VISTAS is the University of West London journal. It provides an opportunity for contributors from all areas of UWL to publish academic, scholarly and contemporary writing to a wider audience. It is playing a part in the wider transfer of knowledge to the community and business in the region. At the same time it invites its audience to reflect their interests and concerns and so engage in debate (through writing and other media) about the leading and significant issues within their perspective.

It offers an opportunity for formal scholarly publication by way of applications to practice, reflection and critical perspective, and attracts expert and authoritative contributions as a way of stimulating exchange of ideas in a critical and policy-related spectrum.

Its range of themes supports the current strategic mission of UWL. These can be broadly based, for example, focusing on media, communications, arts and creative endeavour as well as on a core of business, management, health, technology and enterprise. A strong regional dimension serves to encourage contributors from outside the institution. The three themes of ‘education, economy and community’ will enable the net to be cast widely.

Its purpose is to attract, interest and stimulate writers and readers alike and assist the University to communicate with the public at large, and with specific stakeholders, about mutually engaging themes and issues. It is designed to engage the public, communicate and promote the purposes of UWL, and make a tangible contribution to the identity, image and reputation of the university community and its corporate and public life.

VISTAS: Education, Economy and Community is published in hard copy magazine format twice a year in Spring and Autumn and is available in digital formats (www.uwl.ac.uk/vistas). The published version is distributed widely and is a tangible symbol of University activity and presence.

Members of UWL and other university stakeholders are invited to submit papers for the consideration of the editorial board. Papers are subject to refereeing by peer reviewers, so that VISTAS can be a publication channel comparable to major journals in fields of study and research. In addition, and subject to the editors, VISTAS publishes other suitable matter which represents university and stakeholder interests. Contributions will normally be between 4000 and 8000 words length although longer pieces may be considered. Full details are provided in ‘Author Guidelines for Submitting Papers’.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ISSUE
FROM THE EDITORS

The first issue of VISTAS has been well received within the University of West London. For this second issue we have been able to attract contributors whose work demonstrates research and professional activity associated with three schools of the university.

James Edmunds and Paul Fidgeon are based in the London School of Hospitality and Tourism. James Edmunds reports some preliminary findings from a major study he is carrying out of regional airport operations: in this case Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter. His study explores the ways in which airports can either thrive or struggle in this highly competitive transport market. Local and regional needs have to be satisfied but are themselves functions of wider strategic, industrial and geographical conditions beyond their localities. In this field business dynamics can be seen in active play. Developing and testing his models in this trio of airports will hopefully deepen our knowledge in other competitive markets and clusters of airports.

Paul Fidgeon has produced a substantial review of tourism education and curriculum design which sets present activities in their historic context. The findings and insights may well determine how the university’s own School is likely to develop.

The next three papers are associated with the West London Business School and deal with corporate communication (on the one hand in a tourism setting and on the other in terms of the response to the social media) and with ethics in business education. Maria Vladimirova and Crispin Slee are both graduates of the MSc Corporate Communication programme, and each explores a distinctly different strand of the field of strategic public relations. Maria Vladimirova investigates country branding as a strategy to enable Malta to compete effectively as a Mediterranean destination. Using country branding techniques can be significant in not only building markets but in maintaining them. Reputation helps to build customer capital and this is an asset of growing value. The social media have become very attractive not only for individuals but also for organizations as a tool to build and enhance reputation. Crispin Slee looks into this area from the viewpoint of a corporate communication practitioner ‘at the sharp end’. Roger Cook teaches ethics on business and management programmes at UWL and the paper relates his practical experiences in this field. He is also carrying out a more extended study of this area for a thesis where the philosophical and conceptual roots of the field of ethics will be critically examined for their relevance to pedagogic practice in management education.

To conclude the issue we focus on two papers from the field of computing and information systems. Peter Komisarczuk and fellow contributors report a study of education/ enterprise links which has had some success in New Zealand. Such initiatives are certainly required here in the UK so there are things we may learn from this shared experience. Vaní Aul shares experiences of how Search Engine Optimization techniques can be valuable for Small and Medium Enterprises as they use the web environment to sell to clients. Fine tuning web performance is increasingly feasible for enterprises and is beneficial in terms of boosting visibility and sales prospects.

As managing editors we are pleased to present the second issue of VISTAS, which has now established a web presence within the UWL website: www.uwl.ac.uk/vistas. And at this point we can continue to reflect on the content and message of the Foreword to the first issue written by Vice Chancellor Peter John. As he posed the question ‘So what does being an academic at UWL actually mean?’ we hope that what we present here continues to contribute to the answer. We believe it does, but we also echo his words that others should be encouraged to submit their work for publication, and we look forward to publishing a range of papers from other UWL schools in 2012.

Dr Stephen A. Roberts and Dr Tony Olden
Managing Editors
Challenges facing regional airport operations in Great Britain: a case study perspective of the South West of England & Wales

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The deregulation of the European airline industry has had a dramatic impact on regional airports across the Union. Furthermore, the policy has changed the strategy of the so-called traditional full service network carriers, such as British Airways who as a consequence of this legislation have created powerful alliance networks and consolidated their position at fortress hubs. In comparison, low cost carriers have built a network presence around regional airports as they offer such carriers a variety of cost savings. The demise of charter airlines due to the continued fall in holiday makers booking package tours has further changed the management dynamics of regional airports. This paper examines the consequences of the above actions and evaluates how these issues have been played out within the South West of England and Wales.

Keywords  |  Deregulation; consolidation; regional airports; full service network carriers; gini coefficient; low cost carrier; airline alliances

The past two decades have created some of the most stimulating and yet challenging market conditions for regional airports within Great Britain. This process of change is as evident in the South West of England and Wales as it is anywhere else. The cause and effect of these changes are numerous but have been driven in no small part by the deregulation of the air services across the European Union. This paper examines the challenges faced by regional airports within the South West of England and Wales, namely Bristol (BRS), Cardiff (CWL) and Exeter (EXT), and how they have responded to these circumstances. Regional airports have been defined by the Transport Select Committee (1983, p.2) as a category B facility ‘which provide a network of short-haul scheduled international services, a significant range of charter services and domestic services including links with gateway airports.’

The deregulation of air services within the European Union (EU) was initiated during 1987 when limited levels of competition were introduced to the market. This process of deregulation within Europe was an extremely protracted affair with the third package not being approved until almost a decade had passed. This first package concentrated on stimulating new entrant carriers to the market, banning capacity sharing strategies and removing airlines abilities to set fares based on past tariff systems. The second package of measures introduced by the EU in 1990 included further removal of price fixing practices and the creation of multiple designation carriers. Finally in 1993 full open access to the market was introduced with a relaxation on European ownership rules and harmonisation of licensing requirements. It was not just airlines however, who needed to learn and adapt to these new commercial characteristics, as airports across Europe underwent a steep learning curve with regards to how they treated current users (both airline and passenger) which used their facilities and how they fostered relationships with possible new entrants. Deregulation has undoubtedly created a period of volatility within airport traffic flows according to Burghouwt (2007) and increased levels of uncertainty for airport managers (de Neufville and Barker, 1991). The deregulation of air services within Europe changed the dynamics of the monolithic Full Service Network Carriers (FSNCs), such as British Airways, Lufthansa, Air France and Olympic. Here the need for change was
driven by price competition created by the introduction of Low Cost Carriers (LCC) which had started to eat into these carriers traditional passenger base as well as stimulating new markets of their own, with their low fares and mass market advertising campaigns. The FSNCs were not only having to take on LCCs to maintain their market share, but they also needed to develop strategies to protect themselves from the increasing levels of competition that they faced from the new Middle Eastern carriers such as Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways. This new breed of carrier cleverly exploited their geographical position and sixth freedom rights granted under various bilateral agreements to create super hub airports which channelled passengers from one international flight to another smoothly and at a lower price than was currently available on direct flights from Europe. FSNCs furthermore experienced intense competition from the established Asian carriers of Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific and Malaysian. Williams (2002, p.1) notes ‘deregulation has radically altered the way in which airlines are operated and managed. The cosy world of the past in which carriers were protected from the onslaught of competition by the actions of regulators has been replaced by one in which each party has to ensure its own wellbeing.’ With the inception of deregulation Reynolds-Feighan (2000) argues that smaller airports have become vulnerable due to the FSNCs changing their network characteristics due to the introduction of the free market and economic downturns.

The role of deregulation within the US and Europe is well understood from the work of Graham (1997); Hanlon (2007); Williams (2002); Doganis (2001) and Page (2005). Whilst these authors have tended to concentrate on the function deregulation has played within the major market areas particularly focusing on hub airports and FSNC versus LCC competition, scant regard has been paid to the impact of deregulation on regional airports across Europe. Burghouwt et al. (2003, p.310) emphasized that ‘in contrast to the large amount of empirical studies regarding the changes in airline network structures in the deregulated US air transport market, the number of empirical studies with respect to changing airline network configurations in Europe is still somewhat limited.’ Whilst the loss of any air service can have a major impact on all sizes of airport its effect will be most greatly felt at the regional airport level. Here Reynolds-Feighan (1995, p.467) warns that ‘for small communities with limited air services, the danger is that competition and network reorganisation by the airlines will focus on the major airports and cities leaving the smaller communities with much reduced services or with a loss of all air services.’

To help protect their markets from deregulation and increase market share, FSNCs developed in the 1990s a range of cooperation agreements termed alliances which were aimed at reducing competition whilst at the same time offering passengers a multitude of global destinations. Doganis (2001) illustrates that as competition has increased, airlines have looked for greater protection from such commercial realities by grouping together and creating airline alliances. This strategy has impacted on regional airport facilities as airlines have been able to reduce the level of service offered as they have been able to code share with their alliance partners. This reduction of services has created vulnerabilities within airport operations as the level of destinations serviced may no longer support the revenue required to efficiently operate the facility or to invest in new infrastructure requirements.

Strategically FSNCs have not only opted to join alliances as a mechanism of protection from potential competition but have furthermore adopted a policy of network consolidation through the purchase of carriers which have allowed them to gain synergies as well as reduce potential competitors. The consolidation of European airlines is growing. This strategy has had implications for regional airports as again it raises the prospect of network duplication. This replication of air services may also be seen in the personnel found at the airport from check-in operatives through to maintenance staff. Examples of European FSNC consolidation is best evidenced through the merger of Air France and KLM and more recently the formation of the International Airlines Group formed by the merger between British Airways and Iberia. Whilst these two examples help to illustrate the level of merger activity which is currently impacting on regional airports within Europe, it is the development of the Lufthansa Group of Airlines which clearly demonstrates how a consolidated European airline industry will challenge regional airport strategies. Figure 1 illustrates the airlines which are currently found within the three major airline groupings within Europe. As this article goes to press the future of one of the Lufthansa Group of Airlines – BMI is somewhat uncertain. As of 4th November 2011 Lufthansa has signalled its
intention to sell the mainline operations of BMI to the International Airlines Group, the parent company of British Airways. The implications of this deal for competition at London Heathrow are numerous, including an increased share of the takeoff and landing slots by British Airways which currently has close to 43% of the market. This is expected to increase to over 54% if the deal is successful. Such dominance by a home carrier is still far less than the current 63% enjoyed by Lufthansa at Frankfurt or the 55% experienced by Air France at Paris Charles de Gaulle. It is expected that if successful, British Airways will use the slots gained to increase the level of services to long haul destinations and in particular to open up new destinations found within the growing BRIC economies. This strategy will, however, have implications for the number of domestic destinations served from Heathrow which are expected to decrease. Furthermore, the sale of BMI’s Low Cost operation and its regional division could have widespread implications for regional airports across the UK including those based within the Southwest of England and Wales.

The future challenge faced by all three airports within the research area (BRS, CWL & EXT) is linked to the continued consolidation which is occurring within the FSNC sector. The economics of consolidation have centred on gaining synergies within the operation of these carriers. Based on the relatively small catchment area found between the competing airports of Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter (see figure 2) it is likely that at some point in the near future the Air France / KLM Group will review the current strategy of serving all three facilities. This could very easily leave two of the airports with no direct connection to the main transit airports of Amsterdam (AMS) and Paris (CDG) respectfully. Instead it is possible that the Southwest of England and Wales could be serviced by a super regional hub airport (Dennis, 2005). This strategy would reduce the level of duplication of routes and cost for the airlines involved. It would however have a profound impact on passenger journey times from the most peripheral regions found within the study area and create issues for local development agencies looking to attract new business to the region.

Figure 1 European airline groupings and alliance membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lufthansa Group</th>
<th>Air France/KLM Group</th>
<th>International Airlines Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lufthansa</td>
<td>Air France</td>
<td>British Airways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lufthansa Regional</td>
<td>Brit Air</td>
<td>British Airways City Flyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Dolomiti</td>
<td>City Jet</td>
<td>Iberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lufthansa Italia</td>
<td>Air France Regional</td>
<td>Air Nostrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian Airlines</td>
<td>KLM</td>
<td>Openskies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bmi *</td>
<td>KLM City Hopper</td>
<td>Vuelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bmibaby *</td>
<td>Martinair</td>
<td>FlyBe (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels Airlines</td>
<td>Transavia.com</td>
<td>Sun-Air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurowings</td>
<td>Alitalia (25%)</td>
<td>STAR ALLIANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germanwings</td>
<td></td>
<td>SKYTEAM ALLIANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxair</td>
<td></td>
<td>ONEWORLD ALLIANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun Express (50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine Airlines (22%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* to be sold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR ALLIANCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

James Edmunds
The success of regional airports can in some instances be measured based on their level of global reach. This measurement is somewhat subjective but takes into account how many destinations passengers using the facility can reach by having just one transit point within their journey. To be successful regional airports need to attract FSNCs which are willing to operate flights into and out of the airport at times which will allow them to fit into the wave pattern of transfers offered at the airlines main hub. Here the route network of the Air France / KLM group has been fundamental to each of the airports within the study area ability to offer a range of long haul destinations. Table 1 illustrates which airlines service two of Europe’s biggest hub airports AMS and CDG from Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter airports respectfully. The development of such Hub and Spoke operations has been called into question by Burghouwt (2007, p150) who based on the work of Dempsey (1990) states that ‘airline hub and spoke operations and the freedom of route exit in deregulated markets have not been at all beneficial to airports at the lower end of the airport hierarchy.’
Table 1 Hub airport connections from Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airport</th>
<th>Hub (Connecting) Airport</th>
<th>Airline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Amsterdam (AMS)</td>
<td>KLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Paris (CDG)</td>
<td>Air France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>Amsterdam (AMS)</td>
<td>KLM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>Paris (CDG)</td>
<td>BMI/Baby/Flybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Amsterdam (AMS)</td>
<td>Flybe (Codeshare with AF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Paris (CDG)</td>
<td>Flybe (Codeshare with KL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The introduction of deregulation across Europe has created challenges for regional airports not just through the reshaping of the FSNC’s networks but also through the generation of new business from Low Cost Carriers. Through the introduction of Low Cost Carriers, deregulation within Europe has helped to create new markets and destinations which were in the past either seen as being unviable or unattractive to passengers. Low Cost Carriers had initially started within the United States of America where deregulation had occurred a decade prior to the European Union’s first tentative steps into the process under the Deregulation Act of 1978. Here Low Cost Carriers such as Southwest Airlines and ValueJet had blazed a trail of success helping to obliterate household brands such as Eastern Airlines and Braniff Airways. This is not to say that Europe had not seen some initial experimentation with the low cost model. In particular, under the revised Bermuda II US – UK Bilateral Air Service Agreement of 1977, Laker Airways pioneered the idea of low fares for passengers who were willing to turn up and go on its Skytrain services to numerous destinations across the United States of America. Europe had nevertheless, to wait until the early 1990s for its first Low Cost Carrier to be initiated.

Whilst larger FSNCs, have favoured consolidating their position at fortress hubs, the new breed of LCCs have looked to establish themselves away from these primary airport facilities at more cost effective secondary or regional airports. As described by Page (2005) the main reasons behind this strategy include reduced congestion, less complicated airport infrastructure and most importantly lower airport charges. Here, however, is where the problems for regional airports begin. The rivalry between airports to attract carriers such as Ryanair, easyJet and Norwegian are immense. Airports have been found paying enormous sums of money and offering other such enticements to attract LCCs to their region. Often this drive to gain LCCs is motivated by local government involvement to help create jobs and help rejuvenate areas through the injection of potential tourists to their region. Tourism may not be the only type of employment which can be created by such ventures, however, as the Department of Transport’s White Paper (2003, p.49) The Future of Air Transport states ‘airports are an important focus for the development of local and regional economies. They attract business and generate employment and open up wider markets. They can provide an important impetus to regeneration and a focus for new commercial and industrial development.’

The development of such LCC models at regional airports has of course been evident within the South West of England and Wales. Here a variety of LCCs are to be found at the main airports of Cardiff, Bristol and Exeter. Flybe currently has operations to all three facilities, whereas easyJet and Ryanair have concentrated their route network development at Bristol. Cardiff had previously been included within the Ryanair route network with a single service operated to Dublin; this was however cancelled after a disagreement between the airport and airline based on landing charges. The ruthless nature of LCC’s footloose strategies is therefore a concern which regional airports have to take into consideration. During the summer of 2011 it was announced by BMI-Baby that they would be withdrawing all operations from both Cardiff and Manchester airports. The removal of these low cost services from Cardiff are somewhat alleviated by the duplication of routes from other carriers, including charter airlines. There are concerns
nevertheless as to how Cardiff will be able to replace routes which have been lost and where there is no replication of service. The vulnerability of regional airports in this respect to the withdrawal of a LCC could be even more accentuated at Exeter where one carrier, FlyBe, provides the only scheduled services. Table 2 demonstrates the main low cost carriers operating from all three facilities based within the research region and the destinations served.

Table 2 Low cost carrier destinations served from Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter

(Source: Airport Summer & Winter 2011 Timetables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airport</th>
<th>Low Cost Carrier</th>
<th>Destinations Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>Ryanair</td>
<td>Alicante, Bergerac, Béziers, Bratislava, Dublin, Faro, Gdansk, Girona, Gran Canaria, Ibiza, Katowice, Kaunas, Knock, Lanzarote, Limoges, Málaga, Malta, Marrakech, Milan-Orio al Serio, Palma de Mallorca, Poznań, Reus, Riga, Rzeszów, Seville, Tenerife-South, Valencia, Venice-Treviso, Wroclaw,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FlyBe</td>
<td>Belfast-City, Edinburgh, Glasgow-International, Jersey, Paris (CDG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>BmiBaby</td>
<td>Alicante, Belfast – City, Faro, Ibiza, Málaga, Menorca, Murcia, Palma de Mallorca,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FlyBe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Belfast-City, Edinburgh, Glasgow-International, Jersey, Paris (CDG)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Whilst most LCC networks have previously concentrated on leisure routes there has been a significant move by these carriers into the business markets due to the maturing of their past route operations and the need to drive expansion. The business markets which have been targeted were formerly flown only by those nations FSNC. Whilst this competition on routes has been welcomed by passengers it has caused bitter rivalry between LCCs and their FSNC counterparts. For regional airports the outcome of this competition has often resulted in one carrier leaving the route. This all too often has tended to be the FSNC which then reduces the airports ability to offer passengers the opportunity of transferring flights seamlessly.

The growth and importance of LCCs to regional airports within the study area is furthermore shown within table 3. Here, data has been analysed from the OAG (2010) highlighting the number of departure frequencies recorded at Bristol during the month of June 2010. What is clearly evident from the data is that LCCs have the greatest percentage of slots and have built up an unassailable lead at Bristol. Here, it can be seen that over 77% of operations are by the two main LCCs found within the UK, Ryanair and easyJet. A similar picture emerges at Cardiff Airport where LCCs account for 56% of all frequencies, these being operated by FlyBe and BMIbaby.

Table 3 Bristol Airport airline frequencies for June 2010
(Source: OAG)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airline</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of Firm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OLT-Ostfriesische Lufttra</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.274509804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aer Aran</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.470588235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurigny Air Services</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.470588235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental Airlines</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.470588235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flybe</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.303921569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Airways</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2.843137255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI Regional</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3.62745098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air France</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3.823529412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLM Hopper</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4.411764706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryanair</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>26.07843137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easyJet</td>
<td>1045</td>
<td>51.2254902</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As further illustration of the dominance of LCCs at the regional airports within the study area a simple Gini Co-efficient (GIC) can be undertaken to show the level of concentration within the market. Whilst other measures are available the GIC has become the data analysis tool of choice for airport concentration studies first used by Reynolds-Feighan (2000) but having also subsequently being used by Burghouwt (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007) who employs the GIC to develop concepts based around concentration levels at both a spatial and temporal configuration of route networks. Burghouwt (2007, p.9) notes that ‘concentration and dispersion measures have been used frequently in air transport studies to evaluate market concentration in air transport markets or to analyse the relationship between air fares and market concentration in the context of antitrust issues’. The GIC is calculated by analysing the level of inequality for a particular market based on the Lorenz Curve (Figure 3). The greater the curve produced the higher the level of inequality or concentration within that market.

Figure 3 Illustration of the GIC and the Lorenz Curve

![Figure 3 Illustration of the GIC and the Lorenz Curve](image)

Mathematically the GIC is represented by the following formula:

\[
G = 1 - 2 \int_{0}^{2} L(X) \, dX.
\]

Where:

\[
\sum = \frac{\text{Area (A=B) - Area B}}{\text{Area (A=B)}}
\]

\[
= \frac{1 \cdot \text{Area B}}{1}
\]
Table 4 illustrates the results which were obtained from undertaking a GIC analysis on Bristol Airport for the month of June 2010. The GIC measures from 0 which represents equality between all carriers to 1 which represents total inequality with one carrier having a dominant position at that airport.

Table 4 GIC of Bristol Airport
(Source: OAG)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airline</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>% of Firm</th>
<th>Cum %</th>
<th>Sum of (2)</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOLT-Ostfriesische Lufttra</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.274509804</td>
<td>1.274509804</td>
<td>1.274509804</td>
<td>11.58645276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aer Arann</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.470588235</td>
<td>2.745098039</td>
<td>4.019607843</td>
<td>36.54188948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurigney Air Services</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.470588235</td>
<td>4.215686275</td>
<td>6.901960784</td>
<td>63.2798574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental Airlines</td>
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<td>1.470588235</td>
<td>5.68627451</td>
<td>9.901960784</td>
<td>90.01782531</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flybe</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.303921569</td>
<td>7.990196078</td>
<td>13.67647059</td>
<td>124.3315508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Airways</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2.843137255</td>
<td>10.833333333</td>
<td>18.82352941</td>
<td>171.1229947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI Regional</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3.62745098</td>
<td>14.46078431</td>
<td>25.29411765</td>
<td>229.9465241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air France</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>3.823529412</td>
<td>18.28431373</td>
<td>32.74509804</td>
<td>297.6827094</td>
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<tr>
<td>KLM City Hopper</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4.411764706</td>
<td>22.69607843</td>
<td>40.98039216</td>
<td>372.5490196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryanair</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>26.07843137</td>
<td>71.47058824</td>
<td>148.7745098</td>
<td>649.7326203</td>
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<tr>
<td>easyjet</td>
<td>1045</td>
<td>51.2254902</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>148.7745098</td>
<td>1352.495544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Freq | 2040 | 9.090909091 |
| Total      | 3399.286988 |
| Area B     | 1699.643494 |
| Gini index | 0.660071301 |

Table 4 clearly identifies that Bristol has a high level of concentration at 0.66, with one carrier in particular easyJet, having over 51% of the market. This high level of concentration is furthermore clarified within figure 4 where the pressure on the Lorenz Curve is readily identifiable.

Figure 4 GIC for Bristol Airport for the month of June 2010
The growth of LCCs at regional airports created issues not just for FSNCs but has also impacted upon the past main income generators for such facilities – the charter airline. The package holiday market and the utilisation of charter airlines has been a highly lucrative revenue source for regional airports including Cardiff, Bristol and Exeter. The frequency of services during the summer sun and the winter ski period have in most part financially secured such regional facilities through their aeronautical charges. Furthermore, regional airports have been able to gain revenue from non-aeronautical charges such as duty free sales and food and beverage outlets supplied to the captive audience who are waiting for their charter flight. The charter market is however showing signs of decline, Williams (2001) suggests as more and more holiday makers are experimenting with tailor made vacations, thus leaving the traditional safety bubble of the package holiday and charter flight behind. This decline in charter activity at all three airports within the study area is illustrated within figure 5. Here data has been extrapolated from the Civil Aviation Authorities (CAA) data sets for the past five year period. The graph clearly shows a significant drop in charter passenger numbers at Bristol and Cardiff airports. Here in no small part the LCC sector can be seen to be stimulating demand to new destinations and allowing customers to pick and choose the number of nights away rather than being tied down to the 7 or 14 night contracts that in the past have so often been the industry norm. Table 5 illustrates the number of charter carriers operating from each facility and the destinations they serve.

Figure 5 Annual charter passenger carryings for BRS, CWL & EXT (Source: CAA)
Table 5 Charter airline destinations served from Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter (Source: Airport Summer & Winter 2011 Timetables)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airport</th>
<th>Charter Airline</th>
<th>Destinations Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Cook</td>
<td>Antalya, Bodrum, Corfu, Dalaman, Enfidha, Faro, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Grenoble, Heraklion, Ibiza, Kos, Lanzarote, Larnaca, Menorca, Monastir, Naples, Palma de Mallorca, Paphos, Reus, Rhodes, Salzburg, Sharm el-Sheikh, Skiathos, Tenerife-South, Zakynthos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>Thomson</td>
<td>Alicante, Antalya, Bodrum, Bourgas, Bridgetown, Corfu, Dalaman, Enfidha, Faro, Gran Canaria, Heraklion, Ibiza, Kefalonia, Kos, Lanzarote, Larnaca, Málaga, Minorca, Palma de Mallorca, Paphos, Reus, Rhodes, Sharm el-Sheikh, Tenerife-South, Zakynthos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Cook</td>
<td>Antalya, Bodrum, Dalaman, Enfidha, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Heraklion, Ibiza, Lanzarote, Larnaca, Palma de Mallorca, Paphos, Reus, Rhodes, Tenerife-South, Zakynthos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Thomson</td>
<td>Antalya, Bodrum, Corfu, Dalaman, Enfidha, Enontekiö, Faro, Funchal, Gran Canaria, Ibiza, Lanzarote, Larnaca, Malta, Menorca, Palma de Mallorca, Paphos, Sharm El-Sheikh, Tenerife-South, Zakynthos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Cook</td>
<td>Antalya, Dalaman, Monastir, Palma de Mallorca</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The development of a strong route network profile and a vibrant feel to the airports operation furthermore challenges regional airports. The national and regional pride felt by passengers and local residents alike has been highlighted in the work produced by Davidson, Ryley and Snelgrove (2010). Here, Wales was seen as having the most patriotic requirements with regards to an air link from the south of the country to the north. The development of this route was achieved through the use by the Welsh Assembly government of a Public Service Obligation (PSO) grant. Whilst this route was backed and supported fully by the Welsh Assembly Government it is interesting to note within the current Transport Strategy for Wales that very little attention has been given to air services and airport operations located within the Principality.

The role of local governments within the management of airports across the UK has however been reduced since the Airport Act of 1986. This act of parliament encouraged local councils to devolve their responsibility for operating regional airports. The sale of Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter airports to the private sector have been completed with a variety of backers currently looking after each facility as is shown in table 6. As can be seen from the table all three airports are currently controlled by large multinational infrastructure companies. Such organisations offer the airports a wide range of management skills and financial strength to help them develop competitive strategies.
Regional airports are not just facing challenges based on the type of airline operator who wishes to utilise their facilities, but the development of competing modes of transport have also to be taken into consideration. Lian and Ronnevik (2011, p.86) focus on the work of Fuelhart (2007) and Suzuki et al. (2003) in highlighting that passengers are willing ‘to spend several hours on access drives to larger airports in order to take advantage of lower fares and more convenient airline services.’ Fuelhart (2007) describes this process as airport or traffic leakage. Lian and Ronnevik (2011) elucidate that the level of traffic leakage will be based on access time and level of service a passenger can expect to gain from using the competing airport. Lian and Ronnevik (2011) address the issue of service level by scrutinising the works of Innes and Doucet (1990), Suzuki et al. (2003), Phillips et al. (2005), Zhang and Xie (2005) and Fuelhart (2007). These authors base service level on the following four key concepts – fare, direct versus indirect service, aircraft type (jet or turboprop) and frequency, timing and capacity of flights.

Airports in the study area are currently able to reduce the level of traffic leakage due to the current antiquated rail network which serves the area. Furthermore, the rail network currently misses the opportunity to link with London’s Heathrow Airport which at one point is less than 10 miles from the track! Instead passengers for Heathrow have to disembark at Reading and catch a coach service to the airport which takes an average of 45 minutes. The current system therefore sees passengers either opting to take a connecting flight to their final destination from a local airport or use a car to reach one of the UK’s bigger airports.

This latter point is reinforced by the work of Gjerdaker et al. (2008) who studied the impact of lower fares and improved road infrastructure on traffic leakage at regional airports found within Norway. One could argue here, however, that the perception of the road network has helped reduce traffic leakage at regional airports due to the high levels of congestion found on the M4 corridor which links the study region to London’s main gateway facilities.

The work of Suzuki et al. (2003) found that leisure passengers were more likely to spend greater periods of time travelling by car to airports which offered them lower fares. This research illustrates that if regional airports wish to attract a mix of passenger types they need to invest in services which help the passenger experience: such as parking, restaurants and shopping facilities (Suzuki et al, 2003).

The situation with regards to competitive transport modes is however changing. Under the current government a number of proposals have been put forward which include the electrification of rail services from London to South Wales and the West of England, plus the development of High Speed 2. Here a new high speed rail line is proposed which will replace the current West Coast mainline for train services operating from London to Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow. The rail developments proposed are likely in the future to have an impact on airports found within the study area. The creation of a London Heathrow rail hub has been suggested as a way of allowing regional passengers to use high speed trains to reach the UK’s premier airport for international connections. This would help alleviate the pressure on Heathrow to operate domestic and short haul services into the airport and thus remove the need for a third runway. Whilst none of the airports within the study regional have flights operating to Heathrow, there could still be implications for these facilities as passengers may prefer to transfer flights within their home country. Furthermore, the use of rail may allow for a more convenient departure point from their local town or city rather than needing to travel to an airport (BRS, CWL or EXT) found within the catchment area.

Table 6 Regional airport ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airport</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>South West Airports Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>TBI - Abertis Airports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Regional &amp; City Airports Ltd – Consortium of Balfour Beatty and London City Airport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The challenge for the regional airports located within the study area is not just based on the types of operator, user or traffic leakage but on competition between themselves. Frohlich and Niemeier (2011, p.44), highlight that little research has been undertaken with regards to the level of ‘spatial competition’ which occurs between airports.

This, they believe, is in many respects due to airports being traditionally viewed as natural monopolies. Morrell (2003) suggests that airports are able to compete based on a number of factors including destinations served. Frohlich and Niemeier (2011, p.45), note that ‘competition for destination markets may develop because airports play an important role for the overall attractiveness of the destination it is located. Across the board competition refers to a situation when some airports, even if geographically separated, could be good substitutes for each other.’ Morrell’s paper (2003) continues to explain that competition is more likely for airports which serve the same catchment area. Forsyth (2006) suggests that airport competition will ultimately be based on overlapping or shared local market, transfer or connecting traffic, destination markets, across the board competition, non-aviation related markets and finally competition with other modes of transport.

