eLearning Courses about National Tourism Destinations:
Destination Management Organizations' Offers and Travel Agents' Perceptions and Motivations

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Abstract

A broad number of studies have been undertaken so far both by the academic research and by industry communities on the use of the internet for educational purposes. However, very limited research has been done previously on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as educational and training modes within the hospitality and tourism field. Travel agent training, certification processes and the use of ICTs to deliver training to the travel trade have been largely excluded from the previous academic research. This study aimed to address this research gap with the purpose to understand eLearning offerings within the tourism field. It explored the use of eLearning courses created by Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) for the education and certification of their travel trade partners. Additionally, it investigated the reactions and motivations of the users – travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand – on those training activities.

In order to answer specific research questions, this thesis adopted a mixed method approach including both qualitative (benchmarking and case studies), and quantitative (online questionnaires and phone interviews) research instruments. This interdisciplinary research project contains elements of the following research fields: tourism and eTourism, education and eLearning, Human Resource Management, as well as motivational theories.

This study explored all existing eLearning offers provided by DMOs worldwide. 75 available eLearning courses about national tourism destinations were analysed looking thoroughly at their structure. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the representatives of two DMOs: Tourism New Zealand and Swiss National Tourism Office, in order to provide an in-depth corporate view on the subject matter: Kiwi Specialist Program and Switzerland Travel Academy. An online exploratory questionnaire with the travel agents globally has been done in order to evaluate participation in and awareness about eLearning courses about tourism destinations and subsequent reactions of the travel agents on them. Phone interviews with travel agents based in the United Kingdom (#190), India (#272) and New Zealand (#165) were then conducted in order to discover the rates of current usage. This study also looked at the rates of awareness of eLearning courses in the three studied countries, as well as investigated what motivates and discourages travel agents to participate in online training activities. The final online questionnaire (#249) tested a new theoretical model on the motivational factors for attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. The model was based on the series of elements derived from the previous steps within this study as well as incorporated the elements from existing motivation theories.

This study revealed benefits of eLearning as a new form of training within the tourism industry. eLearning courses are believed to be a convenient mode of training, which gives a greater access to education for travel agents globally, especially to those based in geographically isolated locations. eLearning courses are financially viable from both the provider and the user perspective as well as enhance the performance of travel agents within their roles, and presumably the satisfaction of their current or potential clients.

Travel agents undertake eLearning activities, as they believe them to be helpful in work-related tasks as well as are beneficial for updating needed knowledge. Additionally, travel agents appreciate the opportunity to study online, while being able to update their knowledge on their own pace and in a flexible environment. The research revealed that travel agents in the three studied countries are not attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations due to a desire to feel related to their managers or colleagues.

The study showed that participation in the eLearning courses depends on the country where travel agents are based, the type of agency they work for and their gender. While the age of the travel agents and their educational level did not show any significant influences on the participation level. At the same time, awareness about the existence of eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the county where travel agents are based, and doesn't depend on their age, gender, type of agency they work for or their educational level.

This thesis provided the first empirical results in the field for the use of ICTs for Human Resource Management of the travel trade. It is the first extensive study on eLearning usages within on-the-job training in the hospitality and tourism industry. This study contributed to eTourism and eLearning literature, within a given professional family, that of the travel agent. The research has analysed and tested the factors influencing travel agents' participation in and awareness about eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Furthermore, this research has proposed and tested a sound empirically based theoretical framework for the evaluation of the motivational drivers in the specific context, those of travel agents on undertaking destinational eLearning courses.

The results of the study also have industry implications, particularly the first understanding of the eLearning options through a benchmarking study of all existing national eLearning courses about tourism destinations as well as through two case studies, which presented the managerial perspective on the studied issue. Furthermore, marketing, trade partnership and training managers within national, regional and local tourism offices are presented with the first research on travel agents' evaluation of eLearning training platforms, on the rates awareness and participation in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand and on their motivations on starting an online training activity. This research can help representatives of the DMOs to understand better the role of eLearning for travel agents, and, therefore, develop more efficient and effective strategies and actions in their trade and training partnerships globally.

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List of Abbreviations

ABTA – Association of British Travel Agents

ASTA – American Society of Travel Agents

ATTTO – Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organization

CRM – Customer Relationship Management

DMO – Destination Management Organization

FIT – Free Independent Travellers

GDS – Global Distribution System

HRM – Human Resource Management

IATA – International Air Transport Association

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

IFITT – International Federation for IT in Travel and Tourism

LMS – Learning Management System

LTO – Local Tourism Organization

MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses

OTA – Online Travel Agency

RTO – Regional Tourism Organization

SME – Small and Medium Enterprise

SMTE – Small and Medium Tourism Enterprise

TAAI – Travel Agent Association of India

TAANZ – Travel Agent Association of New Zealand

TNZ – Tourism New Zealand

WATA – World Association of Travel Agents

Introduction

The development of the internet and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are having an intense impact on modern society: enhancing and empowering both personal lives of individuals as well as corporate interactions and relations. ICTs in general and the internet in particular are dominant players in the tourism industry nowadays, as they are changing the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of consumers around the globe. Moreover, in the last twenty years a considerable interest has been seen in the internet as an educational tool and as a platform for delivery of training materials.

In the last decade eLearning, which can be defined as "the use of new multimedia technologies and the internet to improve the quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services as well as remote exchanges and collaboration" (CEC, 2001, p.2), have been adopted by the tourism and hospitality industry representatives as means of increasing skills and knowledge guidance. A broad number of studies have been undertaken so far both by the academic research and industry communities on the use of the internet and ICTs for educational purposes; though very limited research has been done previously on the use of ICTs as educational and training modes within the hospitality and tourism field (Baum & Sigala, 2001; Braun & Hollick, 2006; Haven & Botterill, 2003). Even if a growing interest has been shown by tourism practitioners in the field (ABTA, 2012a; Tnooz, 2011; Travel Market Report, 2011), scant academic research has been done on the subject, in particular, little is known about the status of eLearning training practices for travel trade. For instance, no empirical research has been previously undertaken on the use of the internet as an educational tool for travel agents and travel consultants. This thesis intends to fill in this research gap. Proposed study explores the use of eLearning platforms created by Destination Management Organizations around the globe at a national level, as well as the perceptions and motivations on the new training offer on the side of the travel agents.

