of discussion board from what initially a page to disseminate information by Australia Administrator (most of the postings are links to travel information) to a discussion board open for all fans. Discussion topic that received most feedbacks is "Australia describe with one word". As recorded on November 4, 2010, there were 156 replies to this post. Fans living in Australia or abroad in general are of the opinion that Australia is beautiful, amazing and is best place to live in the world. Topic with second largest replies with 117 pots is "what Australian think of Americans?" And third receiving most feedbacks topic (78 responses) is asking for tips on travelling to Sydney alone. The comments of these discussions suggest that the discussion page gives a platform for fans all over the world who have similar interests, experience or queries to communicate openly in a relaxed way.

Notes

Since May 2008, Australia Facebook page has released 47 notes, 42 of which contain travelling in Australia related information. All these 42 notes are provided with links for more detailed information. 4 most recent notes have common topic of "top ten": [Top 10 favourite spots for an Aussie sunset](#), [Top 10 Things People Love about Australia](#), [Top 10 Best Aussie Dishes](#), [Top 10 and Honeymoon spots in Australia](#). These "Top 10" notes are liked by hundreds of fans as depicted in

Table 2.

Table 2. Number of comments and like of notes by Australia

Note Topic	Liked By (as of November 4, 2010)	Number of Comments
Top 10 favourite spots for an Aussie sunset	405	137
Top 10 Things People Love About Australia	521	175
Top 10 Best Aussie Dishes	265	173
Top 10 and Honeymoon spots in Australia	238	112

These notes seem to prompt fans to post their opinion and their own experience on which spot for example, should be a good spot for Aussie sunset. Depending on fan personal and privacy setting, the comment they post will appear not only on Australia fans newsfeed page, but also on their friends' Facebook page. As a result, more people on Facebook can see the notes as well as the comments.

Videos

There are total 13 video posts by Australia, however three of them are the same video, therefore we can assume there are 11 different videos. These videos exhibit some of prominent figures talking about their favourite places to visit in Australia. Professionally made and entertaining, the videos received hundreds of likes and comments as depicted in Table 3.

Last video, how do you see Australia, is promotional video asking people living in Australia to share their Australia holiday experience by uploading their pictures with some description on Tourism Australia's website <http://nothinglikeaustralia.com/>.

As table 3 demonstrates, the videos also serve as powerful promotional media for Australia Tourism. Moreover, the like button that is embedded with every video (also every photos and comments) makes it very easy for fans to share videos (and other Facebook contents) with all their friends on Facebook. These friends then can share the videos with their network of friends, hence creating a multiplier effect.

Table 3. Number of comments and people who like videos uploaded by Australia

Video	Number of people who like this video	Number of Comments
Pro surfer and Friend of Australia Jessi Miley-Dyer rates Margaret River as one of her fave surfing and food and wine spot	371	96
Here, Friend of Australia Kelly Landry talks adventure in Australia	746	117
Friend of Australia and one of our country's most respected art dealers, Tim Olsen, talks about the unique light we are blessed with	500	77
<i>Heidi Middleton on Margaret River</i>	601	185
<i>Eugene Tan on Australian beaches</i>	625	250
Friends of Australia, adventurers Justin Jones and James Castrission talk about their fave places in Australia	293	159
Home & Away star Axle Whitehead's account of his great road trip adventure	400	106
<i>Josh- Trip in a Minute</i>	453	65
<i>Anna- Trip A Minute</i>	503	79
<i>Australia</i>	320	214
How do you see Australia? http://nothinglikeaustralia.com/	51	34

ANALYSIS OF TYPE OF ONLINE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION FOR AUSTRALIA FACEBOOK PAGE

Measuring web 2.0 engagement is critical for successful implementation, yet there is lack of standard measure for such task (Chang & Kannan 2009). They assert that there are two levels of measurement tasks: (1) measuring engagement and (2) measuring application effectiveness. Au (Au 2010) states that measuring audience engagement and the effectiveness of web 2.0 tool has high level of difficulties. In his report, Au presents a case of measuring web 2.0 engagements and effectiveness of Government Agency page by using qualitative measure, such as the number of certain visitors. Au suggests content analysis of social media users' comments and discussions to further understand audience engagement.

