

## Interacting With ICT to Create a New Touristic Product

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### Abstract

*Being a teacher in the 21st century entails a constant up-to-date in all senses but particularly as far as ICTs are concerned. At this moment technology in general is a tool to facilitate the teaching/learning process and we have to take advantage of that situation. Our students of the Tourism Degree at Rey Juan Carlos University have very specific needs and our intention is to meet those needs so that what they learn during their degree might be useful in their future careers.*

*One of the assignments our students have to face is to create a new product (or service) in the Tourism industry. In order to develop their product, students have to previously carry out some research (e.g. web searches) and get some information about different kinds of existing products so that they can come up with a new idea.*

*Apart from having to think of an idea for a new product in Tourism, they also have to make the potential customer aware of their product (marketing) so that they will also have to deal with other kinds of technology, such as creating an advertisement or using a website they have created themselves.*

*Keeping students motivated is one of the hardest tasks a teacher has to assume and we think that the use of technology in education has a very important impact on students' achievement, since the more involved students are in the learning process, the more they will get out of it. Therefore, our role as teachers is to enhance our students' learning environment and in this paper we will comment on our experience related to creating a new product in Tourism using ICTs.*

### 1. Introduction

'English Applied to Tourism' is a compulsory subject in the first year of the Degree in Tourism at Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid. There are two different subjects, English I is taught during the first semester and English II in the second semester but in fact both subjects could be considered just one, since what starts the first semester goes on until the end of the academic year. We begin with an introduction to the concept of 'Tourism' and with the different kinds of tourism we can come across.

Later on, once several types of touristic products have been analyzed, the idea of 'Tourism marketing' and its importance is introduced, and other concepts associated with it in the present world are highlighted. It is then when students have to start thinking about new products and to follow the different steps in order to market that new product or service they are going to introduce in the tourism industry.

In this paper we are going to focus on the process our students follow in creating a new product and the use of ICT they make.

### 2. Important aspects to involve students in their learning process

As university teachers we have to bear in mind that an ESP teacher is more than just a teacher since being an ESP teacher implies other aspects, such as becoming an *evaluator*, a *collaborator*, a *course*

*designer* and *materials provider* and a *researcher*; in short, a teacher should try to be a 'facilitator' of his students' learning process, which is not an easy task. However, nowadays there are many resources available and we have to learn how to make use of them and how to get the most out of them in the class. We have almost forgotten about textbooks since at present we can resort to many other resources in order to make our classes attractive for our students, especially when dealing with tourism.

We know that the teacher as well as the approach used is crucial in any learning process. Most approaches nowadays emphasize the participative nature of teaching on the part of students, but it is the teacher the one in charge of the class and the one that can really motivate students because one basic aspect in all kinds of teaching is motivation. The more motivated students are, the better results they can obtain and the more they can get out of their learning.

The concepts of Planning and Preparation highlighted by Butt [1] are very important when trying to foster motivation in class. As teachers should organize lessons taking into account their students' needs, we mainly use authentic materials in class (real texts from newspapers and tourism magazines, real websites, already existing products in the tourism industry, etc.). Moreover, we should bear in mind the fact that our tourism students should develop social skills alongside academic skills in their learning process, being both kinds of skills crucial in the near future; and we should also be able to enhance our students' knowledge by using the appropriate resources so that they will be successful in their future professional careers.

Other two aspects to take into account -mentioned by Kyriacou- are 'novelty and variety' [2] since they provide a more stimulating experience. If students are used to doing the same things again and again, they will get bored and lose interest. On the other hand, if we, as teachers try to introduce new ideas, new exercises, new techniques (different and useful for them) when teaching English, we will attract our students' attention and interest in our subject. Thus, we are going to detail how we apply this learning process in the class.

### **3. The progression of the learning process to make students autonomous and successful**

In order to attract our students and make them interested in our subject, we have to make use of the appropriate strategies. If the subject is presented in an attractive way, they will immediately feel interested in it. As learning is a cognitive process, we start by introducing several kinds of tourism and by eliciting different answers from them about 'other types' of tourism. They realize then that there are many kinds of tourism. Once we have made the distinction between different categories, they have to show preferences for some of them. Apart from these, they have to start thinking about real products (or services) they know and/or they have used, since teachers have to give students the opportunity to display personal knowledge or different personal experience because, as Senior [3] stresses, the reality in the book is just meaningless for them - dead on the page, which is one of the reasons why using textbooks is not recommended in our classes.

Later on, they are presented with many new products in Tourism they have not even heard of, which is when they realize the potential the tourism industry has at present and the many possibilities they have when they finish their degree. They start showing more interest when they hear concepts such as 'Glamping' (glamorous camping), 'Slow Tourism' or the increasing use of 'segways' in the tourism industry. One common pedagogical technique mentioned by Dörnyei is to raise curiosity [4] in your students. Once we get to this point, it is the students' task to start doing web searches in order to find out more about new products and their potential success they might have in the tourism sector. Students then realize that currently tourism is one of the fastest growing industries across the world and it is a business that involves many different socio-economic activities in which the following can be

included: attracting people to a destination (advertising), transporting them (means of transport), accommodation (many different offers nowadays), feeding (restoration), entertaining, etc. Therefore, they can focus on several areas and many distinct kinds of products.