This interdisciplinary research project contains elements of the next research fields: tourism and eTourism, education, Human Resource Management and eLearning, as well as motivational theories.

In order to answer identified research questions, this thesis adopts a mixed method approach including both qualitative (benchmarking and case studies), and quantitative (online questionnaires and phone interviews) research instruments.

Research goals

Main aim of this research is to understand and describe both the demand and the supply side of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Its aim has been further elaborated and organized into three main research goals:

1. Map eLearning offers about national tourism destinations created for travel agents.
2. Recognise the travel agents' reaction (participation and awareness) on such offers and factors influencing it.
3. Provide a framework to investigate motivational drivers of the travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations and validate it.

In order to reach above-stated research goals, five research phases were undertaken. The first phase takes a benchmarking research approach in order to explore the specific area of the study and map existing eLearning offers as well as outline their main characteristics. All available eLearning offers provided by Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) at the national level will be analysed, looking at the online curriculum design, teaching methods, contents and incentives strategies, people involved in the production and delivery, as well as usages of the eLearning practices by travel agents.

The second phase includes semi-structured interviews with the representatives of two ministries of tourism: Tourism New Zealand and Swiss National Tourism Office, in order to provide an in-depth corporate view on the subject matter, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses of current eLearning options.

In order to evaluate awareness of the travel agents globally on the existing eLearning offer provided by tourism destinations as well as to evaluate their reaction on such an offer, the third phase is in the form of an exploratory online questionnaire has been undertaken. This has been designed with the global travel agent in mind.

The fourth phase of this study includes phone interviews with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. This research step has been done in order to gauge the rates of current usages and awareness for eLearning courses in three respective countries and to investigate what motivates and discourages travel agents to participate in online training activities.

The fifth, and the final phase, includes an online questionnaire with the travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand and will test a new theoretical model on the motivational factors on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. The

model is based on the series of elements derived from the exploratory studies and the phone interviews completed with travel agents and will incorporate as well the elements of the next motivational theories: Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Roca & Gagne, 2008). Additionally, national differences of the motivations of the travel agents will be evaluated in this research step.

The output of this thesis will be filling in the research gap on understanding eLearning options in the tourism and hospitality field, specifically on eLearning courses offered by DMOs for travel agents.

This research will have implications on both academic and tourism industry communities. It will contribute to tourism eLearning literature, within a given professional family, that of the travel agent, a profession which has been deeply affected by ICTs in the last twenty years. Academic community will see the results of the first empirical research in the next fields:

1. Human Resource Management for travel trade
2. eLearning usages within on-the-job training in the tourism industry
3. Travel agents motivations and a-motivations to study and upgrade knowledge online.

The theoretical outcome of this thesis will be the new framework for investigating motivations among travel agents on their use of eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

Moreover, the study will have an industry application, as the marketing and travel trade partnership managers within DMOs will be presented with the first research on travel agents' evaluation of concerned eLearning training platforms. Industrial community will benefit as well, as this research can help DMO representatives better understand the role of the online training for travel agents, and therefore develop more efficient and effective strategies and actions in their trade and training partnerships.

Overview and structure of the thesis

This thesis has been structured into five chapters. It starts from the *Context and theoretical background* in Chapter 1. This chapter will look at the previous research, which was undertaken within the studied research context and aims to evaluate and emphasize possible links among the hospitality and tourism industry, Information and Communication Technologies, training and education. Furthermore, eLearning concept and its interpretations will be presented along with the evaluation of training practices within the hospitality and tourism industry; relations between Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and their travel trade partners; as well as characteristics of the travel agency sector in the three studied tourism markets: the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. This chapter concludes with the identification of the research gap and the development of the research questions.

Chapter 2 looks at the *methods*, conceptual frameworks and models, which were employed within this research. This chapter justifies the relevance of the used methods and outlines various data collection analysis procedures, which were undertaken within this research project, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the presentation of the *Supply side of the eLearning offer,* featuring a comprehensive overview of the existing eLearning offerings through a complete comparative benchmarking study of all the eLearning courses provided by national DMOs, which were available online in the falls of 2009 and 2012.

Furthermore, two case studies among the best-evaluated eLearning courses about tourism destinations at the national level are presented: Switzerland Travel Academy (Swiss National Tourism Office) and Kiwi Specialist Program (Tourism New Zealand). The development strategies, including technical and content development, motivations of the respective destinations on having such training on offer as well as history of the platforms, management structure, budgets and usages will be discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the *Demand side of the eLearning offer*, looking at the travel agents perception and their motivations on starting online training activity. This chapter features three research steps, which were undertaken in order to answer research questions: exploratory online questionnaire with the travel agents worldwide, phone interviews with the outbound travel agents working in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand; as well as online questionnaire on motivational factors of the travel agents from same countries.

The findings and *discussions* are presented in Chapter 5. The conclusions collect the key points raised within this study, featuring as well research and industry communities'

contribution of current research. Furthermore, the limitations of current study are mentioned along with the implications and suggestions for future research.

Table 1. provides an overview of the main phases of the research, methods involved, sampling strategy and well as the structure of the thesis. Moreover, the overall outcome of the thesis is outlined also here.

