

*Barbara Tomasella and Alisha Ali***Hospitableness: driving Social Responsibility (SR) in hospitality businesses****Purpose of the research**

This paper explores independent foodservice businesses' motivations for improving their SR, their implementation of socially responsible practices and the role hospitality plays in this. Investigating what motivates these foodservice businesses to adopt socially responsible practices is highly relevant for the industry (Brookes, et al., 2014; British Hospitality, 2017; Coles et al., 2013; Hawkins & Bohdanowicz, 2012; Sustainable Restaurant Association, 2013). It further supports a better understanding of what can encourage engagement with sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) across the whole hospitality industry (Lashley, 2016; Jones, et al., 2016; Farrington, et al., 2017; Cavagnaro, 2017).

**Interdisciplinary methodology and methods of research**

This research is inspired by a pluralistic understanding of CSR, as this is a broad, contested concept, adopted by a growing number of different members of society (Carroll, 1999; Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Dahlsrud, 2008); such approach recognises that CSR should be interpreted and adapted to various institutional environments, according to the actors' sets of values and ideologies (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Farrington, et al., 2017). Therefore, this specific research supports the use of the terminology social responsibility (SR) for small businesses, instead of CSR, in recognition of the key role played by the owner managers' ethics and values in motivating small businesses' engagement with CSR (Tomasella and Ali, 2016). Furthermore the study focuses on a specific business context, such as independent foodservice businesses in Britain: researching such context can highlight which specific personal and business values influence the understanding of SR among these small businesses. A qualitative methodology is a suitable research strategy for studying the phenomenon of SR in small businesses: with its flexibility, it allows to explore personal values and business values concurrently, to better understand the phenomenon of small business SR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010; Spence, 2016). The related methods involve primary data collected through documents and semi-structured interviews of small businesses' owner-managers. The sample includes twenty-five small independent foodservice businesses, all operating within the same locality in the United Kingdom.

**Findings**

The results revealed that the SR of these independent foodservice businesses is influenced by their hospitality business values, which are expression of the personal values of the business owner. The benevolent hospitableness of the owner is a form of self-actualisation and self-expression frequently found among small lifestyle hospitality and foodservice businesses (Lee-Ross & Lashley, 2010, p. 173; Lashley & Rowson, 2010; Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Lashley, et al., 2004; Carrigan, et al., 2017). The hospitality values of the owner influence the hospitableness of the business (Telfer, 2017; Wood, 2017), because the business owner of these lifestyle or family businesses prioritises personal hospitality values as motives in business, alongside profit motives. The hospitableness leads these small hospitality businesses to implement caring actions towards staff, clients and local

community; in the long term, the actions that are prioritised, are those contributing to increase branding and reputation of the business. Knowledge and local embeddedness also play a role in driving the long term implementation of SR actions, as it creates awareness about local issues, of economic, social or environmental nature. This confirms the importance of the context in which the small business operates in determining the nature of its SR practice.

#### Originality/value

This research contributes to knowledge by identifying that the hospitableness of these businesses lifestyle and family businesses influences the implementation of SR actions. These businesses interpret hospitality as a social practice, inherently aimed at the fulfilment of human needs, therefore shaped by the values and needs of those involved in such exchange (Brotherton, 1999; Lashley, 2007; Lynch, et al., 2011; Wood, 2017). For these hospitality businesses, the hospitality SR practice is influenced by the cultural values and socio-economic factors of the people involved in the hospitality exchange. Therefore this work confirms that the nature of the corresponding small business hospitality SR practice overlaps with the concept of stakeholder theory (Freeman et al., 2010), because it is inherently oriented towards providing well-being to all the stakeholders engaged in the hospitality exchange (Lee-Ross & Lashley, 2010, p. 173; Lashley, 2016b).

