Chapter 11

The Culture on the Palm of Your Hand: How to Design a User Oriented Mobile App for Museums

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ABSTRACT

The increased usage of mobile apps has a great potential for the tourism industry. Through the use of mobile apps, web portals and social media may allow a fast and wide diffusion of awareness for museum and attract a large number of visitors, thus increasing the value of their image, with moderate investments. The aim of this chapter is to identify the key factors as antecedents of customer satisfaction for the design of a mobile app for a museum. To this aim, the authors use the Kano model that allows categorizing service attributes according to how they are perceived by customers and estimating their impact on customer satisfaction. This model is adopted in order to identify express and latent needs of cultural tourists and to design a mobile app for museum according to their perceptions and expectations. To apply the Kano model, the authors used qualitative data collected through 300 questionnaires administered to tourists visiting the Sicilian cities of Palermo and Trapani over a period of 3 months (October-December 2012). The results of this analysis can be relevant for museum and public managers to plan strategic and operative activities, for researchers in the field of touristic marketing, for application developers, and for all those concerned with touristic and cultural heritage issues.

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INTRODUCTION

In spite of the global economic crisis, the mobile internet devices sector (including smartphones, tablet and similar hybrids) is among the few sectors experiencing a continuous and fast growth.

At a global level we have today about 1.5 millions of mobile app, 500,000 tablets’ apps and over 60 billions of mobile apps downloaded by smartphones and tablets (School of Management del Politecnico di Milano, 2012). In the United States about 119.3 million people (51% of mobile phone users) own a smartphone (ComScore, 2012). In Italy, according to estimates, about 32 million of smartphones, 2.5 million of Internet TVs users and 2.9 million of tablet have been sold by the end of 2012. Forecasts say that in 2015 the sales of smartphones will overcome those of Personal Computers (in Italy 49 million versus 47 million) (School of Management del Politecnico di Milano, 2012).

These devices are becoming a daily presence in the life of people who want to be always connected. This represents a great opportunity for the software industry that can exploit a fast growing market, as well as for any kind of firm that can take advantage of these new tools to get in touch and keep the relations with a growing number of customers. They give to the users, and to the companies supplying software application, the opportunity to keep continuous connections with customers/suppliers, sell/buy online to and from anywhere, get and supply geo-referenced information and different kinds of entertaining-relational uses.

The new “mobile economy” has relevant implications for Internet marketing strategies. The adoption of a mobile marketing strategy allows the organization to follow the client/user along the whole relationship cycle.

In the tourism sector this opens a wide range of opportunities to attract and gain the fidelity of visitors. “Mobile tourists” can go through a new way of travelling as “virtual tourists” for which the travelling experience is empowered by the information and entertainment coming “also” (but of course not exclusively) from their new “travel buddy”: the mobile technology device.

Tourist attractions like museums must not lose this chance and need to find new ways to get the attention of this new kind of tourists, becoming “Museum 2.0.”

Mobile apps have the potential to personalize the users’ museum experience whenever and wherever they like, integrating collections, exhibitions and other offerings into a much broader range of use-case scenarios than we have ever imagined.

Geo-referenced information can attract tourists inviting them to visit the closest museum and maintain the relation after the trip, thus getting more chances of repeated visits.

The challenge for these services is to be able to rapidly supply customer oriented content at low cost (or for free) following the growing expectations of customers/users. Hence, understanding the antecedents of the user experience becomes pivotal. Functional aspects are not enough to overcome the new challenges; a very good app in functional terms could result useless to reach the target. Therefore, it is necessary to design apps according to users’ expectations and desires, so they can be able to establish and keep the virtual relation.

In this study we apply the Kano Model to a cluster of Sicilian museum visitors in order to design a user oriented mobile app for museum.

The island of Sicily (Italy) for its geographic position, historical heritage and mild weather has a strong cultural touristic vocation that has not yet been fully exploited. Sicilian museums are frequently undervalued and barely visible on the web. Mobile application technology, due to the low costs of diffusion, can enhance significantly the Sicilian museum offer, but unfortunately most of the Sicilian of museums are badly managed by local government, which does not invest enough financial resources and is not able to innovate and understand the advantage of web based services.