Research goals
1. Map eLearning (eL) offers about national tourism destinations for travel agents (TAs)
2. Recognise TAs' reaction (participation and awareness) on such offers and factors influencing it
3. Provide a framework to investigate motivational drivers of the TAs on undertaking eL courses about tourism destinations and validate it

Research objectives				
Phase 1 (Chapter 1 and sub-chapter 3.1)	Phase 2 (Sub-chapters 3.2 - 3.4)	Phase 3 (Sub-chapter 4.1)	Phase 4 (Sub-chapters 4.2 and 4.3)	Phase 5 (Sub-chapters 4.4 and 4.5)
Understand research issue statement and map eL offers about national tourism destinations	Identify and present best practices in the field	a. Evaluate tentative participation and awareness about eL courses globally and the reaction of TAs on them; b. Get the list of best evaluated eL courses	a. Evaluate rates of awareness and participation in the eL courses by TAs in the UK, India and NZ; b. Outline motivations and a-motivations	a. Test motivation parameters; b. Evaluate national differences in the UK, India and NZ

Methods				
Literature review and benchmarking study	Case studies through interviews and analysis of internal documents	Exploratory online questionnaire	Phone interviews	Online questionnaire

Sampling strategy				
Analysis of all existing eL courses about national tourism destinations	Suggested by TAs in Phase 3 and opportunistic due to availability	Non probabilistic accidental sample with TAs globally	Simple random sampling of officially registered TAs in the UK, India and NZ	Non probabilistic accidental sample of TAs based in the UK, India and NZ, who have previously done eL courses

Quantity				
75	2	1004	627	230

Main outcome				
First complete benchmarking study of all existing eL courses about national tourism destinations	a. Research framework refinement b. Identified strengths and limits of eL offers	a. First evaluation of the awareness of TAs and their reaction; b. First tentative list of motivation variables; c. List of best eL courses	a. Rates of awareness and participation in eL in the UK, India and NZ; b. Definition and refinement of motivation parameters and variables	a. Tested motivation parameters; b. Evaluated national differences

Research output
- First empirical research in the field of HRM for travel trade and eL usages within on-the-job training in the hospitality and tourism industry;
- Analysis of the factors influencing participation in and awareness about destinational eLearning courses
- Designed and tested a theoretical framework for the understanding of the motivations among TAs on their use of eL platforms about tourism destinations

Industry outcome
Better understanding of the eL offer by DMOs through the analysis of:
- the supply side – evaluation of the existent eL practices
- the demand side – evaluation of TAs perceptions and motivations.

Table 1. Overview and structure of the study

Chapter 1. Context and theoretical background

Overview

This chapter presents the theoretical background of this study, looking at previous research that was undertaken within the studied research context. The core dimensions presented and discussed within this chapter, shape the theoretical basis of this thesis and its research threads. The thesis is looking to evaluate and emphasize the links between the hospitality and tourism industry, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), training and education.

As the main research area that current study examines is eLearning integration in the hospitality and tourism industry, the following four elements provide an overview of current research:
- understanding of the eLearning concept and its interpretations;
- evaluation of training practices within the hospitality and tourism industry;
- relations between Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and their travel trade partners;
- characteristics of the travel agency sector in the three studied tourism markets: the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

Reflections on ICTs in the hospitality and tourism domain, the specific field taken into consideration within this thesis, and its context are investigated in the sub-chapter 1.1. The role played by ICTs in the hospitality and tourism field and their strategic function in the educational arena are examined in the sub-chapter 1.2. In the sub-chapters 1.3. and 1.4. theoretical foundation of this study is investigated, presenting the concept of eLearning, firstly defining it, as well as showing state of the art of eLearning use within the applied domain, the hospitality and tourism field. The sub-chapter 1.5. will present the relationship status between DMOs and their travel trade partners – travel agents, consultants and tour operators. Sub-chapter 1.6. will present the characteristics of the travel agency sector in the three studied countries – United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

Lastly, the presentation of the research gap and main research questions identified for this study will conclude this chapter in the sub-chapters 1.7. and 1.8. accordingly.

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Cantoni, L., Kalbaska, N., & Inversini, A. (2009). eLearning in Tourism and Hospitality: A Map. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 8*(2), 148-156.

1.1. Information and Communication Technologies in the hospitality and tourism industry

Several changes in society have influenced the hospitality and tourism industry, such as political, social and economic factors. However, the principal change in the last twenty years has been seen thanks to the advancements of technology. Tourism and hospitality is one of those industries that is exceptionally suitable for the adoption, integration and successful use of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Anckar & Walden, 2001; Bennett, 1993). For instance, travel related products are a major group of goods that are being sold with the help of the internet nowadays (Yu, 2008). Additionally, tourism and hospitality industry is considered to be one of the leading sectors in marketing and eCommerce (Tassiopoulos, 2010).

The diffusion of ICTs has been influencing the business environment of tourism intensely, particularly in the aspects of information accessibility. Distribution of information has been greatly transformed within the last twenty years from print materials to digital materials, where the web has become the primary tool to deliver information by tourism organizations and hospitality enterprises to potential tourists. At the same time, the internet has changed the way in which communication is taking place, and has become one of the most important sources of information and collaboration worldwide, not just within tourism and hospitality.

The development of ICTs has motivated innovation within tourism industry by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism enterprises. At a strategic level, ICTs have had a deep impact on all business processes, the entire value chain as well as on the strategic relationship and the competitiveness of tourism or hospitality organizations, including both internal and external organizational practices (Choi *et al.*, 2007; Mills & Law, 2004).

For instance, with the help of ICTs, tourism companies have got easy access to information as well as to the preferences of their customers. Tourism managers can easily access customer' profiles through eCRM. Moreover, representatives of the tourism companies can analyse customers' behaviour and needs through web search. Additionally, yield management, dynamic pricing and dynamic packaging all became available thanks to the expansion and development of the ICTs.

The impact of ICTs on the tourism and hospitality industry has been widely recognized and investigated by academic researchers as one of the major changes within the tourism domain in the last two decades. New ways of communicating with prospective tourists and the possibility of selling tourism products online have become a crucial part of the working day within the tourism industry (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Academic research on the online tourism domain has been initiated with the study of

Werthner and Klein (1999), who designed a new conceptual framework, which explained the interaction between the consumer and tourism industry, where ICTs were playing an intermediation role.

