

# Social Media in Urban Tourism

## Impact on Information Search and Spatial Behavioural Patterns

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## 1 Background

### Background

- Growing importance of **user-generated content** in tourism (e.g. *Xiang & Gretzel 2010*)
- **Supply side:** democratisation of distribution, Long Tail theory (*Anderson 2004*): niches have become more important
- **Demand side:** tourist interest in niches has been growing, phenomenon of the “new tourist” (*Poon 1993; Maitland & Newman 2009*)

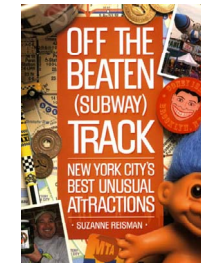
### Trail of ants



Majority of travelers still encountered on trail of ants (*Keul & Kühberger 1996*)

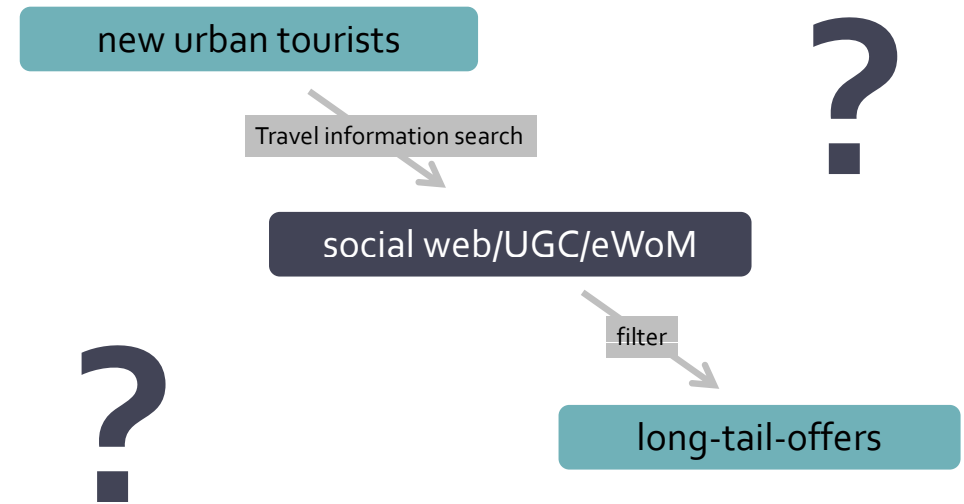
vs.

### New tourists



Interested in discovering authentic and unique places away from the main tourist paths absents der (*Feifer 1985; Poon 1993; Maitland & Newman 2009*)

## 2 Aim of the study



### Main research question:

- Can the *tourist 2.0*, i.e. the tourist, who uses the internet and especially the social web as an information source, also be met on the trail of ants? Or is tourists' appropriation of destinations becoming more and more differentiated as a result of an increasing importance of tips and recommendations that are tailored individually to each traveller's needs? And what role do niche offers play thereby?

### Research objectives

- I. To establish the importance that the social web has for urban travellers and to find out in what way social media are used by them
- II. To establish the impact that an increased social web use has on urban tourists and their behaviour when at the destination

### 3 Methodology

#### Face-to-face-survey

period	June – September 2010
basic population	14-35-year old urban tourists
sampling procedure	convenience sample
sample size	1,079

#### Case study cities: selection criteria

- **Diversity:** apart from the well-known sights in the city centre there are numerous interesting places away from the tourist paths to discover
- **High importance in European city tourism:** all three metropolises currently register more than five million tourist arrivals annually
- **Young tourists** represent an important target group for the three cities: at least one third of all visitors are younger than 35 years old
- **Repeat visitors** play an important role for the respective cities: they represent at least half of all visitors.

#### Case study cities

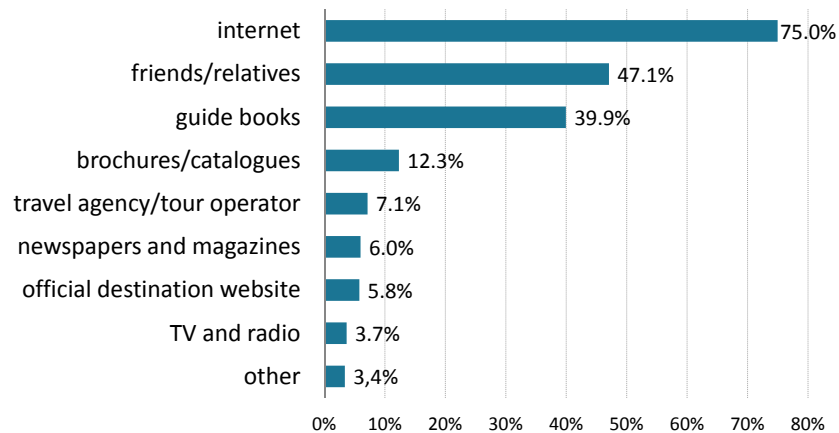
	356 respondents
	350 respondents
	373 respondents

