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BTO 2011 in Florence. Bricks from an exhibition

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Bricks from an exhibition

What are we talking about?

Digital communication in tourism can not be learned by studying a handbook, and having a final assessment...

Rather, it should be approached as a day-by-day self education.

The **BTO 2011**, a recent event – sort of a fair-cum-congress – held in **Florence** on December 1 through 2, 2011,

which your lecturer intentionally attended to,

provides us an opportunity to consider **five topics**,

(or “**bricks**” for building our in-progress “house of knowledge”), which are currently relevant to digital communication in tourism.

And these topics are

1. **Market Research**
2. **Social Media analytics**
3. **Search Engine and Semantics**
4. **Recommendation systems**
5. **Coupons**



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Market Research

PhoCusWright is a travel market research company, a member of which (her name is Florence Kaci) provided the **keynote speech** at the BTO 2011.

The focus of her presentation – a short video on which is now linked from our Google+ circle – were **OTAs**.

1. **Booking.com** has dramatically increased its market share in Europe (Booking.com is the European branch of **Priceline**, an OTA from Connecticut, USA; differently from Booking.com, Priceline also sells flights, and other travel services).
2. **eDreams**, **Opodo** and **GoVoyages** have merged, marking a change in the European OTA competition.
3. **Mobile e-commerce** is forecast to increase.



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Social Media analytics

How to know **what people think about you?**

As for the **Web**, your web server **logs** which pages your visitors have read, how long their visit lasted, and which server they “came” from. Not that much, but it’s something... (We’ll go deeper on this subject, later on.)

But what for the **Social Networks**? Their servers are completely out of our control...

Some specialized companies log the Social Networks, and can be of help. Some of them were at the BTO 2011.

✓ **TrustYou**, and

✓ **Olerly** – this one for accommodation only.

There’s also an academic model: **Dorm**, from Lugano.



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Search Engine and Semantics

An interesting platform was introduced in Florence by **XeniaLab**, from Switzerland and the Veneto region. This platform helps writing **text** to be published on the Web, designed to improve **search engine** positioning in thirty-two **languages**.

In fact, the semantics of a text and the **keywords** used are relevant in terms of search engine **positioning** – or the visibility a website enjoys when search are performed according to specific keywords.

(Think, for instance, of a Google search by a user who digits “Bergamo” + “activities”, or “Italy” + “beaches”.)

In the world of the Web, there is a specific function/profession about search engine positioning, and its name is **SEO** (Search Engine Optimization).



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Recommendation systems

Another topic discussed at the BTO 2011 was how to provide tourists with relevant **recommendations** in terms of tourism services, through a digital system.

Obviously, **tourist needs** vary according to each tourist's consumer **habits**, and the **context** she/he happens to be in, in a specific place and moment.

Suppose you are a tourist in Lecco. It's raining, and you're not a strong mountaineer, determined to climb the Grigne independently from weather conditions...

Which places can the Lecco DMO recommend you to visit, through your computer or your smartphone, in a context like this? A museum, perhaps, or a pastry shop...

A firm from Trento, called **eCtrl**, sells a digital platform which is capable to manage processes like this.



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Coupons

Yet another topic discussed at the BTO 2011 – and the last topic we are considering here in this lecture – was the much debated question of **digital coupons**.

Currently, the key platform in this field is **Groupon**, which is aggressively proposing its service on the Italian market. A presentation held in Florence by Brendan May from **ideas.com** explained why Groupon is **not** to be taken into serious consideration by the tourism industry as a distribution channel.

The risk of **missing the break even point** is in fact too high on the long term.

Digital coupons may be useful for promoting brand new business. Also in this instance, however, they must be used very consciously by the tourism industry.