With the growing importance of the internet and lately of increased mobile usage for travel planning purposes, academic research has been directed towards the analysis of the hospitality and tourism domain. Special attention has been paid to the representation of the role of new technological applications such as search engines, smart phone apps, location based services and augmented reality for the travel planning processes by potential tourists (Alzua-Sorzabal *et al.*, 2007; Lamsfus *et al.*, 2013; Pan & Fesenmaier, 2006; Tussyadiah, 2012; Wang & Xiang, 2012; Wöber, 2006). Academic research community also paid attention to the fact that tourism companies can benefit from the co-creation of their promotional contents together with their clients while supporting and using social media and review sites (De Ascaniis & Morasso, 2011; Marchiori *et al.*, 2011; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

The first complete picture of this new tourism online environment was titled as the "eTourism domain" (Buhalis, 2003, p.76) and has been defined as "the digitization of all the processes and value chains in the tourism, travel, hospitality and catering industries that enable organizations to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness".

The concept of eTourism (Buhalis, 2003) refers to all ICT tools that are used in tourism sector and are helpful to perform planning, development, marketing and management processes within the concerned industry. Subsequently, eTourism is a merging unit, which comprises three distinct areas: business, ICTs and tourism.

- *Business management,* where eTourism incorporates all business functions, for instance, eMarketing, eCommerce, eFinance, eAccounting and eProduction;
- *ICTs*, where eTourism applies technologies for information management in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the tourism management processes within organizations;
- *Tourism*, where eTourism includes all sectors of the industry, such as travel, hospitality, transport, leisure and entertainments, as well as cultural heritage sites (e.g. museums).

ICTs have had significant implications on the tourism sector on both sides: the demand and the supply. Looking at the demand side, ICTs have empowered the consumers providing a direct access to various sources of information. As reported by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2008), tourism technology is influencing the way travel consumers decide, buy and exchange travel-related information. Well-prepared and well-travelled tourists are looking for new experiences, often based on information

they retrieve online. With the development of ICTs, as well as with the spread of social networks and rating websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tripadvisor, travel blogs, etc. "customers have the ability to share information and ratings on the quality of service in hotels and restaurants, as well as on the environmental and social conditions of tourism destinations" (International Labour Organization, 2010, p.41).

Tourists rely on the internet because of the information-intensive characteristics of the travel products. Travel products are "*intangible*, as they cannot be touched and returned; *inseparable*, as they must be produced and consumed simultaneously; *heterogeneous*, as tourism products are too difficult to standardize, and *perishable*, as they cannot be stocked for further use" (Edgett & Parkinson, 1993, p.19). Thus, travel products are normally purchased before the use, consumed and experienced while at the destination and evaluated after the consumption process. Gretzel, et.al. (2000), as well as Buhalis (2003) suggested that tourists nowadays are looking for an extensive information on tourism destinations, attractions and activities both before their departure, while searching for available accommodation options, flights, climate and weather conditions and after their arrival at the destination while using maps, mobile apps, and other tools for communicating with relatives and friends. Technologies are also used after the trips, while reviewing and sharing previous experiences with friends and relatives and other tourists, uploading images and videos about the trip online. Consequently, modern tourists are more independent when they plan their travels, they prefer to use several online tools and channels and wide range of possibilities to search, plan, customize, and book their trips.

Thanks to the improved quality of multimedia, expansions of global search engines, as well as of the recommendation systems – tourism players, including hotels and tourism destinations, are able to provide easily optimal product information to potential clients – tourists and visitors. As a result, the customers also reduce their efforts on information gathering and travel planning, and the web becomes the most preferred information source for potential tourists. For instance, figures within Google's report of "The Travellers Road to Decision" (2011), demonstrate that "the internet" is the number one source for trip planning both for private and business purposes, accounting for 85% and 78% accordingly, followed by "family; friends and colleagues", whose opinion is important for 60% and 38% accordingly.

Because of the fast technological shift that happened in the last decade, tourism supply side has to face the challenge of satisfying current technologically skilled travellers. Tourism organizations need to be ready to provide accurate and high quality information. At the same time it should be acknowledged, that tourism enterprises need to monitor the changing demand of the customers. ICTs support the globalization of tourism industry

by providing instruments for management, development and distribution of their offers worldwide. In fact, several tourism companies have noted that proper use of ICTs can empower them in the communication process with potential clients and other stakeholders, as well as can be helpful in achieving economies of scale (Collins *et al.*, 2003).

The use ICTs in general and the internet in particular are exceptionally vital for the competitiveness of the hospitality and tourism industry overall, and for the Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) in particular (UNWTO, 2004). According to Frew and O'Connor (1999), this happens, as the internet has become a favourite channel for tourism destinations to market themselves and their products internationally. Therefore, it is crucially important for DMOs at different levels, which may be a ministry of tourism, a regional tourism organization or a local tourism office, to adopt ICTs for keeping their destinations competitive and maintaining their leadership in the available marketing and selling tourism networks. For instance, online marketing, which includes search engine optimization, social engine marketing, email marketing, online promotion, etc., has created great opportunities for destination managers to promote their destinations via the internet. Such promotion helps DMOs to enhance their overall communication and interactions with the suppliers, and finally deliver a remarkable amount of information in an effective way to potential customers (UNWTO, 2008). It should be acknowledged that several DMOs globally have already experienced the benefits that online marketing brings to them. Nevertheless, the competition between tourism destinations is growing, so DMOs need to keep up with the web and applications development and react wisely to the technological developments as well as to the changing patterns of the tourism demand.

As the use of ICTs within the industry is increasing significantly, for the sustainability in this sector, travel companies will naturally increase the demand for the employees "who are competent in adapting, implementing and managing ICT as a part of their normal daily business activities" (Tassiopoulos, 2010, p. 51-52.).

The world of tourism and hospitality has been deeply reorganized due to the development of ICTs not just in terms of how tourism products are being marketed, sold and purchased, destinations being promoted, hotels and airline companies being ranked online, but also in the ways in which tourism and hospitality personnel is being trained (Buhalis & Law, 2008). ICTs enabled managers of both the hospitality and tourism companies to better support and prepare their employees and external partners with more extensive and current information as well as through online training activities.