When examining the airports within the study region it is clear to see that there is currently a high level of competition which exists between them. Figure 2 highlights that each airport is roughly within a 50 mile radius of each other - this does not take into consideration the vagaries of the road and rail network, which can increase these distances greatly. From a destination market perspective it is evident that all three facilities virtually replicate each other route networks. In the long run such a situation cannot be seen as tenable as FSNCs look to reduce cost and concentrate on their hub operations. Furthermore, the footloose nature of LCCs means that regional facilities need to constantly review costs so that they remain attractive to such operators. If not, even airports with a large range of routes may find that services are withdrawn and moved to a nearby competitor.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the regional airports of Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter have a number of challenges to face over the coming years. While all are currently able to justify their existence through the range of services that they operate, this situation is constantly changing. Here the role of deregulation and open skies agreements has been seen to play an important part. These policies have helped create and stimulate competition within the market and opened up new routes and destinations which would have been unthinkable only two decades ago. Herein however also lies the problem, as these policies helped create fortress hubs across Europe where FSNCs have consolidated their position and continue to do so through cost savings and synergies gained from merger and alliance strategies. These activities have reduced regional airports’ ability to compete on price and range of destinations available.

The successful development and expansion of the LCC sector has further created a number of opportunities for regional airports. LCCs have helped regional airports recover revenue lost through the reduced demand from charter carriers. Here again it is important to consider the footloose nature of these carriers and the impact which such policies can have on the airport if future terms and conditions no longer meet their requirements.

Strategically, regional airports found within the study area also have to consider the challenges faced from competition with larger airports which are found outside of their catchment area. Primary airports such as London Heathrow and Gatwick can be seen as being both attractive to business and leisure passengers due to the direct nature of the service, frequency and price. Here regional airports need to consider how they can attract local passengers to use services based on the attractiveness of their facilities, including less congestion and tailored services. Furthermore the changing nature of transport services to the Southwest of England and Wales needs to be considered by airport managers. The main challenge here revolves around greater accessibility to the primary airports in the UK, based on seamless electrified rail service linking the major towns within the region to a hub rail station located at London Heathrow. Again regional airports need to consider how they would be able to offset this development with marketing and operational strategies aimed at reducing this potential threat.
References


Official Airline Guide Data (OAG) (Accessed on 11/08/11.)


Tourism education and curriculum design: a practitioner perspective

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The London School of Hospitality and Tourism,
University of West London

Academic and practitioner courses in travel and tourism have developed substantially in the past thirty years. The force behind this change can be attributed to the growth of tourism as an activity and the organisations involved in meeting the needs of tourists expanding to cater for this demand. This growth, combined with the increasing professionalism of tourism suppliers, played its part in prompting educational institutions to meet the demands and opportunities created by tourism employers. It also contributed to the strong vocational orientation of many of these programmes.

In the early years of the development of the subject, the curriculum was informed by extra disciplinary knowledge – knowledge from industry, government, think tanks, interest groups, research institutes and consultancies. Curriculum planners have also supplemented the curriculum with multidisciplinary knowledge, drawing various ideas, skills and methodologies from other subject disciplines. The subsequent maturity of the subject has come to be reflected in the creation of interdisciplinary knowledge whereby scholars have been able to draw upon more than one discipline to explain a solution to specific industry-related problems and issues.

Almost without exception, tourism courses stress the vocational nature of the subject and the extensive range of career opportunities found in tourism. Here the development of management skills and the ability to apply these skills to various public and private sector operational tasks and problems are seen as central to academic philosophy from craft (National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) levels 1 to 3) to the postgraduate level.

Research conducted by the author suggests a large and diverse range of courses in the subject area; the dominance of BA and in particular combined studies awards; a relatively small Higher National Diploma (HND) and Higher National Certificate (HNC) market largely replaced by foundation degrees and extensive postgraduate provision. In such an educational milieu, discussion has focused on whether the market can support such a large number of courses and how individual institutions might seek to establish unique selling points. These factors have become increasingly apparent in the light of the rising cost of education in 2012, international competition and new industry-led initiatives, namely 16-19 Diplomas and industrially sponsored foundation degrees.

Keywords  |  Tourism degrees; Higher National Diplomas; National Vocational Qualifications; Vocational relevance and work-based learning; Subject benchmarks.
Introduction
This paper examines the growth and development of tourism education within Great Britain, with specific reference to the situation in England and Wales. Tourism education has received relatively scant attention since the publication of a number of seminal papers produced in the mid to late 1990’s and in the last decade (Goodenough and Page (1993), Koh (1995) Tribe (1997, 1999) and Johnson and Airey (1999) and Airey (2002)). The paper reviews how tourism education has developed from relatively humble origins into a major subject of academic and scholarly activity taught in a wide variety of educational institutions. The writer seeks to evaluate what programmes aim to achieve in terms of knowledge, skills development and preparing students to meet the labour needs of the tourism industry. The writer also reflects on where tourism education is going in terms of courses, course philosophy, levels of study, subject content, and teaching and learning strategies.

The ensuing discussion seeks to address the rationale for tourism courses and the search for academic respectability for tourism as a subject. It will be shown that programmes have sought to balance the needs of employers with those of a traditional academic educational system that has emphasised academic rigor and the pursuit of core subject disciplines. This has resulted in a series of guidelines, articles and discussion papers covering the development of a national curriculum including papers by Holloway (1995), Botterill and Tribe (2000), and Tribe (2006).

Writing in 2005, Tribe concluded that while 86 percent of pedagogic research investigated curriculum related matters only five percent concentrated on curriculum design and planning issues. Therefore there is a need to address a lack of literature found in this area and critically review the issues in relation to tourism education.

The paper considers the thinking behind developing various higher educational programmes in travel and tourism in England and Wales. The writer will review how underlying philosophical considerations have influenced the aims and objectives of programmes. Undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum models are discussed and progression issues in and between such programmes broached. The merits of including an element of work-related experience in any tourism programme are considered together with how such work-experience might be assessed.
The antecedents of tourism education

It is over 40 years since tourism first appeared as a distinct area of study (Airey 2005). Airey argues that its origins can be traced back to the study of some of its component sectors, namely hotel operations and catering, or component activities such as leisure and recreation. These all date to pre-World War II. Prior to this, specialist academic disciplines, notably geography and economics, broached aspects of the subject when discussing issues such as regional studies and foreign trade. Here the works of Ogilvie (1933), Norval (1936), Brunner (1945) and Pimlott (1947) are illustrative.

These early developments remain relatively isolated and restricted to certain sectors and scholars. Indeed it was not until the 1960s and a number of key changes in the nature of tourism activity, higher education and society that tourism emerged as a clear area of study in its own right that could be followed as an undergraduate discipline and a research activity.

Other factors have also contributed to the expansion of tourism education. Foremost among these has been a general expansion in the number of students enrolling onto further and higher education programmes. Dearing noted a doubling in numbers between 1977 and 1997 (National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education, 1997). This has been coupled with the development of vocational education throughout the western world. Prompted by changes in the world of work and the development of the service economy together with the need to maintain competitive advantage, governments have encouraged vocational education. As a growing sector of economic activity, the tourism industry has been perceived by many students as having good employment prospects. This has been a further driver for vocationalism and has consolidated tourism’s position in the wider educational curriculum.

Airey (1979) catalogues the vocational origins of tourism in higher education within Great Britain. He notes its earliest provision, in the mid-1960s, was in the form of optional components on other programmes notably in hotel and catering administration. The first Higher National Diplomas (HND) in tourism started at the end of the 1960s. Perhaps more important regarding the future development of tourism as a field of study was the development of two postgraduate master degree programmes developed at the universities of Surrey and Strathclyde in 1972 (Airey 2005). With these came the recognition of tourism as a separate area of study within its own right, linked to university hotel and catering management departments.

An important development circa 1990 was the appearance of tourism as a subject of study in the 16- to 18-year-old age category (referred to in Great Britain as Further Education (FE)). Given the rapid growth of tourism as a subject discipline perhaps it is not surprising that certain criticisms have been raised (The Observer, 1995). Initially these centred upon tourism lacking serious content or academic rigour.

Efforts to develop subject knowledge have been outlined by Tribe (1999, 2005a). The subsequent maturity of the subject (as identified by Morrison (2004) has come to be reflected in the creation of interdisciplinary knowledge whereby scholars have drawn upon more than one discipline to explain a solution to a specific research problem.
A pedagogical research foundation
Research in tourism education has developed considerably since Ritchie and Jafari published their seminal work in the *Annals of Tourism Research* in 1981. The issues they addressed in the aforementioned paper, namely the definition of tourism, the need to develop a body of knowledge in tourism and the perceived weaknesses of tourism education have now all largely been addressed (Holloway 1995; Middleton and Ladkin, 1996 and Tribe 1997, 1999).

Their research has sought to consolidate earlier work undertaken by Medlik (1965) whose analysis of higher education and research on tourism in Europe was pioneering in this area. The 1988 International Conference for Tourism Educators hosted by the University of Surrey gave what Tribe (2005b) described as a fillip to educational research in tourism attracting a broad range of papers. The development of The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education, a European organisation (ATLAS) gave further impetus to the development of educational research through hosting two major conferences Tourism and Leisure Education in Europe: Trends and Prospects (1994) and Tourism in Central and Eastern Europe: Educating for Quality (1995).

Curriculum research has tended to focus on general issues pertaining to the curriculum such as curriculum planning models and critical reviews of the curriculum. Further critical reviews of the tourism curriculum include those by Amoah and Baum (1997) and Ryan (1995). The former have described the formulation and implementation of tourism education in the UK as ad hoc.

Specific perspectives on the development of tourism education in various countries have been provided by Walsh (1992), Formica (1997), Sims (1999), King and Craig Smith (2005), Leal and Padiha (2005), Lewis (2005), Zhang and Fan (2005), Venema (2005), and Singh and Singh (2005). Comparative analysis between various educational systems has been undertaken in Europe by Cooper and Messenger (1991) and by Formica (1996) - the latter examining similarities and differences between Europe and North America.

Whether tourism represents a separate discipline with its own body of knowledge and distinct methodology remains controversial. More attention has been given to teaching, learning and assessment strategies, and examples of successful teaching, learning and assessment methods in tourism education are somewhat legion (Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), 2005). However in the UK the 1993 Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) report on tourism degree courses and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) subject review of 2000-2001 raised serious issues pertaining to academic progression and the demonstration of ‘graduateness’. This discussion has subsequently extended to include the need for benchmarks for progression from HNDs to honours degrees (Fidgeon 2003).

The travel and tourism industry in context
To a large extent the justification for the provision and development of a wide number of tourism programmes lies in the size and significance of the tourism industry and its perceived career opportunities as noted by Airey and Johnson (1999) and Airey and Tribe (2005).

Globally 238,277,000 jobs are in the tourism industry. This equates to eight-and-a-half percent of total employment or one job in every 11.9 individuals. Nine percent of global Gross Domestic Product and 11 percent of export earnings can be attributed to tourism expenditure – the latter put at £1,502 billion (World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) 2010).

If the British tourism industry is to continue to remain competitive, education will play a key role (Visit Britain, 2010). In recognising this role, successive governments have supported educational institutions in their provision of tourism curricula. It is against this backdrop that an expansion in tourism education must be seen.

The origins of tourism education in England and Wales can be traced back to the Business Education Council (BEC) and Technical Education Council (TEC) programmes pioneered at Bournemouth and Ealing Colleges of Higher Education and Hammersmith College in the mid- to late 1960s. Here tourism was studied as part of an undergraduate diploma in business studies.
The Universities of Surrey and Strathclyde pioneered postgraduate teaching in this area, offering the first Masters awards in 1972.

The late 1980s was characterised by a race for the first degree in tourism studies. This was eventually won by New College Durham in 1986 and their Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) sponsored programme. They were closely followed by three colleges of Higher Education (Bournemouth, Ealing and Bristol) all of whom were to benefit from the abolition of Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) control over the development of their course curricula and the onset of self-accreditation in 1994. Initially these courses were criticised as being nothing more than a re-branded Higher National Diploma (Fidgeon 1996).

The entry of the traditional universities into the undergraduate market came in the late 1990s - witnessed by developments at the University of Hull and University College London. Tourism Education in the twenty-first century has been characterised by developments in the 16- to 19-year-old age category (Further Education) and the growth of Professional Qualifications. This has been reflected in the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs).

The rise of the professional qualification such as the Meetings Professional International (MPI) Certificate in Meetings Management, or International Association of Professional Congress Organisers (IAPCO) certified one-week seminar completes the eclectic mix of tourism qualifications. Table 1 illustrates the possible progression to the professional qualification and outlines the range of tourism qualifications found in Great Britain.

The academic origins of tourism education in Scotland is sufficiently different from its counterparts south of the border to warrant special attention. Here the work of the Scottish Hotel School (SHS) was pre-eminent. Founded in 1944 as part of the Glasgow and West Scotland Commercial College, the SHS was absorbed into the University of Strathclyde in 1963. On the 1st August 2006 the SHS was abolished and its work incorporated into a new Department of Hospitality and Tourism. This has now ceased to exist and courses and staff have been amalgamated into a generic business studies department. This rebranding of the SHS has effectively come to define what the teaching of tourism in Scotland incorporates, much more than just the study of hotels, rather a broad spectrum of studies focused on professional management education.

More recently the provision of tourism education in Scotland has been overseen by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This has provided a coherence and a structure to the delivery of tourism education, something that has been somewhat lacking in England and Wales.

From colleges of Further Education to Russell Group Universities tourism programmes have truly come of age providing everything from foundation programmes targeted at 14- to 16-year-olds to PhDs. In doing so, they have reached out to students with widely differing intellectual abilities and career aspirations. Initiatives have spanned the length and breadth of Great Britain and have incorporated different educational philosophies.

Tourism education overseas

While essentially beyond the scope of this paper, Hall (2005) notes a well established presence of tourism programmes in colleges and universities overseas. These date from the 1920s and include institutions in Austria and Switzerland. The first programmes in Australia (at Gatton and Footscray Colleges of Advanced Education) were developed in the late 1970s and were strongly influenced by developments in Europe. By 1997 tourism was being offered as a first degree in three tertiary institutions and twenty three universities (Hall 2005).
### Table 1 - Qualification

(Typical full-time duration in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Education (14-16 years)</th>
<th>Further Education (16 years plus)</th>
<th>Higher Education (18 years plus)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16 Diploma in Travel &amp; Tourism – Foundation (2 years)</td>
<td>OCR A/S, A-level Travel &amp; Tourism (A/S 1 year, A-level 2 years)</td>
<td>Certificate of Higher Education (1 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Travel &amp; Tourism/Foundation in Travel &amp; Tourism (2 years) (Scotland)</td>
<td>City &amp; Guilds Diploma in Travel &amp; Tourism</td>
<td>Employer-led Foundation Degree (2 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BTEC level 1 &amp; 2 Introductory Certificate/ First Diploma in Hospitality Travel &amp; Tourism (2 years)</td>
<td>Higher National Diploma (2 years full-time, 3 years with work experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-19 Diploma in Travel &amp; Tourism – Higher (2 years) Advanced (2 years)</td>
<td>Degree (3 years full-time, 4 years with work experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma (1 year)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Arts/Science (12-18 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Philosophy (2 years by thesis or publications)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy (3 years by thesis or publications)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These courses might be combined with a programme of outside trips, visits and guest speakers

Typically value is added to the curriculum by combining the following professional short courses to the above programmes:

- Airline Fares & Ticketing (IATA 1 & 2)
- Introduction to Global Distribution Systems e.g. Galileo, Sabre, Fedelio
- Welcome Host/Scotland’s Best ABTAC (Certificate of Travel Agency Competence)

Sometimes combined with the following professional short courses:

- Meetings Professional International – Certificate in Meetings Management
- International Association of Professional Congress Organisers – Certified Seminar
- ABTAM (Certificate of Travel Agency Management)
- Institute for Tourist Guiding (Certificate of Professional Development in Tourist Guiding)

Occasionally combined with short courses in:

- Research Methods & Techniques
- Research Philosophy
- Data Analysis

Source: after Page et al. (2001)
Approaches to curriculum design

A number of somewhat dated studies have suggested various models for curriculum design. These include Tyler (1949), Eraut et al. (1975), Rowntree (1982), and Mainwaring and Elton (1984). Each suggests a typical sequence of design that might be summarised as:

- Establish rationale
- Conduct market research and consultation to establish demand
- Define aims and objectives
- Establish a modular structure including progression between levels and compulsory or elective merits
- Choose modules
- Establish learning outcomes for modules
- Determine assessment strategy
- Determine teaching and learning strategy
- Develop a system for validation, evaluation, review and improvement.

Such a process still largely holds good today. However tourism curriculum design has been beset with issues pertaining to the nature of tourism, its academic or vocational focus, stakeholder involvement and the need to address a national curriculum. All are issues that have informed debate about what should constitute the tourism curriculum and how that curriculum should be structured. Almost without exception, tourism courses stress the vocational nature of the subject and the extensive range of career opportunities found in this area. Here the development of management skills and the ability to apply these skills to various public and private sector operational tasks and problems are seen as central to their academic philosophy.

For the curriculum planner the choice is whether to adopt a similar strategy or seek to differentiate themselves from the competition. Given the vocational aspirations of students, experience from the University of West London would suggest the latter approach could potentially alienate as much as 80% of the student market (Fidgeon, 2008).

Course numbers

2010 figures from the Universities and Colleges Applications Service (UCAS), What Course? Hobson’s Postgraduate and the Learning Skills Agency suggest:

- A large number and diverse range of courses
- The dominance of BA and in particular combined studies awards
- A relatively small HND/HNC market
- A substantial number of foundation degrees
- Extensive postgraduate provision

The most recently available data for 2010 is outlined in Table 2.

Whether the market can sustain such a large number of courses is open to debate and clearly a matter of concern for curriculum planners. The dominance of combined studies awards perhaps reflects the popularity of tourism as a subject discipline and its ability to be taught as a multidisciplinary subject across a wide range of Faculties from the arts to the social sciences and business studies. There is no doubt that the decline in the number of HND/HNC courses (catalogued by UCAS) can be attributed, in part, to the increasing popularity of tourism degrees and the financial advantages to institutions of offering foundation degrees (Institute of Hospitality, 2008). Extensive postgraduate provision is congruent with an increase in literature in this area (Tribe, 2005a). This has made Postgraduate Diplomas and Masters Awards not only possible, but has also contributed to the range and diversity of such courses. New Masters programmes in Culinary Arts, and Airline and Airport Management at the University of West London are illustrative.
Table 2 - The provision of tourism courses in Great Britain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Course</th>
<th>Mode (FT/PT/SW/DL/A)</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NVQ (All Courses) Levels 1-3</td>
<td>FT/PT/SW/DL/A</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>1053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Degree</td>
<td>FT/PT/SW/DL</td>
<td>Travel/Tourism</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>FT/PT/SW</td>
<td>Tourism (Combined Studies)</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>PT/FT/SW</td>
<td>Tourism (Single Subject)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>FT/FT/SW</td>
<td>Travel (Combined Studies)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>FT/PT/SW</td>
<td>Travel (Single Subject)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher National Diploma/</td>
<td>FT/PT</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher National Certificate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher National Diploma/</td>
<td>FT/PT</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher National Certificate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Diploma/MA</td>
<td>FT/PT</td>
<td>Travel/Tourism</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This figure underestimates the true figure as it excludes courses in, for example, Heritage Management, Visitor Attractions, Management and Leisure Management

** These figures also include teacher training programmes in this area and make no distinction between MA and MSc programmes

FT (full-time) PT (part-time) SW (sandwich) DL (distance learning) A (apprenticeship)

Tourism as a subject of serious academic study

Within Great Britain the study of tourism has always struggled to be taken seriously as an academic discipline (Hall, 2005). Indeed, it has often been seen as a ‘candyfloss industry’ and a subject devoid of abstract theory and its own intellectual property or cognate body of knowledge (Goeldner and Ritchie 2006).

In its search for credibility, initially the subject was guilty of drawing upon other more established subjects such as Geography and Economics (Airey, 2005). Concepts such as the environmental impacts of tourism, tourism demand, tourist motivation and the processes and typologies of tourist development all became central to the tourism curriculum thanks largely to the work of Holloway (1984), Pearce (1989) and Burton (1991) who drew their theoretical frameworks from other established disciplines.

During the 1990s the subject made considerable strides in developing its own subject material and literature. Here the work of Page (1994), Swarbrooke and Horner (1995), Davidson and Maitland (1997) and Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Wanhill and Shepherd (1998) are illustrative. Such developments allowed curriculum planners greater scope in terms of developing their curricula as witnessed by new degrees in, for example, the Anthropology of Tourism (at Roehampton Institute) Public Sector Tourism (at South Glamorgan Institute), Adventure Tourism (at Birmingham College of Food Tourism & Creative Studies) and Events Management (at Leeds Metropolitan University).

In the market driven university environment of the late 1990s and early C21st some of the more traditional academic concerns were lost as tourism courses proved themselves to be highly popular with students and extremely cost effective (Airey, 2002). The latter was based on: high student to staff ratios; the ability of the subject to share resources such as key business texts; Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC) higher-band funding; limited resource constraints as the teaching of tourism often did not require extensive capital outlay (unlike for example hospitality courses) and the opportunity for staff redeployment from other under-recruiting programmes. Faced with such insurmountable evidence even some of the traditional universities were forced to bury their prejudices and welcome tourism into their institutions, albeit under the guise of Sustainable Tourism or Travel Journalism (currently offered at UCL and Kings London by the departments of Geography and English respectively).

Business studies or tourism studies

In the early 1990s combining the study of business with tourism was seen as the ideal curriculum model (CNAA, 1992). There were several reasons for this. Traditional business studies subjects such as Marketing and Corporate Strategy were thought to give tourism a degree of academic credibility and much needed theoretical underpinning.

Having the word business in the title of any tourism programme became de rigueur in the 1990s. BA Business and Tourism Management (University of Wolverhampton), BA Business Studies and Tourism (Trinity College Carmarthen), BA Tourism Business Management (Westminster College) and BA Business with Tourism (Northumbria University) all continue to testify to the extent to which tourism and business studies enjoy almost a symbiotic relationship in the minds of curriculum planners.

Tourism Programme Leaders were also quick to learn that by adding a few suffixes to the word tourism, namely the terms business or management, this could make a substantial difference to overall student numbers. At Thames Valley University the forerunner to the University of West London undergraduate applications increased by 33 percent in one year just by simply rebranding their travel and tourism programme to BA Tourism Management (TVU Recruitment Statistics, 1992-2001).

The message for curriculum planners is clear. The title of the programme and the nature of the curriculum model can have a fundamental impact on the way in which any student perceives a programme (Moorhouse, 2006). Traditionally universities and colleges have drawn upon a formula that has served them well i.e. business and management. This has been consolidated by government guidelines and strategic subject reviews (Airey, 2002).
Towards the end of the decade came the first evidence that employers were starting to trade up, that is, to choose students with a degree in tourism as opposed to those with an HND. The aforementioned discussion raises interesting questions for curriculum planners. Serious questions can be raised as to the future of HNDs. Indeed Touzin (2009) speaking at the West London Lifelong Learning Network questioned the longevity of such qualifications and their associated awarding body BTEC, given the move towards vocationally relevant qualifications and the dominance of People 1st, the Skills Council given responsibility to oversee the development of technical qualifications in travel and tourism. However the ethics of developing unrealistic programme aims and objectives is also debatable. With large numbers of graduates entering what is at present a depressed labour market in search of that illusive management position and the jet-set lifestyle, perhaps the time is long overdue for a review of learning outcomes and curriculum content?

Educational philosophy
For the curriculum planner the nature of tourism as a subject discipline is such that it allows the subject to be studied from a variety of different perspectives. Hall (2005) notes no fewer than sixteen different disciplinary approaches to tourism.

Lawton (1983, 1996) in writing about curriculum design has stressed the importance of reflecting on educational philosophy. His injunction maintains that fundamental questions about the aims and meaning of (tourism) education must be addressed at the outset. This is because it determines the whole educational experience.

Given the importance of educational philosophy in determining curriculum design, it is surprising that little tourism literature discusses the aims and values that frame the curriculum. Worthy of study is the work of Apple (1990) and Barnett (1990). While neither specifically approaches tourism as a subject discipline they raise a series of interesting questions about the purposes of any curriculum and the implications for programme structure.

Balancing academic and work-related skills
Tribe (2002) argues the merits and highlights the pitfalls of adopting various philosophic approaches to curriculum design. While he argues in favour of balancing both vocational and academic aims, he is forced to conclude that there neither is, nor should there be, any overriding principles for ordering the tourism curriculum. As such, curriculum planners find themselves in the difficult position of having to assess the relative balance of academic and work-related skills.

Exponents of a more vocational approach to curriculum design stress the acquisition of skills, qualities, attitudes and knowledge that are judged to be important for the world of work (Pring, 1993). Both Haywood and Maki (1992) and Koh (1995) have found that the tourism industry has valued practical and general transferable skills including computer literacy, human resource management, managerial accounting and managing service quality – see Table 3. All elements in Table 3 are skills and actions practised by those employed in various sectors of the tourism industry. The aim of any programme adopting such an approach to curriculum design is, according to Birch (1988), to enable students to become operational and make a smooth transition into the world of work. Technical skills and knowledge underpin the curriculum with students earmarked for the role of the potential manager.

Table 3: Key elements of the tourism curriculum

- Theories of human resource management
- Written communication skills
- Marketing theory
- Hotel & restaurant operations
- Managerial accounting
- Introduction to the travel & tourism industry
- Microcomputer literacy
- Ethics and social responsibility
- Entrepreneurship & innovation
- Managing service quality
- Interpersonal relation skills
- Principles of tourism development
- Practicum

Source: (after Koh, 1995)
More liberal or academic approaches to the tourism curriculum stress the open acquisition of knowledge and the understanding of all aspects of the discipline. Typically curriculum planning is characterised by adopting a multidisciplinary approach drawing upon subjects as diverse as geography, sociology and politics. Students are encouraged to see the bigger picture, find their own voices and develop critical agendas (Goodlad, 1995).

However, just as vocationalism can imply closure of the curriculum to certain concepts, skills and ideas deemed not to be of utility or relevance, a tourism curriculum framed solely for liberal ends may be criticized as one which has turned its back to the world of work (Goodlad, 1995). As Goodlad notes, programmes with little emphasis on knowledge or skills and limited practical application or preparation for course related employment can risk a ‘detachment of the individual from any realistic perception of what is either socially desirable or practically meaningful’ (1995, p. 28). Birch’s reference to academic enclaves and ivory towers is pertinent here since more liberal approaches to the tourism curriculum are always at risk of being criticized as being divorced from, and unconnected to, the world of business (Birch, 1988).

The principles underpinning the development of a curriculum for philosophic practitioners are firmly rooted in the world of day to day vocational actions, aiming to be competent and efficient. Such programmes aim to deliver better services, but also contribute to the construction of a better tourism world (Tribe, 2002, p. 351). Business ends implicit in vocationalism and free ends contemplated in liberalism are given equal weight. Elsewhere the epistemological key to the curriculum for philosophic practitioners is that knowledge is used from the whole field of tourism studies and not just business studies, albeit that it might be the dominant contributor. The important issue is to avoid domination by any particular interest. While principles such as efficiency, profit and effectiveness might be valued, they are set alongside and are given equal standing to social equality, justice, ethics and environmentalism, for example.

In search of a national curriculum
The multiplication of new courses in tourism, especially since the early 1990s and greater diversity of approach to curriculum design has caused uncertainty among curriculum planners about what to include and exclude in a tourism curriculum (Holloway, 1995). The expansion of the tourism literature base and efforts to internationalise the curriculum has only served to intensify these pressures. At the same time there has been an understandable reluctance to jettison material which has stood the test of time (Busby, 2003).

Debate contributed to the establishment of a national conference bringing together academics and members of the tourism industry in December 1994. At this conference seven areas of knowledge were advanced by a National Liaison Group (NLG) for Higher Education in Tourism, an academic body established one year earlier.

The areas of knowledge identified included:
• Understanding the meaning and nature of tourism: this was taken to include definitions, social and other conditions and determinants of tourism and tourism motivations.
• The structure of the industry: this was to encompass a description and interrelationship of the main component sectors of the tourism industry and their operating characteristics.
• Dimensions of tourism and issues of measurement: here the scope of the tourism industry, its spatial dimension, patterns and determinants of demand, the resource base of tourism and sources of tourism data and management information would all be broached.
• The significance and impact of tourism: this was to consider the costs and benefits of tourism from a social economic and environmental perspective.
• The Marketing of tourism: this included general marketing theory and an analysis of consumer behaviour as it applies to tourism.
• Tourism Planning and Development: destination and site planning, the financial implications of planning, partnership issues and sustainable tourism were all considered appropriate areas for study.
• Policy and Management in tourism: this was to address issues pertaining to public sector policy and corporate strategy; organisations in tourism and visitor management issues were thought to compliment this study.
The extent to which institutions took on board these recommendations reflected their philosophical perspective and the significance of tourism within their programme areas (Airey, 2002). The case for and against a core curriculum has been extensively argued (e.g. Cooper, 1994; Middleton, 1998; Tribe, 2006). In essence debate has centred on how a core curriculum would guarantee a reliable supply of educated professionals to a developing and expanding worldwide industry.

Perhaps the major contribution of a debate on a core curriculum has been its ability to determine and make clear the basic philosophy and aims of vocational tourism programmes. In this sense it has proved invaluable to curriculum planners. Emphasis on marketing and financial management issues in tourism have been questioned by those who believe a place should be found for information technology and human resource management. To this debate can be added: what role for languages? A testament to the confidence placed in the idea of a national curriculum in tourism was the issuing of a series of subject benchmarks by the government’s regulatory body, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in 2000.

Building flexibility into programme design

In a continually changing student market, no curriculum planner can fail to ignore the importance of building flexibility into course design. Flexibility begins with adopting a liberal philosophy and accepting that aims and objectives cannot be written in stone (Tribe, 2002). It is taken further by providing for a variety of different modes of study namely full-time, part-time, sandwich (thick or thin) and credit accumulation (Brunt, 2006).

It has been the introduction of modular courses that have given curriculum planners artistic licence to develop some really unusual and interesting tourism programmes. The need for flexibility in curriculum design has also caused planners to consider their entry requirements and progression onto, for example, final year honours degree programmes. Experience at the University of West London has shown the need to introduce a suitable support structure for these students in the form of an Adapting to Advanced Study module. This has placed emphasis on developing skills such as research academic writing and critical thinking.

Flexibility in programme design can be interpreted in terms of preparing students for an ever-changing employment market (People 1st, 2010). The challenge to curriculum planners is therefore how to build the development of transferable skills into the curriculum. The answer lies in the establishment of innovative teaching learning and assessment strategies (Stergiou, 2005; Wheeller, 2005; Becket, 2005).

The range and diversity of tourism programmes in terms of subject content and level testify to the diversity in student demand. In meeting this demand (both actual and perceived) new programmes are conceived and new methods for delivering the curriculum are implemented. Over the past four decades curriculum planners have learnt that being flexible and innovative in their approach to curriculum design, taking on board examples of good practice and listening to student desires and aspirations (essentially their market) has ensured the longevity of their programmes.
Learning through work experience

It has become common practice to incorporate an element of learning through work experience on many tourism programmes (Busby et al., 1997; Busby, 2005; Cave, 1997; Cave, 1999; Walmsley et al., 2006). This is primarily achieved by supporting and accrediting a compulsory element of work experience attached to a relevant company or organisation. The main methods of achieving work-based learning include incorporating a supervised industrial placement, accreditation of part-time or voluntary work and prior experience and learning (APEL). All have been successfully developed across the full range of tourism programmes from NVQ Travel and Tourism at Brooklands College Surrey (where a placement system has been adopted) to BA Business Studies with Tourism at the University of the West of England (that accredits part-time and voluntary work).

Traditionally the incorporation of learning through work experience has not been included in postgraduate programmes (Witney, 2005). The incorporation of learning through work experience raises some interesting issues for curriculum planners. The case for vocational reflection and action has been extensively debated (Moscardo et al., 1997). Work placements in particular can contribute to vocational reflection especially where there is an opportunity to debrief students on their experiences (Busby, Brunt and Baber, 1997). A key argument in favour of work placements continues to be their ability to enhance the student’s awareness of his/her preferences, strengths and weaknesses in relation to a range of job opportunities (Callan, 1997; Kusluvan, 2003).

