

Visitor Information State of the Art

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Definitions

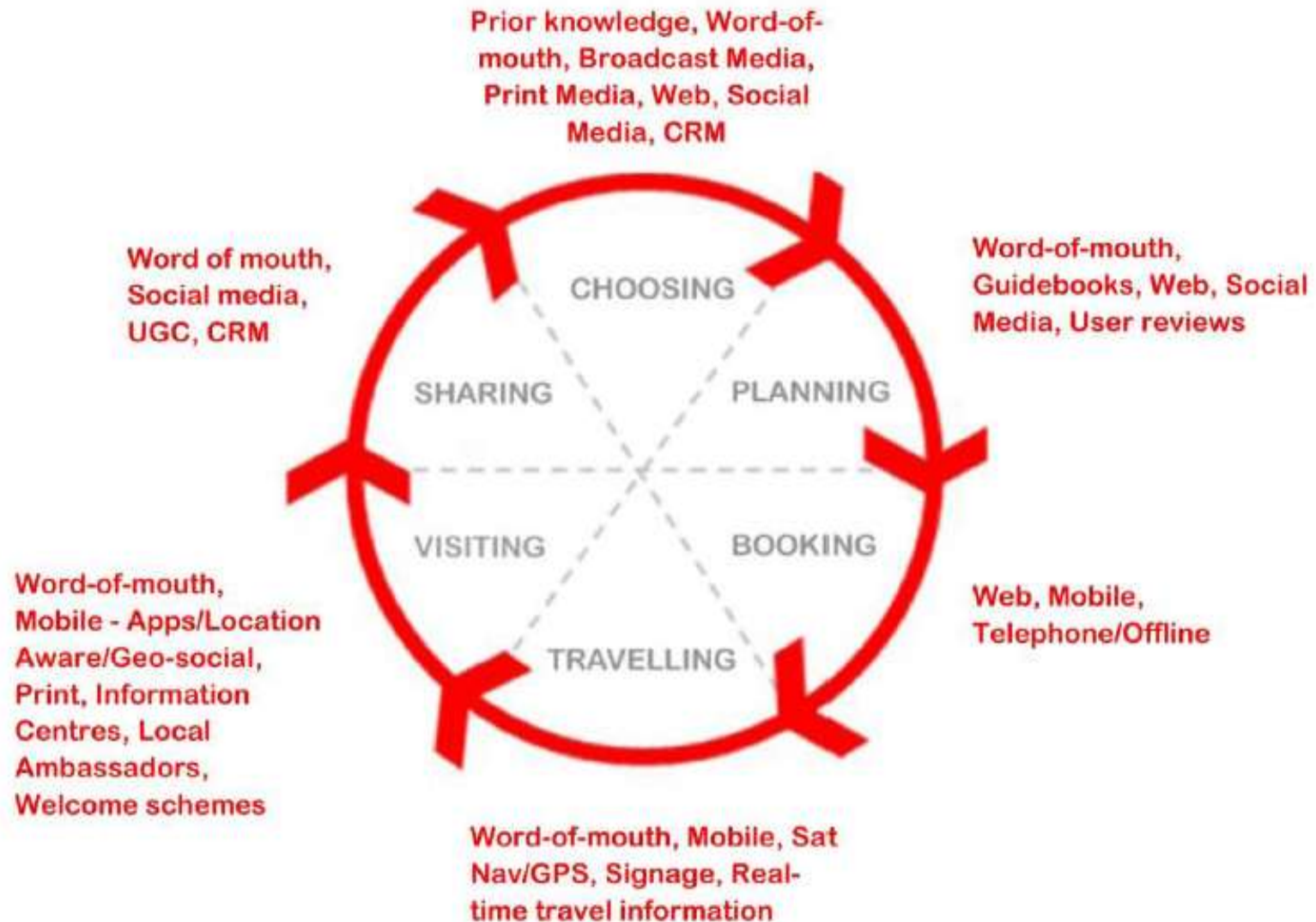
- **Visitor:** all types of tourists as well as day trippers
- **Tourist:** leisure and business travellers with at least 1 night stay, including visiting friends and relatives (VFR)
- **Visitor Information Centre:** serving all visitors, functioning as a welcome centre to destination, region, settlement, city, province etc.
- **Tourist Information Centre:** serving tourists to destination, region, settlement, city, region, province etc.
- **Information:** a collection of facts and knowledges from which decisions can be made
- **Visitor Information:** interactions throughout visitor journey, influencing decision making (choice of destination, length of stay, what to see, do and experience during visit, whether to return or recommend to others)
- Face-to-face contact or through new technology
- Vital part of marketing process