In the view of the above, it is possible to conclude that ICTs have made a significant shift to the hospitality and tourism industry and brought several benefits to it, such as the

increase of profitability and performance, achievement of competitive methods, development of new business and management techniques and encouragement for bigger and more efficient cooperation among tourism companies. Moreover, the development of ICTs has showed to tourism managers that in order to keep up their positions on the market and to remain competitive in the eMarket they need to embark on all the possibilities that are provided by ICTs, e.g. online marketing communication or online educational channels.

1.2. Employees' training within the hospitality and tourism industry

The hospitality and tourism industry is one of the fastest growing economic domains in the world. It brings a significant amount of income in payment for goods and services accounting for 30% of the world's exports of services, and 6% of the overall exports of goods and services (UNWTO, 2012a). The tourism and hospitality industry is valuable and in some cases vital for the economy of around the globe. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2012), tourism will employ more than 100 million people globally in 2013 and will generate revenue, that exceeds 2 trillion GDP. Throughout the world, tourism is now ranked in the top three industries for service and employment (Goedler & Ritchie, 2006), and it continues growing internationally. UNTWO (2012, c) confirmed that the international visitor arrival reached one billion in 2012 and this situation creates an immense amount of business opportunities and employment positions globally. The industry has created significant opportunities for employment in the next sectors: transportation services, hospitality services, entertainment and cultural heritage interpretation (UNTWO, 2012b).

Fast development and growth of the tourism sector during the last decades has led to a shortage of adequately trained staff (Go, 1981). According to Esichaikul and Baum (1998, p. 359) "demand for labour exceeds supply, in terms of quantity in developed countries and quality in developing countries. Additionally to that, many countries face a problem of matching the suitability of education and training to the needs of the industry". Sheldon *et al*., (2011, p.2) suggested that fundamental radical change in tourism education "is necessary to respond to global challenges impacting tourism at a fundamental level".

According to Baum (2007), the success of tourism enterprises depends on the employees and on the way they are employed, managed, trained, as well as rewarded and supported through the process of continuous career development. Tourism industry structure and its particularities make the training a complex issue. In most cases within the industry "staff training, whether it exists at all, is on-the-job, whilst teaching skills of tutors may be quite rudimentary or at best spontaneous" (Sigala *et al*., 2001, p. 34). For instance, hospitality industry displays one of the lowest levels of training activity in the British economy (HCTC, 1995). Sheldon *et al.,* (2011, p.3) suggested that there is a need within the concerned industry on understanding and promoting lifelong learning "in order to underpin professional expertise".

The next factors describe the structure and particularities of the industry that influence significantly Human Resource Management (HRM) in general and the training in the field in particular:

- high diversity in terms of the types of businesses within the industry;

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- size of the companies and geographical spread;
- seasonality;
- skills shortages and high level of turnover, etc.

The above-mentioned reasons present some unusual challenges for training and education providers (Baum, 1994, 2006), concerning issues of access, deliverability of the training offer, cost and the amount of time needed. The hospitality and tourism sector is characterized by a high diversity in terms of the types of businesses, which include different structures of the hospitality enterprises (hotels and resorts, B&Bs), retail companies (shops and bars), transportation (airline companies, rail transport, cruise companies and taxis). It includes as well entertainment venues (amusement parks, casinos, shopping malls, music and concert venues, as well as theatres), governmental bodies and cultural heritage sites.

Business size within the industry is also very varied, "ranging from the independent operators, employing in most cases several family members to the small franchise operators, from the nationally-based chain operation through to emerging global multi-national corporations" (Baum & Nickson, 1998, p.75). The largest companies in the industry accounts for 6,000 hotels each, and employ more than 150,000 employees spread in up to 100 countries worldwide.

As the tourism and hospitality sector is very fragmented, this leads to significant differences in performances and competences within the studied domain. Larger hotel chains or national DMOs are able to ensure the employment of human resource development officers, who can introduce and support in-house and on-the-job-training of the employees, while small and medium enterprises lack this capacity, which influences the overall level of training and performance of the industry. According to the International Labour Organization (1997, p.89) Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) experience human resource challenges that are not fully shared by bigger companies: "SMEs often lack financial resources to employ highly qualified staff; even if they earn the same salary, highly qualified staff tend to prefer working in large enterprises for career development; as a result, SMEs are not generally keen to invest in training for advanced skills".

In general, tourism is an industry of small businesses with 91% of all the companies employing less than 19 people in one enterprise, while 62% of the enterprises employing even less than 5 people per company (Bolin & Greenwood, 2003). Within the European Economy, Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTE) contribute to about 10% of the annual GDP and correspond to one seventh of all the jobs. SMTEs are more recognized as essential items in the capacity of the tourism destinations to take

advantage from tourism business and to satisfy tourism demand (Buhalis & Main, 1998). As, the majority of tourism businesses are small and have limited resources for sufficient turnarounds (Moscardo, 2008), this can lead to the decline in the quality of work and loyalty of the workers as well as "in generating considerable costs to employers in terms of loss of skills and sunk costs in training" (International Labour Organization, 2010, p.17). HRM has been identified as the main challenge for SMTEs in their daily activities followed by sales and marketing, finance and quality management (Collins *et al.*, 2003). Additionally, human resources development in the hospitality and tourism industry is perceived to be a cost, both in terms of financial involvement and of the time spent for training, rather than an investment (International Labour Organization, 1997), and often receives little or limited attention.

According to Hollick (2003), SMTEs are characterized by a low skill base and an increasing feeling of isolation, as they are located in peripheral regions where access to formal training and skills support are often limited. Furthermore, time constraints, workload, and absence of sufficient resources of managers and employees of SMTEs frequently prevent them from attending training sessions during their working hours (Collins *et al.*, 2003). In several cases managers of the SMTEs have no possibility to allow their employees to attend off-the-job training sessions or paying for them. As a result, staff are poorly trained at all the levels with a limited investment into the training activities and practices from the side of the employers.