The incorporation of work experience into any curriculum requires students to receive learning support throughout their programme of study in order that they might engage in the process of reflective learning. It is, however, by attaching a period of supervised work experience to an individual module that many tourism programmes have developed the principal medium for the delivery and assessment of learning through work (as at the University of West London, University of Plymouth and Bournemouth University). Such modules appear under a variety of different names from to Managing People in Practice (at the University of West London), Off-Campus Study Period (at Sheffield Hallam University) to Sandwich Placement (at the University of Hertfordshire).

The rationale behind the positioning of a period of supervised work experience on undergraduate programmes can be explained simply. As noted, common practice is to include such a period mid-way through the programme. Curriculum planners consistently argue that students need a breadth of knowledge and a range of skills to enable them to perform successfully whilst on placement. It is also felt that the industrial experience gained as part of any placement can form an essential and integral part of further study.

The extent to which placements will be easy to find during the current period of economic uncertainty is difficult to determine. Experience from the University of West London and their Airline and Airport Management programme (where students have traditionally spent forty weeks working in airline or airport operations) suggests this has become increasingly problematic. Such a change has prompted some universities to question the wisdom of including a placement or moving to a system of accrediting part-time or seasonal work (as at Buckinghamshire New University).

The teaching of tourism at University of West London (UWL)

Given the number and sheer diversity of tourism programmes within Great Britain it is difficult to come up with any definitive programme structure. Much depends on the level of study, the academic philosophy and commitment to structural principles such as modularisation and inter-institutional credit accumulation (Tribe, 2005a).

The University of West London has one of the biggest tourism schools in Great Britain (with over three thousand students enrolled on various dedicated programmes). The institution offers a variety of courses from Foundation Degrees in Travel and Tourism (formerly its Higher National Diplomas) through to undergraduate honours degrees, a Postgraduate Certificate and a Masters in Tourism Management. Its programme structures reflect the vast majority of other tourism programmes in Great Britain being overtly vocational (Busby 2001, 2003).
All the programmes enjoy a close working relationship with the tourism industry with each academic level on each programme being sponsored by an industrial partner. Specialist options in tourism also appear throughout the university. They are included on programmes as diverse as BA Media Studies and MBA.

The University of West London and its former institutions, namely Ealing College of Higher Education, the Polytechnic of West London and Thames Valley University have been teaching the subject for over forty years. During that time it has built considerable pedagogic and subject expertise. Alumni statistics reveal that 87 percent of its students find employment within three months of completing their course - a feature also reflected in a recent Guardian Poll that placed the university number one in the graduate employment market (Guardian, 2009).

In 2002 the University was designated as a National Centre of Excellence in the QAA Subject Review. It has since pioneered the development of the first degrees in Airline and Airport Management (2002) and Business Tourism (2003) and co-ordinates the West London Life-Long Learning Network. In 2009 it was awarded the unique honour of the Queen’s Award for Industry for its services to vocational education. The university has long since established a number of formal links with international institutions in this area. Indeed, it co-ordinated the first EU Erasmus network in Tourism in 1990 in conjunction with partners in the UK (Christ Church and Hereford Colleges) and the universities of Lille (France), Faro (Portugal), Hojeschool Amsterdam (Holland) and University College Cork (Ireland).

It is this experience that is brought to bear on the ensuing discussion. Here curriculum planners are offered an insight into the philosophy, structure and content of The University of West London’s undergraduate and postgraduate tourism programmes. Issues arising from the operation of these programmes are discussed including that of academic progression and market maturity. As a point of comparison the reader’s attention is also drawn to Busby’s paper that considers the modular content of BSc (Honours) Tourism Management at the University of Plymouth (Busby, 2001).

An issue of progression
Implicit in the structure of tourism programmes within Great Britain is the concept of progression. The staircase of tourism qualifications conceived by Page et al., (2001) and formalised by government educational policy effectively allows for student progression from NVQ to PhD.

For curriculum planners talk of academic progression is linked to developing a curriculum structure where modules have been designed that arise from, and have grown out of, other underpinning modules thereby increasing intellectual breadth and depth. In this way a module on the impact of tourism taught on the foundation year of a degree programme might be seen as providing the underpinning for developing a final year module that advocates the need for tourism planning. A similar argument might be put forward as to how the technical skills acquired on a NVQ level 3 programme could provide the operational understanding to develop a critical evaluation of operational procedures and practices traditionally discussed on undergraduate degrees.

The study of tourism in a maturing market
Figures from UCAS (2010) suggest that the demand for undergraduate courses in tourism is starting to decline. At the postgraduate level, the sheer number and diversity of courses must bring into question how many students are applying and subsequently being enrolled on these programmes. In the case of the latter, market research linked to the revalidation of the MA in Tourism Management at the University of West London in February 2010 revealed no fewer than forty-seven such courses located in London and the South East.

For curriculum planners these market trends raise some interesting dilemmas. For example, should planners close programmes that fail to recruit and redirect resources elsewhere? British universities have not been afraid to adopt such a strategy as witnessed by the closure of a number of high profile chemistry and physics departments in recent years.

An alternative approach has been market consolidation with programmes seeking to maintain student numbers by doing what they already do but doing it better. Such a strategy has resulted in programmes evaluating their
teaching learning and assessment strategies with the aims of making their programmes more student-centred, simplifying the structure of the curriculum, extending the range of options and increasing the diversity of work placement opportunities. The adding of value to the curriculum through a formal programme of trips and workplace visits, guest speakers and additional short courses has also been shown to pay dividends here.

In an effort to maintain their position in a competitive market, Foundation degree (FdA) and BA Programme Leaders at the University have sought to provide a varied diet of learning and teaching materials. Module evaluation had previously indicated to staff the popularity of role play and gaming techniques in the delivery of the curriculum. Workshops had also been shown to build confidence in the use of handling data, particularly when applied to real-world situations. For these reasons, computer modelling and additional case study analysis was built into the curriculum.

The future of tourism education in Great Britain

The future points towards retraction and consolidation in the undergraduate and postgraduate markets (UCAS, 2010, Hobson’s Educational Directory, 2010). This will be offset by an expansion of the teaching of tourism at the FE level (Travel & Tourism Diploma Development Partnership, 2007). The latter see this as a product of new course provision and the attempts by government to expand the FE sector.

Current discussion in tourism education has centred on the development of 14-19 Diplomas due to be launched in 2010 and Industry-led Foundation degrees. Since 2007 tourism academics and representative from industry under the auspices of Go Skills and People 1st (the Sector Skills Councils for passenger transportation) have debated the development of a new Sector Qualification Strategy. They reported their findings to the Sector Skills Development Agency in March 2008 (People 1st, 2008). The latter supported the development of a new qualification – the 14-19 Diploma in Travel and Tourism, designed to match employer needs. This will be linked to existing awarding bodies including Edexcel and Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR).

The focus for learning providers in the consultation and subsequent process of delivery will be how to address the challenges presented by the Sector Qualification Strategy. Questions have already been raised. What units should be developed in any such diploma? How might they be delivered? How could teaching learning and assessment strategies be linked to the demands of the workplace? What new technologies should be utilised in the delivery of the curriculum and the execution of assessment? How might any diploma build on current examples of good practice?

It remains too early to report on the answers to many of the aforementioned questions. However, People 1st and the West London Lifelong Learning Network have had curriculum structures in place since 2009 (WLLLN, 2009). Indeed, Table 4 illustrates the structure of a typical 14-19 Diploma. What is clear is that such qualifications will not only become increasingly common, but that they will also receive the support of a number of professional organisations working within the travel and tourism industry. These include bodies such as the Institute of Travel and Tourism who have been active in encouraging its members to engage with such programmes and People 1st.
The OCR website (OCR 2011) contains detailed module specifications and learning outcomes for each of the aforementioned modules. It also contains guidelines pertaining to teaching learning and assessment.

It is tempting to believe that such an initiative is irrelevant to the teaching of tourism in HE. However, a number of Tourism Programme Leaders working in this sector have been shocked to learn the extent to which ideas for the 14-19 Diploma approach what might be termed the traditional undergraduate curriculum. While it is inevitable that 14-19 Diplomas will lack the intellectual breadth and depth of awards in HE, the challenge for HE programmes will nevertheless remain how to position their programmes as conceptually different from their FE counterparts and add value. Failure to convince potential students of the merits of additional study might only serve to intensify the problem of market consolidation and falling applications for degree programmes.

Foundation Degrees were introduced by the UK government in 2001 as a new vocational qualification. They were specifically designed to be employer demand-led. This meant that employers were required to lead the design and development of the curriculum thereby ensuing that any skills and knowledge developed were in keeping with current employment needs. As a result any organisation could potentially custom build their own foundation degree to meet their specific business needs.

The development of Foundation Degrees in travel and tourism also warrant mention as an emerging educational initiative. Foundation Degrees in Travel and Tourism (of which there are currently eighty-seven in Great Britain) are validated by universities and are deemed to be an equivalent qualification to the first two years of an honours degree. They are, however, distinctive from most honours degree qualifications in that they require students to demonstrate a much higher level of workplace competence. Unlike other qualifications where learning through work can be somewhat peripheral to the academic aims of the programme, in foundation degrees the workplace is considered to be central to the educational experience and a learning environment just as important as a lecture theatre (Dewhurst, 2006).

Table 4 - The structure of the 14-19 Diploma in Travel & Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 (Foundation Level)</th>
<th>Level 2 (Higher) Equivalent to 5 A*-C grades at GCSE</th>
<th>Level 3 (Advanced) Equivalent to 3 A-levels given access to further/higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units – (hours of learning equivalents in brackets)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Planning journeys (30)</td>
<td>• Exploring travel and tourism destinations (60)</td>
<td>• Opportunities in travel and tourism (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introducing travel &amp; tourism destinations (30)</td>
<td>• Scope and scale of the UK travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
<td>• Enhancing the customer’s experience in the travel and tourism sector (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tourism and its impacts (30)</td>
<td>• Delivering customer experiences in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
<td>• Destinations and cultures in travel and tourism (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Looking after customers in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
<td>• Working in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
<td>• Environmental impacts and pressures on the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introducing the world of work (30)</td>
<td>• The travel and tourism business environment (60)</td>
<td>• Image and perception in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Team working in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
<td>• Promotion and sales in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
<td>• Political and economic influences on the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Team working in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
<td>• Technological developments in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Changes and trends in the travel and tourism sector (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Project management in the travel and tourism sector (90)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Oxford, Cambridge & RSA Examinations (2009) Level 1 H848 Principal Learning in Travel and Tourism; Level 2 H849; Level 3 H850
Foundation Degrees offer students a tailored progression route initially from apprenticeships (NVQ) and Vocationally Relevant Qualifications (VRQ) through to the final year of an honours degree and beyond. Critical to the concept of academic progression is that on completion of a Foundation Degree students are awarded a minimum of 240 credits at Level 5.

Flexibility of delivery and innovative teaching learning and assessment strategies are considered to be the hallmarks of Foundation Degrees (Dewhurst, 2006). This is because they are often designed around the requirements of the workplace and the commitments of the employee. They can be studied full-time or part-time. They can also involve day release, block release at agreed points or they can be delivered entirely by distance learning with support from tutors and workplace mentors – the latter being agreed between employers and educational intuitions.

While nothing is especially new about Foundation Degrees, what is new are proposals to extend the number and range of such programmes. These include two new foundation degrees in Travel Operations Management and Airport Management. These initiatives are a joint collaboration between the universities of Coventry and Wolverhampton and University College Birmingham (UCB). They have been led by two employers TUI UK Ltd and Birmingham International Airport (BIA) working in association with the Sector Skills Council People 1st.

While not without problems, both proposals fully embrace the philosophy of a foundation degree and seek to develop a qualification that is employer-driven and specifically designed to suit the needs of students who wish to engage in a higher educational qualification in the workplace. Discussion is well advanced, particularly with respect to a foundation degree in Travel Operations Management, where UCB has already started recruiting students onto its programme. At Coventry and Wolverhampton graduate profiles, programme structure, content, credit ratings, modes of delivery and procedures for the accreditation of prior experiential learning onto the Foundation Degree in Airport Management have all been formalised, albeit that at Coventry subsequent problems with BIA has seen their degree being temporarily placed on hold.

The strengths of the two programmes undoubtedly relate to the two employers behind the initiatives. Both enjoy a high profile and are synonymous with market innovation. In addition, the three co-ordinating institutions have an established track record in the teaching of tourism and the delivery of Foundation Degrees (People 1st, 2008). TUI and Birmingham International Airport have proved themselves to be willing partners and have been actively involved in the development of the curriculum since November 2005. The implications of such a development is that universities that already specialise in the teaching of aviation management or inclusive tour operations (such as Buckinghamshire New University, University of West London and Newcastle College) can expect to experience formidable competition from these programmes in subsequent years.

Critics of Foundation Degrees (Street, 2006) point to the limited impact these degrees have had on the [tourism] market. Street notes, in many instances, an inability to attract and retain students together with many universities and colleges finding it difficult to recruit suitable industrial partners. Academic purists argue that foundation degrees are little more than training exercises and lack the criticality and reflection of a liberal education (Birch, 2007). The narrow focus of foundation degrees might conceivably limit the development of a wide range of transferable skills thereby restricting career development (Fidgeon, 2007). Whether some of the older and more established traditional universities would want to be associated with such initiatives is also debatable. For many Russell Group universities their status and prestige almost guarantees buoyant recruitment irrespective of the merits of their programmes.

Many educational planners have questioned the extent to which Foundation Degrees are fundamentally different from established vocationally-orientated degree programmes (Sheenan and Monk, 2007). All, for example, address issues pertaining to recruitment, selection, training, team building, quality, sales and customer care. Whether these can more effectively be taught in the marketplace is questionable (Dowling, 2007). In addition, experience from UWL suggests that finding placements in the tourism industry has not been a problem; employers have been more than willing to contribute to curriculum development, release guest speakers, teach
the more technical elements of modules and become involved in setting live client briefs. The extent to which a dedicated foundation degree might allow for additional industrial involvement in the curriculum is consequently somewhat marginal.

Conclusion
This paper has shown how tourism education has come of age (Airey, 2005). Analysis of course structures reveal a wide variety of programmes taught at different academic levels combining both a generic and sector-specific focus.

Increasingly the subject has been recognised as a credible academic discipline having developed its own theoretical framework. This has given curriculum planners the confidence to develop new programmes drawing on ideas, concepts and methodologies beyond that of business management and the social sciences. The influence of the latter on the tourism curriculum nevertheless remains all-pervasive as witnessed by the content of many tourism programmes.

It has been shown that tourism courses have proved popular with students (Airey, 2002; UCAS, 2008). This can be explained by growth in the tourism industry, student perception of significant employment opportunities and general developments in vocational education. This expansion has also generated considerable income for universities and colleges prompting new entrants into the market – including the traditional universities in the UK.

For curriculum planners discussion has centred on what academic level to pitch the curriculum (FE or HE; undergraduate or postgraduate) and what should be the academic philosophy of any such programme? Issues such as how to balance work-related and academic skills, the wisdom of including work experience and the need to take on board subject benchmarks have proved similarly vexing (Tribe, 2002, 2005). The incorporation of flexibility into curriculum design has been matched by the development of a staircase of tourism qualifications and efforts to facilitate the seamless transfer of students between academic levels.

This, in turn, has only served to raise questions as to how to differentiate programmes in the educational hierarchy, add value and establish a unique selling point.

In a highly competitive market with an increasingly aware student population differentiation will be critical. The development of new industry-led Foundation Degrees and 14-19 Diplomas pose particular challenges to existing educational providers both in further and higher education. They will require curriculum planners to review their offer taking on-board sector skill requirements while refining and redefining the structure and content of their programmes.

In terms of structuring the HE curriculum it is interesting to reflect on whether tourism programmes will return to their generic business studies roots with tourism essentially flavouring a business-based curriculum. Page and Connell (2006) and Hall (2008) have provided evidence to suggest that has already happened in countries such as New Zealand and Australia. UK evidence suggests that a too specialised and liberal curriculum runs the risk of alienating both industry and the majority of the student market (Cooper and Shepherd, 1997; Leslie and Richardson, 2000).

Recognising how the curriculum will change and the need for consolidation and review poses interesting challenges for the future. Tribe’s (2003) study of lecturer perceptions of quality in tourism higher education however illustrates a confidence in the future and an ability to develop innovative and coherent programmes of study. Meeting such challenges will depend on the quality and development of academic staff both as researchers and teachers together with the effective dissemination of knowledge (Tribe, 2005b). Tourism education has certainly been effective in attracting some very talented scholars in recent years. Ensuring that they have opportunities for development perhaps remains the key in curriculum innovation and development.
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The brand image of Malta as a tourism destination: a case study in public relations and corporate communication practice

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Place branding and country branding are evolving concepts, which continue to engage attention. This paper reviews the conceptual foundation of place branding and its application to public relations and corporate communication practices in the island state of Malta, a popular tourist destination in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea. The Maltese authorities use communication practices to develop Brand Malta and the study shows how the image of Malta is used to position its offer in the valuable UK market. Tourism is vital to the Maltese economy and the authorities need to create a favourable image and a strong brand.

A number of interviews were carried out with representatives from the Malta brand promoter, Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) to establish the brand strategies and communications approaches adopted for rebranding and repositioning in the market. In addition two tour operators were contacted, who specialize in promoting Malta, to illustrate the practices of the private sector and their coordination with the Maltese authorities.

The findings are analysed in accordance with the theoretical frameworks featured in the literature. The studies show that Malta has achieved some success in developing and sustaining the brand in a competitive tourism market. Niche propositions and added value have been important. A coherent approach to public relations and a corporate communication rationale do provide a strategic framework which helps competitiveness and sustains overall value.

Keywords | place branding; country branding; Mediterranean sea; tourism; niche marketing; public relations; corporate communication; Malta.
Introduction

Geography and history: The Republic of Malta is located in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea in close proximity to Italy, Tunisia and Libya. It consists of three main islands: Malta, Gozo and Comino, and two uninhabited islands, Fifla and Comminoto, all together referred as the Maltese archipelago. The total area of the country is 316km² with a population of 0.4 million, which makes Malta one of the countries with the highest population density in the European Union (National Statistics Office, Malta (NSO), 2004, p. 3). The national language is Maltese, although English is recognized as the second official language.

Its strategic geographical position meant Malta became a base for many of the powers who strived to control resources, trade and communications in the region between the two continents. Colonial occupiers have included Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, French and the British. Since the late middle ages Malta has been the seat of the Order of Knights of St John.

In the early 19th century the British Empire formally acquired Malta and developed it as a major naval base. The country played an essential role in supporting the Empire during the two World Wars. In 1964, Malta gained its independence from Britain but has remained part of the Commonwealth. In 1974 Malta became a Republic (Department of Information (DoI), 2001a). Malta become a full member state of the European Union in the enlargement on 1 May 2004 and on the 1 January 2008 adopted the official currency of the Union, the Euro. Malta actively participates in a number of international and regional organizations, among which are the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth and EuroMed (DoI, 2001b).

Tourism development: Malta’s natural resources of its mild climate, sea and sunshine make it a major tourism destination in the Mediterranean alongside islands like Cyprus, Crete, Sardinia and Corsica. The history of Malta has given it a rich heritage and culture and strengthens its potential for cultural tourism. English is a second official language -an advantage in tourism. In 1958 the Maltese Tourist Board was set up to promote the Islands as a tourist destination resulting in over 12,000 visitors in 1959, mainly Britons (Mitchell, 1996; Markwick, 1999). Since independence in 1964, tourism has enjoyed a positive annual growth but was not initially perceived as major economic activity. However, when the Maltese Government under Dom Mintoff negotiated the departure of the British naval base from the islands, tourism became the major force for expansion and strengthening of the national economy (Foxell and Trafford, 2010; Theuma 2006). Tourism then enjoyed a rapid growth in the mid-1960s and 1970s, with government support for building a new tourism infrastructure associated with developing of the coastal areas in Sliema and St. Julian’s, St. Paul’s Bay, Bugibba and Qawra (Theuma, 2006; Markwick, 1999). Malta received 728,700 international visitors in 1980, but economic recession in the early 1980s led to a decline (Theuma, 2006). In addition, the tourism sector was still dominated mainly by the British visitors, accounting for nearly 77 percent of the total arrivals in 1980 (Lockhart, 1997 in Theuma, 2006; Marwick, 1999).

The rapid downturn continued through the 1980s and highlighted the importance of market diversification along with promotion of different kinds of special interest tourism. As a response to that recession, the Maltese government adopted a Malta Tourism Development Plan with the aim to achieve market diversification, an upgrade of the product and tourist market and lengthening of tourist season (Foxell and Trafford, 2010; Theuma, 2004). Seven marketing actions were outlined, including marketing communications and development of cultural tourism as part of the strategy (Theuma, 2004; Theuma, 2006). The National Tourism Organization of Malta (NTOM) was set up after 1990 to implement the plan and this led to a minor upturn. The plan was to upgrade and reposition Malta as a cultural heritage destination which necessitated upgrading of historical assets and the creation of cultural events such as festivals and concerts. Even though the Maltese authorities established partnership relations with UK tour operators to assist in advertising, the country was still perceived as a sun-and-sea destination (Theuma, 2006). Theuma (2006, p.215) describes the tourism development in the period of the 1990s as ‘characterized by an over-reliance on price factors, large hotel development and a tourism service that lacked quality’.
The impact of tourism on the Maltese economy: Many small island states tend to depend on tourism more than larger states especially if they can gain comparative advantage from natural attractions and a mild climate (Briguglio & Briguglio, 1996). This dependence means that a large proportion of employment occurs in tourism-related activities which contribute significantly to national income. These factors have positive impact not only in economic terms, but also for the well-being of the population, including improvement in education, infrastructure, communication, medical and other facilities (Briguglio & Briguglio, 1996). Tourism in the Maltese islands is now considered as the backbone of the economy of the country, accounting for nearly 25 percent of the GDP (MTA Annual report 2001 in Theuma, 2004, p293; NSO, 2009).

In 2010 the number of visitors to Malta amounted to 1,332,086 which is a 12 percent increase on the previous year (MTA, 2011). This result shows that the Maltese economy is recovering after the recession at the end of 2008. The main purpose of visiting is for holidays, accounting for 76 percent of total inbound visits. A further 8.8 percent of visitors are business travellers and about 7.6 percent come to visit friends and family on the islands (MTA, 2011). Total visitor expenditures for 2010 amount to over one billion Euros (€1,128,176,842) or € 847 per capita (MTA, 2011).

Resources and assets: images of Malta “Although Malta is an internationally recognized tourist destination, the reconstruction and promotion of its image policy was deemed necessary in order to face the new tendencies and challenges in the global tourist market and retain a competitive profile towards its rivals, especially in the Mediterranean basin” (Metaxas, 2009, p. 1361).

Economic dependence on tourism stresses the need for Malta to develop a strong country brand on the global level based on awareness, familiarity and national values. Malta needs to compete with other tourist destinations in the Mediterranean region and elsewhere. The main competitors are large countries like Spain, Greece and Italy and long-haul destinations. Malta as a small state does not have the resources to spend in advertising and promoting like the larger states. The national tourism administration budgets of the competitors exceed that of Malta many times. In 2005 Malta spent 22.7 million euro whilst Greece spent 121.7 million euro; Spain 96.2 million euro and Italy 49.8 million euro; even Cyprus, another small island state spends 51.9 million (Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MTAC), 2006, p.26).

From the early 1990s the main body responsible for the marketing of Malta overseas was the National Tourism Organization of Malta (NTOM). Over the last decade, it was clear that Malta could no longer sustain the growth and development in the sector based in the image of a sun-and-sea destination (Theuma, 2006; Foxell and Trafford, 2010). The rich cultural heritage the country inherited from its colonial past provided a different image of the country with potential. Malta’s unique history and culture with various prehistoric temples, architecture and ancient buildings, crafts, archeological sites and museums, set up the routes for repositioning and rebranding of the country.

Although close to Italy, Malta’s statistical data over the years shows the high dependence of Malta’s tourism on the British market. Following independence in 1964, Malta’s economic activities were still strongly related to Britain (Foxell and Trafford, 2010). According to the latest statistics the major market for tourism exports is the UK, accounting to approximately one-third of the total visitors to Malta (NSO, 2010). The second largest market is Germany, followed by Italy and France. Statistical data shows that the British visitor component has declined since the 1980s, but Malta is still highly dependent on the UK market.

According to a recent survey by MTA, people associate Malta with three things: friendly and hospitable people; history and culture, and sun and blue sky (MTA, 2011). According to the study, people mainly choose Malta for their holiday destination because of the agreeable climate, it is a new place to go and because of its history and culture (MTA, 2011). The most frequent visitors were between 40 and 58 years old and typically office or retail workers and professionals. Before 2000 Malta had attracted around a million tourists equivalent to twice the island population (Foxell and Trafford, 2010). First Markwick (1999) and later Foxell and Trafford (2010) have both argued that mass tourism growth was no longer sustainable. High-density tourism, road congestion, overcrowded beaches and shortages of water
during peak season were negative factors.

Facing competition from other Mediterranean destinations offering sun-and-sea holidays, in Malta the prices of package holidays were increasing and the quality of the product was declining. Malta was no longer competitive destination in term of a mass sun-and-sea holiday destination.

Markwick (1999) claims that it is been inevitable for Malta to shift towards special-interest tourism, more specifically towards the growth of cultural tourism. Malta was facing the need to redefine its product, since mild climate, sea and sun no longer gave a strong competitive advantage. However, the diverse and rich cultural heritage suggested a strategy for attracting visitors (Metaxas, 2009; Marwick, 1999).

Theuma carried out surveys in 2002 with informants from both public and private tourism sectors which supported the view that the ‘Malta product was “very fragmented”, since the Maltese authorities sell Malta as a sun-and-sea destination, a cultural destination as well as an activity destination’ (quoted in Theuma, 2006, p. 215-216). Theuma goes on to point out the lack of a clearly defined image was leading to confusion as to what the Maltese Islands stand for. According to her research, the overseas representatives from the MTA undertook separate approaches to address the public with fragmented marketing and advertising campaigns, sending mixed images and conflicting signals. So Malta stood for beach tourism in UK, culture in France and Italy, an English language destination in continental Europe, and an attraction for elderly visitors in UK. Theuma’s research identifies the need to develop a coherent image of the Maltese islands.

The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) had been set up in 1999 as a more strategic approach to development. The MTA took over the responsibility of NTOM as the country brand promoter and its responsibilities are in three main areas: product development, re-imaging of Maltese Islands, and redefining marketing campaigns. MTA took action by creating of a logo, defining specific segments of the public, and developing a brand image (Theuma, 2006; Metaxas, 2009).

**Country branding: the importance of the branding of countries and destinations**

The American Marketing Association defines brand as a ‘name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the good and services of the one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition’ (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). There are numerous studies developing the notion of branding in corporate terms. The concept of corporate branding and brand management has followed the development of traditional product branding and shares the same objectives to differentiate and create preference (Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009). The brands are considered a valuable asset to the company as they develop personality and create social and emotional value for the user, which can be transformed into customer loyalty (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). The brand personality played an essential role in creating a differentiation, awareness and reputation of the product in the marketplace. Knox and Bickerton (2003, p. 998) define corporate brand as ‘the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of an organisation’s unique business model’. Balmer (2001) states that there are three main virtues of the corporate brand: 1) Communicate; 2) Differentiate; and 3) Enhance.

However, Kotler and Gertner (2002) put the question: can a country be a brand? FutureBrand (2010) in association with BBC World News, developed an annual executive study on Country Brands and claims that country brand is ‘[t]he nation’s ultimate intangible asset and goes beyond its geographic size, financial performance or levels of awareness’. Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009, p. 521) argue that place branding can be defined as ‘the practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to the economic, political and cultural development of cities, regions and countries’.

In reference to this, Ollins (2002) in one of his works follows the development of the nation branding through history. According to the author the concept of nation branding is not well accepted in the public’s eye and provokes negative reactions based on the idea that corporations or products can be branded, but not nations. His work refers to the development of certain nations that have experienced several rebrandings over the years. Ollins (2002) follows closely the history of France that has had five republics, two empires and four kingdoms, as an example of the development of the concept of branding and rebranding nations. Ollins (2002) also points out the...
transformations Germany made through the years and the changes since Bismarck, from Kaiser to Reich to becoming an emerging industrial, economic and military power, ‘the most admired and by some the most feared new brand of the 19th century’. Branding transformation also occurred in the Ottoman Empire after World War One and after the collapse of the European colonial empires when new nations emerged. The point Ollins (2002, p. 245-246) makes is that ‘nationalism and national identity have been the fundamental ideas which fuelled the creation of nation-states over the past two centuries … some nations like Spain and Australia whose realities have changed have very carefully and deliberately adapted the techniques used by corporations in marketing themselves and their products and services in order to help them project a new or revised or in some way modified view of themselves’.

Kotler and Gertner (2002) argue that the ‘country’s images result from its geography, history, proclamations, art and music, famous citizens and other features’ and positive images are most likely to influence people’s decisions of purchasing, visiting, travelling, investing and even changing residence. They also state that even if the country does not consciously develop and manage its name and reputation, people still have an image of the country and perceive it in a certain way. Gilmore (2002) claims that most countries already have developed a sort of an identity and image of themselves, each carrying certain associations, both positive and negative, such as Argentina being associated with Eva Peron, the tango or even the disputes over the Falkland Islands. He refers to the positive element of the brand identity as the ‘communication equity’ elaborating on the brand communication assets such as logo, colours and design of the product.

Additionally, the term country equity has been introduced by Shimp et al. (1993, in Kotler and Gertner, 2002) which is defined as the ‘emotional value resulting from consumers’ association of a brand with a country’. Whether it is the smallest village or the largest country, place marketing and strategic marketing play the role to attract a specific target audience: tourists, investments, companies, workers and so on (Dinnie and Fola, 2009; Kotler and Gertner, 2002).

Place marketing: marketing countries as tourism destinations

‘We have seen how places increasingly compete with other places to attract their share of tourists, business, and investment. The marketing of places has become a leading economic activity and, in some cases, the dominant generator of local wealth’ (Kotler et al. 1993, p. 21).

Lumsdon (1997, p. 30) argues that even though the principles of marketing can be applied universally, when it comes to marketing tourism, the application of those principles and specific marketing management tools are slightly different. The tourism sector shares a number of similarities with the service sector in general such as intangibility of product, perishability, and properties fixed in time and space (Middleton, 2001). However, the difference with tourism marketing and more specifically in the marketing of destinations comes from the following (Lumsdon, 1997):

- The seasonality of the product: most leisure tourism markets are affected by the climate and changes of the seasons
- The destination is a combination of services and highly dependent on various suppliers: e.g. tour operators, airlines, hotels, restaurants, museum, galleries, etc.
- The destination offers relative fixed supply of facility which can be changed only slowly, in contrast to the often rapidly shifting demand from customers
- The similarity of promotion according to the targeted segments: historical sites, sunny beaches, entertainments, shopping destinations etc.
- The lack of control over the brand as there is no real ownership: the suppliers are responsible for creating and delivering the destination or attraction


‘The tourism destination comprises a number of elements which combine to attract visitors to stay for a holiday or day visit. There are four core elements: prime attractions, built environment, supporting supply services, and atmosphere or ambiance’ (Lumsdon, 1997, p. 238). Kotler and Gertner (2002) on the other hand suggest that it is essential for country brand managers to understand that different places attract different tourists. They suggest that the segmentation in the tourism industry should be according to either the attractions the tourist seeks, such as natural beauty, sun, sea, adventure, sports, events or culture and
history; or by areas, regions, locations; or by seasons; by customer characteristics, or by benefits. Kotler et al. (1993, p.33-40) proposes four strategies to attract the target audiences:

- **Image marketing**: the main idea is to identify, develop and disseminate strong positive image that communicates the features to the main targets.
- **Attraction marketing**: some places have the natural attractions (natural resources, climate), or historical buildings.
- **Infrastructure**: visitors need good transportation system, safely on the streets, good restaurants and hotels, medical help available.
- **People-friendly and hospitable environment.**

The control over the promotional approaches and brand strategies are mixed between public and private sector. Middleton (2001, p. 334) claims that most of the organizations dealing with the overall marketing of countries as tourist destinations tend to be mainly National Tourism Organizations/ Administrations (NTO/NTA). However those NTOs are responsible for only part of the total tourism and travel marketing efforts made on behalf of the country. In addition, there are various business firms, tour operators and private organizations dealing with promotion and marketing of countries with which the NTOs need to establish a two-way partnership to increase their influence on tourism marketing.