## 4 Results of the study

### 4.1 The importance of the social web as a travel information source

#### Travel information sources

(n=1,079, multiple answers possible)



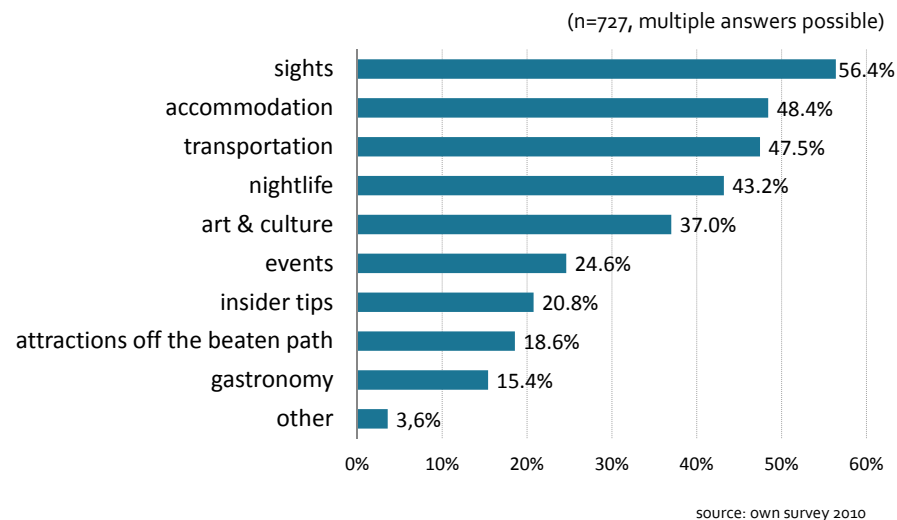
source: own survey 2010

#### Use of social media for the city trip

	social networks	review portals	travel communities	video portals	blogs	photo communities	micro-blogs
used a lot	15.4	14.3	8.2	4.4	4.2	3.6	2.2
used a little	21.7	30.8	23.9	17.4	19.0	15.3	6.1
not used at all	61.1	50.6	63.3	76.5	74.7	77.3	87.5
don't know	1.8	4.3	4.5	1.7	2.2	3.8	4.2

source: own survey 2010

## Social media: searched topics



## The social web as an information source – most important results (1)

<b>applications</b>	review sites, social networks and travel communities most popular
<b>topics</b>	sights practical information: accommodation, transportation little interest in niche offers quality assessment
<b>point in time</b>	before the trip
<b>advantages</b>	convenience, diversity authenticity, personal experiences

## The social web as an information source – most important results (2)

<b>travellers</b>	Asians, South Americans very active Germans more reserved on average slightly older
<b>trip characteristics</b>	greater length of stay no difference between first-time and repeat visitors often solo travellers

## 4.2 The impact of tourists' social web use on their behaviour

# Activities and social web use

(1 = very high importance, 5 = no importance)

		social networks	blogs	video sites	photo communities	review sites	travel communities	micro-blogs
to see the most important sights	users	2.04	1.96	1.97	1.96	1.94*	1.99	1.88
	non-users	2.07	2.09	2.08	2.09	2.16*	2.09	2.08
to discover places away from the tourist crowds	users	2.44*	2.36*	2.43*	2.36*	2.57	2.49*	2.25*
	non-users	2.74*	2.72*	2.69*	2.70*	2.68	2.70*	2.67*
to discover and try out pleasant little cafés and restaurants	users	2.50*	2.55	2.53	2.51	2.59	2.50*	2.38*
	non-users	2.66*	2.62	2.62	2.62	2.61	2.65*	2.62*
to visit smaller and extraordinary museums and attractions	users	2.61*	2.51*	2.53*	2.53*	2.67*	2.69*	2.42*
	non-users	2.86*	2.84*	2.83*	2.83*	2.85*	2.81*	2.80*
to get to know the places where the locals go to	users	2.46*	2.43*	2.49*	2.38*	2.54*	2.47*	2.33*
	non-users	2.69*	2.67*	2.65*	2.67*	2.68*	2.69*	2.64*