The hospitality and tourism sector provides a significant number of jobs to workers with little or no formal training, and those who do not want to enter long-term employment commitments, for instance, students. As a result, tourism and hospitality industry has been described as the industry with the highest levels of staff turnover and the lack of knowledge, which is needed to satisfy high level of job skills shortages (HEFCE, 1998). For example, a study conducted by the Hotel & Catering Training Company (1994) in the United Kingdom showed a nearly 30% of the labour turnover in the tourism and hospitality industry. Due to that structural fact it has become critical for managers of SMTEs to introduce training offers either on-the-job or through online training offers in order to keep, motivate and educate their staff. In fact, online training can be delivered at flexible hours to match daily or yearly seasonality of the tourism companies, including both SMTEs and large hospitality and tourism corporations.

Another issue which has had a profound impact on the management and training of human resources in tourism organizations is "seasonality" that creates a "cyclical employment environment requiring extraordinary resources to be devoted to recruitment, selection, training and retention of staff" (Jolliffe & Farnsworth, 2003, p.312). Seasonal work as well as a variable demand cycle, both have strong implications for HRM and the

training within the industry (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Peters, 2005).

Due to the high level of competition among tourism enterprises, but also because of the consumers that expect nowadays highly qualified service, continuous skills development and training is needed and expected in all the areas of the sector (Brown, *et. al*, 2012; Longworth, 2013). Additionally, because the competitiveness and productivity of the industry depends on "the skills level, professionalism, commitment, passion, loyalty and soft skills of the workers" (International Labour Organization, 2010, p.60) on-going training and skills development remain a priority within the studied sector. Moreover, continuous changes and uncertainties within all the sectors of the tourism and hospitality business environment create a situation that requires constant learning of all the employees within the sector (Cho & Schmelzer, 2000). HRM in the hospitality and tourism industry presents clearly a notion of continuity where the constant investment in the training of the employees at all levels, including managers, is needed.

According to Pollock and Ritchie (1990), tourism industry has had an image of the industry, which provided only unskilled and low quality employment, largely dependable on the seasonality. While many job in tourism are still of this nature, the tourism industry is opening career opportunities which are both professionally and economically rewarding. Those jobs are in the airline industry, the hotel sector or government tourism departments. The quantity, as well as the quality of education and training that is required for employment in the tourism and hospitality industry, both formal and on-the-job training has increased over the years. Nevertheless, traditional training, as offered through tourism colleges or universities in the form of formal courses and qualifications, "plays a lesser role in the hospitality and tourism industry" (Baum, 2007, p.1390), and the need of formal qualification within the industry is less important in comparison to other industries.

Existing types of tourism academic programs differ significantly in terms of duration, content used and context applied. However, according to Leslie (1987) and Echtner (1995) tourism training and education can be grouped into two main areas: professional education and vocational training. Professional education has been mostly designed for planners, marketers and managers. It is generally more "academic" in nature, and the university level institutions usually provide it. Such education gives broader and deeper understanding of the tourism nature to students. While vocational training has been developed for front-line services and maintenance personnel. The main goal of vocational training is to provide skills that can be applied to specific job levels, such as a chef, a travel counsellor or a housekeeping supervisor. The content of vocational programs is highly practical and technical (Blanton, 1981), and "it focuses on specific on-the-job tasks" (Cooper & Westlake, 1989, p.72.).

As there is no universal academic track for those looking to enter the tourism and hospitality industry, the certification and licensing procedures within the industry has risen. However, according to Sheldon (1989), in some countries (e.g. USA) still few tourism and hospitality occupations require a license to practice in the same way that a doctor, a lawyer or a real estate professional require. Nevertheless, in several cases a certification, an official document, which certifies skills level that is required in some positions, for instance, in travel agencies. The set of international or even national standards or competencies that apply in all organizational settings in the travel and tourism industry barely exists. Due to the complex structure of the industry, such a set cannot be developed, as individual travel and tourism organizations have their own standards and sets of job competencies. As there is no common strategy in this industry, some professional associations (e.g. ABTA – Association of British Travel Agents) encourage tourism workers to update their skills, be tested and receive certification of their competency.

Due to the all above-mentioned particularities of the industry – high level of staff turnover, seasonality, fragmentation of the industry, lack of both financial and timing resources for HRM) – the prospect of flexible in its location, cost and time effective learning environments supported by ICTs started to encourage tourism employees to initiate or to participate more in the training sessions via eLearning systems (Baum & Sigala, 2001; Becton & Graetz, 2001).

Nowadays, not only academic institutions and professional associations are providing training services for the tourism and hospitality sector. Tourism enterprises themselves are creating training platforms, including also online courses for their employees in order to satisfy training needs in workplaces on the spot, while saving time and financial investments on sending the employees to traditional classroom based training sessions (Buchta & Dolnicar, 2003; Cantoni *et al*., 2009; Kuttainen & Lexhagen, 2012; Li *et al*., 2012).

1.3. eLearning concept

The latest expansion of the internet is having an extraordinary impact on the educational processes worldwide, which is transforming training contents, instructional design as well as educational curricula. Specifically, because of the main characteristics of the internet: enhanced interactivity and connectivity, it has allowed the internet to be described as a global educational platform. The internet enables students of different countries and employees of different industries to receive and interact with educational materials online, as well as to engage with tutors and peers in ways that has never been previously possible. According to McGreal and Elliot (2004, p.143), "education is one of the fastest-growing economic and social sectors in the world, and the use of new technologies is an integral and driving component of that growth".

The importance of training in the new information economy has been highlighted in the academic literature as well as in the industry reports. In the new economy, the value of intellectual capital, employees' skills, their competencies and knowledge, is greater than any other form of business capital, and can help to drive crucially competitive advantage of any company or industry globally (Bell & Federman, 2013; Daniele & Mistilis, 1999; Sigala *et al.*, 2001).

Furthermore, eLearning has been adopted and is being used by various sectors in order to update the knowledge of the employees of the companies and inform their customers. Companies that have large and spread distribution chains use online trainings to educate their sales teams on the latest product developments without an actual need of organizing in-presence training sessions. Banks, insurances, pharmaceutical corporations, IT companies and governmental agencies (Karadimas & Rigopoulos, 2006; Schweizer, 2004; Welk *et al.,* 2006) are using eLearning platforms in order to keep their current staff updated or to give initial training to those who are just joining the company.