Countries should adopt a more conscious approach towards branding in order to compete, and that includes strategic marketing planning (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Metaxas (2009) adds that place marketing does not operate on its own, but it rather has to be produced, distributed and promoted through a strategic planning process in order to be more effective. The strategic planning is defined as the formulation of long-term objectives and goals. As strategic planning is characterized by long-term actions, place marketers need also to take into account the short-term activities i.e. tactical planning actions to achieve total management planning (Metaxas, 2009). Through strategic marketing planning processes, place determines which industries, services and markets should be encouraged and maintained. The aim of the process is prepare a plan for actions to integrate place’s objectives and resources with the changing environment which will require developing an information, planning and control systems for monitoring and responding to changes in opportunities and threats (Kotler et al., 1993). The strategic management approach according to Kotler and Gertner (2002) should include a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, identifying the main industry, landmarks and historical events as a basis for the brand and adopting an umbrella concept for all the branding activities on behalf of the country. According to Metaxas (2009) place competitiveness depends on the organizations ability of strategic planning.

### Public relations and communication techniques for building and promoting country brands

“Public relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics” (Universal definition adopted by The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)).

The notion of public relations developed into the roots of the corporate communication function to integrate specialized disciplines including corporate advertising, corporate design, internal communications with employees, media relations, investor relations, issue and crisis management. The concept of corporate communication is responsible for the management and coordination of all internal and external communications with various stakeholders groups on which the organization is dependent and maintaining its good reputation among them (Cornelissen, 2008). This definition is applicable not only to corporations, but also to the public and private entities, business and not-for-profit organizations, as well as countries as corporate entities.

Lumsdon (1997, p. 176) claims that many tourism organizations are increasingly using public relations due to the social and environmental pressure on them. He also adds that many destinations are relying more on public relations (PR) rather than on advertising campaigns, arguing that if managed strategically, PR activities can convey the message more effectively.
The tourism industry and the need to attract tourism is only one of the aspects for developing strong nation brand. Yang et al. (2008), quoting Morgan and Prichard (2005), notes that public relations plays a significant role in tourism industry as a promotional tool when it is integrated with other partnerships of place/destination marketing.

The development of the brand strategy: the Maltese case
Two major shifts in the tourism industry have been identified by the Director of Communications and PR of the MTA headquarters in Malta (Mr K. Drake), as a driving force for taking further steps into rebranding and creating a new coherent image of the Maltese Islands that will be disseminated globally.

The first shift was the emergence of new destinations in the Mediterranean and the increase in regional competition. The newer destinations in the region, such as Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and countries from North Africa (Tunisia and Morocco) are capable of providing better package holidays at attractive prices, and often cheaper than Malta, and they provide better natural resources of virgin beaches and wildlife to explore. Countries like Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Montenegro and Croatia evolved as tourism destinations in the last 15 to 20 years and impose a big threat in terms of competition to Malta. The conclusion of MTA was that the Maltese islands were not able to sustain their competitiveness in the market by providing only sun-and-sea packages.

The second shift is a move in the international tourism and travel industry from tour operator tourism to individual travelers using Internet booking portals. In addition, ‘... individual travellers, are now looking for much more than just sun and sea. Most travellers nowadays want to experience all that makes the country unique’ (Director of Communications and PR). The former NTOM were projecting very diverse and conflicting images of Malta in the core markets: Maltese luzzu (traditional small fishing boats) with a fisherman (France); people on bikes (Germany); a family on a beach (UK). Consequently, MTA recognizes that “The first and most important thing is to have a very clear branding strategy.”

The new branding strategy began in 2005 with the external consultations from branding specialist Christian Sinding from Interbrand. The decision was taken to adopt a single logo to stand out for the Maltese Islands. The strategy was to push the Maltese Cross that originally belonged to the Order of St. John as a universal logo that will be used for branding and merchandising alongside the old logo the Maltese eye (Figure 1). The element of the Maltese Cross was added to the original logo of the Maltese eye in 2006 during the new brand strategy by MTA. According to Mr. K. Drake the Maltese Cross has been valued at between a half to one billion dollars.

Figure 1. Malta brand logo

In addition to the logo, brand values have been identified through a survey among 5,000 people, both Maltese citizens and from other countries. The three core values were: Heritage, Hospitality and Diversity. These values are used as a brand platform and are incorporated in any promotional item, brochure or advert produced by MTA.
Those core values stand for the following:

- **Heritage**: The Maltese Islands have a history, heritage and culture that no other country has dating back to prehistoric times. For example, the Italians have the Baroque, but Maltese have the Baroque and the British colonial heritage as well. The island has prehistoric temples from the early ages, the Roman, Byzantines and Arab presence, the Baroque period, and the French and British heritage. The first traces of humanity on the islands dates back to 5000BC and one of the oldest man-made buildings in the world, the Ggantija temples, are on Gozo. The choice of Heritage according to Mr. Drake had been logical: “The place is like a living museum.”

- **Hospitality**: Malta is the only country in the world whose hospitality has been stated and promoted around 2,000 years ago in the Bible, in the Acts of the Apostles. With regards to the shipwreck of St. Paul on the Islands, it was said ‘the locals showed us uncommon kindness’ [and hospitality] (The acts of the apostles, Ch. 28, v. 2).

- **Diversity**: Malta enjoys not only cultural diversity and rich history, but also diversity in activities and leisure opportunities within easy reach. The islands provide opportunity for various sports activities (diving, rock climbing, swimming, country walks); cultural activities (museum, theatres, galleries, festivals, concerts); entertainments with events and cultural calendars all year round; seaside restaurants and clubbing opportunities. Due to its size, everything is within easy reach of a 30 to 40 minute drive.

The branding campaign was launched internally in Malta citing all Maltese citizens as the main stakeholders. The campaign has been called ‘1001 things to do in Malta and Gozo’ and was featured in a two-page advert in a local newspaper. The advert showed a list of 1001 things to do and see in Malta and Gozo with a note at the bottom saying ‘This is just the tip of the iceberg’. Before launching the brand platform overseas, the strategy has been to approach the locals first and explain what brand is all about. A campaign called ‘You are the Brand’ with text in Maltese language reading ‘You respect your country’, was launched referring to every citizen as brand ambassador of the country. Published materials, explaining the need for branding and how MTA intended to brand Malta, were sent to all homes in Malta and Gozo, and to managers and people working in tourism.

In addition, a six-month campaign for hotels, restaurants and interest groups was done that included presentation of the purpose of the brand and creation of brand ambassadors. Another initiative for internal branding was the development of courses and an educational campaign to train people in the industry how to be more sensitive to the tourists, to be proactive, more conscious and more aware of how to help the tourists.

Although a single logo and brand platform were identified, the Director of Communications still claims that occasionally there is a difference in the images projected in different markets. The difference comes from the diversity of the activities and various segments that are promoted and not all of them are suitable for certain countries. ‘For example, it is pointless for us to show Baroque architecture in Italy since they have much more than we do. They would not come here to observe Baroque architecture. So we have found a different way. The prehistoric temples— they are a good idea. It is useless for us to show Spain beaches, sea and all that because they have quite a lot themselves. So we try to promote things that Spanish people like, for example the cuisine as they like to try different cuisines, events, activities, learning English, various things. For Scandinavia, being besides the sea might be a good thing to promote there, learning English may be not so much… There are specific realities in each market that we take into consideration.’ (Kevin Drake, Director of Communications and PR, MTA).

However, the brand platform and the logo are universally used.

The advantages to differentiate Malta over its competitors are its image of “Home from home” (Chevron Holidays representative); “the uniqueness in history and diversity” (K. Drake, MTA-Malta), “the ability for quick response, change in strategy and shift in campaigns at a time of current crisis with the events from the war in Libya and political crisis in North Africa” (A. Incorvaja, MTA-London); “a safe atmosphere in an English speaking nation” (Belleair Marketing Director).
The image of Malta in the UK and the need to change strategy: The dependence on the UK market shown by statistical data was confirmed by both representatives from MTA. They claimed that even though British tourists are decreasing in recent years, currently accounting to only 30 to 40 percent of total visitors, UK still remains the predominant market.

“UK is a very particular market for us, for the reason that, first and foremost the UK was always our biggest market… The UK still remains our number one market, but it has changed very much in size and in image… although British tourists were decreasing in number significantly, in percentage-wise as well, the makeup of the British tourists was very much the same. The image of Malta was dropping considerably in UK. British tourists of a certain generation are very loyal. They would like to go to the same place year after year after year. But that is a generation that is dying out. Because of this Malta was getting an image in the UK like “O, yes, Malta, is the place where my parents used to go every year” or “Malta, the place my grandparents met during the War”. The image was like a retirement home by the sea for a lot of people under 40 in the UK. First of all, people who knew about Malta decreased significantly, and the people who knew about Malta had the impression of Maltese Islands for being the place where their parents used to go every year, boring, where the grandparents used to go etc. So we had a very particular demographic group coming to UK consistently. Now realizing that this is a dying generations, we have to keep the interest in our country going ”

(Kevin Drake, Director of Communications and PR, MTA)

The influence of the former British colonial heritage as a strong factor in the favourable image of Malta in the UK was confirmed by interviewees. However, according to the Director of MTA London office this is no longer the driving force. The activities the London office undertakes are to promote diverse activities for a number of segments, such as culture, sports and activities, youth market, Gozo holidays, luxury holidays, spas and weddings in addition to the history and heritage.

The organization of public relations and corporate communications: The public relations and communications activities of the MTA in the different countries are organized by their overseas network and office stations. In certain countries there are only one or two people in the offices, while in the major markets, such as UK, Germany and Italy, there are well developed offices with managers and various executives. The overseas offices use the services of PR agencies for the organization of activities which are coordinated with the head office in Malta. The UK office is considered as a distinct unit that uses a PR agency in coordination with counterparts from Malta headquarters.

Target Audience: “We try as much as possible in our marketing and in our promotional campaigns to have something that appeals to all the major demographic age groups” (K. Drake). In most countries the main demographic groups are the 35 to 50 age group, followed by the over-50s, 25 to 35s and the under-25s. As stated earlier, the strategies towards the British public are to attract the younger generations and to create a favourable image for the under-25s and 25-35 demographic groups. However, as mentioned by A. Incorvaja (MTA, London), MTA is trying to promote a niche for every type of traveller.

Market segmentation: “There are a number of niches we are promoting aggressively on the market to make it truly an all-year-round destination for all types of travelers” (Alex Incorvaja, MTA, London). According to the interviewees, a number of different segments have been developed by MTA to attract different types of tourists. In addition, both representatives from MTA opposed the concept that Malta make a shift from sun-and-sea destination to cultural heritage destination, claiming that it was not just cultural heritage, but rather focusing on various segments.

In terms of the British market, as identified earlier, there was a need to attract a younger generation, who were approached through the development of leisure segment that include clubbing, entertainment, sport and sun-and-sea. A purely entertainment segment was developed with the approach to become the second Ibiza in Europe. A sports segment has been developed as well, referring to water sports, rock climbing and diving. Cruise liners, meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE), luxury holidays and
wedding destinations are also being promoted. In addition, two other segments had been referred to: the religious or church destination and health and well-being. The religious segment has been developed for the people interested in Christianity in the Mediterranean, and Malta provides a good basis for that with around 400 churches and chapels from the Baroque and pre-Baroque periods, St Paul’s shipwreck, and sites built by the Knights of St. John.

Another segment has also been identified: English language teaching, which for obvious reasons is not promoted in Britain.

Improving the brand value of Malta: country branding strategy

The study of the communication practices of the Malta Tourism Authority as the main country brand promoter provides useful information regarding the strategies and organization of public relations and corporate communications in terms of branding a country as a tourism destination, both internally and externally.

Visual identity and brand values: With regards to the brand visual identity MTA has adopted on behalf of Malta, the logo represents the eye of Osiris connected with the Phoenicians and it is usually illustrated on the traditional Maltese luzza fishing boats. The colours used for the logo are the same as the colours of the boats - red, blue and yellow. The Maltese Cross on the other hand belongs to the Order of St John, and the symbol was associated with the award to the Maltese by the king of the George Cross. This was their heroic role in World War II. Both symbols are strongly related to the history and culture of Malta and it is a good way to communicate with the local people. Although the Maltese Cross is well recognized as its associations with the Knights of St. John, the Osiris Eye is a long-traced tradition and it is not well recognized symbol for someone who have not been to Malta or is not familiar with their culture and tradition. As defined by Balmer (2001), corporate brand has the virtues to communicate, differentiate and enhance. To analyze the logo in the Balmer’s framework, the symbolical meaning could communicate well to the internal audience of the Maltese and with regular visitors to the islands who are familiar with the culture, history and have seen the luzzus. But it does not mean much for an external audience, external stakeholders and potential visitors.

Additionally, Metaxas (2009) compares the Maltese logo with the logos of two main competitors in the Mediterranean Sea: Greece and Cyprus (in Figure 6.1). Comparing with the other two logos, the Maltese is not easily differentiated. According to Metaxas, even supporting the idea that the Maltese logo transmits the message of a pleasant and competitive destination, the image projected can hardly be differentiated with the other two competitive destinations providing the relatively the same product as a sunny Mediterranean destination.

Figure 2 Malta’s, Greece’s and Cyprus’s logos
In terms of the corporate and country identity of Malta, the image presented is based on the three core values: Heritage, Hospitality and Diversity. In addition, in the latest video advertorials Malta is presented as ‘Truly Mediterranean’. The corporate identity that has been formed of these elements - the visual logo, values and slogan, creates a well-built, enhanced image of Malta as a brand. These elements have been presented in all forms of communication by MTA: in their promotional materials, advertising and publicity. The brand education programme undertaken by MTA to present the brand strategy to the internal stakeholders - local people, hotel and restaurant managers and staff - ensures a thorough understanding of the principles of branding. These elements will be implemented in the behaviour of the local people and employees and will be presented to the external stakeholders. Viewed this way, through coordination of the elements of symbolic presentation, communication and behavior, MTA efforts could easily be applied to the model of Birkigt and Stadler (Cornelissen, 2008) of corporate identity as a successful way to present the image of Malta to the external audiences and create corporate personality. Kotler and Gerner (2002) propose that a country should choose an industry, landmark or historical event as a basis for the management of the brand and identity, and should adopt an umbrella concept that will cover their communication activities. In the case of Malta, the Maltese Cross has been a successful adoption in the branding strategy referring to the historical events and the Order of St. John. Applied under the brand core values of Heritage, Hospitality and Diversity, it creates a complete image of the country and a strong brand platform to be used in all forms of communication.

Global brand and intercultural communication: In terms of the global presentation of the image, MTA adopted a successful approach towards the target countries by applying the concepts of intercultural communication. The strategy applied by MTA in some of the countries considered as core markets was to promote some of the market segments and activities to meet the need of the particular country, such as marketing the English language teaching in Italy, rather than promoting Baroque architecture, or marketing history and heritage in UK as opposed to the English language teaching.

These strategies successfully apply the concept ‘Think global, act local’ in terms of intercultural communications and reflects on the needs of the host country while at the same time keeping the strong brand platform and identity of Malta.

Internal branding: Another important aspect of the branding strategy is the branding education programme given by MTA at the beginning of the branding campaign. The introduction of such a programme is a crucial element in the process of engaging the main stakeholders in the country and encourages the whole community to act in an hospitable and warm way towards visitors. Transmitting the message of branding from the management level to the people directly and indirectly affected by the tourism industry is an important strategic element to raise awareness of the community and to improve the service. However, the model for communication with the internal stakeholders could be identified with Grunig’s one-way symmetrical model of communication and informational strategy (Cornelissen, 2008). The model suggests that stakeholders are informed about the decisions of the organization, but the stakeholders are not involved in the decision-making process and are not actively communicated to in order to provide feedbacks and create a dialogue. Even though the practice to start branding from the inside is important, MTA should actively seek engagement with the local communities to build a relationship and create mutual understanding through a dialogue strategy to achieve a two-way communication model (Cornelissen, 2008).
Improving the brand value of Malta: market research and strategic marketing planning

The research and situation analysis undertaken by MTA plays an important part in marketing and branding strategy. The data gathering process through a survey in the process of developing the brand core values was an essential step in the foundation of the brand. The survey was conducted with local people, tourists and people from core markets who have never been to Malta, and showed that the MTA engages closely with its stakeholders both inside (the local communities) and outside (tourists and people from the core markets).

In order to implement a successful campaign and build a strong image, MTA have a constant need for data and information about the visitors to the island, their purpose of visit, country of origin, interests, motivators, impressions etc. MTA implemented a number of tools and techniques for data and information gathering including arrival statistics and cooperation with NSO, Malta International Airport PLC (MIA) and Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA). Taking into consideration the information needs of MTA, the tactics implemented ensure data collection both internally and externally, gathered from primary formal sources. The collection of the data streams and market intelligence is useful to help understand the trends in the tourism industry and the developments of the market and to be implemented in the long-term strategy of the organization.

Improving the brand value of Malta: public relations and communications strategy

MTA undertakes a very creative approach towards promoting the country through a wide range of public relations activities. Cost efficiency is an important aspect of the various tactics undertaken. Given the relatively low budget, the techniques MTA have adopted are an effective mix of activities that ensures publicity at relatively low cost.

Market segmentation: The strategy of MTA is strongly focused on developing various niche markets to attract tourists all year round. It is a successful strategy in terms of approaching various interest groups and expands the spectrum of special interest tourists. The strategy coincides with the suggested model of Kotler and Gertner (2002) that different places attract different tourists and it is essential for country brand management to develop segments according to the attractions the tourists seek. However, in the attempt for segmentation and promoting parts of the attractions for particular group of tourists, the strategy lacks consistency in the image and fails to create an image of Malta as a whole item composed of those parts and segments.

Target audience: In terms of defining target audiences, there is a difference in the total approach of the MTA and the Malta specialized tour operators in the UK with regards to the age groups. While MTA is adopting strategies to target the younger generations in the 25 to 35 and 35 to 50-year-old demographic groups and diminish the image of retirement home, the two tour operators that specialize in promoting Malta only provide their holiday packages mainly for the grey market. This difference in approach will reflect on the approach of the MTA in terms of cooperation and coordination of public relations and advertising campaigns with the private sector.

While campaigns targeting the grey market could be coordinated with the Malta specialists, the younger generations should be approached through other means and with coordination with other tour operators and/or travel agents.

PR tools and activities: The MTA has a very proactive approach in terms of public relations and corporate communication according to the shifts in demands and trends in the tourism industry. An example is the sponsorship of Sheffield United football club and use of Expedia, making Malta as a pioneer for using these PR tools for country branding. In terms of adaptation to the developments in digital communication and social media platforms and the shift in trends towards individual tourists, MTA treats these developments more like opportunities rather than threats. In this respect, more initiatives for presence in the new media, web portals and e-marketing, forcing the creation of the digital asset management system have been introduced by MTA.

Presence at travel and tourism fairs and events increases the international awareness of the country and is a direct way to address the public in this particular market. Appearance
in fairs and events, providing information and making presentations where information about the country as a tourism destination is presented, creates an opportunity for press coverage, workshops and business meetings. With regard to the media relations of MTA, the International Media Relations Programme adopted is an effective way to present Malta to the international media representatives to ensure press coverage at relatively low cost. Unlike paid advertisements, unpaid coverage after such an event will gain more credibility in the eyes of the target public. Even though media visits are creative and cost effective and ensure publicity afterwards, this strategy is not long lasting and MTA faces the challenge to be more innovative and creative every year to keep the interest of the media and present something new and fresh every year at the annual visit.

Developing the various niche markets creates an opportunity for more exposure in the various sectors, such as extreme sports and diving publications and special programmes and editions. The creation of festivals and concerts with world famous singers and artists is also a good way for promoting the country and gain extra publicity.

The partnership with Music Television (MTV) and the free entrance concerts as part of the Isle of MTV, an annual music event in Malta, in recent years not only gains circulation in that broadcasting channel but traces the path for Malta to be considered as the second Ibiza in Europe.

Sponsorship opportunities also include additional media coverage and exposure of the brand logos. The decision to sponsor a football team in the UK (Sheffield United) is a creative and proactive approach to invest in sports activities in the major core market where this particular sport is very popular. Therefore, the sponsorship of Sheffield United is in line with the public relations strategy for image exposure in the major core market, targeting various age groups, although mainly from the male gender, supporting good causes and sports activities and gaining extra media coverage. It meets the intercultural needs of the host country and has a very strong effect due to the fact the football can be like a religion in UK.

Main tools and techniques for promoting Malta

As a small country Malta cannot afford to have advertising budgets like the larger countries. According to Mr Drake, whatever Malta does, it needs to be done intelligently, “to shout louder than the others, if not in the wider picture we have got to be more focused”. Some good practices have been developed including:

- **International Media Relations Programme**: This is an annual event, when between 800 and 1,000 journalists and photographers are invited to Malta. MTA covers the expenses for accommodation, flights and food. The event generates millions of euros worth of value and insures coverage in the respective publications and media. The programme generates a lot of column inches, TV specials, radio programmes, and photographs.

- **Traditional media advertising**: The use of the traditional media have been used in the core markets by MTA. In the UK for the last three year there has been a TV campaign with the use of productions especially made for Malta by National Geographic. The campaign is launched on Boxing Day, 26 December and lasts until June. In addition, the representatives in the overseas network offices participate in certain TV and radio programmes and specials. Print advertising in most of the source markets in magazine, newspapers and special publications is also used.

- **Fairs and exhibitions**: The MTA appears at a number of travel and tourism fairs and also in more specialized fairs according to the segment, such as history and culture, and MICE fairs. The overseas offices also organize presentations around the year and provide materials, audio-visual presentations and video productions in the languages of the target markets.

- **Sponsorship**: Malta is the official sponsor of the English football team Sheffield United. According to the interviewees Malta is the first country to sponsor a football team. For the last three years, MTA ensures that the players have the visitMALT A.com”logo and the Maltese Cross on their shirts. The partnership is a strategic approach to ensure a large distribution among Britons and will achieve more equitable and demographic distribution and in male audience in the main source market.

- **Cross-promotional tools**: Cooperation has been established between the MTA and various airlines to work on joint marketing
partnerships with the national airlines, airports, and suppliers are involved. For this complex experience is the product and many entities industry is a complex sector where the total are very important. The tourism and travel associations related to tourism in Malta partnerships with various organizations and

- **Outdoor advertising:** The use of outdoor posters in Metro/Underground Stations, billboard posters and building exposure in the core markets is another tool.
- **Web portals:** The increase in use of website booking portals has been treated as an opportunity by MTA. Expedia is one of the largest travel booking portals and a place for promotions of resorts, hotels, car rental. However, MTA was the first to promote a whole destination, a country, through Expedia, which was also beneficial for the hotel and restaurant industry in Malta as well. “We were the first country in the world as a destination to actually start promoting the destination on Expedia… For three years in a row, Expedia gave us the most valued partner award at ITV and they have called us ‘Pioneers’ as we are the first to do that.”
- **E-marketing and digital communications:** MTA created a digital asset management system online with a database of high resolution photos, images and videos of the Maltese Islands. They are available to the public and were initiated to help future travellers, tour operators and journalists. Through the website, anyone is able to download any material they need either as a souvenir or for business purposes. Additional banner exchange on certain websites is initiated by MTA as promotional tool.
- **Promotional materials:** A large number of promotional materials (such as cards, leaflets and brochures) are produced and distributed in tourist information offices, hotels, events and different sightseeing sites across the Islands.

**Cooperation with private entities and organizations:** Business relations and partnerships with various organizations and associations related to tourism in Malta are very important. The tourism and travel industry is a complex sector where the total experience is the product and many entities and suppliers are involved. For this complex system to function effectively it is essential for the country brand promoters to establish partnerships with the national airlines, airports, hotel and restaurants associations and tour operators and agents. The task for the MTA has been to establish partnerships with Malta International Airport, Air Malta, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, MHRA and FATT A.

They must ensure that there is a constant exchange of information and that departments communicate on daily basis, as well as with the representatives in the core markets in order to ensure coherency and consistency in the image and delivered product.

The strong relationships of MTA with the various private organizations, such as tour operators, travel agents, airlines and tourism and travel associations, ensures good business relations with the actors in the industry. The good business relations and partnerships with those stakeholders are beneficial in terms of promotion, joint campaigns and cooperation in various strategic practices.

**Improving the brand value of Malta: image and practices in UK**

With regard to the images projected in the major market, the primary data collected confirmed that the roots and reasons for the favourable image of Malta in the UK could be traced back to the history of the Islands as a former British colony, but this is not the major motivator. The image of England by the sea creates emotional connections with British people and Malta. The tourism industry in Malta developed initially when it was still part of the British Empire and the British navy was based on the island. The major consumers of Malta as a tourist destination in UK are people from the older generations who still feel the emotional and historical ties. Taking into consideration that unfortunately this is a dying generation, MTA made an attempt to approach the younger generation and people in their 20s, 30s and 40s and clear the image of retirement home by the sea where the grandparents used to go. The public relation activities undertaken by MTA and the various niche-markets identified for special interest tourism expands the image from an old people’s holiday destination. However, in their attempt to expand the images of Malta and go further beyond the historical past of the Islands, MTA in their current approach towards the British public does neglect those important historic elements, which include the English-speaking nation, the historical and cultural sites related to the British colonial times and the whole atmosphere that makes Malta a
The brand image of Malta as a tourism destination: a case study in public relations and corporate communication practice

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home from home destination for the British. There is still the opportunity to present Malta as a sunny England that is easily accessed by a short-haul flight, where people still feel at home and will be able to have short weekend breaks during the winter season. The historical ties with Britain could be used as an opportunity to create stronger emotional connection with the British public not only with the grey market but also with the younger generations and an advantage over the competitors is that Malta provides a homely atmosphere for the British.

The way ahead: a role for strategic public relations through country branding

The concept of country branding is not an easy task for marketing and communications practitioners, as it requires allocation of considerable resources, it takes time to be developed, lots of suppliers and actors are involved and it is not the same as promoting tourism. In this respect the Maltese authorities show a number of good practices in terms of developing Brand Malta with the relatively small amount of financial resources the country can afford to allocate to the project. However, the communication strategy is an ongoing process and possible improvements can be suggested for further developments.

• Visual identity: As discussed earlier, the Maltese logo lacks differentiation from the logos of Greece and Cyprus, two of the main competitors in the Mediterranean. Similar to the other two logos, Maltese emblem shows elements that could be associated with sea and sun that is an identity Malta is trying to leave behind and rebrand. The cultural association is not well recognized for the external stakeholders and potential visitors. As Kotler and Gertner (2002) suggest, good practice would be to adopt natural landmark, historical building and/or even the national emblem.

• Internal communications with the local communities: The adoption of internal branding ahead of the global branding is a very successful strategy. However, the strategy of MTA is only to inform the locals for their branding exercise and explain the purpose and advantages of the brand. Possible improvement could be made in the communication practices towards the local communities regardless of whether they are directly or indirectly involved in the tourism industry. Surveys, questionnaires, debates among groups, in schools and or university classrooms with students from the Tourism areas of studies and even in the local councils will be a good way to involve the local communities in the branding process, engage them in the problem and enable them to express their opinions and give feedback. The social media would also be a good way to allow local people to express their views with launching of websites or social media platforms for local people only and not for potential visitors.

• Coherency in the image of Malta: With the adoption of the various niche markets for presenting Malta and to increase the inflow of tourists outside the summer months, the MTA needs to create a coherent image of Malta. A strategic approach towards image of Malta as a sum of these various niche elements could be adopted. The base for the approach could be one of the brand core elements ‘Diversity’, and can be shown as a total experience of all these niches.

• The International Media Relations Programme is a successful approach for generating press coverage and most importantly gaining credibility. Similar activities could be initiated with representatives from tourism and travel institutes and representatives from various associations and local councils that MTA works with. Especially with the development of the MICE segment that includes meetings and conferences, the invitations of high profile figures and opinion leaders in Malta will generate extra press coverage. Inviting the team of the Sheffield United to spend a number of training days in the Islands could also be used in a number of occasions.
• With regards to the image in the UK, the communication strategy could include elements from the historical past of Malta as a colony of the British Empire. Malta could be presented as a home from home destination or sunny England with an aim to promote the British heritage left in the Maltese Islands and create emotional connection with the British and to make them feel welcome and at home.

This research had the aim to illustrate the importance of the concept of branding in relation to countries and nations, more specifically in terms of branding a country as a tourism destination. It has explored the role of branding and use of public relations and corporate communications as a strategic approach to develop a strong country brand. Every country has its identity and reputation and with the development of the nation brand, the country could prosper further, gain competitive advantage and improve its overall economy. The process of developing the image and market position of a country requires integrated marketing and communication strategies and approaches in order to achieve a strong coherent image in order to stand out in the international stage.

In the case of Malta as a small island state which is highly dependent economically on tourism, the concept of country branding is essential for its global strategy. With the country’s historic development as a former British colony which became an independent state, and with developments in the tourism industry in other states in the Mediterranean basin providing direct competition, the state of Malta is facing the challenge to find a new course of direction for tourism and the need to improve its image overseas.

The research elaborated on the major challenges facing the Malta Tourism Authority, as the country’s main brand promoter, to make a shift in the approach to presenting Malta, to build and retain the brand name, to reposition the image and to adopt a proactive communications approach in promoting the country to the international market. Greater emphases have been given to the British market as the major recipient of Malta’s image as a tourism destination. Following the developments of the tourism industry in Malta, it can be concluded that the MTA has succeeded in adopting a coherent approach in their branding strategy.

Establishing a clear brand platform for universal use in the promotional activities and maintaining and developing the brand platform on behalf of Malta has been successfully applied.

The investigation has explored the main reconstructions and maintenance of the image undertaken. There are still challenges of differentiation from competitors, communication to the target audiences and market segmentation to achieve. However, appropriate communications strategies and tactics have been developed as part of a total tourism development strategy.

Clearly the policy MTA has adopted shows improvements in the brand image of the country and more proactive approaches towards the main markets, by maintaining strategic partnerships with various actors in the industry and reinforcing further developments and local participation.

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References


The impact of social media on corporate reputation

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The likes of Twitter, the micro-blogging site, Facebook, the social networking tool, and YouTube, the video sharing platform, are a socio-cultural phenomenon. Made possible by the advent of Web 2.0, a suite of technologies that allow web-users to congregate, interact and share information online, and known by the collective noun social media, they have transformed the media landscape for corporate communicators.

But in reputational terms, what value does social media offer to organisations? Via interviews with leaders in the fields of social media and corporate communication, this paper seeks to answer that question. It concludes by suggesting that social media has heralded a new dawn for the concept of reputation management, one where organisations can for the first time begin to manage their reputations directly.

Keywords: Social media; corporate reputation; Twitter; Facebook

Introduction

From very humble beginnings, websites like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have grown to become powerhouses of the 21st century media scene: 13 hours of content are uploaded to YouTube every minute; 30 billion pieces of content are shared each month on Facebook by 500 million active users; registered accounts on Twitter grew 1,500 percent in 2009; and social networking accounts for 23 percent of time spent online in the UK. Christakis and Fowler (2009, p. 27) argue the new technologies ‘realise our ancient propensity to connect to other humans.’