As the choice of topic in the class is another important aspect, we have decided to make use of marketing since this is a common concept in everybody's life and something they can easily apply; on the other hand, they are used to advertising and they enjoy applying all kinds of ideas in the advertising world. Something that strikes students at the beginning of the academic year is the practical orientation the English subject has. They are used to sitting in the class and being taught things but they are not really accustomed to taking the initiative and doing work on their own, much less, to creating a new product 'from scratch'. Therefore, we are going to explain the process we follow in class.

#### **4. How to put the aforementioned aspects into practice using ICT: the creation of a new touristic product**

First of all, our students are supposed to carry out some market research so as to find out whether the idea they have for a new product does exist in the market or not. We know the access to new technologies implies an increase in the supply of information and the Internet is the main tool they use for their market research. They can get some feedback via e-mail surveys, for example.

Usually a new product is supposed to fulfill an existing need in the market, that is, a gap, which is why we recommend them to think of a gap in the tourism market, sometimes following their own personal experience. Afterwards they have to fully develop the four P's of marketing, that is, Product, Price, Place and Promotion. And they obviously have to deal with the concept of the target market for their new product (which is also known as the fifth P of marketing).

Therefore, they start describing their new product or service. Tourism is a service industry and it mostly offers services to different kinds of people (the target market). As in the last years there has been an increase of the Internet portals specialized in selling tourism products, students tend to make use of this tool since it is an easy to use and cheap option to make potential customers aware of a new product. For example, students are made aware of different products and several websites and how they are organized. Some new products for them are:

- <http://www.vegetarian-restaurants.net/India-Guide/IndianStates/Madhya-Pradesh/Khajuraho.htm>, <http://www.kairali.com/Centers.asp> (Ayurvedic massages in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, India, the Dance Festival and all the Jani and erotic temples, declared World Heritage).
- They are also shown new tourism products which have been created during the last years:
- Glamping is a new tourism concept and the very word is a blend of glamour and camping <http://goglamping.net/>, <http://goglamping.net/location/europe/spain/> (glamping in Spain)
- [http://www.tourismkamloops.com/home\\_showSection\\_ID\\_95.html](http://www.tourismkamloops.com/home_showSection_ID_95.html) (New products in 2011 for Kamloops, British Columbia).

Some blogs related to the tourism industry are also mentioned:

- <http://www.tourismindustryblog.co.nz/> (New Zealand)

In order for them to really learn the process of creating and marketing a new product, some online articles are recommended to students so that they learn about launching a new product as well as they are improving their level of English: Some examples are:

- <http://www.tourismbusiness toolkit.co.uk/xsdbimngs/TK1.aDOC%20-%20Developing%20Tourism%20Products.pdf> (Niche NPD in North East England). In this article the steps to follow when marketing a new product in tourism are very clearly explained.
- <http://fama2.us.es:8080/turismo/turisonet1/economia%20del%20turismo/marketing%20turistico/new%20development%20products%20in%20tourism.pdf> (NPD in tourism companies)
- [http://www.ticadexchange.org/fileadmin/media/documents/AABFV\\_Plenary\\_3\\_Prof.\\_Marafa\\_talking\\_notes.pdf](http://www.ticadexchange.org/fileadmin/media/documents/AABFV_Plenary_3_Prof._Marafa_talking_notes.pdf) (NPD and marketing: the relevance of African destinations for the Asian market).

After having read these articles, they realize their product has to be unique to a certain extent (they should present a Unique Selling Proposition) so that they can attract potential customers (their target market). Moreover, they also have to carry out a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) to try to check whether their product will be successful or not. And obviously they will make use of some advertising techniques to make their potential customers aware of the new product.

Some marketing articles are the following:

- <http://www2.dunedinnz.com/Portals/dunedinnz/Files/Info%20for%20new%20operators/Promoting%20Your%20Product%20to%20Cruise%20Passengers.pdf>
- Advertising and promotions: one-to-one web customization.
- <http://www.destinationwebwatch.org/> Helping destinations to achieve successful marketing online.
- [http://www.tatnews.org/TAT\\_Videos/vdo/5366.asp](http://www.tatnews.org/TAT_Videos/vdo/5366.asp) Thailand advertisement ('Amazing Thailand always amazes you' Slogan).

Our students know that Spain is a very good touristic product, which is why they are shown the evolution of the different advertising campaigns in Spain and the image of Spain as a tourist destination with Turespaña: <http://www.slideshare.net/PedroVzquezPereira/campaas-publicitarias-turespaa> so that they can realize the importance of advertising and how to sell a new product.

## 5. Conclusion

At the end of their first academic year, and especially when they finish their projects, my students realize that tourism is a very dynamic as well as exciting industry to be involved in. On the one hand, students have to become familiar with new technologies since their role in the tourism industry is crucial nowadays; as we have seen, new technologies have a potential impact on tourism businesses. On the other hand, by writing and presenting these projects, not only do students improve their level of English, but they also deal with real products and authentic materials and they also learn a lot about the tourism industry in which they are going to work in due course.

As new tourism practices are usually associated to aspects such as lifestyles and holiday and work patterns, our students can easily create a product or service to be offered to the new kind of tourist as opposed to the type of traditional tourist. Since Information and Communication Technologies have transformed tourism globally, it is basic that students learn how to deal with them in order to be able to use them in the real world when they finish their degree and we are sure that after having written such a project launching a new product they have started their preparation for the real world.

## References

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