Due to the development of modern technological innovations, including broadband internet, digital videos and personal computers, as well as mobile devices and tablets used for educational purposes, eLearning is becoming a commonplace. The worldwide eLearning industry market is estimated to be worth over US$100 billion, and is due to reach US$107 billion by 2015 (PRweb, 2012). According to recent industrial reports, eLearning accounts for a significant proportion of corporate investments globally (SkillSoft, 2010).

The eLearning market has been described as a complex system, which involves academic, corporate and consumer fields, and integrates a variety of segments that include consultancy, training courses content and services development, technology support providers, as well as technology sellers and promoters (Baum & Sigala, 2001;

Cantoni & Succi, 2008; Piccoli *et al*., 2001).

For the first time the term "eLearning" has been used in late 1990' as an abbreviation from "electronic learning" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2007). A number of other terms were used in the academic literature in the last twenty years in order to define the process of ICTs integration within learning and training activities. For instance, "online or distance learning", "virtual learning environment", "computer-based training", "computer mediated training", "electronically enabled learning", "technology-enhanced learning".

The description of the European Union (CEC, 2001, p.2), will be used as a background term within this study:

> "*eLearning is the use of new multimedia technologies and the internet to improve the quality of learning by facilitating access to resources and services as well as remote exchanges and collaboration*".

eLearning involves all technology-enabled learning activities, which include the delivery and management of training options and all the types of support via desktop computers, mobile and tablets, networked and web-based technology. Educational service providers offer online lessons and webinars, online tests and video-tutorials, as well as educational consulting to meet the diverse demands of their customers.

All those are used in order to help an individual or an organization to improve performance and aid development (Haven & Botteril, 2003; Brown, *et al*., 2012). Depending on the viewpoint of the researcher (Cantoni *et al*., 2007), eLearning can include:

(i)   internet (online) education and training;
(ii)   the use of ICTs in education and training;
(iii)   the capacity to transform education and training through the use of ICT.

As the definition of eLearning varies significantly, similarly the academic research that study this concept varies. It should be pointed out that eLearning is not a discipline in itself, and it is studied by researchers from other subjects, such as education, technology, psychology, sociology, communication sciences, economics, etc. Furthermore, the research paradigm of the eLearning field is strongly affected by the diverse academic communities working on it. According to Bates (1999) it is complicated to recognize similar approaches and methodologies used in order to have a general understanding on the comprehensive models and theories to be adopted while analysing eLearning applications and practices.

Neglecting fragmented academic research on the subject, due to the potential benefits, eLearning has drawn significant attention from educational institutions, educational software developers, and business organizations. The benefits of eLearning have been widely discussed including reduced educational cost, consistency, timely content, convenience and the effectiveness of a training delivery (Cantoni *et al.*, 2007; Lorenzetti, 2005; Rosenberg, 2001; Strother, 2002). eLearning is believed to be one of many methods of the training and learning procedure which allows flexible learner-centred education (Lee & Lee, 2008). According to Johnsson (2005), eLearning moves traditional instructional paradigm to learning paradigm, which gives more control over selection of the training materials and training delivery methods to the users – current or potential learners. According to Clark (2006), the use of technologies for training provides consistency of both learning and teaching can be faster than traditional learning, and can be tailored to the individual needs of the users.

Non-profit and for-profit organizations globally are increasingly replacing offline on-the-job training with eLearning programs. They also combine them within the blended mode, when some parts of the training activities are happening online and the rest in a classroom environment. It is claimed that online training saves training costs and enhances learning effectiveness by delivering high-quality training services with fewer staff and in a shorter time frame.

Within formal educational settings, several researchers (e.g. Cantoni *et al.*, 2007; Sigala, 2002b) suggested that online collaborative eLearning has the capability to overcome several problems associated with the distant student's out-of-campus placement, for instance:

- isolation felt by the student;
- fear related to the involvement into the academic conversation and dialogue;
- time and place constraints for students who are dependent on the employment;
- trouble of building a common understanding amongst students' coming from different cultural and social backgrounds and for students located in different cultures.

With its beneficial features, such as cost-effectiveness, delivery-efficiency, self-management of learning, on-demand training, anytime and anywhere availability, eLearning is to a greater extent acknowledged as an important supportive structure for both formal and informal learning at the working place (Rosenberg, 2006). According to Zornada (2005, p.14), eLearning from the company point of view, is a "revolutionary way to empower workforce with the skills and knowledge the company needs to keep a balanced performance within a rapidly changing international market". As organizations

globally are trying to enhance their competitiveness by regular promotion of continuous (or lifelong) learning and enhanced training culture, eLearning continues to grow in popularity as its helping organizations to meet their strategic goals and needs for a flexible, well-trained and well-educated working force (Kosarzycki *et al*., 2002; Bowl, & Tobias, 2012; Fourage, *et al*., 2010; Longworth, 2013). In fact, eLearning can be more effective in improving knowledge and skills due of its more personalized nature.

Even if potential benefits of eLearning may be significant, there are a number limitations and challenges within the implementation and support of eLearning practices. eLearning generally requires a high upfront cost, new pedagogical skills, good level of bandwidth connection and learners' self-discipline and motivation (Cantoni *et al*., 2007). Additionally, security issues such as cyber-attacks and hacking to eLearning systems may become a concern to the learners and service providers especially in the on-the-job training context (Ramim & Levy, 2006). Another key barrier to the success of the training initiatives that involve the use of ICTs is general absence of attention from the management side to the enhancement of the employees' engagement and motivation to participate in the eLearning activities, which are happening at the workplace (Admiraal & Lockhorst, 2009). Additionally, due to the low level of motivations, often employees don't start eLearning activities, even if they are compulsory, as well as the high dropout rates are registered (Levy, 2007; Succi & Cantoni, 2008).

In fact, all those perspectives, advantages and disadvantages, eLearning can be applied in the field of hospitality and tourism, an industry in which ICT and the internet have had dominant impact at all operational levels, and where acquiring new knowledge and skills is of high importance for all involved stakeholders. The discussion of the use of eLearning applications within the hospitality and tourism industry will follow and will be presented in the sub-chapter 1.4.