A byproduct of the success of social media has been the devolution of power: no longer is the ability to produce and publish the preserve of the few, since via social media it is owned and embraced by the many, and blogs are part of this phenomenon.

Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham, (2010, p. 37) contend: ‘The familiar, mass communication model – with its centralised organisation, elite gatekeepers and established relations with institutions of power - no longer has a monopoly, with new opportunities for the public to connect, communicate and deliberate online (Delli Carpini and Williams 2001; Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006).’

Interest in and uptake of social media is increasing, while the bastions of traditional media are in long-term decline, with print circulations and audience figures falling. This changing media landscape has a profound impact for those involved with corporate communication. Shih (2009, p. 43) states: ‘It is one of the most significant socio-cultural phenomena of this decade. By inventing more casual modes of interaction and thereby making possible new categories of lower-commitment relationships, social networking sites like Facebook, are fundamentally changing how we live, work and relate to one another as human beings.’
Yet social media is a very new medium, and many organisations, described as Apollonian by Handy (1978, p. 23) as they are by nature slow to adapt to changing operational environments, are still coming to terms with social media in terms of its impact and importance with regard to reputation.

What value reputation?

Reputational capital is a powerful resource. Fombrun (1996, p. 9-10) argues: ‘Reputation confers clear-cut advantages and privileges on companies. We trust those companies that we respect, so we grant them the benefit of the doubt in ambiguous circumstances.’ He argues favourable reputations provide competitive advantage and (p. 57) ‘produce tangible benefits: premium prices for products, lower costs of capital and labour, improved loyalty from employees, greater latitude in decision making, and a cushion of goodwill when crises hit’. Dowling (2001, p. 11) contends reputation is ‘among the most important intangible, inimitable strategic assets’ and describes 13 strategic benefits, including adding ‘extra psychological value’ to products and a ‘performance bond when the firm contracts with other business enterprises such as suppliers and advertising agencies.’ As well as operational benefits, Dowling (p. 16) argues that good reputations bring financial rewards by increasing the length of time that firms spend earning superior financial returns (a carry-over effect) and reducing the length of time that firms spend earning below-average financial returns (a lead-indicator effect). Doorley and Garcia (2007, p. 4) assert that companies with the better reputations ‘attract more and better candidates, pay less for supplies’ and ‘gain essentially free press coverage that is worth as much if not more than advertising’. Fombrun and van Riel (2004, p. 86) contend there are five key elements to building ‘star-quality reputations’: being visible, distinctive, authentic, transparent and consistent. Communication is implicit within the elements of visibility and transparency, and required to operationalise the other three, the author asserts. (Fombrun and van Riel, 2007, p. 1) state: ‘It is through communication that organisations acquire the primary resources they need (such as capital, labour, and raw materials) and build up valuable stocks of secondary resources (such as legitimacy and reputation) that enable them to operate.’ Communication therefore is a vital part of reputation building. It allows an organisation to harmonise its vision (the management’s aspiration for the organisation), with the culture (the organisation’s values as felt and shared by employees) and its image (the impression that the external stakeholders have of the organisation) (Hatch and Schulz, cited by Cornelissen, 2008, p. 71).

How does reputation form?

Aula and Mantere (2008, pp. 30-31) argue reputation forms as a result of direct experiences with the company, the behaviour of employees, observations in the media and stories and fragments of information that move within social networks. Dowling (2001, p. 19) believes reputation is a value-based construct and (p. 3) underpins the idea that reputation is an aggregate impression from different sources, stating: ‘The reputations people hold of an organisation are the net result of all its activities.’

Despite its widely acknowledged value, reputation is an immaterial resource; an abstract concept (Aula and Mantere, 2008, p. 33). In a systematic review of definitions, Walker (2010, p. 369) found it is predominantly defined in terms of perceptions and that, he argued, implied reputation resides in the minds of others. Aula and Mantere (2008, p. 21) state: ‘To a great extent reputation does not exist within its subject but in the opinions and interpretations of those assessing the subject’ and argue (p. 51) reputation ‘lives inside our heads in a sense.’

Doorley and Garcia (2007, p. 22) argue reputation is the sum of performance/behaviour and communication: ‘...information transparency (communicativeness) affects reputation and the ability to do business’. Fombrun and van Riel (2004, p. 86) contend there are five key elements to building ‘star-quality reputations’: being visible, distinctive, authentic, transparent and consistent. Communication is implicit within the elements of visibility and transparency, and required to operationalise the other three, the author asserts. (Fombrun and van Riel, 2007, p. 1) state: ‘It is through communication that organisations acquire the primary resources they need (such as capital, labour, and raw materials) and build up valuable stocks of secondary resources (such as legitimacy and reputation) that enable them to operate.’ Communication therefore is a vital part of reputation building. It allows an organisation to harmonise its vision (the management’s aspiration for the organisation), with the culture (the organisation’s values as felt and shared by employees) and its image (the impression that the external stakeholders have of the organisation) (Hatch and Schulz, cited by Cornelissen, 2008, p. 71).
It is widely acknowledged that reputation forms over time, that is it is a temporal construction (Aula and Mantere, 2008, p. 24; Cornelissen, 2008, p. 76). Rindova (1997, p. 189 cited by Walker, 2010, p. 367) states reputation is ‘distilled over time from multiple images.’ It is also constructed socially (Fombrun and van Riel, 2007, p. 43; Aula and Mantere, 2008, p. 50) with experiences and perceptions being shared in discourse, and enacted in dialogue and communicative action, defined by Habermas as ‘the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations’ (Brexendorf and Kernstock, 2009, p. 395). Aula and Mantere (2008, p. 51) state reputation is ‘constructed and re-enacted in speech. Reputational stories are produced and reproduced through talking.’

Referring to personal reputations, Solove (2007, p. 30) argues: ‘Our reputations are forged when people make judgements based upon the mosaic of information available about us.’ Social psychologists refer to this process as impression formation. Hogg and Vaughan (2008, p. 47) state: ‘Impression formation involves the integration of sequential pieces of information about a person (i.e. traits present over time) into a complete image. The image is generally evaluative, and so are the pieces of information themselves.’ One approach to the study of impression formation is known as ‘cognitive algebra’ (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008, p. 47). It focuses on how people assign positive and negative valence to personality attributes and how these pluses and minuses are combined into a general evaluation.

Organisational reputation is also a mosaic, the author argues, a summation of many fragments of information arranged via process akin to cognitive algebra. How large and vivid each piece is depends upon a number of factors: how recent the information, how important, the credibility and social proximity of its source and the method of communication.

Can reputation be managed?
The interwoven notions that reputation resides in the minds of others, crystallises over time as the result of mediated meaning, and is alive in dialogic communication leads some to question whether it is possible to manage it per se. Fombrun (1996, p. 57) states: ‘Because a reputation is not directly under anyone’s control, it is difficult to manipulate.’ Aula and Mantere (2008, pp. 27-28) state: ‘Reputation is non-centralised as it is held and constantly re-enacted by a variety of stakeholders. It is more fragmented than image. As such, reputation can be influenced by various parties but it is much harder to manage or control than image is.’ Grunig (2002, cited by Aula and Mantere, 2008, p. 30) also argues that reputation cannot be managed directly.

In reputational terms, what value does social media offer to organisations?
During June and July 2010, the author interviewed 21 people, mainly face-to-face: 12 acolytes from the social media realm and nine leading corporate communicators. Their interviews ran to over 100,000 words and below is a selection of extracts from their interviews, starting first with the social media experts.

All the interviewees thought social media was an important method of stakeholder communication in order to build reputation. Annmarie Hanlon, who runs social marketing consultancy Evonomie, was emphatic: “On a scale of one to ten, I would say that it’s ten. It is vitally important.” She added: “Social media is absolutely an essential part of stakeholder communication in the age in which we live.”

Stephen Waddington, a PR entrepreneur and MD of multi-sector PR consultancy Speed, said: “Social media is important because it has the ability to completely flatten relationships. Traditionally a brand has communicated via intermediaries to its customers. Social media enables the relationship to be direct. That’s very efficient, a lot more transparent and a lot more effective.”

Dave Cushman, MD of social media consultancy 90:10, said: “In my opinion, if you are not engaging in social media you are missing out on hugely valuable things. Even if you think of how to do the next thing you are planning to do, you should be doing that with the people to whom you are planning to do it. Instead of doing it to them, do it with them.” Alan Moore, co-author of the seminal work Communities Dominate Brands, said: “I think we’re using social media to re-negotiate the power relationships of how we work, how we trade, how we live our lives, how we’re governed, and how we’re going to learn in the future.”
Martin Thomas, a pioneer of integrated brand and communications planning and author of Crowd Surfing and Loose, said: “I think it [social media] has done two things. First of all it’s actually created an expectation in stakeholders that they can hold companies to account. There’s an expectation now that you can have dialogue, you can contribute, you can get involved, and you can debate issues. So it’s kind of accelerated that tendency, and also it provides the perfect mechanism to do it. So you’ve got both the problem and the solution, and it is the easiest way for any organisation I think to engage with stakeholders and vice versa; it’s the easiest way for stakeholders to engage an audience. So it’s absolutely core to it [stakeholder communication], and in five years time, stakeholder marketing will be social media marketing. There won’t be a distinction between the two. It requires a complete reinvention of the discipline that you, but that’s fine . . . . a complete reinvention of the whole notion of stakeholder marketing, in the same way as any kind of marketing has had to change.”

Philip Sheldrake, entrepreneur and the author of The Business of Influence, highlighted the inherent ability of social media to be participative, interactive and dialogic. He said: “Social media allows conversation. Whenever you want to persuade somebody, you can never do it through preaching, only through conversation. Conversation requires timeliness, and social media facilitates timely conversation. Real time, hour by hour – not letters to the editor which appear a week later if someone deems your conversation is interesting to the publisher.” Moore added: “Conversations are things that you imbue, you internalize, they become part of memory, and I think to a degree we can no longer build brands out of desire in the way that we used to. I’ve seen it too often now in too many different ways: when you build sociability into the fabric of the business, that can do extraordinary things in terms of trust, communication, advocacy, and learning.”

On the question of relationship building, all of the experts believed social media enabled organisations to build relationships with stakeholders, and that relationships had value. Anthony Mayfield, author of Me and my web shadow, said: “Social media allows organisations to form relationships with stakeholders that they couldn’t see before via traditional media. I think a better way to think of it is rather than replacing or becoming more powerful than traditional media communications, is that it augments and supercharges our other forms of communications; our ability to build social networks and communicate with them, and to maintain large networks of friends, colleagues, acquaintances and contacts.” Mayfield added: “The interesting thing is that that value of these relationships is becoming more explicit, measurable and visible. I keep playing with this idea of social media giving us social superpowers, exceeding our design limitations. If you play with that superhero analogy, one of the things you might say is that it gives you super-sight: X-ray vision of your social networks. Before you could only see your friend and your friend of a friend. Now you can quite often actually seek out as many links as you want, and you can see how your network is working.”

Waddington said: “When you’re engaging directly the relationship is much more open and transparent, and therein is the future. You can engage with people in a much better and effective way, and it is a proper relationship. Those relationships almost certainly have value because you’re building loyalty with your audience in a way that has been more difficult previously.” Moore said: “If you do it right, what social media allows you to do – via a blog for instance – is to really engage with people.”

Cushman argued that social media allows organisations to build a new set of relationships with people who can communicate on the organisation’s behalf: “It is a whole new set of relationships. In the old days your key relationships were with journalists and the people who had control of publishing. They had to create the content, distribute it and organise your experience of the content. Now all of that is in the hands of everyone so your relationships have to be effectively with everyone. That takes you into difficult territory because you are never going to be able to reach along the entire long tail. But what you can do is to support the people who are doing that and service those needs by helping to discover people and introduce people and support them in creating the outcomes that you have a shared mission on. You have to make the effort to go out and discover people who may not know each other yet but who care about the same things as you and bring them together. One extra node on the network doubles its value.”
As Moore mentions above, blogs are seen as an integral part of a social media strategy. Waddington added: “Blogs are an online form of media that are as close as you will get to traditional media. They are very well suited to existing communication techniques, albeit your style and tone of voice needs to be much more chatty. They offer the opportunity for direct engagement.” Mat Morrison, social media lead at Starcom MediaVest Group, said: “Blogs give you control and you can build a community around your blog. Once you’ve got a blog of your own you can guest blog on other people’s blogs. That’s really exciting because you can get to other people’s audiences. You can build relationships with bloggers, and bloggers tend to be people who have opinions and get quoted.”

While the ability of social media to provide an engaging method of communication was supported unanimously by the group, the balance of power, in terms of total impact, resides with traditional media, they said. However, everyone thought social media would become more influential and many recognised the impact it has on shaping the mainstream media news agenda. Hanlon believes social media has a magnetic quality which is absent in traditional media, allowing groups to form and coalesce around an issue, drawing in people who were previously impossible to reach. She said: “The Bat Conservation Trust started a Facebook page last year. So far with not a huge amount of effort, we’ve got up to 7,000 fans. The impact on the trust has been that we’ve got people who’ve never before attended a bat-walk, engaged in and participating in these events and becoming members. From that perspective it’s extremely powerful because clearly, our traditional methods of recruitment haven’t engaged any of that audience before.” Mayfield said: “If we think of it as a way for organisations to effectively communicate with the publics that are important to them, then it is more powerful and it makes the pre-existing forms of media more powerful as well.” He added: “I don’t think that we’ll see traditional media’s influence disappear, but it has been changed. It has been massively altered by social media, and it will continue to do so as the uptake and use of social media amongst all parts of the population grows.” Matthew Eltringham, a BBC editor who has led the corporation’s effort to adopt social media, has said: “In news terms, social media genuinely affects our agenda.

It gives us access to material that otherwise we absolutely would not have had. It means that our end product – be it a piece on the ten o’clock news or the story on the front of the BBC website - has content and a perspective we have not otherwise have had.”

What are the consequences for ignoring the social media sphere? Sheldrake summed up the prevailing view: “Quite simply, the consequences are the same for not interacting pre-social media. If you weren’t in the room, you weren’t having the conversations, you weren’t building your reputation, you weren’t building your relationships and that would ultimately impact your ability to achieve your business objectives, just in the same way as it does now we’ve got social media as the new thing. It just impairs your ability to achieve your business objectives.” Hanlon said: “Those embracing social media will be winning the business. Those failing to embrace it will potentially lose business, because they simply won’t be visible – they’ll become invisible.”

Mayfield said: “A loss of competitive advantage is the ultimate outcome, because social media is not just about getting your press releases further online, it’s about understanding how the world is changing.” Thomas said corporates who are ignoring social media risked ‘sailing into disaster’: “It is complete ostrich-like, denial behaviour. If I put my fingers in my ears, maybe it might all go away.”

Due to its conversational and inherently social nature, much of what is being said in the social media space is open and candid, and although it may feel like a private conversation to those taking part, unless people have taken time to refine their privacy settings, it is taking place in public. This aspect of social media allows organisations to monitor what is being said about them. Andrew Smith, digital marketer and director of Eschermann, said: “Listening to what is being said about the organisation wherever conversations are being had is vital to the health of an organisation. Reputation is what people say about you when you are not in the room. With social media, the number of rooms in which you can be talked about has greatly increased but at the same time, using technology to monitor what is being said, you can be in the room and hear what is being said.”
Eltringham said: “Organisations must be listening to what is being said to them. Then they can respond, they can engage and they can have conversations. That adds control. It gives control back. Whereas before you weren’t really aware what was being said about you, because they were saying it down the pub; they were telling their mates over a cup of coffee. Now they are saying it much more publicly, much more transparently. Now you can follow that conversation. So you can understand what people are saying about you, and where you are in their minds, and then you can engage with them to change their minds.”

The interviews with the corporate communicators were carried out using the same questions. In comparison to the social media experts who trumpeted social media as a route for stakeholder communication, the response from the corporate communicators was more mixed. Heleana Greeves, a press officer for Tesco, Tanya Joseph, a freelance communication consultant, and Mark Schmid, director of communications for TalkTalk, said they regarded it, respectively, as “crucial” “incredibly important”, and “incredibly important for consumers, and for media”. Nigel Dickie, director of corporate and government affairs for Heinz in the UK, described social media as ‘part of the communications mix’, although he acknowledged: “I think going forward it will become more and more and more important as social media becomes embedded in the way in which everybody communicates.” Clare Collins, press and PR manager for Sodexo, said: “I think like all methods of communication it plays a role. It plays a part; it’s another method of communication, but I think it plays a different role for different companies.” Schmid offered an insight into how consumers are using social media to attract the attention of companies. He said: “The difference now is that consumers will use social media as the first place to go to find out information. Whereas previously, they may have gone to a company’s website, or phoned the company up, now there’s a growing group of consumers who will go to Twitter - we see it every day in our own business - and they’ll put in there; ‘I’m thinking of switching from Sky to TalkTalk, what does everyone think?’ And they’ll get hundreds of responses from people who are advocates to one or the other saying ‘Yes you should do it it’s been great for me’ or ‘No you shouldn’t’. So they use that as a way of judging the relative merits of different companies and brands, and they trust the responses that they’re getting back there, because they see that it’s coming from other people like them; they see it’s unbiased.

“We also find now, consumers will go to a Facebook page and put in a customer issue. Consumers are increasingly discerning so they think ‘If I want a company to hear me and react to what I’m saying, how best is to do that?’ One way is to write a letter or ring them up. Or if I post it on the wall of their Facebook, where the whole world can see I’ve got an issue with them, are they more likely to come on and answer that straight away? So they’re quite clever I think now in how they see they can get a best result from an organisation by perhaps making their grime more widely known.”

Interestingly, in terms of the aspects which differentiate social media from traditional media, the corporate communicators imbued social media with the same set of characteristics as the social media experts: interactivity, informality, speed, openness, transparency, authenticity, opportunity for direct engagement, two-way communication, real-time dialogue, ability to share, and create networks.

In keeping with the social media experts, the corporate communicators also believed social media allowed organisations to build relationships with stakeholders in a way that traditional media doesn’t. Dickie said: “Yes, absolutely – because social media allows you to directly engage with your stakeholders, consumers and NGOs in a far more interactive, real-time way, that is not forwarded through other more traditional channels of communication. But I still think this is part of the mix. I think people still want to phone and get their stuff in other ways.” Collins said: “I think one of the key things about social media is its ability to engage. You can strike up a dialogue and that is extremely powerful. In the past, people could read something about you in a newspaper but there was no way for you actually to spark an instant dialogue. Now you can make a connection.” Greeves related a story about her experience as a member of the East Dulwich forum, an online discussion forum for people living in East Dulwich. She said: “The local station manager who works for Network Rail uses it as a forum to respond directly to travellers. He is very personable and you can have a laugh and a joke with him. It is great PR and it brings everything back down to a local community level.”
It is like we have gone full circle. It is a good example of how powerful social media can be. If you get it right, it allows personal engagement, and as humans we respond really well to that.”

The corporate communicators also believe those who do not engage with social media are missing out. Schmid said: “I think they run the risk of being excluded from a lot of conversations about themselves, and even if they don’t necessarily want to participate, I think they could learn a lot about what a particular group think of them or the issues that affect them. It could have a real business impact, depending on the business.” Collins said: “I think they will lose out because it is here to stay. It’s a new channel that I think is going to grow and grow, and I think they’re just not going to be part of that. They will not be reaching some of their audience.” Joseph said: “I think to ignore social media now would be like people in the late 50s and early 60s thinking TV wasn’t going to be important, thinking that it was just a phase. This is the way that people will be communicating, certainly in the west, and increasingly I think much more so in developing countries, because you need less hardware. There are more mobile phones in Afghanistan than there are landlines – there are very few landlines. This is how people are going to communicate, this is how people get information, and if you’re not part of it, if you’re not being active and absolutely getting it right, then you’re going to be left behind.’

Conclusion
Social media may seem like a fad to the casual observer, but according to this research it cannot be ignored, the author asserts. None of the people interviewed believed its relevance in a reputational setting would fade, only that it would get more and more important. As witnessed by Eltringham’s comments, social media is already shaping the news agenda of the BBC and other public broadcasters. Its innate qualities as a conversational, participatory and interactive medium allow for a level of engagement with stakeholders beyond that which traditional media can offer, the research demonstrates. It can be described as rich media and provides a platform where organisations can have a real-time, two-way dialogue with their stakeholders, delivering a mechanism for symmetrical communication that is a requisite of ‘excellent public relations’ (Grunig et al., 1992, p. 150). Openness is a key to building relationships (Cho and Huh, 2010, p. 34) and relationships are key to building reputational capital (Aula and Mantere, 2008, p. 30; Svendsen et al., 2009, cited by Hutt, 2010, p. 183). Openness is also key to building trust (Cho and Huh, 2010, p. 34) and trust is a vital part of reputation. Social media also allows, for the first time Eltringham believes, organisations to hear what people are saying about them in their conversations with other people, conversations to which organisations have been previously blind, metaphorically speaking. Reputation is, in large part, a social construction (Fombrun and van Riel, 2007, p.43; Aula and Mantere, 2008, p.50) with reputational stories being shared among social networks. Colloquially, it is what people say about you when you are not in the room. Now however via social media, as Smith says, you can be in the room and monitor what is being said.

Social media have democratised the media. Anyone can create their own content and publish it to a platform with a latent audience, via Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or post on a blog. Fill (2009, p. 791) argues: ‘Business-related or corporate blogs represent huge potential as a form of marketing communications for organisations. This is because blogs reflect the attitudes of the author, and these attitudes can influence others.’ The research highlights that blogs allow organisations to take back the element they are fearful of losing: control. Morrison believes so and Mayfield (2010, p. 166) argues: ‘A blog can give you a great deal of control over your web shadow.’ Facebook and Twitter provide organisations with a mechanism to develop communities of interest, attracting stakeholders which organisations did not know existed before according to Hanlon. Blogs too act as a community hub, acting as a virtual talking shop by allowing comment around the posting which becomes a focal point for discussion and dialogue. Ahonen and Moore (2005, p. 100) state: ‘Blogs are exceptionally interconnected.’ They add (p. 109): ‘By using corporate blogs, many companies are finding that thoughtful but unvarnished communication can form the core of a trust-based strategy. . . . If you open a channel of communication with your customers during good times, they will be carrying your voice and be your advocates when you hit the bad times . . . A blog can be a way to future-proof your company’s profits tomorrow by talking with your customers today.’
Of course, organisations have to get the tone and nature of the content right - and their activities have to be conducive - but if they do the communities have the potential to form into communities of support, advocates for the organisation who will help the organisation to manage the long tail, as described by Cushman, enlivening their own personal networks to pass on the organisational message via the digital equivalent of word of mouth, known as word of mouse. This creates a process that the author describes as distributive reputation management, where stakeholders connected to the organisation via virtual communities speak out on behalf of the organisation to defend or develop its reputation. Their words have the potential to be carried by hyperdyadic spread (Christakis & Fowler, 2009, p. 22-23), and to be monitored and measured to calculate their reach.

Palazon & Sicilia (2008, p. 267, citing Mathwick, 2006) state: 'A virtual community supported by a web site will serve to improve the relationships between individual consumers, as well as among the consumers and the brand. As a result, intense relationships will emerge voluntarily fostering both consumer loyalty and trust.' The author uses the word distributive rather than distributed reputation management, which is a term used in the IT industry, as distributed suggests an operation is undertaken and completed at a given moment in time. Distributive is suggestive, the author argues, of process which is ongoing and continuous.

Taking all these elements together – the ability to have real time, two-way dialogue; the power to engage; the proclivity for transparency which in turn develops and maintains relationship and enables trust; the capability to monitor relevant, inter-personal conversation; the facility to create your own media; and the capacity to build communities of interest and support around corporate brands – the author argues that the impact of social media offers a new era of reputation management theory and practice, where organisations are able to directly influence their reputations more effectively. But in order to be able to answer the question “What value do social media offer to organisations?” three key issues need to be addressed through research:

1. The assessment of and validity of data collected from competitors, and others who assume the identity of customers (implying the reliability and credibility of social media data)
2. The evaluation of data streams from content analyses and other reputation management techniques (implying the quality levels of data for monitoring)
3. The ongoing monitoring of commercial and professional blogs, social networking sites and other emergent communication technologies as they are adopted.
References


Developing ethical awareness among MBA students

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The teaching and learning of business ethics is challenging for postgraduate management students, who often lean towards a pragmatic worldview which does not relate easily to idealistic concepts. However, the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) classroom can provide an invaluable location for enquiry, for social learning activity, and for critical reflection.

Contemporary business ethics texts largely rely on classical ethical theories to frame and explore moral aspects of business, despite the strangeness of these theories to management - a discipline grounded in social sciences. We find at The University of West London (UWL) that MBA students are often able to engage more readily with an ethical conversation which is grounded in psychological perspectives on moral reasoning, rather than on philosophical concepts. This paper summarizes the results of students’ feedback upon completion of a core Business Ethics module, which was delivered from a range of differing conceptual start points. The findings indicate that an adapted model derived from Kohlberg’s concept of stages of moral development provides an accessible conceptual map for personal learning and ethical discourse, which allows students to test and appraise different ways to frame questions concerning ethics at work.

Keywords | Business ethics; MBA students; Kohlberg’s stages of moral development

Introduction

It is increasingly recognized that if companies act responsibly (McEwan et al., 2003) and develop competence in evaluating, discussing and communicating values, they will over time create customer loyalty, engage stakeholders, and enhance competitive advantage. Business schools (Mangan, 2006) are now learning from past errors of omission in previously delivering management education reinforcing the ‘myth of amoral business’ (de George, 1999). The soul searching that followed the spate of corporate malfeasance which emerged around the millennium has led to substantive changes in curriculum design for business and management courses, and a recognition of the value of training managers to recognize and deal with ethical issues in the workplace (Trevino and Nelson, 2007). Design is not delivery however, and it is a demanding task in practice to engage students to develop skills in moral discourse and critical reflection in the relatively short periods of time typically afforded to developing ethical awareness as part of a wider syllabus for a business or management course.

This paper looks at postgraduate business and management provision within these constraints, focusing primarily on the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree at the University of West London (UWL), where our business ethics education is delivered by means of a separate core module on our MBA degree. We do not consider the incorporation of ethics training into other modules to be sufficiently rigorous to provide a foundation for ethical competence. Instead, ethics needs a specific focus to develop relevant skills in analysis and application to the business context, because it has a long history of enquiry, and its own distinct body of knowledge.
Ethical discussion is a skill only effectively acquired by doing – that is engaging in conversation and critical reflection about business conduct. It cannot be properly developed without first acquiring a degree of conceptual understanding and communicative skills in expressing and debating moral points of view about business or organisational situations, activities and decisions. Ethics as here defined conducts a discourse about morality, where morality concerns itself with decisions between the good and bad. As such it is inevitably value laden, and the challenge for the student is to understand and critically apply frameworks and concepts which can explain and justify any value judgements made, and to conduct a meaningful discourse within which such judgements can be evaluated and discussed.

For UK-based MBA degrees, students are by definition post-experience on initial enrolment, and therefore able to draw on previous real life examples of organizational and business conduct. With an appropriate approach to teaching and learning they can also benefit from the knowledge and experience of their peers as a social process guided by tutoring staff to facilitate to learning experience. Each MBA student arrives with prior exposure to challenges and dilemmas. Such issues bring significant benefits to a cohort if students are able to share their own work-based ethical challenges, and this results in enhancement to the collective learning experience. The seminar room becomes a learning laboratory where, in relatively safe conditions, problems and puzzles can be discussed – but in a limited timescale this has to be tutor guided, and the challenge is to achieve this effectively. Richmond and Cummings (2004) see the teacher’s role as a moral guide, rather than an authority figure transmitting rules of behaviour, which is the role that would be adopted using a traditionalist approach.

The teaching and learning strategy adopted is based on a ‘social constructivist’ (Renshaw and Brown, 1995) view of learning. In this approach, learning is seen as a social activity, which is interactive, co-constructive, and self-regulated by group members who evaluate shared ideas and values. The emphasis is not on the teacher but rather on what is happening to participants as learners, and on participants’ interaction with their peer group and with circumstances, events, people and experiences. Through this interaction, participants gain a personal understanding of their own and others’ moral perspectives. Constructivism is based on the belief that there are many ways to structure worldviews and there are diverse meanings and interpretations of an event or a concept. For business ethics this is an appropriate (though not exclusive) view of knowledge because participants’ previous management and learning experience will influence the way future events and experiences have meaning to them. In a social constructivist curriculum the course tutor takes the role of one who creates and provides learning experiences and opportunities that facilitate the natural development of participants’ mental abilities through various paths of discovery. Learning is seen as much as a collaborative and social activity as one of personal critical reflection.

The workplace is a key location where learning is applied and where expertise is developed, but learning can also be developed with the help of skilled tutors and teachers. Learning and teaching are concerned with the development of participants’ professional knowledge and competence, and the approach we have taken relies on Enquiry Based Learning (EBL) (Kahn and O’Rourke, 2004). Tosey and McDonnell (2006) further develop the notion of the ‘process of enquiry’, stating that EBL is at best a process in which the learner has a significant influence on or choice about the aim, scope, or topic of their learning, and is guided or supported in the process of learning.

It is the tutor’s role therefore to provide enabling frameworks which create a safe laboratory for learning and reflection where challenges, successes, and failures can be re-examined from differing perspectives. This is a valuable launch point for a personal and communal learning journey, as each participant is encouraged to reflect openly on actual dilemmas they have faced, and prepare for situations they may face in future.

The central question of business ethics.

There is a fundamental problem in teaching the subject of business ethics as it stands today. We are for the most part delivering ethics courses as part of academic programmes; indeed the study of ethics from a philosophical perspective is arguably the founding original academic discipline. Contemporary philosophers, as ever, differ in their logic as to how to best analyze moral dilemmas, but are united in their belief that, after centuries of
rigorous study and critical thinking, they must by now have developed concepts from which we can all learn (Goodpastor, 2002). Business ethics in particular however, is a relatively young academic discipline in the UK. It has developed through drawing from and adapting perspectives and analytical frameworks taken from moral philosophy. Indeed to a moral philosopher business ethics is arguably simply another form of situational ethics where rigorous logic and appropriate perspectives can be applied to a specific entrepreneurial context. Some of these ideas go way back in time, and to this day Aristotle’s approach to virtue ethics has its champions in the field of Business Ethics (Solomon, 1993).

Our MBA students need to learn quickly and efficiently, while dealing with time pressures, but find that the rarified language and vocabulary of philosophical discourse takes time and effort to acquire and use effectively. Traditional classical approaches to ethics largely continue to dominate the field of business ethics, as can be readily seen in terms of the approaches taken by recent texts aimed at undergraduate and postgraduate students. This issue lies at the heart of the dilemma of teaching ethics to business practitioners.

Moreover, the moral philosopher is not necessarily interested in any form of empirical approach to the study of ethics – indeed what is is by no means an indicator of what should be – i.e. a normative approach. Moral philosophy therefore can be broadly characterized as taking an idealistic perspective, as it is more interested in examining how underlying principles can be brought to bear in the analysis of business situations and decisions. The trouble is that anyone who has tried to teach business ethics starting from abstract concepts of deontological or teleological principles will be well aware how quickly the eyes of students may become glazed and the attention distracted.

Tensions arise when pragmatic managers grapple with idealistic moral theories, but this is a problem that is to some degree moderated by different approaches to the subject. While normative ethics (top-down) takes an idealistic approach, descriptive ethics seeks to better understand what is now, and why individuals and situations differ. Descriptive (bottom-up) ethics derives from the social sciences, and has an entirely different epistemology and research paradigm to moral philosophy. The question arises as to whether it is possible to combine both approaches with such wide differences in their understanding of knowledge.