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## How Social Media can support DMOs in case of natural crises

Many tourism destinations might have faced the threat of dealing with a crisis. Crisis is intended as a big event with potential negative impacts and uncertainties. Its consequences may cause massive damage on an organization and on its employees, products, services, assets and reputation. (Mingchuan, 2015). Crisis can have different origins and impacts. This study focuses on the natural disaster/crises. Natural crisis can be defined as “a sudden and terrible event in nature (such as a hurricane, tornado, or flood) that usually results in serious damage and many deaths” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). If theatre of an extreme weather event.

In this context, tourism destinations can be affected by a natural crisis, becoming victims of such unpredictable weather-related situations. Those phenomena represent a challenge for tourism enterprises and government departments as they have to respond actively, take positive and effective measures, make information public to tourists, local residents, and the provide an overall coverage to news media. Indeed, the negative impacts of such natural crisis should be limited in order to avoid the transformation of being victim of such crisis to accidental crisis and even to preventable crisis (Coombs, Holladay, 2002), that is, the destination lacks to improve favorable conditions for locals and visitors after such crises. Scholars explores both the effects of natural crises or extreme weather-related events in tourism destinations and how to recover from them. However, there is still the need of establishing good practices for the use of Social Media in managing the different phases of a natural crisis. Tourism is a unique product; it is mainly composed by immaterial services. For this reason, it is a trust and belief product. This is why it is crucial for DMOs to avoid damages to the public’s feeling, impression and cognition of the tourist destination due to the potential negative effects and the uncertainties caused by extreme natural events. Despite this, few destinations have properly developed disaster management plans which include the role of social media to help them cope with such nature-related phenomenon. The goal of this research is to investigate whether it is possible to define a framework for the use of social media during the phases of a natural crisis (before, during and after) in a tourism destination to help Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) establishing better natural crisis management. Indeed, social media can be effective tools for the DMOs’ communication purposes in the three stages of the crisis management. Internet has dramatically changed the interaction between tourists and tourism destinations, and it has become the primary medium used by DMOs to communicate with prospective travelers (Buhalis, 2003; Inversini, Brühlhart and Cantoni, 2011).

An American destination in Florida is used as a case study. The destination under study has been involved on a natural crisis due to the so-called “Hurricane Matthew”, that is a category 5 Atlantic hurricane, later downgraded to a post-tropical cyclone, which hit the Florida coast in October 2016, leaving over one million people without energy power across the state and causing 12 deaths (Caplan, Gallagher, Winsor, Thorbecke 2015). The online behaviour of the destination under study has been tracked. That is, posts on destination’ official social media accounts and the related feedback left online by followers have been

collected and content analysed. Results allowed reconstructing what aspects have been covered by the destination and which kind of reactions have been generated in the users' public feedback left on the posts. In particular, results present the different use of social media for evoking different users' engagement: usefulness, reassurance, nostalgia, recovery, etc. Responses generated by the DMO have been grouped using an ad-hoc framework including the following categories:

- Before (the crisis) – Maintenance Mode and Remote Threat, Acute/Approaching Threat;
- During (the crisis);
- Immediately After;
- After (to when DMO operations have been officially recovered).

Interviews with the DMO managers provided also insights on how the destination used social media for taking immediate decisions and countermeasures in order to limit the negative consequences, and, at the same time, to influence the positive rebuild of the image of the destination.

Implications for research in the field of eTourism and natural crisis are discussed. Practical implications for tourism stakeholders interested in best practices and current procedures regarding the role and use of social media pre-during and post such crises have been also presented and discussed.

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## Planning for hospitable public spaces and the changing city: A content analysis of the city of Sunderland Unitary Development Plan

A plethora of new public spaces have been developed in northern English cities in recent years, all seeking 'cultural urban renaissance' to some extent or another. A number of policy plans recently produced by the planning departments of many of the same English cities seek to encourage proposals for hotel development close to public spaces in central urban areas. All of them identify a 'hoped for' link between the arrival and site of a new hotel and the enlivening of the nearby public realm. Indeed, the problem of public spaces struggling to meet the aims with which they were designed, that of attracting a regular flow of visitors who ideally will stay awhile, rather than simply walk briskly through, is well recognised.