According to the T-Test the values that are marked with a \* show a significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

source: own survey 2010

# Social web use in relation to the type of sights and districts visited

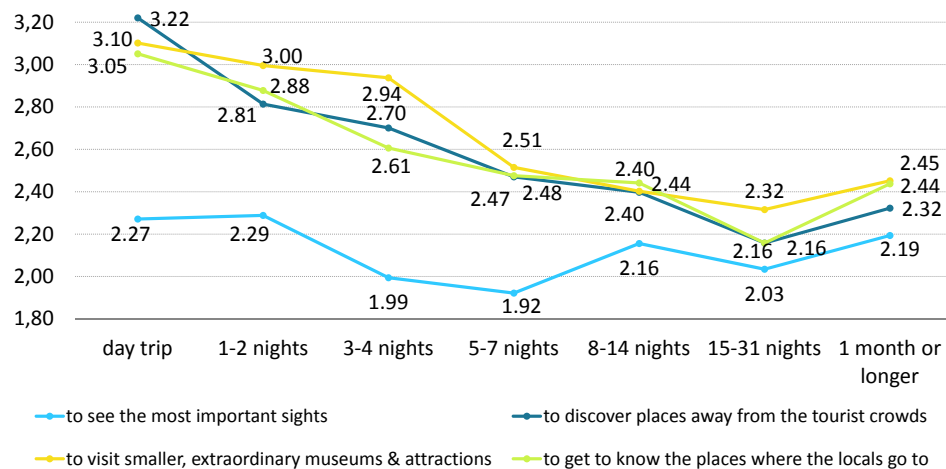
		number of well-known sights visited	number of niche sights visited	number of well-known districts visited	number of niche districts visited
social networks	users	4.43	1.48*	2.90*	.62
	non-users	4.32	1.00*	2.69*	.51
blogs	users	4.68*	1.72*	3.03*	.73*
	non-users	4.26*	1.02*	2.68*	.50*
video sites	users	4.42	1.55*	2.81	.63
	non-users	4.34	1.09*	2.77	.53
photo communities	users	4.54	1.40*	2.84	.64
	non-users	4.30	1.12*	2.76	.53
review sites	users	4.52	1.40*	2.93*	.62*
	non-users	4.23	1.00*	2.64*	.50*
travel communities	users	4.43	1.51*	2.95*	.65*
	non-users	4.33	1.02*	2.69*	.50*
microblogs	users	4.11	1.48	2.51	.65
	non-users	4.38	1.15	2.79	.54

According to the T-Test the values that are marked with a \* show a significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

source: own survey 2010

# Activities and length of stay

(1 = very high importance, 5 = no importance)



source: own survey 2010

# Cluster analysis

Niche tourist (n=271)	Ants tourist (n=584)
Slightly older	Slightly younger
Greater length of stay	More short trip travellers
Repeat visitor	First-time visitors
More interested in niche offers	Much less interested in niche offers
More impressed by places off the beaten track	More impressed by well-known sights
Often VFR-travellers,	Most-selected accommodation: hostel
Interested in contact with locals	Interested in contact with locals
More use of social media	Social media less important

## Social web use and its impact on tourist behaviour – most important results

- Interest in niche offers – only partly connected to increased social web use
- Other influencing factors: length of stay, age of traveller, trip's purpose
- **Niche tourists vs. Ants-tourists**
- Social web user = hybrid consumer

## 5 Conclusion

### Central research question

**In what way does an increased importance of the social web affect urban tourists' behaviour?**

### Social web use: impact on travel behaviour

<b>Social Web users</b>	more interested in niche offers than non-users longer at the destination, older at the same time also more interested in standard sights
<b>Further influencing factors</b>	length of stay knowledge about city contact with locals

→ social web only partly acts as a filter that drives travellers towards niches

## Conclusion

### → Trail of ants will continue to exist

- User-generated content → often reproduction instead of generating new content
- Increase in cultural capital through unusual travel experiences → no incentive for dissemination of information



## Outlook

- social web as a medium for all generations
- strong focus on reviews
- mobile internet & social media



Thank you!



## Niches & Long Tail

### What is a niche company?

#### *Defining characteristics – at least one of the following:*

- specialized offer (to meet identified customer needs),
- greater success for the company by focusing on specific target markets,
- compared to companies in the overall market, other ways of controlling the business will be chosen,
- as a quality leader and trendsetter niche players are successful because "they do things differently". (cf. Danner 2002: 56)

## Kontakt zu Einheimischen & Social-Web-Nutzung

		Interesse an Bekanntschaft mit Einheimischen oder anderen Reisenden
soziale Netzwerke	Nutzer	2,05*
	Nichtnutzer	2,33*
Blogs	Nutzer	1,97*
	Nichtnutzer	2,31*
Videoportale	Nutzer	2,03*
	Nichtnutzer	2,28*
Fotosammlungen	Nutzer	2,01*
	Nichtnutzer	2,29*
Bewertungsportale	Nutzer	2,11*
	Nichtnutzer	2,33*
Reisecommunities	Nutzer	2,11*
	Nichtnutzer	2,29*
Microblogs	Nutzer	1,94*
	Nichtnutzer	2,26*

Die mit einem \* gekennzeichneten Werte weisen laut T-Test einen signifikanten Unterschied ( $p \leq 0,05$ ) auf.

Quelle: Eigene Erhebung 2010