In previous section this paper has presented quantitative measure of postings on Australia Facebook. To further measure what type of engagement the Facebook Page is trying to achieve, spectrum of online engagement for web 2.0 tools as shown in (IAP2 n.d.) is used.

Different forms of the online engagement framework are available in public service and engagement literature (Dellow & Barlett-Bragg 2009, DoFD 2009, DES 2009) & IAP2 n.d.). In the context of government, citizenship and community we can think of online engagement as a spectrum of possibilities starting from community policy making, policy implementation to service delivery and community outcomes. The online engagement framework provides the conceptual scaffolding for the level of engagement seen in government engagements, in particular in our case Gov 2.0 engagement through social media such as Facebook. The paper uses the Online Engagement Framework derived from a number of pre-existing models and guidelines, including:

- The 2003 OECD policy engagement cycle model, referenced in current Federal guidelines for online engagement;

- Electronic Engagement: A Guide for Public Sector Managers, produced by the Australian and New Zealand School of Government; and
- The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum model.

Engagement is not a single process or set of activities. It is an ongoing process or conversation that builds trust and relationships. There are between 5 broad categories encompassing different levels of engagement and the corresponding types of involvement being sought. These levels create a spectrum of engagement (IAP2 n.d.)

Table 4. Type of engagement for web 2.0 (IAP2 n.d.)

Type of Engagement	What is promised:
Announce	Notify of new and changed activity and information
Inform	Keep community informed
Consult	Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and decisions
Involve	Ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered throughout process
Collaborative	Partner each aspect of the decision including alternatives and solution
Empower	Support public to form their own communities and make final decisions

Identification for each type of engagement is conducted by analysing content (postings) on Australia Facebook. Table 5 depicts identified type of engagement:

Table 5. Type of engagement on Australia Facebook Page

Type of Engagement	Identified ?	Sample of postings
Announce	Yes	<i>Hi everyone, just a note to let you know that the URL for this page has now changed to www.facebook.com/SeeAustralia. This may be why some of you have perhaps had difficulty connecting. Please alter this in your bookmarks. But that's the only thing that has changed - the nature of the page is still exactly the same, so... please keep up all your fantastic contributions about Australia! Thanks and have a great day :-)</i>
Inform	Yes	<p>Helpful Hint: Australia's country code is 61. Local calls from public payphones are untimed and charge at \$0.50. Mobile (cell), long distance and overseas calls are usually timed. Mobile (cell) phone network coverage is available across Australia however coverage may be limited in some remote areas. www.australia.com/wyd08</p> <p><i>Many of you have asked questions about studying in Australia. You'll definitely find world-class education here. Check out this site for great info: Study in Australia: Live.Learn.Grow www.studyinaustralia.gov.au</i></p>
Consult	No	-
Involve	Yes	<p><i>If you call Australia home, you know there's nothing else like it. So what's the ultimate Australian holiday experience? Go to http://NothingLikeAustralia.com/ and share your best Aussie adventure with the rest of the world. Show everyone why there's Nothing like Australia. You could even win a perfect Aussie holiday package of your own worth \$25,000!</i></p> <p><i>Thanks to everyone in Australia who participated in the Nothing Like Australia campaign with their beautiful pictures and memories. We got a massive 29,031 entries, each one unique in its own way. What makes Australia unique to you?</i></p> <p><i>Is there someone special in your life or in your community that you consider a hero? Is there a person you know who is selfless and is always giving back to your community/ hometown? The Oprah Show producers are looking for Australian heroes. If you know someone deserving of recognition, click here for more information...: https://www.oprah.com/ownshow/plug_form.html?plug_id=6004470</i></p>
Collaborative	No	-
Empower	No	-

As Table 5 demonstrates, Australia Tourism is using facebook page as a tool to announce, inform and involve facebook fans. Statistics of participation in terms of number of comments, number of fans liking a posting and number of feedbacks suggest that facebook is an effective tool for for that type of engagement. The campaign of Nothing Like Australia posted on Facebook for instance, resulted in over 29,000 entries. It is difficult to determine if this achievement is the outcome of facebook use alone, since Tourism Australia has other campaign media such as web site <http://NothingLikeAustralia.com/>. However, considering the posting by Australia administrator and the number of fans accessing this page, we can be certain that Australia Facebook Page has a significant proportion of contribution to this campaign success.