Ethical discussion works best if linked to actual conduct, that is by developing a praxis, and ethically informed practice is self-evidently the goal of ethics training and skills development. The academy is in a different position to professional bodies in that it has little or no leverage to enforce any form of adherence to an ethics code upon its graduates, but this is not necessarily a disadvantage as it can explore alternative perspectives unconstrained by operational requirements. Rather than being restricted to mechanistic compliance, issues and stances may be compared, and radical alternatives considered.

Ethics is historically a normative discipline since it is idealistic and inherently more concerned with what should be as opposed to what is. Its effectiveness derives from sound reasoning processes and application of relevant normative theories. The relatively recent development of descriptive ethics is a different branch of the discipline however, as it seeks to explain and understand differences between individuals and work situations as they actually exist. In the unique context of the workplace as a difficult or even hostile environment for ethical discussion, descriptive ethics does have a value for the MBA student. The MBA graduate is likely to return to the workplace in a management role and therefore needs to understand how people think and behave, and also how managers often are able to shape significantly the behaviour of those they supervise, motivate, control and reward and whose careers they may promote, regulate, or terminate. Because descriptive ethics is evidence based, MBA students more readily engage with it initially.

The contemporary challenge in classroom delivery is to contextualize the relativism and subjectivity which suffuses our collective consciousness, and then to proceed to engage in an exchange of ideas and viewpoints in order to enlarge the participants’ personal understanding. To facilitate this, the author aimed to develop a practical and accessible framework for ethical analysis and discussion starting from a process of reasoning sympathetic to managers, which was also sufficiently rigorous to challenge business practice and stimulate personal reflection.
Developing a theoretical framework

In developing and delivering business ethics modules, this writer found himself on a personal learning journey to discover how to best make ethics meaningful, accessible, and amenable to managers. The goal was to locate and disseminate ways of thinking critically, which are of value to practitioners, but which are also models and concepts sufficiently robust to structure analysis and evaluation. This has effectively become a form of action research (Reason and Beadbury, 2006). The writer discovered he was not the first to find that students participate more readily with ethical conversations by initially avoiding the avenues into critical discussion afforded through moral philosophy (Beerel, 2006). Rather, by starting from more familiar territory, MBA students engage with evidence based approaches to study. It was found that Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1982, 1984) empirical studies of moral reasoning intuitively made sense to managers when introduced to the concept. In summary Kohlberg formed the view that moral development was as distinctly identifiable as psychological or physical development, and followed a specific identifiable sequence of levels of ethical awareness, moving from ego-centered reasoning (Level 1) through stages of reasoning based on social awareness (Level 2) and arriving at a final level of principle-centred reasoning in some mature adults (Level 3). These levels’ cognitive moral development (CMD) are summarized to create the perspectives outlined at Figure 1 below. Each level delineates a perspective from which moral reasoning occurs.

Figure 1 Levels of CMD - Adapted from L. Kohlberg (1984)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-conventional Level: Ego-centred reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: Right and wrong defined by expectation of punishment and reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Instrumental self interest-seeks reciprocity in exchange</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Level – Group-/Society-centred reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: Individuals accord with expectations of peers and social groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4: Consideration broadened to wider society’s laws and expectations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Conventional level: Principles-centred reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5: Upholds basic rights, values, and contracts of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6: Universal principles of justice, fairness and equality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kohlberg’s levels of moral reasoning point to useful mindsets from which to approach business ethics questions, even if to do so takes them well away from their original context. Kohlberg’s model is based on observed human behaviour, and his findings have in part been replicated in other situations (Snarey, 1985), even if his ideas were not originally conceived in a business or organisational context. However subsequent research has indicated that the actual behaviour of managers correlates to CMD (Blasi, 1980), and that most managers remain at Level 2 (Weber, 1990). This relevance to a work context has been confirmed empirically (Trevino and Youngblood, 1992). Kohlberg has also been adapted as a framework for the conduct of research into the issue of levels of development also applied to the whole organisation (Victor and Cullen, 1988) as well as to the individual manager. This research subsequent to Kohlberg’s original work is a valuable development, as it takes the basic principles of CMD and reworks the idea while keeping its essential nature as a useful framework for describing how ethical decisions are made at work in an enterprise or organisation. This is represented in Figure 2.

An adapted Kohlbergian framework proves a useful summary model for considering issues in business ethics, in that the recognition of legitimate self-interest is a key motivator in business behaviour. Also, for Kohlberg Level 2 and 3 perspectives do not replace more immature Level 1 thinking, but build upon it from fresh viewpoints.

Figure 2 An adapted Kohlbergian model to frame moral reasoning:

![Figure 2 An adapted Kohlbergian model to frame moral reasoning](image-url)
Given that CMD has been discovered to provide a useful framework to engage with business ethics questions, it is now relevant to survey how his work is treated in Business Ethics texts seeking to perform a similar function to the module delivered at UWL.

The state of knowledge: some literature reviewed

Business ethics is itself an emerging discipline even if it remains at present dominated by an approach derived from classic moral philosophy. The esoteric nature of this discourse is problematic for students, but at least many of the business ethics texts published over the last ten years specifically reject any monistic approach to the study of ethics in business in favour of pluralistic models incorporating a diversity of concepts and frameworks (McEwan, 2001; Fisher and Lovell, 2010).

This brief overview of relevant texts concentrates primarily on authors who are seeking to make ethics accessible to practitioners - most often to support the delivery of courses to students enrolled on validated programmes of study. This is work by academics engaged in the field as a specialism, but aimed at a wider audience. As a body of literature it reflects contemporary approaches taken either to shape course development, or to communicate to practicing managers wishing to acquire a working subject knowledge. While the majority of this corpus is American, recently increasing credible efforts have been made at developing a specifically European approach, which is helpful for students enrolled at a British university. Contemporary European texts of the type here surveyed typically rely primarily on a summary presentation of influential normative theories to provide the tools for ethical analysis, but then also acknowledge the contribution of descriptive ethics. For example Crane and Matten (2010), at present the best selling European text, places a chapter on descriptive ethics immediately after a summary of traditional and contemporary normative theories. A reasonably thorough summary of CMD is included as one of a range of individual factors shaping a person’s conduct, but it sits uneasily within descriptive ethics as having only an explanatory value to ethical analysis (which is essentially done after events have occurred). Crane and Matten do however address CMD in sufficient detail including a range of critiques of Kohlberg’s work.

A similar approach though less critical is followed by Fisher and Lovell (2009), who also provide their own summary framework of normative concepts as an analytical framework, as has McEwan (2001). These approaches, if differently ordered, are comparable to Crane and Matten who by contrast do not provide a specific summary framework to shape a pluralistic analysis. Other UK-based texts recently published (Mellahi, Morrell and Wood 2010) Campbell and Kitson (2008) however ignore CMD entirely in favour of summaries focused entirely on traditional normative theory – these authors are specifically seeking to develop concise work accessible to practicing managers so an abbreviation of material is unavoidable – but they are by default stating that normative theory exclusively must be the guiding chief principle for ethical enquiry. Their omission of psychological or sociological perspectives speaks volumes.

Though European texts are now increasing available, American ethics authors still proliferate in greater numbers. In texts originating from USA, Wicks, Freeman, Werhane, and Martin (2010) are prominent authors in the field but their joint text continues to ignore psychological perspective in a recent publication seeking to take a managerial approach to the subject. A more nuanced approach is adopted by several edited readers collating influential contributions from American scholarship. For example, Beauchamp, Bowie, and Arnold (2009) have compiled a comprehensive work from diverse scholars threading together principles and applications - this is a valuable general reader but again CMD is conspicuous by its absence. Overall however a richer picture emerges in edited texts. Bowie, [editor] (2002) has a similar scope to Beauchamp but does includes an essay by Velasquez who acknowledges moral reasoning in an organisational context needs to attempt to bridge the ‘is ought’ gap. Velasquez’ view is that sheer institutional descriptions of managers roles and activities are simultaneously normative and descriptive, containing implicit norms that guide activities and relationships, and that we should therefore not necessarily expect an appeal to highly abstract moral rules to effectively inform and guide conduct. In Frederick (2002) Trevino is much more specific as to the usefulness of CMD, and surveys the progress made in interdisciplinary enquiry between descriptive and normative ethics. Her view is that even if difficult to achieve, the goal is desirable.
A major component of the person-situation interactionist model that has guided her work has its base in Kohlberg’s research.

Ferrell, Fraedrich and Ferrell’s (2008) ethics text takes a forward step in the use of CMD in recognizing that the personal values of the manager are more effectively considered ahead of the shared or stated values of the organization. They also recognize that CMD is a valid construct for considering managers’ moral maturity. The same authors have also taken this approach in a wider focus in Thorne, McAlister, Ferrell and Ferrell (2008). A widely disseminated text in the same vein from Lawrence, Weber and Post (2005) adopts a similar approach. These texts are each inevitably reductionist in their representations, but provide sufficient material to grasp the key dimensions of relevant perspectives.

Kohlberg’s (1981, 1984) own research has received a great deal of attention from social science researchers who have subsequently sought to apply his model of CMD to various professions uncritically, but this school of study does not seek to take the conceptual leap to adapt or reframe Kohlberg’s model (Weber, 1990).

It needs to be recognized that Kohlberg’s work has been the subject of criticism, particularly for its interdisciplinary nature which displeases the purists among both philosophers and psychologists as it does not fall entirely within the norms of either discipline (Modgil and Modgil 1985). Also, the invariate sequence of linear development across levels is disputed in various ways, for example:

- Gender differences are not addressed (Gilligan, 1982)
- Model is individualistic, doesn’t recognize community (Snarey, 1985)
- Kohlberg’s model doesn’t extend to moral regression, which is a critical issue in entrepreneurial ethics, as an individual’s moral behaviour may degenerate over time (Crane and Matten, 2003)
- At level 3 the model interjects personal values, assuming deontological ethics to be of higher worth than relational ethics (Derry, 1987)
- The model lacks context dependency, which is also a significant influence on ethical behaviour (Jones 1991).

None of these observations take away from the basic appeal of Kohlberg’s approach as grounded in observed human behaviour, even if the validity of some of these criticisms is accepted. His model has a value as an organising framework for the consideration of moral reasoning from different perspectives, even in a somewhat deconstructed form.

An author who has made a significant if somewhat unnoticed conceptual leap in his use of CMD is Professor Dienhart (2002). His is a unique text as it also looks at the role of institutions in shaping ethics – but what is more interesting in this context is his further adaptation of CMD. Dienhart adopts a Kohlbergian framework in an innovative way, deploying it as an organising framework for his own classification of traditional moral theories. Dienhart like Kohlberg is a developmental psychologist who has transcended the borders of his discipline and become engaged with philosophical issues, and in so doing has crossed academic boundaries by taking an interdisciplinary approach to the study of ethics. Though his particular classification of ethical theories can be disputed, his adaptation of Kohlberg’s broad framework of levels of development has the advantage of enabling the assimilation and use of classical normative theories, but shaped within an overall framework to which business students can readily relate. This framework becomes in effect a conceptual map of a range of specific theories (see an example at Figure 3). While Dienhart does not question the developmental aspects of Kohlberg, it is not necessary to buy into the invariate linear development of Kohlberg’s approach to nevertheless accept that a mix of self-interest, social awareness and ethical principles are fundamental motivators of human enterprise. Dienhart therefore usefully points to the use of Kohlbergian theory in a different context, and opens the door to a creative reframing of his model as a personal construct for understanding the scope of and use of diverse theories.
A research approach and some findings

MBA students were, over the course of the delivery of a business ethics module, asked to appraise business conduct, situations and activities from a number of starting points, applying widely accepted concepts and frameworks as summarized in the literature and progressively introduced by the tutor. Models from three UK texts (Crane and Matten, 2010; Fisher and Lovell, 2009; and McEwan, 2001) were considered as alternative useful ways to organize the classification and application of ethical theory. Module assessment for students was based on their own individual choice of enquiry, though students were required to present and defend their work to their peers. They were also asked to reflect on their learning experience, specifically as to the value and use of a range of ethical concepts for the purpose of engaging in ethical analysis and discussion.

At the conclusion of the module, they were also invited to record their views as to the comparative value of the three different conceptual frameworks. Each student was asked to indicate their preference of model for its comprehensiveness, rigour and practicality in applying an ethical analysis, and to provide supporting comments as to the reasons for their choice. Any additional observations were recorded by means of module assessment and feedback, circulated questionnaires, participant interviews, and plenary discussions. Results were captured and compared over 2 academic years (2008/9, and 2009/10), as obtained from six MBA cohorts in total. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 35 students in 2008/9 (21 in Semester One, 14 in Semester Two) and 32 students in 2010 (22 in Semester One and 10 in Semester Two). These results are summarized below.

There was a consistent preference across cohorts for the use of an adapted Kohlbergian framework as an organizing principle as compared with other approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fisher and Lovell</th>
<th>Crane &amp; Matten</th>
<th>McEwan</th>
<th>Dienhart/Kohlberg</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008/9 Semester 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/9 Semester 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009/10 Semester 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10 Semester 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings provide clear evidence that an approach which is interdisciplinary in nature, combining insights from both developmental psychology and moral philosophy, is consistently the most effective in engaging MBA students. Typical comments recorded were:

‘Crane and Matten summarize most normative theories well, but do not then really provide a specific methodology for their application’

‘The McEwan ‘moral compass’ is overloaded in attempting to incorporate too wide a range of theories’

‘The Fisher and Lovell ‘map’ of ethical theories is questionable in its placing of Virtue theory, although the theory itself is well explained’

‘The CMD model makes sense, as it reflects my own experience’.

Kohlberg’s work is then a useful start point for adaptation to build a pluralistic approach to the use of ethical theory. Dienhart has demonstrated that the levels of CMD provide the basis of broad classifications of ethical theories, and can be applied as an adaptive model reflecting the different ethical orientations of different individuals. Students engaging with the subject are able to progress by the end of the module to create their own mental maps, including or discarding specific moral theories as they shape and enrich their own worldview.

Figure 3 represents one particular student’s typology of key ethical theories with which she wishes to engage - environmental ethics is here classified as relational because the student accepts Lovelock’s notion of Gaia. Others have used the framework differently, for instance several of those of religious belief have adopted the principle of stewardship and therefore include faith as a relational ethic. The adapted CMD model has also proved accessible as a useful framework for personal learning and development in its various applications to business contexts. Discussions with students demonstrated that the model can be freely tailored as a personal construct to be used for self-directed study, as it provides a reliable and adaptive mental map for their own learning journey.

Figure 3 An adapted Kohlbergian model to classify ethical theory:
Examples of comments recorded by students relating to the extended use of this model were:

“I am interested in exploring rights theory and its relationship to distributive justice”

“I would like to understand Machiavelli better – not sure if it is ethical though!”

“None of these models adequately covers different approaches to environmental ethics”

These comments indicate that there are ultimately limitations to the use of any conceptual model, no matter how well framed.

Value and limitations

The challenge of making ethical conversations relevant to the workplace can be met with the use of appropriate practical frameworks, in the context of enquiry based learning and in a safe social space for that learning to occur.

Analysis and debate is a precursor to reflective learning, which is of course not at all the same thing as ethical behavior in the workplace. In the seminar, pressures such as moral distancing (Bauman, 1993) that is a suppression of any sense of personal involvement are not incurred, and ‘moral muteness’ (an inability to articulate moral discourse due to the pressure of the workplace) are avoided (Bird and Waters, 1989). However the absence of such pressures is precisely the value of an educational context, where there is opportunity for skills in ethical discourse to be developed. Also, the classroom is not the workplace, but for MBA students there is a reasonable proximity between the two, and in this context a work-related approach to learning is relevant and useful. Here the variables of power relationships and the influence of organisational culture and ethos are diminished. MBA students of course do not always accurately represent the whole population of management practitioners – there is an inherent bias among them towards those open to new ideas and willing to make the effort to learn. But they do represent those who are willing to change, to think and act differently, and as such are a valuable barometer for all practicing managers.

We live now in a business context where increasingly stakeholders will challenge moral aspects of business, and expect management to be to explain, defend, and sometimes improve their praxis. Thus effective and accessible ways to develop ethical awareness among managers is becoming a key skill at work.

In developing the framework offered in this paper no attempt has been made to distinguish gender difference, as the paper focuses rather on the mental map of the individual regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or religious belief. Previous research on the influence of gender difference on ethics at work has in any case proved inconclusive (O’Fallon and Butterfield, 2005). The influence and value of long-standing and influential religions and philosophies is not denied or excluded by applying such a framework. Indeed as a tutor personally embracing a Christian worldview, this writer has found that it is possible to engage with students of diverse religious beliefs and philosophical backgrounds in a discourse examining and articulating the ethical implications of personal belief systems through the application of this framework.

Effective and realistic moral reasoning will not solve all the challenges of ethics at work, but it is a good starting point. Moral climates cannot change without a discourse to provoke change, and the real value of the approach taken here is that an interdisciplinary approach using a framework based on CMD has been found to be accessible to managers from a wide range of professional backgrounds. It is hoped this research is to be followed up by subsequent work measuring changes in perceived self-efficacy between the beginning and conclusion of a business ethics course.
Conclusions
The language of ethics is collaboratively developed and defined, and ethical conversations in the workplace are initiated and shaped by managers and leaders. Skills are needed for this task, which can be effectively developed in a context which is work related but a separate space, where competences and skills can be developed for use at work. These findings indicate that an interdisciplinary approach can be created which crosses the boundaries between developmental psychology and moral reasoning to which practitioners can readily relate. This has implications for the direction of further research in applied business ethics.

While the framework developed in this paper is intended to facilitate personal learning and growth, its ultimate value may lie in acting as a lens to contextualize and apply contrasting normative theories to business and work situations. It is therefore more a pluralistic than a postmodern approach to ethics, and seeks to avoid reducing ethics to mere relativism and subjectivity. However the framework is intended to facilitate an articulation of values as an essential starting point for the development of an effective ethical discourse.

Developing ethical awareness among MBA students remains challenging, but it can be also engaging and exciting when structured as a social learning experience and can further stimulate subsequent personal reflection. The use of normative theory as an ethical resource is helpful to frame moral thinking and discourse, but because it is unfamiliar territory it is best introduced through the vehicle of more readily assimilated material. If moral discourse is approached from a perspective of cognitive moral development, the territory becomes rather more familiar. Kohlberg’s research is controversial, but it is remains a valuable starting point for enquiry into moral reasoning from different various psychological perspectives which have their counterpart in a range of specific moral theories.

References


Developing ethical awareness among MBA students

Roger Cook


In 2006 the Wellington Summer of Code was brought to life engaging ICT undergraduates with innovative Wellington employers, it has developed into a thriving talent pipeline engaging all levels of tertiary students and industry in the Wellington region. Summer of Code engages students during term time through industry led learning and a summer seminar and workshop series that are open to all. It has worked with the NZCS to integrate the Evening with Industry where undergraduates see young IT professionals starting their careers discussing the move from academia to the real world. Through Summer of Code ~70% of students are retained in full or part time employment and ICT career opportunities explored. In 2010 Summer of Code evolved to the Summer of Technology by incorporating engineering, design and business analysis and the scheme provides a template for other centres in New Zealand. This paper explores the success of Summer of Code, its engagement models, curriculum aspects and the potential for the future.

Keywords | Information and computing technology, ICT, undergraduates, work experience, employers, New Zealand, Information technology, IT professionals.
Introduction
In 2005 the Wellington Summer of Code was brought to life engaging ICT undergraduates with innovative Wellington employers. Since then it has developed into a thriving talent pipeline engaging all levels of tertiary students and providers in the Wellington region with over 150 students contending to be part of the Summer of Code working with over a score of innovative companies in a cooperative internship scheme.

Summer of Code engages the students during term time through industry led learning delivered through the year and a summer seminar and workshop series that are open to all. It has also worked with the NZCS to develop the Evening with Industry where undergraduates see young IT professionals starting their careers and discuss the move from academia to the real world using professional tools such as the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA+, 2010). The programme has achieved success with around 70% of students retained in full or part time employment, new products have been developed and ICT career opportunities have been explored.

The Summer of Code evolved to the Summer of Technology in 2010 incorporating more than just code development and the Internet industry segments by including engineering, design and business analysis. The scheme provides a template for other centres in New Zealand and a model for future growth and innovation that is essential for the development of the ICT industry. This paper explores the success of Summer of Code, its evolution to Summer of Technology, its engagement models, which includes bootcamps, seminars and workshops, and finally the potential for the future.

The paper is structured as follows: a brief history is provided followed by a discussion of the engagement model with industry; the integration of Summer of Technology into the curriculum is explored in the larger context of professional practice in the Bachelor of Engineering; the paper then explores the future direction for Summer of Technology.
A brief overview of industry-academia engagement in New Zealand

Engineering programmes have traditionally engaged with industry, they have a requirement for undergraduate engineers to have at least 800 hours of practical experience in industry in order for the degree to be accredited under the Washington Accord.

There are various examples of how this can be achieved – typically in New Zealand this is through 2 or 3 summer work placements or internships. Internationally there are various models, such as a thick sandwich course, where the students spend a year in industry, through to flexible cooperative schemes, typically found in the USA, where students can spend almost any trimester in industry. These coop schemes require the institution to provide a very flexible schedule of course/modules that the students can take in-between industry engagement.

Other areas within ICT have also taken on board the concept of work experience to create more rounded graduates that have a better appreciation of their industry. One such degree was the BIT at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) that began in 2002, which merged into the Bachelor of Engineering programme at VUW in 2007-8. The BIT was the primary source of students for the Summer of Code initially, a discussion of its efficacy is found in (Pauling, 2006).

Within New Zealand there have been a number of initiatives to engage industry and academia, a number are discussed here. A further discussion including IT internships can be found in Wempe, (2010). As mentioned engineering degrees require work experience and Waikato University (Waikato, 2010) and Victoria University of Wellington (Victoria, 2010) provide some details of their engagement. The University of Auckland, created the Centre for Software Innovation (CSI Academy, 2010) in 2004, funded through the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), to link ICT researchers at the University of Auckland with the ICT industry. At the inception of Summer of Code the CSI Academy was probably the top NZ internship programme in the ICT area as they provided a managed internship programme (Academy, 2010). It is led by the University of Auckland, accommodated at the University of Auckland and usually requires fully costed funding. The CSI Academy employ a project manager to manage the summer internship projects and those students are located at the CSI Academy.

There were a number of issues with the CSI Academy model from the Summer of Code perspective. The cost base was high, with the cost of accommodation, infrastructure and a project manager, so to develop a similar programme was seen as prohibitive. Furthermore the industry and student experience was more limited, with the prospective employer held at arms length and the student not exposed to the full employer engagement. The talent pipeline enablement was not deemed as effective as it could be, although there would be some employers who would prefer an arms length engagement with a university led facility. By placing students in industry and providing training, learning and working aspects we could develop a more effective solution, within the context of central Wellington which is a relatively compact central business district (CBD).

In 2008 and 2009 there was a move to try and create a national engagement opportunity which brought together most of the universities, the CSI Academy, Summer of Code and a representative from Dunedin regional development, who wanted to replicate the Summer of Code within their environment. A single national engagement structure was not feasible with different needs geographically, different engagement strategies and delivery models. Accelerating Aotearoa (Accelerating Aotearoa, 2010) began a similar programme in Auckland and the Dunedin ICT Business Cluster developed the Dunedin IT Wave in 2008 which runs alongside the Dunedin ICT Cluster’s regular internship program (thedistiller, 2010).

In addition, starting in the summer 2009-10, Government grants through the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) were provided for summer interns at universities. In 2010 the proposition from the TEC is that the Government provides NZ$3500 per student, with around 100+ grants per university. To gain the funding for a summer intern requires matching funding from industry or the university, an industry and university supervisor and an appropriate student. The internship is university based and supervised, with industrial engagement, furthermore the programme is not limited to ICT or engineering.

Additionally there are other schemes, for example a Polytechnic programme (incorporating the Institutes of Technology) in conjunction with ManufacturingNZ has recently started. This offers an engagement aimed to accelerate product development,
improve operational processes and increase organizational capabilities (innovatingNZ, 2010). This scheme is to be extended to the other polytechnics in 2011.

A brief history of Summer of Code/Summer of Technology
The development of Summer of Code began in 2006, based around the technology incubator CreativeHQ. It was developed as a not-for-profit premium internship programme connecting smart students with Wellington technology companies.

Over the summer of 2006-7 we developed the initial internships, feeling our way, based at CreativeHQ a technology incubator in central Wellington. Seven companies were engaged in taking on students and Summer of Code engaged with Victoria University of Wellington and Massey University. Around 30 students applied, they were interviewed, selected and eventually 17 were employed. TechNZ sponsored most projects/interns in their companies. A summer seminar series and social events were organised to help develop the student experience. The Summer of Code was a success all round and based on our learning from the initial engagement the second Summer of Code was planned.

During 2007 we ramped-up Summer of Code to get more companies and students involved for the summer of 2007-8. From our experience the previous year we developed Bootcamps in order to provide some industry led training. The experience over the summer with the first cohort of students showed that they had little knowledge or perspective on the industry, they were not using communication skills well, with poor CV’s. There was also a missing curriculum, that is a more industry focused set of skills or knowledge. Also some of the coverage at university was too theoretical. Therefore Summer of Code companies developed a number of bootcamps to introduce certain topics and provide a pointer to further learning material for student self study. These covered communications and writing a better CV, web aspects such as html and PHP programming, Microsoft development using Visual Studio, an introduction to databases and SQL. These bootcamps developed through the next few years as different industry partners engaged, so for example Ruby was used as an example of a web development scripting language in subsequent years as its use became more significant within the companies represented. The introduction to Visual Studio was popular with students as the majority of university teaching was in Java or C/C++ in a Unix environment, whereas the predominant industry requirement was for Microsoft based operating systems and development tools.

Another key aspect in 2007 was the engagement with more tertiary institutions, through the Wellington Tertiary IT Network (WTIN). These were predominantly the polytechnics in the greater Wellington region (Weltec, Whitireia, and the Open Polytechnic). This introduced more students to Summer of Code with a greater variety of backgrounds, for example the polytechnics often employed more Microsoft development tools in their courses. This year also saw the first students from Massey University in Palmerston North make the 90km trip to the capital to take part.

Testing of the students was extended in order to pick the best students; this is a requirement for TechNZ to prove that students are worthy of financial support, but also the companies as well. Over 100 students applied, and the students meet industry in a social event and at the NZCS Evening with Industry which was then followed by a speed dating event where students had 10 minute interviews with the key industry players. Students were allocated to the companies through a combination of industry preferences and student preferences, with key students having a large number of interviews. To cover costs for social events the companies were asked to contribute to cover the costs, as CreativeHQ was not the core for Summer of Code seminars moved to a central city university venue. Additionally a social contract between students and companies began to be developed, such as a minimum wage (well above the official minimum wage), the contract also indicated the development needs of the students that the companies should provide, such as mentoring, see Summer of Tech (2010). A few companies were not happy with the social contract and so withdrew from Summer of Code, however the summer of 2007-8 saw a more extensive seminar series, workshops and social events for the selected students and industry partners. The seminars covered a variety of technical subjects, personal development and an introduction to various industry segments, plus longer workshops, for example scalable database design for the web industry.

The key lessons from 2007-8 were many fold: better systems to test, mark and select students, the need to work more smoothly
with TechNZ to get funding for companies in a timely fashion. Also the key need to have more administrative help to survive was realized, although some admin help was provided by Victoria University and TechNZ paperwork was predominantly organised by Grow Wellington, it was far from enough to sufficiently organise such a set of events and number of students.

In 2008-9 Summer of Code was nearing saturation within the context of the Wellington area. We engaged funding bodies to further develop Summer of Code beyond its original ICT niche and to also include other cities. However funding bids to extend the scope and to extend SoC to centres beyond Wellington all failed, the feedback from applications indicated that for one source there was a lack of funding available and the other indicated that we did not have sufficient industry support outside Wellington. However in Wellington SoC had over 150 students apply, with 27 employers taking on 35 students at the end of the process. A more significant company contribution was set in order to provide for some part-time administrative support. The success generated issues in providing enough space at bootcamps to accommodate students wanting to take part in the training and learning experience that were offered. Furthermore two part time administrative assistants were engaged over the summer as the management of Summer of Code needed support to avoid impact on the small businesses that provided the key volunteers.

For 2009-10 we developed a diversification of the Summer of Code formula based around the greater need for work experience through the provision of Engineering at Victoria University, but also through the Bachelor of Business and Information Systems (BBIS). The majority of effort was placed into the traditional Summer of Code although that was largely saturated (with employers/students). The new needs in engineering required an engagement with more diverse industries covering electronics, mechatronics and network engineering especially. However we had also seen a need from the softer end of the ICT market emerging in 2008-9 and so more opportunities developed in the areas of business analysis etc. in 2009-10. In addition Grow Wellington were developing more design and manufacturing business links. These would develop the Digital Design area and manufacturing which engaged with a number of other industry sectors. Through the combination of university outreach and Grow Wellington business development we saw linkages with local engineering industries: the birth of Summer of Engineering. Several aspects of this expansion cause concern, we no longer have an integrated programme – we were widely geographically dispersed as manufacturing and electronics/mechatronics industries were not CBD located and that there was a much more wider range of students so the seminar series needed adjustment. Additionally the summer seminar series was opened to all students in the Wellington region rather than limited only to those directly participating in the programme.

Following on from the developments in 2009-10 the key changes in 2010-11 were around the consolidation of new directions. The Summer of Code was renamed to Summer of Technology (Summer of Tech) which incorporated a number of initiatives: Summer of Code, Summer of Business Analysis, Summer of Engineering and Summer of Design. Through this the number of companies and students involved has almost doubled. Table 1 shows the participation statistics, for final number of companies and students involved.

The key partners in Summer of tech are shown in Figure 1, with significant inputs from Xero and ProjectX, with industry interfacing both directly to previous Summer of Code industry partners but also through the regional development agency Grow Wellington and nationally through TechNZ. Xero in particular sponsors the Summer Seminar Series. The seminar series includes personal development, technical, business and industry perspectives, including for example how to start-up your own business, or how to be a games developer. In addition from a professional development perspective the students learn how to develop as a self learner, for example ‘expanding your help horizons’ is about how to plug into
support communities beyond the workplace (Summer of Code Blog, 2010).

Figure 1: Key partners in Summer of Technology 2010

The financial aspects of the Summer of Technology are highlighted in Figure 2. Many companies apply to receive TechNZ funding which provides $16 per hour for up to 400 hours to cover the majority of the student pay. The companies pay a participation fee and a per student fee to Summer of Technology – which is a not-for-profit organization. In turn Summer of Technology and Grow Wellington facilitate the interfaces with the student body, the tertiary organizations, provide learning and teaching for students and help develop the funding applications to TechNZ. There is no guarantee of project/student funding, however TechNZ has invested over NZ$500K in Wellington Summer of Code projects from 2006-2009. To receive funding requires a suitable company with a suitable R&D project, these are matched to a suitably qualified student that would benefit from the industry project.

Increased demand and re-focused priorities in the TechNZ funding programme in 2010 (TechNZ, 2010) have led to the exploration of other funding models, such as the local government-supported programme in Dunedin, which has a wider remit for funding support for interns, not just working on R&D projects. In 2010 TechNZ’s undergraduate internship fund was significantly over-subscribed, with increased demand from businesses throughout New Zealand. Unfortunately, the focus of investment in R&D funding moved more
toward large and established companies, this meant that the traditional Summer of Technology host companies (predominantly medium and emerging businesses) have not been supported in 2010 as much as in previous years. Other factors including the uncertainty of funding approval and the timing notification of grant allocations (during end-of-year exams in November, when intern recruitment starts in March) added to the need to find other sources of funding. Additionally other partners such as the young IT networking organization Unlimited Potential (UP) and the technology incubators provide entrepreneurial development opportunities, with the summer seminar series includes various entrepreneurial components. Through such inputs Summer of Code has developed several start-ups, for example Code to Customer specializing in Ruby development.