Visitor Information

- Providing a valuable welcome and information service to the visitor 'in-destination'
- Converting the marketing inspiration into planning and booking stages
- Effective customer relationship management

The Visitor Journey

Interactions and methods of information provision



Visitor Information - overview

- A service providing visitors with the information needed
- It can be of physical or non physical existence!
- Several countries have developed an extensive network of visitor information centres



Visitor information VS Tourist information



A visitor center is a specific attraction or place of interest, such as a landmark, national park, national forest, or state park, providing information (such as trail maps, and about camp sites, staff contact, restrooms, etc.) and in-depth educational exhibits and artifact displays (for example, about natural or cultural history). Often a film or other media display is used. If the site has permit requirements or guided tours, the visitor center is often the place where these are coordinated.

A tourist information center providing visitors to a location with information on the area's attractions, lodgings, maps, and other items relevant to tourism. Often, these centers are operated at the airport or other port of entry, by the local government or chamber of commerce. Often a visitor center is called simply an information center.



The importance of visitor centres

- Professional approach towards visitors
- Revenue generation through sales (souvenirs, etc)
- Unique point of call/reference for the visitor
- Presence of the destination on press - media – the destination itself
- Coordinated promotion of events, activities, destination
- Aiming to improve visitor satisfaction, customer service to increase spending and reasons for visitors to return and recommend others to visit
- Collaboration between public and private sector
- Optimize technological advances
- Effective distribution
- Increase cost effectiveness

Visitor information is going mobile...



Free application for iphones

Increasing number of visitors seeks information PRIOR to the arrival

Increasing number of visitors use mobile devices to access information (smart phones, tablets)

The Magnesia Declaration on Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development



Magnesia Declaration on CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT



Discussed, agreed and signed at the final conference of CHIRON project, co-funded by the European Union INTERREG IIIB CADSES Programme, on 'Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development', held in Agria, Magnesia, Greece, on 3-5 July 2008:

Having regard to:

- the **International Cultural Tourism Charter** 'Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance' (1999) by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)
- the **Cardiff Declaration** of European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN) on Cultural Tourism (July 2005)
- the **Malta Declaration** on Cultural Tourism: its Encouragement and Control, by the Europa Nostra Congress (May 2006)
- the **Gothenburg Declaration** of the European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN) on Cultural Tourism (November 2006)
- the results of the **5th European Tourism Forum** – New Instruments and Innovative Partnerships and New Trends New Markets Workshops, held in Limassol, Cyprus, November 2006 and the **6th European Tourism Forum** – Management and Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage Workshop, held in Portimão, Portugal, October 2007.

whereas:

- Cultural Tourism is the fastest growing sector of European tourism and can contribute to the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism in the European Union and its neighbouring countries
- Europe has the richest Cultural Heritage and Identity in the world which enriches visitors and contributes to inter-cultural dialogue and understanding, including between EU member states, candidate and neighbouring countries
- The tourism sector can facilitate the conservation of cultural heritage, a process that requires responsibility, integrity, cooperation and commitment by all concerned
- Local communities should be fully involved in conserving cultural heritage sites and in the promotion of sustainable tourism
- The development of tourist destinations is linked to their cultural distinctiveness
- Creating the right balance between the needs of the cultural environment and the development of competitiveness of destinations requires an integrated approach where all shareholders share the same objectives
- Sustainable tourism is crucial for the preservation and enhancement of Europe's cultural heritage
- Concrete benefits to the tourism sector may be achieved by facilitating partnerships at all levels and with all actors, including transnational partnerships
- The creation of new tourism products, such as cultural tourism, plays an important role in increasing tourism participation
- There is a need to plan towards sustainable development of tourism and in particular the development of cultural tourism.

- To strengthen the information means, channels and materials for the promotion, education study and awareness-raising of prospective visitors before, during and after their visits, including creation of multilingual material and Visitor Information Centres

Challenges and Opportunities

- Well informed visitors stay longer in destinations, potentially move to other nearby destinations and most important they want to return
- Tourist industry must ensure that information is modernised, integrated and keep up with technological advances
- Methods of providing visitor information must evolve in response to visitor behaviour
- There will be a rapid increase in the use of the technology to access VI
- Including mobile devices, QR codes, user generated content UGC and social media
- Dedicated TICs will continue to play key role through staff skilled in customer care and face-to-face contact
- TICs can play key role in customer influence to make repeat visits and in e-marketing

Concluding remarks

- Visitor Information Centres enhance the overall visitor experience by creating a positive image of a destination
- South Pelion municipality wishes to establish and operate a visitor information centre at its seat of Argalasti as legacy of CHARTS project



Thank you

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