In spite of this, this site could be viewed as a form of collaboration, in which the audience is, in effect, building a resource for the organisation, although the only contribution for the organisation is the platform being used. Communication is two-way, with members' queries usually receiving a timely response from administration.

This is an indication that Facebook is more suitable Web 2.0 tool for promoting participation and even collaboration.

Further if we take cooperation, coordination and collaboration as collective activities and they are in a continuum, then we can conclude that to some extent this site show evidence of some form of co-operation. However the Tourism site is trying to encourage people to come to Australia by promoting potential destinations and giving users advice about what they might find and what do, including alerting them to potential problems and how to deal with them. It is addressing this in a collaborative manner (crowd sourcing experience), by getting other people who have visited to suggest locations, supply photographs, answer questions and give advice. Although there is no obvious structure to this, and nothing is "official", it is clearly a valuable resource and is achieving the department's aim.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented content analysis of a Facebook Page by Australia Tourism. The findings indicate that Tourism Australia has uses Facebook as a web 2.0 tool for the purposes of announcing, informing and involving. The nature of Facebook facilitates this engagement, even further the Facebook page has been effective for Tourism Australia campaign program in addition to being a good platform for its fans to share their thoughts and experience of travelling in Australia. Tourism FB page is naturally more popular and thus more engaging in terms of content. Also having the ability to upload pictures has been one of the engaging mechanism through which tourism experience can be easily shared. This is an example of a crowdsourcing endeavour where tourism experiences and stories and pictures are being crowd sourced.

Based on the statistics of participation in terms of types of posts, number of fans liking or commenting on postings, and number of feedbacks suggest that Facebook is an effective application for these types of engagement. Tourists choose spots mostly based on the information they have gathered as well as the experiences that others have shared with them. Social networking sites are most effective in spreading 'word of mouth' (Xiang & Gretzel 2009). This is exactly what 'Australia' Facebook page is doing for Tourism Australia. Industries such as tourism that rely on experiential marketing and benefit from platforms like Facebook for promotion as they have an integral role in sharing experiences and information in the most unconventional casual manner possible (Xiang & Gretzel 2009).

Web 2.0 is just a label that identifies the evolution of the structure of the pre-existing global net in the "social" sense. It is not a new concept of web but a new way of using the web (Colazzo et al 2009). Web 2.0 communities have generally no specific mission; the interest of web 2.0 is to aggregate as many persons as possible, while virtual community objectives is to aggregate just those people interested in the community scope. Meaning web 2.0 is better for participation rather than collaboration. We are yet to see good examples of Facebook sites for collaboration and empowerment (except in cases like Obama presidential campaign, fund raising for natural calamity like Queensland floods, the Egypt revolution etc).

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has few limitations. This paper presents both quantitative and qualitative analysis of FB page content. But to make further conclusions the study needs to follow a more systematic method like qualitative content analysis (QualCA) which involves purposive sampling, an iterative, inductive approach to content coding method, descriptive conclusions and can result in theory building such as typologies (Parker et al). The challenges that needs consideration when doing social media (e.g. FB) research is the time-frames for data collection, whether to collect further data in multiple stages as content changes occur; what constitutes the context and unit of analysis for dynamic content. QualCA is a suitable method for social media research which can handle this ephemeral and voluminous nature of social media websites (Parker et al). The metrics for participation used in this paper are limited and based on available online wall posts and behavioural statistics. More metrics will be included in future research such as interactions of the administrator or moderator and their impact on participation; more qualitative data about alignment with organisation goals; outcomes and critical success factors. The types of participation activities have been identified based on information on Facebook pages and the Tourism Australia web pages. Further research into this case is in progress to see if an engaged online community exist, how the contributions are being used by the agency (if at all for other purposes), are these contributions being linked to other tourism sites etc. The research does not take into consideration the barriers to participation and engagement. There are data mining tools (e.g. mindmap) that can be used to gather, analyse data statistically to report more behavioural patterns seen in these sites. Future studies can also use Social Network Analysis (SNA) tools to understand audience engagement and its value and outcomes.

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