Figure 2: Typical cash flow in Summer of Technology
Integrating the industry and the academic experiences

The Summer of Code/Summer of Technology value statement is to: ‘Accelerate student learning and their industry experiences through bootcamps, internships, seminars and workshops.’ The key aspects of bootcamps, internships and seminars/workshops were introduced in the previous section. Additionally Summer of Code has had an effect on the university curriculum with for example the inclusion of scripting at second year in Victoria University, to give the students a fuller experience of programming. It has also led to the development of a set of more extensive professional development courses, these are discussed in the next section. However the development cycle in academia is relatively slow with at least a year’s lag in developing changes to courses, potentially longer in terms of the development of new courses.

The net benefits from Summer of Code include the education system (student and tertiary institutions) and the ICT industry. Students are exposed to significantly more industry presence than before Summer of Code. Their appreciation of what the ICT industry includes and what career opportunities they can find is significantly enhanced. Certainly within the New Zealand context the majority of ICT companies are small businesses and they often require their employees to be more rounded individuals that can contribute across a number of areas, not just programming or testing. This can excite a student as they see a variety of challenges ahead of them in the industry.

A key enablement from Summer of Technology has been the talent pipeline from the tertiary system to the ICT industry in the Wellington region. Around 70% of students that are provided with internships through Summer of Code have been pipelined into the ICT industry. As of March 2010 90 jobs have been created and 121 internships had been completed, in the order of 40 man years in total. Additionally approximately NZ$500K of funding from TechNZ has been provided since 2006. As a whole the Wellington regions ICT industry has gained valuable resources to help develop products and services.

In the future of course we hope for more and better outcomes, but much relies on the support of the various players/stakeholders. From TechNZ and Grow Wellington, to the companies that want to develop the talent within the Wellington region through to the tertiary providers. Most important of course has been meeting the need to the students and exciting them to develop within the ICT industry. Now with the extension of Summer of Technology, into other areas there is an expectation that the benefits gained by industry and tertiary providers in the ICT areas will be seen in engineering, design and the applications of ICT to business.

There is much research and development in the area of professional practice. The professional bodies have been active in bringing professional accreditation and career development within their industry segments. The British Computer Society (BCS) and Institute of Engineering Technology (IET) have developed the Skills Framework for the Information Age, a framework identifying a common reference model across ICT and engineering that identifies skills and competency levels across a large number of job titles and functions (SFIA+, 2010). The New Zealand Computer Society (NZCS) have brought ICT professional certification to New Zealand in 2009 with the ITCP (Information Technology Certified Professional) based on SFIA+ and international developments in IFIP, BCS and the ACS. ITCP is aimed at accrediting ICT professionals that have gained key competencies and skills typically after five to seven years in professional practice, giving graduates from the tertiary sector a goal for further development.

Likewise the tertiary sector has been active in developing industry linkages, bringing industry speakers into the classroom as well as developing the professional ethos in students. This has been expressed as a range of courses covering ethics, professionalism and the learning from industry successes and disasters. Additionally ICT career fairs and the milkround are seen as key to bringing students and industry together. One of the key providers of student – industry activities in the New Zealand context is the New Zealand Computer Society. The Evening with Industry has encompassed the Summer of Code and working together they now provide a young persons focus towards bridging academia and industry. Additionally the Wellington NZCS region provide other opportunities for students to meet industry with a social event in trimester one and a student final year project competition in trimester two.
Curriculum for developing professional practice

Victoria University was at the heart of developing Summer of Code and has integrated it into the development of their engineering and ICT work experience programs. This has culminated in the creation of courses aimed at developing the student towards employment through an understanding of industry, jobs and functions, communication skills and developing self learning through reflection on their learning. Three courses are developed: ENGR291, ENGR391 and ENGR491 in conjunction with the students work experience, see the material available from Victoria University, (2010).

In addition, because these are engineering oriented, these courses include specific requirements such as NZQA health and safety as well as aspects such as SFIA+. These also incorporate elements of the Victoria University victoriaPlus programme run by the careers service which provides an additional certificate to employers showing that a student has achieved across a number of areas including service and leadership (victoriaPlus, 2010). These courses run in conjunction with Summer of Technology activities. Bootcamps, start in trimester 1, providing a perspective on the ICT industry in particular plus communication skills and CV creation. These continue through the first half of trimester two with more technical content, such as Microsoft development, web development, an introduction to databases and so on. These are aimed primarily at second year students who have not perhaps gained a breadth of coverage over their first three trimesters.

Through the combination of Summer of Technology and the courses provided through the School of Engineering and Computer Science at Victoria University, the student is able to prepare a suitable CV aimed at industry and job needs, gain an understanding of the ICT and engineering industry, move on to engagement through interviews usually culminating in job offers an industry experience either as part of Summer of Technology or through other employers.

The future for Summer of Technology

Summer of Code, now Summer of Technology, provides a low cost base, cooperative, value added, internship programme which should continue for many years. It began based on industry volunteers providing time and effort to give back and this is still key to the heart of Summer of Technology. Through its growth since 2006 the programme has become a serious contributor to the growth within the Wellington ICT industry, developing a key talent pipeline and providing an enhanced student experience.

Summer of Technologies goals are to remain NZ’s leading industry-driven skills development and summer internship service for technology businesses, as we have grown we have seen that host companies want interns with a broader set of skills and career aspirations. In order to build a sustainable, self-sufficient programme, we are seeking to expand to serve a wider range of employers. There is also demand from employers in regions outside of Wellington, so we are talking to partner organizations throughout New Zealand to help establish the model in other areas.

Talent and foster connections between the education, research and business In 2010, Summer of Technology was established as an Incorporated Society, so the future will include serving our membership, being a strong voice for industry in the bridge between education and the workplace. Continuing to build partnerships with the NZCS and other related industry organizations will be a key criteria for success, along with further developing our ongoing partnerships with tertiary institutions and partner organizations. Critically we must share the vision for industry-led professional development, and recognize that in order to grow our industry and economy, we need to invest in local communities.
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[All links accessed on 12/12/2011 with the exception of Summer of Tech, (2010), and thedistiller, (2010)]
Search engine optimization for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

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This paper shows how Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can implement the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) elements on their websites and make them visible on the search engines. Four SMEs have been considered in this study. Two SMEs had absolutely no web presence whereas the other two had operational e-commerce websites. For the first two SMEs new websites were created, SEO techniques were implemented and these websites became visible on Google. On the other hand, advanced SEO techniques were implemented for the existing e-commerce websites which enabled them to gain higher ranking on search engines for their targeted keywords. On gaining these rankings on search engines the SMEs established their identity on the web, which would ultimately help them attract visitors and prospective clients searching for their products or services on the search engines. By undertaking this process it was shown that the websites’ visibility on search engines have a positive contribution for the growth of SMEs’ businesses.

Keywords | Search Engine Optimisation, SEO, SMEs, SME, Small and Medium Enterprises, Google, Yahoo, Bing, Ask, AOL, increased website visibility, website optimisation

Introduction
The main aim of this paper is to identify the tools and technologies that can be adopted by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to establish their virtual identity through website visibility. A review of the literature is followed by a reported empirical study. This involved creating two test websites (simulating SMEs) which were made visible naturally on the main search engine (i.e. Google), by implementing the techniques of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Two more SMEs with operational e-commerce websites selling motorcycle clothing on the web were identified to provide a control. As these real websites are competing in a competitive niche, an advanced level of SEO techniques was implemented in order to enable these sites to compete effectively with their competitors and build rankings on Google for their targeted keywords.

Google has been chosen for the study as it is the dominant search engine having the largest share of users as compared to the other two popular search engines i.e. Yahoo and Bing. The outcome of the study is the development of a set of principles and techniques which SMEs themselves can use to address the visibility of their websites through SEO in order to support their business operations and gain business benefits.

Search engines and how they work: Larry Page (co-founder of Google), states that; “basically, our goal is to organise the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful” (Levene, 2010). The challenge of finding information on the World Wide Web (www) had been solved by search engines (Dreilinger and Howe 1997). Search engines are programs that collect website information from the World Wide Web, using automated programs called spiders that crawl the web, collect the websites’ information, save it into their respective database(s) and fetch this information from the databases when requested by searchers. Generally search engines serve ten results per page. For instance Google has the top ten results on its first page, followed by the next ten on the second page.
Figure 1 Highlighting the top ten non-paid/organic/natural and paid results on a Search Engine Results Page (SERP):

Paid results are the results for which companies pay to get listed on a SERP for the specified keywords. The search engines follow an auction-model of payment in which different companies bid for the same keywords and higher amount bids result in higher ranking of the companies’ websites on the SERP. Paid results are also known as sponsored results and are clearly segregated from the natural results. Non-paid or organic or natural results refer to the results which are delivered naturally by search engines. The websites are awarded rankings naturally by the working of search engine algorithms. To build rankings naturally on the search engines, website owners run SEO campaigns for their websites. SEO plays an important role in making a website visible on search engines.

**Search Engine Optimisation:** SEO refers to the process of optimising websites to make them visible on search engines for their related keywords or key phrases. For example: an educational website of a University, for instance, www.uwl.ac.uk, would aim to get ranked on key phrases such as Higher Education in UK or University in West London. Whereas a website selling motorcycle clothing would target to build ranking on keywords such as Motorcycle Jackets or Motorcycle Helmets.

Hence the targeted keywords and scope of SEO campaign of each website is unique and generally determined by its category, target audience, online marketing budget and the overall objectives. Due to the increased importance of search engines, the emphasis on SEO has increased in order to gain visibility on the search engines. SEO has become a significant contributor in the growth of
e-commerce and internet marketing. SEO helps a website to gain top ranking positions on the search engine for its related keywords. When a user searches for those keywords on the search engine, he accesses the top ranked websites and possibly makes an online purchase from one of these websites. Hence if an SME implements SEO on its website and attains higher ranking positions for its related keywords, it increases the likelihood of generating sales through these search engine rankings.

**Small and Medium Enterprises:** From the perspective of the World Wide Web, SMEs can build their web presence and grow their business through their company websites. Presently, it is the right time for businesses to evaluate if the search engines can become their new marketing channel. On a global level, millions of internet users are using the internet to make their purchasing decisions. Many of them actually buy via the internet through the means of electronic shopping or e-shopping. For meeting their shopping needs, consumers start their search by using the search engines (Thelwall, 2000), as highlighted in the diagram below.

**Figure 2 Highlighting the sequence of events on the World Wide Web**

There is a clear chain connecting different processes that starts with the shopper using a search engine for finding the relevant product and possibly ends with the actual purchase of the product. SMEs need to understand this process and work towards making their websites visible on search engines so that their target audience should find their website and purchase through it.
Literature review

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO): SEO may be defined as the optimisation of a website for search engines, so that search engine spiders are able to view it in an optimal manner. It is possible to achieve high rankings and become visible on search engine(s) by using various techniques of search engine optimisation (SEO) (Humayun, 2009). SEO is the process of improving a website’s ranking in the results page of search engines (Hissom, 2010). Weideman, (2007) states that search engine optimisation involves altering the web pages by making them ‘crawler friendly’ and enabling the search engine crawlers to index the page.

Humayun (2009) notes that various techniques exist for optimising the websites for search engines, which are evolving gradually by observing the working of search engine algorithms. Search engines use specialised algorithms to perform the task of ranking the relevant websites in the search engine results page. All the major search engines are powered by their respective algorithms. These algorithms are the ultimate authority for rewarding the rankings to relevant websites in search engine results pages. Website relevance and website ranking are two critical factors addressed by search engine algorithms. Search engine algorithms do have some weaknesses and hence are developing gradually, thus improving continually. In order to take advantage of the weaknesses of search engine algorithms, website owners or SEO professionals tend to observe the shortcomings of these algorithms and manipulate their websites to improve their ranking position in the search engines results pages. In order to address this problem, search engines keep their algorithms up-to-date and constantly improve them in order to keep ahead of the manipulative techniques devised for compromising and challenging the integrity of the algorithms (Chambers, 2005). Hansell (2007) makes a point in this direction by saying that Google introduces about six minor or major tweaks to its algorithm on a weekly basis. Hence it is correct to state that SEO techniques and search algorithms have been developing gradually in a vicious circle where both these elements affect each other.

For instance, in order to trick search engines webmasters publish content on the webpage in the same colour as of the background. This content is visible to search engines and not to the visitors. As search engines have developed to detect these techniques they have started penalising websites using such techniques. For minimising such tricks, search engines constantly change their algorithms and tend to keep it very secret for avoiding any possible abuse of their weaknesses by the webmasters’ (Couzin and Grappone 2008).

As search engines disapprove the manipulative strategies and punish the websites by removing them from their index, therefore it is very important for webmasters to follow the guidelines of search engines for implementing only ethical SEO techniques (Golliher, 2008). There are various ethical techniques which can be implemented for improving visibility in search engines (SEOmoz, 2009). Although none of these techniques assure a particular ranking position in the search engine results pages, the implementation of these SEO techniques and strategies improve prospects of the websites to gain visibility on search engines. Ultimately this results in receiving visitors to the website and consequently leads to increased sales and revenue for the website.

George (2005) asserts that search engines value the sites having good navigation structure with high quality content. Zhang and Dimitroff (2004) note that SEO involves the process of identification of website-factors which impact on their accessibility by search engines. Further it involves optimisation of these factors in order to build higher rankings for the websites in search engines. One of the prime motives of SEO is to provide good accessibility of web pages to the search engines for attaining improved visibility in the search engine results page (Zhang and Dimitroff, 2004).

Interestingly there are various factors in SEO which can be implemented on-page which involves SEO implementation directly on the website or off-page which involves SEO implementation indirectly on third party websites (Golliher, 2008). On-page factors refer to the on-site factors which can be modified by a webmaster. These on-page factors are internal to and determined by the webpage and are fully controlled by the webmaster. These factors include: content on the webpage, code of the webpage, and keyword inclusion in anchor text of hyperlinks.
Off-page factors refer to those factors which are external to and cannot be defined or obtained by the webpage and are not in the control of the webmaster. They generally include hyperlinks on other websites, overall reputation or recognition of the website on the web and the network of the website to which it belongs. Steenderen (2001) argues that SEO is a continuous on-going process which is facilitated by the specialised marketing tools available on the web. Further he observes that it consists of a multitude of small steps, the implementation of which is time consuming. SEO is a quite complex task as it involves an understanding of the working of different algorithmic factors and an implementation of these factors according to the unique algorithmic factors of different search engines (Humayun, 2009). The next section shows the list of SEO factors developed through empirical observation and implementation.

**Empirical research:** Many researchers attempted to understand the important SEO factors by analysing the high ranking websites on the search engine results pages. They studied and analysed the usage of different elements in the highly ranked pages. They used the deductive research methods for identifying the factors influencing the ranking of a website. Alternatively, some of the other researchers adopted the inductive reasoning method for their research work; they implemented the SEO techniques on websites, analysed the results empirically and formed their observations on the basis of the results achieved. The focus of research in the past has been mainly to identify the on-page SEO factors influencing visibility and ranking of the websites on search engines which is explained in the following sections.

**SEO factors influencing ranking in Google:** Evans (2007), conducted research, ‘Analysing Google rankings through search engine optimization data’, to identify the popular SEO elements implemented for gaining higher rankings in Google. He analysed top 50 ranking sites in two categories. The factors he examined in the high ranked sites include: the usage of page rank, total number of website pages, number of incoming links to a website, age of the domain, and the popularity on third party sites or web directories, and social bookmarking sites. After conducting this analytic study he found that:

- High number of pages within a website partially influences the ranking
- Although higher page rank does influence the website ranking considerably, but sometimes websites having lower page rank value outrank the websites having higher page rank
- High number of incoming links to a website results in higher ranking for the website; at the same time, the quality and relevance of these links is another critical factor determined by search engines to calculate the actual value of these incoming links
- Website listing in the Dmoz directory is a favourable factor for higher ranking
- Old domains with higher age do influence the ranking to some extent
- Social bookmarks from popular sites like Delicious.com have a positive effect on the ranking.

**Extending the Chamber’s SEO model:** Visser (2006), extended the Chambers’ SEO model by implementing it in the SEO campaigns of five websites. He observed the effects of different elements by monitoring the visibility and ranking of these websites on search engines. As a result, he identified and added some new elements to the SEO model and grouped the elements under four categories: essentials, cautions, extras and dangers.

- Essentials refer to the elements which must be included in a website in order to make it visible on the search engines such as keywords in website content, meta-tags, keywords in hypertext/anchor text, link popularity and headings.
- Extras are the supplementary elements that provide help when used along with the essentials, like: domain names and HTML naming conventions.
- Cautions are those elements which are not crawlable or visible to the search engine spiders. In other words, search engines won’t be able to see the contents of these elements like: flash, images, videos, javascript and frames.
- Dangers indicate elements such as spamming (text or link spam) which can hamper website visibility, since they can lead to removal of a website from a search engine.
Figure 3 Visser’s model of SEO (the extended model of Chambers):

The elements identified in the above model have been explained in this article.

**Conceptual framework:** Malaga (2007) carried out a similar study on SEO, to assess if implementation of SEO could refer targeted traffic to the website and result in a positive ROI (return on investment). For carrying out this SEO implementation project, he devised the following conceptual framework.

Figure 4 Highlighting the conceptual framework adopted by Malaga:
The above figure may be interpreted as indexing and on-site factors result in search engine ranking which ultimately leads to website traffic. As shown above, Backlinks and Pay-Per-Click Advertising is shown as a negative factor (dashed-lines).

After the implementation of the above conceptual framework, major improvements were found in the results for the website: in terms of increased visibility on search engines including Yahoo and MSN (now Bing), increase in traffic by 125 times over its prior traffic, increased sales and revenue generation for the website. The limitation of this research was that the website got limited exposure in Google.

**Explanation of on-page SEO elements**

On-page SEO elements refer to those elements that are implemented within the webpage or the website and are in the direct control of webmaster. The researchers have identified various factors under the umbrella of on-page SEO. The explanation of the most common elements affecting on-page SEO is given below under different headers of essentials, cautions, dangers and extras:

**Essentials**: Essentials mean those elements which must be included. These include Meta-tags, Meta-title tag, Meta-description tag, Meta-keyword tag, Meta-header tag, Hypertext Anchor Text, Meta-robot tag, Alt tags, Keywords, etc.

**Cautions**: Cautions are those elements which should not be implemented in perspective of SEO. These are; Frames, Flash, JavaScript, Graphics / Images, Sounds, Video, PDF and other format Files, etc.

**Dangers**: Dangers are those elements which are not recommended by search engines, and the usage of which might result in penalising of the site by search engines. These are; Spamming, Text spamming, Link spamming, Webpage Cloaking, etc.

**Extras**: include HTML naming conventions, domain names, etc.

**Explanation of off-page SEO elements**: Off-page elements are those elements that are executed externally on the web for promoting a specific website. These elements are performed off-page or external to the webpage. One important off-page SEO element is of link building which refers to the process of procuring links on third party sites which are related to a specific website. It is important to note that only high quality and relevant sites should be considered for building links.

**Role of a business website for SMEs**

Steenderen (2009) advises that with the current development of technology it is advantageous to create a business website and supplement the existing business through an establishment in the virtual world of WWW. Further he states that it is not only important to have a website but making it visible on the web is even more crucial. A website can reach its full potential by receiving targeted traffic. However, there is no one proven method for developing and promoting a site. (Elderbrock et al., 1997) noted that in the present day scenario, it is easy for companies to get off the track as they face intense pressure from the competition with the challenge to develop their business website having little knowledge about it. In order to make sure that the company makes sound decisions, it is important to determine important business objectives:

- Why the company needs a website?
- Which products will be sold and delivered via website?
- Who is the target audience or potential customer?
- How to reach the customer via website?

A business website can be instrumental in deriving direct or indirect revenue generation for the business (Steenderen, 2009): direct revenue generation in the form of product sales, product subscriptions, and site membership; and indirect revenue generation derived from increased brand-awareness, supplementing the main product, and reducing costs.
Thelwall (2000) highlights that a business website can offer different types of financial engagement:
- **Company information**: where business information and contact information is provided including email, contact number and postal address
- **Product information**: In addition to the above, product information is also provided
- **Online catalogue**: In addition to the above, pricing details of products are also provided
- **Online mail-order catalogue**: In addition to the above, the website gives the ability to buy via mail-order
- **Cyberstore**: In addition to the above, the website has the provision of accepting and processing online payments.

By creating a website, the business develops the capability of being seen on the web. It is important to note that the website should be accessible 24 hours of the day, each day of the year. Subsequently it is important to be actually seen by the company’s target audience which can become possible only if the website has visibility on the web search engines. Website visibility can be developed by running an SEO campaign. SEO can help the website to receive its intended audience on a global level, giving national and international coverage to the business.

**Adaptation of internet for e-commerce: a potential marketing opportunity for SMEs**: The widening of the exposure of SMEs would result in the increase of marketing channels as well as direct and indirect revenue streams (Steenderen, 2009). Berman and McClellan (2002) note that inclusion of e-commerce into the business processes would result in enhanced profitability for the business. E-commerce may be defined as the usage of electronic networks for exchanging information, products or services and payment for commercial purposes between the individual consumers and businesses, between businesses themselves, within the government, between public and the government or between the business and the government (South Africa’s Department of Communications, 2000).

The SMEs who are adopting e-commerce for their businesses are realising practical benefits in terms of overcoming cost and geographical barriers, getting access to new markets and enjoying the advantages of improved customer relationships, services, accelerated communication and the sharing of information. As the integration of internet with a business is not very costly, SMEs aware of this technology option do make use of it (Boyes and Irani, 2004).

Despite of the problems posed by the adoption of e-commerce for SMEs, it is recommended that SMEs should adopt this marketing channel.

Observing consumers behaviour and purchasing habits on the internet has become very important for SMEs to integrate internet into their businesses. Porter (2001) asserts that the internet should be adopted to complement the business strategy. Rather than considering whether or not the internet should be adopted for the business, the SMEs should be considering how to adopt the internet. Internet provides the opportunity for companies to position themselves strategically by delivering exclusive services to their customers that are different from their competitors. Further he highlights the viewpoint that creating a customised information technology platform helps to integrate and consolidate different activities of the company. This customised use of technology cannot be imitated by the competitors, hence giving the SME an edge and competitive advantage over its competitors. Ultimately, Porter has inspired SMEs to understand the fact that the right usage of technology could complement the traditional methods of competing.
Finally, Singh (2002) has highlighted the benefits realised by the top 100 companies of America by using internet for their respective businesses. The percentage of different benefits gained is shown in the figure:

Figure 5 Highlighting the different benefits realised by adopting the Internet

Depending on the scale of a business and the extent of adoption of technology the SMEs can certainly expect to experience considerable benefits.

Limitations of research on SEO and SMEs: Most of the research-work done by different researchers including Chambers’ (2005) SEO Model, Visser’s (2006) Improved Model of Website Visibility, Malaga’s (2007) Conceptual Framework for increasing website traffic and other researchers, as discussed above show that the main focus of study and analysis revolved around understanding the impact of on-page factors of SEO, but side-lining the off-page factors of SEO. The SEO models give a good coverage of the on-page SEO elements only. However, off-page SEO elements constitute a very important part of the SEO campaign for a website, without which the SEO campaign is incomplete.

Although Malaga (2007) has provided a brief discussion about indexing by Yahoo and Bing, there is very little information about off-page SEO. The current research extends the previous research by showing the implementation of off-page SEO elements in addition to the on-page SEO elements.

Different researchers including Steenderen (2009), Berman and McClellan (2002), Porter (2001), and (Singh, 2002) have highlighted the fact that SMEs can enjoy potential benefits with the adaptation of WWW. They do not highlight the nature and types of these benefits. Moreover, the actual benefits an individual firm could realise from the internet can be better understood by the business owners after they adapt to the technology. Additionally, such benefits would be highly unique and specific depending on the nature of business of each firm. Thus past research leaves the business owners with a vague understanding of the potential business benefits.

Hence on observing this limitation, the current research has explained the website creation process and website visibility methods, which is the beginning of reaping the benefits from WWW. In order to make these concepts very clear to the reader, these processes have been highlighted and explained through experimental study with its application to four real SMEs. Most importantly this solution is applicable to all businesses even those belonging to different industries and economic sectors.
It is not only important to have a business website but it is more important to have visitors visiting that website. In view of those SMEs/businesses already having a website, it can be stated that the majority of them are not aware of the concept of a visible website and the benefits it can generate for their respective businesses.

Investigating the problem area

An empirical study: Technology, internet and the WWW is playing a pivotal role in today’s socio-economic field and has become a significant contributing factor for the survival and growth of SMEs. This can give them access to market their products globally and run their operations effectively. But it has not been adopted by the businesses to its full potential by the majority of SMEs.

For businesses of all sizes, a business website has become an indispensable tool for complementing their traditional marketing channels. Specialised technical knowledge is required for creating a visible website and maintaining it effectively. As the creation and maintenance of web presence requires awareness and understanding about this technology, hence the majority of SMEs are hesitant to adopt this marketing channel. In contrast a minority of SMEs who already have a website do not have the sufficient expertise to make their website visible to their target audience through the medium of search engines and get the ultimate business benefits. Six research questions were identified for empirical study.

RQ1: Carry out a study to determine the presence of website of four SMEs on Google.

RQ2: To investigate empirically the feasibility, process and steps to be undertaken, which SMEs can adapt to establish their web identity or website ranking goals.

RQ3: An analytic study of different SEO elements that can help the SMEs to attain their respective website visibility and keyword ranking goals on Google.

RQ4: An evaluation of the main SEO factors instrumental in establishing the visibility of website on Google.

RQ5: To understand the probable impact of a website on the SMEs’ business.

RQ6: To determine the potential for improvements and specifying future performance and visibility benchmarks.

Research design: The research design below was prepared for executing the research methodology in an effective manner. Quantitative research methodology was used mainly, along with its subtypes of descriptive, exploratory and experimental research methods which were executed sequentially. Descriptive research was used to investigate the present status of SMEs’ websites, exploratory research was used to gather authentic information for building web presence of SMEs, and experimental research was used to actually implement the recommended techniques and processes for establishing the visibility of the SMEs’ websites. The main focus of this research was to study the SEO elements affecting the visibility of websites on the main search engine Google. For conducting this research the internet, Google.com and four websites (www.changology.co.uk, www.searoseexim.com, www.leatherup.com, www.motorcyclecenter.com) of four different SMEs have been used. This study has been conducted on the premises of University of West London.

Research participants: The selection criteria of selecting these four SMEs were: two of these SMEs should not have any web presence and the other two should have existing e-commerce businesses. This would help the readers to get the information at two levels: firstly, on how to build a web presence starting from the scratch; secondly, on how to improve the existing web presence by building the ranking on Google for the targeted keywords, which will help to generate sales and revenue for the websites. It will help to cater the audiences at two levels: those who want get started with building their web presence and those who already have a website and want to build ranking for their targeted keywords.
Figure 6 Research design

Figure 7 The details of the four SMEs considered in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of SMEs</th>
<th>Description of SMEs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Searose Exim</td>
<td>A bicycle products manufacturing firm based in India. This company had no web presence. Hence a new website <a href="http://www.searoseexim.com">www.searoseexim.com</a> was created (using HTML &amp; CSS) and search engine optimisation was done for this website to make it visible on Google.com.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Changology</td>
<td>A consultancy firm providing consultation services to organisations for implementing IT infrastructure. This company had no web presence. Therefore, a new website <a href="http://www.changology.co.uk">www.changology.co.uk</a> was created (using HTML &amp; CSS) and search engine optimisation was done for this website to make it visible on Google.com.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Leather Up</td>
<td>E-commerce business selling motorcycle clothing and apparels via its e-commerce website: <a href="http://www.leatherup.com">www.leatherup.com</a>. As this website was already established advanced SEO techniques were implemented to help it build organic/natural/unpaid ranking for its targeted 15 key-phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Motorcycle Center</td>
<td>An e-commerce business selling motorcycle jackets and related items through its e-commerce website: <a href="http://www.motorcyclecenter.com">www.motorcyclecenter.com</a>. This website was also already established and required further promotion, therefore it was promoted to build Google ranking for its targeted 14 key-phrases, using advanced SEO techniques.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedures used in executing the research design: The primary instrument used for data collection was Google.com reflecting the visibility/ranking for the four SMEs’ websites: www.searoseexim.com, www.changology.co.uk, www.leatherup.com and www.motorcyclecenter.com.

In the case of www.searoseexim.com and www.changology.co.uk, it was checked if these websites became visible on Google.com and for www.leatherup.com and www.motorcyclecenter.com it was checked if these websites attained ranking on Google for their targeted keywords.

The main procedures undertaken for the four SMEs’ websites are displayed below. As the SMEs Searose Exim and Changology did not have a website, the procedures to be executed were similar for establishing a web presence for these two firms. Hence a common explanation of the execution of procedures has been provided for these two SMEs. On the other hand the other two SMEs; www.leatherup.com and www.motorcyclecenter.com already had an established e-commerce website and had a common objective of building rankings for its keywords on Google, therefore a common explanation about the procedures executed has been provided for these two SMEs.
Figure 8 Execution of research design for www.searoseexim.com and www.changology.co.uk:

The steps undertaken for these SMEs have been explained under respective research methods as shown below:

- Registering the domain name(s): www.changology.co.uk and www.searoseexim.com.

- In the next step a website framework was developed using HTML 4.01 and CSS for developing the website. This framework was made according to the W3C web standards and Google Webmaster Guidelines.

- Specific keywords related to the products/services of SME’s business were identified and content was developed on these keywords.

- The content was included in the respective pages of the website and Title Tags were included for all the pages of the website.

- The websites were uploaded on the web, under the respective domains www.changology.co.uk and www.searoseexim.com.

- A link to these websites www.changology.co.uk and www.searoseexim.com was procured from the site http://www.silchartchronicle.com from these pages:
  


- After procuring these two links, Google’s spider crawled these sites and included them in its index.

- Finally these sites became visible on Google.
Figure 9 Execution of research design for www.leatherup.com and www.motorcyclecenter.com:

The steps undertaken for these SMEs have been explained under respective research methods as shown below:

- A competitive analysis was done using Google to identify the main competitors of these SME. For identifying the competitors the targeted keywords were searched on Google and the most frequently top ranking site i.e. www.motorcycle.com was identified as the main competitor.

- By analysing this website www.motorcycle.com it was found that it had built its own network of more than 30 motorcycle forum sites to which it regularly publishes the reviews of motorcycles and has built a strong network with other motorcycle and automotive websites in its web community.

- It would have proved very costly to exactly replicate this strategy of the competitor. Hence a very close alternative was worked out, that was feasible to implement with the present resources and time available.

- It was planned to write content on the category of motorcycle clothing with keywords as the anchor text in the links to www.leatherup.com and www.motorcyclecenter.com and publish them on the motorcycle-leather forums.

- Content was written on the topic of motorcycle-leather and links were embedded in the content.

- Further forums were shortlisted which met the criteria of SEO parameters and were popular in the category of motorcycle leather.

- The articles along with the links were published on these shortlisted forums to build the links.

- Hence in this manner the link building was done. In total 264 links were built for www.leatherup.com and 275 links were built for www.motorcyclecenter.com.

- Finally, these links helped to build the rankings of these websites on the targeted keywords.
Evaluation and conclusion

Verifying the hypothesis, null hypothesis and research questions: For conducting this research a hypothesis and null hypothesis, along with six research questions were formulated. To check the effectiveness of this research, it is important to investigate if the hypothesis has been proved true or false and if the research questions have been answered. The following discussion highlights this verification: It was hypothesised that the implementation of Search Engine Optimisation Elements for a website makes it visible on search engines.