In order to gain a better understanding of how cities plan for hospitality industries in public space this paper presents a content analysis of the planning policy documentation and subsequent press coverage concerning four development zones in the city of Sunderland. Content analysis is commonly used to explore and understand policy (Richie and Spencer 2002). Studies have successfully used content analysis involving the umbrella term tourism to gauge: the function of tourism in political manifestos (Chaney, 2005), the changing dynamics of tourism planning policy over time (Heslinga, Groote and Vanclay, 2018), and how local governance and planning models (Mascardo, 2011) and sustainable development (Moyle, McLennan and Ruhanenm 2014) engage with tourism. However, none have focused specifically on the symbiosis of tourism, hospitality and public space in planning policy documents. Furthermore, whilst the public private continuum is a recognised feature of the domains of hospitality (Lashley, 2000) the spaces that constitute the public domain, which cross commercial and civic interests remain under researched (Bell, 2007; McNeil, 2008).

A content analysis of the City of Sunderland Unitary Development Plan was conducted. The content analysis was based on a keyword search limited to four key terms; hospitality, hotel, public space and tourism. It was identified that the planning policy documentation presents both a conceptual and applied understanding of the key terms tourism and public space. There is also an appreciation of the potential of new hotel developments and public space in making the city appealing to visitors and residents alike. A shift was detected in how each of the key terms is framed over the course of the document: from inspirational to functional. Notably, there is an absence of the term 'hospitality' in the document. Through the content analysis four development zones where public space and hotel development coincide are identified. Thereafter, a second content analysis using local newspaper articles was used to elaborate on and unpack how press coverage frames the development of new hotels and public space within the city of Sunderland. Prominent discourses attributed to each development zone are identified with individual zones being framed as transformational, inspirational, flagship and urban cool. The development of new hotels and new public spaces lay the foundation for the much sought after clusters of diversity which are a feature of the contemporary post-industrial city urban planning (Mommaas 2004). Importantly, the content analyses reveal that the components of the hospitality industry: visitors, hotels, bars and restaurants, will take a prominent role in giving life to the new public spaces. It is

therefore argued that given the pivotal role that the hospitality industries play in both the development plans and in the creation of a hoped for lively public space and city that a deeper conceptual understanding of hospitality is required in the policy documentation from the outset.

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## Innovation and Knowledge in Events: Understanding the processes of absorptive capacity in events organisations

As with many other sectors, events organisations now operate in a globalised environment. Gaining competitive advantage through the application of knowledge-based resources has been seen as critical to survival in such dynamic environments (Tseng & Lee, 2014). The ability of an organisation to recognise, absorb and deploy external knowledge is referred to as absorptive capacity. It has become one of the most important theories in organisational research (Lane, Koka, & Pathak, 2006) and is considered a dynamic capability that enables firms to create value, and to develop and sustain, competitive advantage by using their knowledge stocks to innovate (Camisón & Forés, 2010).

Although there is a substantial literature on absorptive capacity, most studies have been conducted within the context of knowledge-intensive industries, using quantitative methods. These studies have not sought to understand the underlying social processes involved in absorptive capacity (Easterby-Smith, Graça, Antonacopoulou, & Ferdinand, 2008) or recognise the implications of sectoral differences. In addition, the majority of research has focused on the competitive benefits of absorptive capacity at the expense of investigating its components and antecedents (Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2005). In contrast to industries which rely on research and development, tourism and event organisations must rely on alternative sources of knowledge (Hjalager, 2010).

Attempts to understand absorptive capacity from a tourism and events perspective have looked at the hotel industry (Thomas & Wood, 2014) and meetings industry (Thomas & Wood, 2015). Yet, they have been frustrated by an inadequate mechanism for measuring the concept in a way that recognises the industry's characteristics and have suggested a different, qualitative approach (Thomas & Wood, 2015). Such an approach is seen to as vital to understand the social processes that may link absorptive capacity with innovation and ultimately performance (Thomas & Wood, 2015).