The stated hypothesis of this research has been proved true as the implementation of Search Engine Optimisation Elements have resulted in making the SMEs’ websites visible on search engines. The table below shows that all the four SMEs’ websites have become visible on Google:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Targeted keyword</th>
<th>Ranking position attained on Google for the specified keyword</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.leatherup.com">www.leatherup.com</a></td>
<td>motorcycle jackets</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.motorcyclecenter.com">www.motorcyclecenter.com</a></td>
<td>motorcycle center</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.changology.co.uk">www.changology.co.uk</a></td>
<td>changology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.searoseexim.com">www.searoseexim.com</a></td>
<td>searoseexim</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Null hypothesis: In order to check the credibility of implementing the SEO elements for a website a null hypothesis was also formulated as:

The absence of Search Engine Optimisation Elements for a website makes it visible on search engines.

In this experiment, the null hypothesis has been proved false. As found on the website: www.expressprintdirect.com (not illustrated) the absence of search engine optimisation elements did not make it visible on the main search engine. This site has been made in frames which is not recommended by the search engines; therefore it has not been crawled or recognised by Google:

The absence of SEO elements in www.expressprintdirect.com has not made it visible on search engines, which means that Null Hypothesis has been proved false. Thus the rejection of the above null hypothesis clearly indicates that implementation of search engine optimisation elements are necessary to make the website visible on the search engines.

Research questions answered: Furthermore it was found that the research questions formulated for this research have also been answered.

RQ1: Carry out a study to determine the presence of website of four SMEs on Google.

Research conducted on RQ1: It was found that two SMEs didn’t have a website and the other two had e-commerce websites.

RQ2: To investigate empirically the feasibility, process and steps to be undertaken, which SMEs can adapt to establish their web identity or website ranking goals.

Research conducted on RQ2: For the first two SMEs it was found that their business websites need to be created along with the execution of basic SEO principles to build their websites’ visibility on Google. For the other two SMEs it was found that they need to build their website rankings on Google for their related key-phrases. Hence one way link building was done to enable these websites to attain the rankings on Google.
RQ3: An analytic study of different SEO elements that can help the SMEs to attain their respective website visibility and keyword ranking goals on Google.

Research conducted on RQ3: SEO comprises of both on-page elements and off-page elements. Both of these elements are critical for running an effective SEO campaign. Hence it was found that firstly the websites should have on-page SEO elements; that is they should be made in an SEO friendly manner and secondly the implementation of link building as an off-page factor, was found to be critical.

RQ4: An evaluation of the main SEO factors instrumental in establishing the visibility of website on Google?

Research conducted on RQ4: This can be grouped according to on-page and off-page factors. From the on-page factors, presence of keywords in the title tags which help in attaining a higher ranking position for those keywords and from the off-page factors. One Way Link Building (with keywords as anchor texts) was found to be very critical.

RQ5: To understand the probable impact of a website on the SMEs’ business.

Research conducted on RQ5: It was estimated that higher rankings have a great impact on the performance and revenue generation of a website. Comparatively, lower rankings are not really profitable until and unless they are promoted to attain higher ranking positions.

RQ6: To determine the potential for improvements and specifying future performance/visibility benchmarks.

Research conducted on RQ6: The future implications are clear from the verification of present results for the respective websites. For all the websites it is recommended to employ sophisticated SEO techniques for attaining top ten rankings for all of their targeted keywords.

Comparison of results attained for four SMEs

In the case of first two SMEs, Changology and SearoseExim, a new website was built and made visible on the main search engine Google. These sites (www.changology.co.uk and www.searoseexim.com) were less than a month old, at the time of writing this. Very basic SEO principles were implemented for these sites.

In this first stage it is critical for a website to get crawled and indexed by Google and this has happened to both these sites (www.changology.co.uk and www.searoseexim.com) successfully. Although these websites have started ranking for their respective title tags and some key-phrases, little traffic will be generated from these rankings as practically no-one would search for those obscure key-phrases. Hence a focused SEO campaign needs to be executed for these sites in order to build ranking on the targeted keywords. Once the rankings are attained then there would be probability of business generation.

On the other hand the third SME, Motorcycle Center, has gained first ranking position for the key-phrase Motorcycle Center. This website would be receiving some traffic because this key-phrase has a search frequency of 14,800 on Google (in the USA region). Probably, it would be generating some sales as well from its top ranking position on this keyword. Last but not the least, the fourth SME i.e. Leather UP has gained high ranking positions for its targeted keywords. These rankings would be resulting in a constant high traffic, sales and ultimately revenue for this website.

From a look at the figures involved in probable key-phrase search volumes and sales generated for Leather Up, it is clear that there is great revenue potential which can be realised from higher ranking positions on the related key-phrases.

The above discussion reflects the real standing of each of the SME websites and their role in adding value to its respective business. In regard to e-commerce, Changology and SearoseExim have prepared to start their journey, Motorcycle Center has just begun its journey whereas Leather Up is progressing on its journey!
Evaluation of the results
The results indicate that the implementation of SEO elements can actually make a website visible on the main search engine Google. The individual elements of SEO do have an impact on the overall visibility of the website on the search engines. Thus, it is important to prioritise the implementation of both the on-page and off-page elements of SEO.

The results obtained for websites of all the four SMEs show that SEO results are significant for their businesses. The results achieved for the site www.leatherup.com reflect a huge potential of business that it would be already receiving from its top ten rankings on related key-phrases on Google. Secondly, the site www.motorcyclecenter.com had also gained top ranking for one of its keywords on Google, which would help it receive some free traffic and possible business from Google. Finally, the websites www.changology.co.uk and www.searoseexim.com had been indexed in Google and gained visibility for their related key-phrases. This could be improved further to build the top ten rankings and start receiving potential clients from these rankings by continuing the implementation of SEO techniques.

The current research has extended the previous research on implementing the recommendations of previous researchers. All the researchers have recommended the research on off-page factors in the future. Malaga (2007) states: ‘The search engines constantly change their ranking algorithms. This leads to situations in which a site might rank well one day and completely disappear from the search engine the next day. How should site owners plan and manage in such a volatile situation? Are there any methods or techniques that are more likely to provide long term results?’ For addressing Malaga’s future work recommendations, the current research has made use of link building for building high repute of the websites in their respective niche, which is highly valued by the search engines, and will not result in the removal of the site from search engines’ results pages.

Chambers (2005), states that the results of the implementation of his SEO model can be used to conduct further research in improving visibility of the website. The element of title tag as identified in Chambers’ model has been implemented.

Visser (2006) recommends that ‘Future research could include the development of basic webpages containing only one type of meta-tag whereby the researcher could monitor the webpage ranking on search engines. This could illustrate the importance of that particular meta-tag as an SEO element.’ Considering Visser’s recommendation, title tag was implemented in two websites and it has been found that this particular SEO element plays a vital role to build the rankings for keywords specified in the title tag. Hence this research paper has taken into account the recommendations of previous research so as to extend the previous research. It has clearly identified, implemented and measured the results of off-page SEO factors, provided clear information for SMEs on how they can benefit from WWW and explained the process of making sites visible on the search engines. It has taken the previous research one step ahead by implementing technology in the existing businesses to their benefit.
Conclusion
From the above study it can be seen that the implementation of SEO elements is absolutely necessary for gaining visibility, building top ten rankings and receiving free traffic from search engines. The implementation of different elements of SEO differs with the different operational levels of the websites. However, the following factors play an important role for building rankings on search engines: the placement of keywords in titles (an on-page SEO factor) and link building (an off-page SEO factor). This research study has successfully exhibited the implementation of these SEO elements for completely new websites and already existing e-commerce websites.

Although a lot of information about SEO has been covered in this research study there are certain limitations. This research only discusses how to build rankings on one search engine, Google. Although Google caters to a massive 63% of the total search traffic on the internet, the other search engines Yahoo, Bing, Ask and AOL collectively cater to 30%-35% of the total search traffic. Hence it is important to build rankings on the other search engines as well. Secondly, the research discusses building the visibility and keyword rankings of websites on Google but it did not take into account the important aspect of converting website visitors into clients. Thirdly, the research covered information only on building the natural rankings on Google; it did not take into account generating website traffic and sales through the paid advertising. Finally, in future with the changes in search engine algorithms, these techniques may become obsolete.

Recommendations:
The current research could be extended in future by studying the implementation of SEO right from the initial stages of building the website rankings to the last stage of generating the website sales. It would include attaining the rankings on search engines, receiving the website visitors through these rankings, and applying the strategies for converting these website visitors into clients. Moreover, it would also require the tracking of website activity, optimisation of landing pages (web pages selling the products), and studying the website logs. This process would help to cover information and techniques on how to convert the website visitors into clients and generating sales from them on an e-commerce website. Additionally, it would be interesting to study how e-commerce websites can start selling right from their first day of birth on WWW through the means of paid advertising on search engines. Finally, it would be beneficial to study the SEO strategies that can help making a website visible across all the major search engines.
References


Andy Martin Smith came to Thames Valley University in April 2004 as Head of the School of Computing at the former Slough campus. He oversaw the move of the School to the St Mary’s Road, Ealing campus in summer 2009 until his sudden death in late May 2011. During his seven years as head of department he succeeded in taking the School forward on a very strong footing and began to successfully shift the organization from a mainly teaching department to one in which research activity was actively beginning to take root.

A number of friends and close colleagues have already published a tribute in Interfaces: the journal of the BCS HCI special interest group. The editors of Interfaces have given permission to reproduce their tribute article in VISTAS and we are very grateful and pleased to be able to do this.

As their tributes are very much ones from personal experience, an editor of VISTAS has taken this opportunity to tell a little bit more about the career of a remarkable computer professional who spent his last seven years at the University of West London. In setting out to write about a colleague in one’s own institution however straightforwardly and simply you can discover that it is both more revealing and challenging than might be thought. Indeed, it can prove to be a stimulating and creative experience.

In doing so the starting points have been the personal recollection of the writer himself, his knowledge and experience of the events, and recollection and memory as much as empirical research and data collection which Andy would surely have admired and hoped for in such a biographical exercise. Such a well researched study could no doubt be done, but alas, not by this writer, at this moment. My ambition was certainly greater than my grasp, resources of time and technique. Andy had gathered together an impressive bibliography as part of his CV and to some extent this has provided some ‘hard data’ to supplement recollection and memory. Alas, the bibliography was not complete after around 2007, but this material along with the standard items of the CV has proven a useful supplement. In fact a critical bibliometric biography would be a very good piece of work to undertake.

So, having made my caveats I have also judged that others would be interested in an ‘however provisional view’ of Andy’s life and times at UWL. What follows is what I have been able to do so far until some other person can follow the path. I hope it makes some contribution and it is done on behalf of his colleagues in the School of Computing and Technology which he himself worked diligently to create, and which we might all hope we can continue to sustain.

Early years and formative years

Andy Smith was born on 9th July 1955 and spent much of his early years in West London. From 1966 to 1973 he was a pupil at Isleworth Grammar School. Early on he took a science based track (perhaps favouring his mind and temperament) and achieved good results in A-levels in Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. Not unpredictably he decided to pursue a degree in civil engineering and in 1973 enrolled at the University of Nottingham. Whether or not the engineering industry appealed as a route to employment he soon decided on a move towards education. Immediately on graduating Andy took a graduate traineeship at Mouchel and Partners. This was a summer job but gave experience and confidence to then enrol on the PGCE at the Nottingham School of Education specializing on mathematics and computing. This was indeed a time of growing industrial opportunities in computing, and these decisions taken then were to serve him in good stead.

The experience of the PGCE seemed to give a good impression of teaching possibilities. Over the next seven years he worked in two secondary schools. From September 1977 to August 1979 at Sondes Place School in Dorking, Surrey. In September 1979 he moved to Langley Grammar School (close to Slough) to be a teacher of mathematics and computing. During this time he attended the Polytechnic of North London as a part-time student on the PG Diploma in Computing (August 1980 to July 1982) and achieved a Distinction. In early 1982 (before he had completed the PG Diploma) he achieved promotion to Head of the Computing department. By April 1983 Andy was contemplating a move from the secondary sector to the Further Education sector.
Professional education in computing.
Andy began as a Lecturer (L2) in Computing in April 1983 at Bracknell College, getting promotion in 1984 to Senior Lecturer and then became head of the Computing Section. In the mid-1980s Bracknell in Berkshire had established itself as a major industrial and commercial base in the UK computing industry. It was part of the UK’s Silicon Valley par excellence. With Andy’s growing commitment to computing this was clearly a good place to be and a stepping stone to further progress.

In June 1986 it was time to move on within the sector. He became a Senior Lecturer in Computing at Richmond upon Thames College, and in September 1989 he became Principal Lecturer and Head of the Computing team. Whether this was the result of getting a taste for management (likely not!) it was certainly a matter of industry and competence coupled with quiet motivation and a growing commitment to the field. This was recognized because in September 1990 he became Director of Marketing in addition to Dean of the Faculty with responsibility for 77 staff.

In Autumn 1993 Andy made the move into higher education. He was appointed to the post of Principal Lecturer at the University of Luton in the Faculty of Creative Arts and Technologies. Continuing a wide range of responsibilities in a large Computing group saw continued engagement in teaching and programme related work. In addition came the task of co-ordinating research across the Department, supervision of Post-graduate programmes, income generation activities (e.g. with Microsoft), staff development, BCS Accreditation of the Departmental portfolio of courses, membership of the University Staff Development Committee and the Faculty Academic Standards Committee. In 2003 he became Sub-Dean of Research in the Faculty at Luton. Research was by now becoming a greater focus of attention. From 2002 to 2004 he was the Director of the Centre for Software Internationalisation as well as project manager and co-convenor of IESUP (Indo-European Systems Usability Partnership). In the course of his Luton period Andy worked with the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (2001 – 2002). In March 2000 he was involved with a consultancy firm as Director of Optimum Web limited (www.optimum.web.co.uk). Optimum.web is now one of the UK’s leading usability consultancies. He was also involved with Netpoll another consulting firm.

From 1992 – 2000 he was a BTEC external examiner for Edexcel. This experience was to continue to stand him in good stead at TVU/UWL where the need for a strong sense of quality management supported by fit for purpose procedures was essential in strengthening the direction of that institution.

By the time Andy was ready to move on to Thames Valley University, it was clear that some of the interests that were to shape the next phase of his career were already in place. Usability, software internationalization, HCI and socio-technical systems research were key areas of interest and activity, as well as research and publication. During his time at Luton Andy had undertaken the necessary sorting out and prioritizing that academics have to do. During this period he had extended his contacts and networks in the field and had developed a fruitful working relationship with Lynne Dunckley who had over that period established herself at the Open University. Lynne had moved to TVU and Slough before Andy obtained his position there in 2004. They shared many research and professional interests and it was their opportunity to combine forces again at TVU that proved decisive in laying down a new foundation for computing and information systems education there.

Moving to Thames Valley University.
Andy formally took up his post at TVU in April 2004. He came into a setting where there was a strong need for reconstruction. Why? Thames Valley University had come into existence in 1992 as one of the post-1992 sector institutions, after a rather successful life as Ealing College of Higher Education (ECHE). But the 1991 Higher Education Act was a sign of the structural changes which UK HE had to face. The decision to make the polytechnics into universities had been taken, thus ending the binary sector of HE. HE expansion, sectoral reform and the need to widen opportunities to access HE were all part of a strategic movement of change. It created an opportunity for smaller institutes and colleges to redefine themselves and to create new futures. Mergers of smaller institutions was one way to create viability. ECHE and Thames Valley College of Higher Education (Slough) had been encouraged to make a link with the London College of Music (LCM) and Queen Charlotte’s Hospital College of Health Care Studies (QC), to create an institution of ‘polytechnic scale’ which could become a new...
post-1992 university. The decade of the 1990s were turbulent ones for TVU. The history can be pieced together elsewhere, but there had to be a period of recovery, redirection and reconstruction. In Andy’s case we can focus on the academic field of computing and IS alone.

The move to TVU was clearly an opportunity for Andy. There was a tough and immediate agenda that had to be followed. If this could be addressed more and better things might follow.

Andy’s arrival in the department had immediate impact and effect. The former head had stepped aside but continued on the team. Lynne had earlier arrived from the Open University. After a short period a modus operandi was established. Andy clearly relished the challenge and felt sufficiently supported to do what had to be done. Andy’s experience in education coupled with strong and clear organizational ability was decisive in helping a redirection to take place. He had two senior colleagues who provided support. The task of bringing round and welding the staff into a new grouping was no easy task. A certain thickness of skin had to be deployed although some colleagues may have missed the essentially sensitive and fair nature of Andy! No matter, progress was clearly being made not only at the level of process and procedure, but also (slowly) in terms of culture. Andy did not lose sight of a necessary vision although not all staff shared it on a daily basis! This is not uncommon!

An early sign of a real future as a proper academic school of computing came with the establishment of the Institute for IT. This has become the basis for the present School of Computing successes in research and scholarship. In 2004 the School itself had been renamed losing its ‘Technology and Information Systems’ designation for a more forward and upbeat ‘Computing’. In addition, the university had also acquired its link with Reading College. The department was increasing in size and complexity with new areas of FE to service, foundation degrees and collaborative networks as well as continuing to be responsible for computing in arts and media.

In the mid-2000s the investment in systems was paying off in terms of quality, structures and efficiency. External reviews and internal peer reviews had seen many improvements for which Andy was ultimately responsible and for which he had been a prime mover.

Nothing however could be achieved without a sense of team effort and ownership and this was growing. No doubt, too, that Andy drew strength from several very close associates in the Department and he continued to gain the support and trust of programme leaders.

Following this period of development and the arrival of Professor Peter John as new VC in 2007, the economy of TVU required attention. From 2009 resources were under a much more severe constraint as the economic downturn began and higher education funding tightened. In this period it can be said that the affairs of TVU were finally stabilised after difficulties in the late 1990s. The damage to reputation had been repaired and the links between stakeholders could be developed and enriched. Right from Andy’s arrival he had understood the need to build links with the computing industry and his work with Microsoft and Hewlett Packard especially were essential and paid dividends. If the computing industry had not experienced some down turns the results of these growing links would have been even better and stronger.

Expanding horizons: building a strong department

Difficult conditions at home however did not discourage Andy from kindling some research based links with overseas. His contacts in the internationalization field lead to work with contacts in China and India and slowly this created conditions for what he had long had in mind. This was to have a department that could bid for research funds with credibility and use this as a means of growing the academic reputation and level of activity. The mid-2000s saw the growth in demand for higher education in all fields expand but none more so than from China and India. TVU and computing did not have the capacity nor the clout to be part of the first wave, but Andy saw the possibility of entering in at the niche level. He was an energetic traveller and made research visits to China and recruitment visits (especially to India). From 2008 the number of Indian students recruited to the MSc programmes started to rise.

Whilst there could be tangible successes in overseas recruitment, the need to reshape the organization was also a growing concern (again) for HODs and the Directorate. External domestic forces and policy were driving change, not least finance but also issues of philosophy and purpose. The arrival of Professor Peter John signalled the intention to re-strategize...
Stephen A. Roberts

As a HOD Andy was increasingly involved in management of university at the strategic level. Peter John needed to have a supportive executive made up of heads and senior officers and Andy progressed to develop his role in this area. Like most senior academics in UK universities Andy was no stranger to the need for and vagaries of organizational change. At TVU there has been continual adjustment as part of the process of being responsive to change and opportunities, as well as modification in order to meet constraints (often of finance) but equally of markets, demand and operational conditions. When Andy came to TVU in 2004 a Faculty system had been introduced and was bedding down. By 2009/2010 this Faculty basis was being run down. A smaller number of Schools would acquire budgets, powers and responsibilities and a major layer of systems and organization (the Faculty level) would be taken out. Peter John was to lead the university into a new phase of development and Andy Smith showed himself responsive to these needs and actively took up the challenge.

After a long period of expansion since 1992, and a period of turbulence and adjustment, a combination of financial conditions, market needs and policy changes were to indicate a strategic change of great magnitude. Peter John had to bring in an agenda of concentration after the decision to cease the FE/HE combination which had built a major campus in Reading. Balancing the budget and a shortage of capital funds (and a lack of reserves) lead to the decision in 2010 to withdraw from the campus in Slough. This broke the links which had constituted an early part of Andy’s work at the university.

As a Head of School it was inevitable that Andy came to play a significant role in the overall concerns of the University by informing and shaping policy and helping to implement it. He was a strong advocate of efficiency in use of resources and time. His technical outlook ensured a systematic approach to implementation in practice: timetabling, assessment specifications, problem solving, timely delivery and a strong sense of process in managing quality were matters where his touch was felt in getting results. Whilst Andy played a very full part in all this, it never dimmed his ambition to focus on what became the main theme of his leadership. The idea of a research based school was always a desire and a motivator and Andy set out to achieve the best that could be done in the situation.

The 2007 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has proven to be a catalyst for helping to realize the ambitions Andy nurtured. The School of Computing achieved good results from its RAE efforts so that in 2008/2009 it was able to benefit from new funding. The School acquired five Vice Chancellor PhD bursaries out of the RAE money and other research active staff have been able to access funds to travel, attend conferences and to build research networks. The School had already become a research grant earner before the RAE success, and it is Andy’s legacy from his build of contacts prior to that which we should acknowledge. It is always a little of ‘to those who have shall be given’ but Andy was also giving before his School received those (RAE) gains. Reputation signals attraction and the School gained new professorial posts and some new teaching staff.

His achievements in computing were increasingly carried over into the wider realms of university research development. There is no doubt that he would have gone on to play an even more significant part. He was the Associate Dean for Research in the Faculty of Professional Studies and in the last year was making detailed proposals as to how activities in this area could be conducted. The research legacy to UWL and to the School of Computing is what Andy Smith must be remembered for. Teaching and learning and pedagogy and quality standards were not forgotten either in the last years. It is fair to say that he has left behind much of which he had hoped to continue. His story has been a rich and beneficial one for the School and for himself. He has left behind a strong group which under new leaders will surely realize the benefits of following what Andy had begun.

Prepared by Stephen A. Roberts for the School of Computing and Technology.
Andy Smith: a tribute

Colleagues and friends remember Professor Andy Smith, founder of the Centre for Internationalisation and Usability at The University of West London, who led a team of researchers working in Europe, Africa and Asia until his death in May 2011.

Pioneering cross-cultural usability

Andy Smith was a pioneer in cultural usability research. Cross-cultural usability is about making global products useful and usable to local users. For instance understanding how global websites should be designed to be an effective means of communication between a global website owner and a local user (Smith et al, 2004). His more recent work also focused on cultural aspects of software engineering in contexts such as off shoring in India (Lee, Smith and Mortimer, 2011). He founded the Centre for Internationalisation and Usability at The University of West London, which currently holds a team of researchers working in this field with partners in Europe, Africa, Latin-America and Asia.

As the influence of web based communications expanded, people realised that they needed to understand, and address the needs of a culturally diverse user base. When communicating to and with people across regional, linguistic and country boundaries, the user requirements are strongly influenced by their local cultural perspective. This has also had a direct effect on increased cultural differences in design and development teams, which Andy said also had to be addressed to improve quality of the product and user experience.

Cross-cultural usability is also about understanding the issues and problems arising when carrying out usability evaluations within culturally diverse populations. Usability evaluation techniques have traditionally been developed within Western cultures, and make assumptions about willingness of people to take part and express critical views about a prototype. However, studies which Andy was involved with showed that these established Western methods are less effective with users from other cultures (Smith, 2011). The work of Andy and his colleagues suggested that the reasons for this ineffectiveness are the consequences of deep-rooted differences in personal interactions in different cultures. His research provided evidence from countries including China, India and Africa.

Personally, I worked with Andy in different projects and modes over the last ten years, commercially and academically, even before we joined University of West London. He was not only a mentor and colleague, but also a very good friend. As you will notice from the lines below, Andy is described as a bright and organised academic, but the most important reason for which he will be remembered is that he was very good at bringing people together. He leaves behind a network of friendships passionate about a common research goal, which, no doubt, will keep being developed. That is his main legacy.

Jose Abdelnour-Nocera, Centre for Internationalisation and Usability, University of West London.
Enthusiasm for HCI
When he undertook the MSc in Interactive Computing Systems Design at Loughborough in 1992, Andy was already an experienced computing professional but the course really fired his enthusiasm for HCI. I had the pleasure of supervising his project (for which he gained a distinction). It was a survey of user-centred design which convinced him that usability was not being addressed systematically in the ordinary practice of systems design. What impressed me was his recognition that, to be usable, a system needed to map onto the rich user and task context of its application. In 1997 he published his book ‘Human Computer Factors’ (Smith, 1997) for which he and I developed the Plumbest plc case study as a running theme to show how every stage of design had to relate to the organisational context of the users. Subsequently, exploring the context of HCI took Andy into the realms of cultural and international determinants of usability. Andy had the courage to accept the confusion and variability of the many different worlds of users and the ability to find practical ways of dealing with the issues this raises for the design of usable systems. It was a privilege to know him and he will be sorely missed.

Ken Eason, Emeritus Professor at Loughborough University. Andy’s former HCI mentor.

Promoting collaboration
I felt deeply saddened and sorry when learning that Andy Smith passed away in June this year. He made a great contribution to international HCI by promoting collaboration between European and Asian researchers. He helped HCI to develop in China by exploring the impact of culture on both design and evaluation, recognising both the similarities and the differences between people around the globe. HCI colleagues in China lost a respected friend.

Andy and I met for the first time in January 2003, when he visited the Sino-European Usability Center. We discussed and agreed a joint proposal to the EU for the Sino-European System Usability Networking (SESUN) initiative, which was finally approved in 2004. This undoubtedly gave us great encouragement when we were experiencing various resistances in promoting usability in China.

In the ensuing years, 2005–2007, under Andy’s leadership, seven institutions from the EU and China worked together on the SESUN project. We organised five seminar tours all around China that attracted thousands of attendees from industry and academia, and conducted research on culture factors and the UCD process. All of these have made outstanding contributions. In the years when usability as a field had just started in China, many people from industry and academia actually began to know about this concept through our work and started their career in usability and HCI.

In the years working with Andy, my impression is that he was amiable, kind-hearted, lenient and considerate for others. Perhaps it is because of these qualities that he could gather and work well with so many partners in making such a big contribution to HCI’s growing up in Asia. Being a veteran of HCI in China and the adjunct chair for developing worlds at ACM SIGCHI, I shall take Andy as a model in pursuing the business he had not finished.

Zhengjie Liu, Director Sino-European Usability Center, Dalian Maritime University, China. Research Partner.

Down-to-earth style
Andy and I first met in the early 1990s and we later worked closely together at Luton College of HE (which later became Luton University), now Bedfordshire University. We then closely collaborated (he as co-founder, myself as humble Usability Consultant!) on several ‘real-world’ projects for ‘blue-chip’ clients of Optimum Web Ltd. It was Andy who first inspired both myself and our MSc students to relate theory to practice in usability engineering. That is, to engage on the application and commercial value side of things, not just look through an academic lens. Thus, commercial ‘jobs’ for Optimum Web Ltd led to many academic papers on cross-cultural design, whilst a small pilot study for a major UK Building Society web site for Optimum Web led me eventually to complete my own PhD in E-Trust at Reading University. Similarly, joint supervision of a PhD student on E-culture led to commercially applicable projects with clients.
Andy could be quite a demanding person to work with (he didn’t suffer fools gladly!) but was above all a really warm human being who thrived on challenge and who always engaged others in a direct manner. I shall miss his humour, his down-to-earth style and above all his passion for all things ‘HCI’. He made HCI @ Luton and @ Optimum Web ‘real’, cutting edge and a nice little ‘earner’. I wish we could all tick those same boxes eh?

Tim French, Senior Lecturer, University of Bedfordshire. Colleague at University of Luton.

Dedicated support
Professor Andy Smith was the ideal teacher any student would have dreamt of. His timely help and dedicated support while I carried out my PhD research and wrote up my thesis was second to none! He made my PhD journey so much easier as I could talk to him anytime especially when I had those nagging questions at the back of mind. He made me write journal papers even when I did not want to do so (in hindsight, I am so glad he made me do so)!

He took the risk and trusted me enough by giving me extra responsibilities within the department like teaching HCI which overall made me more alert and organised. Specifically, he supported me while I was in the field collecting data, when analysing that data and when finally putting it all together. Although it looked such a daunting task – without Andy’s help I’m not sure I would have seen the end of my PhD research. Despite this account being a very personal experience with Andy, I’m sure I speak for many students whom he supervised.

Cecilia Oyugi, University of West London. Andy’s PhD student.

Fuelling creativity
I met Andy while working as a consultant for Optimum Web in London. When we met, we had very different approaches to consultancy, me being more industry focused and Andy more academic. As we worked together and I had an opportunity to get to know Andy better, my appreciation and respect for him and his work grew greatly. He re-opened my eyes to the importance of academic work to practitioners and how it can fuel the creativity in which we apply user experience methods in industry. Andy was a master at this.

We shared an interest in cultural design and Andy provided me with the opportunity to travel to India on the IESUP Programme. I also had the opportunity to work with Andy on IWIPS over the years, most recently when TVU hosted the workshop in London in 2010. Andy’s contribution to HCI is immense; he was active internationally and brought the discipline to many countries. He provided guidance, support and friendship to many people, and fostered the development of the HCI discipline across the world. It was a privilege to have had the opportunity to work with Andy and to be able to call him a colleague and most of all a friend. He will be missed by many.

Elisa del Galdo, Director, del Galdo Consulting, UK. Colleague.

Quality of warmth
I felt deeply shocked and saddened when I learned about Andy Smith’s sudden death in June this year. We first met in the early 1990s at Luton University (now called Bedfordshire University). We taught a module together called Information Systems and Users. The experience with teaching with Andy was wonderful as he was so passionate about usability and I felt I learnt so much from him. This module led him to write his book on Human Factors.

Andy was a very kind-hearted understanding person; he loved undertaking and pursuing research in usability. He had a brilliant quality of warmth, friendliness and he always tried to integrate people. Recently, Andy gave me inspiration to do my PhD on a part-time basis; I will always be grateful to him for that. Many colleagues and friends will miss him greatly.

Sunila Modi, Senior Lecturer, University of Westminster. Colleague.
Special humour
Honestly, I was shocked to hear that Andy Smith had passed away. The HCI community lost a great international networker. Professor Andy Smith was at all times a quiet but fundamental father figure for my work. I met him several times in different projects. One of the nice experiences was as external examiner for one of his PhD students at the University of Luton. Andy was so nervous, much more than the candidate. But if you knew Andy, the exam was well prepared and the candidate had also learned very well. My memories are of his personal engagement to support the junior scientists and his individual relationships with each of them, but with the typical British distance. Andy was an excellent project manager and made things possible, things you could never believe before. He enabled us to think about HCI as a global challenge. Andy, I will miss your special humour after a hard working day. Kerstin Roese, TU Kaiserslautern and Siemens AG, Germany. Research Partner.

Generous spirit
I had the pleasure of working with Andy on both the EU–Asia IESUP (Indo-European Systems Usability Partnership) and SESUN (Sino-European Systems Usability Network) proposals and subsequent projects. Andy was a superb project coordinator, well-organised yet easygoing, and our adventures on the two projects, as we toured India and China giving talks and meeting faculty, students, government and business people, over several years, were fascinating and instructive. I particularly remember some of the delightful experiences we had on our travels, many shared with Jan Gulliksen, from Uppsala University in Sweden. Andy was a generous spirit who made everyone he came in contact with feel at ease. He cared deeply about making a worthwhile contribution to the development of HCI in these countries, yet he was also sensitive to how local needs and concerns needed to be incorporated into our approaches. We had occasional academic differences on how to approach the topic of ‘cultural’ usability, yet this never got in the way of our friendship.

I am deeply saddened at his premature and sudden passing, but I am buoyed by my remembrance of some of the very happy moments we shared, as we travelled across India and China. It was a privilege to have been there together, just as it was a privilege to have become, not just a colleague, but, over time, his friend.

Liam Bannon, Adjunct Professor, University of Limerick, Ireland; Hon. Professor of HCI, Aarhus University, Denmark; Visiting Professor, University College, Cork, Ireland. Research Partner.

References


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Education, Economy and Community: The University of West London Journal

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Referencing and house style

A referencing style sheet is available.

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