In this PhD study, the 'black box' of absorptive capacity processes was explored through a multiple case study approach. Fifty-two interviews were conducted with event professionals in five UK organisations. Data from the interviews, supported by observations and document analysis, offered insight into the way non-research intensive organisations find and use valuable new knowledge. Preliminary findings suggest that informal socialisation techniques may play a greater role in achieving valuable knowledge transfer than systemic, management-led initiatives. Respondents also pointed to cultural issues, organisational heritage and ownership structures as key determinants of efficient knowledge absorption. Understanding how events organisations learn, and which processes and mechanisms aid this learning, should of interest to academics and practitioners alike.



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## The role of events in public spaces in the lives of Nicaraguan urban residents: The impact of mobility

Outdoor events in public urban spaces, planned or spontaneous, have a long history and an iconic profile, regularly forming a key part of the brands with which cities around the world hope to attract visitors as well as potential new residents (Mordue 2007).

In Western countries, there is some concern (Carmona 2010, Mitchell 1995, Sennett 1978) that use of public space, and attendance at events within those spaces, do not play as central a part within the lives of urban residents as historians suggest they once did (Goodson et al 2010). As assets for Western cities, public spaces may be in danger of losing some of their potency, as residents no longer populate them at leisure in the same way. In addition, increasing amounts of time, effort and money are spent attempting to rehabilitate public spaces through physical design (Carmona et al 2010) and by attracting landmark events (Kohn 2004) – events, which can sometimes seem ‘parachuted in,’ detached from the history and identity of a space.

Often cited as key to the situation described above, are the monumental historical changes in urban residents’ experience of mobility in Western society. For the purposes of leisure, there is now, an unprecedented level of freedom to visit a great number of places and people quickly. Distance is also less of a constraint. This can entail travelling physically or virtually, enabled by the internet (Virilio 2012, Thrift 1996). This array of options can endanger the central civic role of the urban public space and the events they host.

However, much of the global population retains an experience of mobility, which is far more restricted than is common in the West. This is the case in Nicaragua, a country whose tourism branding also features prominently images of thriving outdoor events in public urban spaces. Indeed, urban life in Nicaragua is genuinely marked by vibrant use of public space and a civic calendar relying heavily on outdoor events in urban spaces.

This paper is based on research employing a qualitative case study approach. Fifty semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in July/August 2017, split equally between two Nicaraguan case study cities: Granada and Managua. Interviews were carried out in three public spaces in each city with users of the spaces. The spaces are venues for outdoor events, both planned and spontaneous. Participants were resident in Nicaragua and interviews were in Spanish.

The interviews explored: how the participants engage with the public spaces and events within them; the role the spaces and the events play in their lives; the participants’ experience of mobility in their leisure time and its impact on the first two points.

The research aim for this paper is to critically and empirically examine the relationship between Nicaraguan residents’ engagement with public urban spaces and the outdoor events within them and their experience of mobility during their leisure time. Data analysis

using NVivo is currently on going. Its aim is not to compare the two case studies but to generate common findings.

Some initial themes have emerged from the data. For example, considerable mobility for leisure was detected within each city. Interviewees regularly travelled to events in the spaces from distant locations in the same city. There was lower than expected engagement with events and spaces very close to participants' homes and serendipitous encounters with friends in spaces were uncommon. A large proportion of people left their homes with the specific aim of going to an event in one of the spaces, rather than chancing upon the event on the way to or from another site. Many participants stated without complaint that sites outside of the city in which they live which they considered visiting for leisure were limited, due to poor marketing and a perception that it was difficult, time consuming or expensive to get there. This contributed to making events in public spaces in the cities in which they lived central to their leisure schedule. The majority of participants also reflected that the spaces and events felt safe in comparison to being in other parts of the city and gave them a sense of freedom when compared to being at home or in the immediate vicinity of home.

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