1.4. eLearning in the hospitality and tourism industry

This paragraph will present current eLearning use within the hospitality and tourism industry. It will look at the use of eLearning platforms within academic training context (1.4.1.) and will present on how online training platforms have been used so far within the industrial training context (1.4.2). Furthermore, in the sub-paragraph 1.4.3. advantages and disadvantages of the eLearning integration within the hospitality and tourism training will be discussed.

The hospitality and tourism industry, due to its complexity: the growing number of globally dispersed tourism corporations, high number of SMTEs, high level of staff turnover, seasonality, etc., provides unusual challenges for training and education suppliers. They need to solve the issues of access, with its delivery becoming more complicated and sophisticated, and increased time and efforts are needed for the training. Additionally, the increasingly complex nature of tourism and hospitality along with the continuous state of changes and uncertainties within all sectors of the business environment create a situation that requires on-going learning for all the employees of the concerned industry (Cho & Schmelzer, 2000).

It is generally acknowledged that the hospitality and tourism industry is well suited to adopt and make use of eLearning, as technology in general becomes central within the working environment of tourism employees, e.g. travel agent and tour operators use computers on a daily basis in order to book hotels or airline tickets, or simply collect information about tourism destinations. Furthermore, eLearning is not just about using technologies for educational purposes, but it's a way in which individuals or companies can exchange information and gain required knowledge to increase their competitive edge.

As eLearning provides great opportunities for the employees of the sector to become competent, that in the last decade many hospitality and tourism companies have started to adopt online trainings and intranets. Increasing skills and knowledge to provide guidance along with other methods of training delivery, despite the levels of its adoption by tourism companies differ significantly (Baum & Sigala, 2001; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Lominé, 2002).

In the tourism industry eLearning is particularly well suited for SMEs (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Collins *et al.*, 2003), that in several cases are positioned in geographically peripheral zones and have difficulties finding time and resources to involve the employees, including managers, into traditional classroom based training programs. Also tourism corporations have also seen the benefit of eLearning usage as an additional tool to training provision among employees globally (Kim, 2009), especially in the multi-units, which are dispersed geographically and where the employees should be trained at

the same level being based in Beijing or Moscow. Additionally, eLearning training is increasingly being used within the hotel sector, especially for training soft skills online (Cobanoglu *et al*., 2006; Kim *et al.,* 2011; Swanson, 2000; Weber *et al*., 2009).

Academic research on eLearning has been very fragmented, though several attempts by tourism academics to understand and represent the use of eLearning in the hospitality and tourism have been made. The relevance and advantages of eLearning for the tourism and hospitality education have been acknowledged in the recent years likewise (Cantoni, 2012; Haven & Botterill, 2003; Kasavana, 1999; Kuttainen & Lexhagen, 2012; Nadkarni & Venema, 2012; Sigala, 2002b).

Based on a study by Cantoni *et al.,* (2009), existing online courses in the field of the hospitality and tourism can be classified into four categories according to the providers of the online training service: Academic, Corporate, Destination Management Organization and Independent courses.

1. Academic courses are all online training programs, whose provider is an officially registered academic or educational establishment. This category includes the cases such as Bachelor of Tourism Management at Kenyatta University (Kenya); Bachelor in Tourism at Anglia Ruskin University (United Kingdom); Introduction to tourism course at the University of Southern Queensland's (Australia) and Introduction to Spa and Hospitality Operations at the University of California Irvine's (United States).

2. Corporate courses are all online training platforms, whose provider is a company or an institution working in the tourism field, and managing online training for its own employees, being current workers, whose knowledge requires updating or newcomers who need an initial training on products, corporate culture, selling or hospitality skills. The next examples can be mentioned: Silversea Academy, Hilton University, Avis Car Rental Training and Rail Canada Training.

3. Destination Management Organization courses are online training platforms, which are offered by tourism offices at different levels (e.g. national, regional or local) to trade partners, who sell the country, region or city as a tourism destination. For example: Canada Specialist Program initiated by the Canadian Tourism Commission, Dubai Expert provided by the Dubai Department of Tourism, Commerce and Marketing and Ticino Switzerland Travel Specialist, created by Ticino Turismo, regional tourism board in Switzerland.

4. Independent are the eLearning courses, whose provider is a third party other than an academic institution, a tourism enterprise, or a DMO. The topics of the online training courses still cover the required knowledge to work within the tourism and hospitality industry. The following are such examples: Ecotourism and sustainable tourism development training, English terminology in tourism, Travel writing or GDS eLearning for travel agents.

1.4.1. eLearning use within academic training context

eLearning within the industry is being used both as in-service training for the employees of the hospitality and tourism field, and within a formal academic setting. In the last years, Cho and Schmelzer (2000); Sigala (2002a); Braun & Hollick (2006) extensively discussed how flexibly delivered online skills and knowledge sharing could help capacity building in the tourism industry.

Haven and Botterill (2003) reviewed existing and potential exploitation of online training environments within the hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism, while acknowledging that online resources allow hospitality and tourism students to get up-to-date information about industry structure and developments.

Nowadays, tourism educators around the globe use virtual learning environments, online trainings and sophisticated technological techniques in order to support their class teaching experience, distribute training notes and links to educational resources, as well as to facilitate training course administration (Hsu, 2012). The internet and computer simulations have also been extensively used in the last twenty years to stimulate in classroom discussions in order to enhance students understanding of the tourism related subjects (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Duncan *et al*., 2012).

Cho and Schmelzer (2000) suggested that online trainings incorporated into the hospitality education could teach and prepare students for future working situations that require the demonstration of the abilities to think critically, solve problems and make decisions, as well as to communicate and socialize with future colleagues, partners and clients. Moreover, eLearning courses might be helpful in teaching students to become technologically competent. According to Sigala (2002b, p.41) eLearning can be "an effective mean of preparing students for the global tourism workplace, which increasingly requires a knowledgeable workforce that can work collaboratively irrespectively to their spatial, time and cultural differences". In particular, Cho and Schmelzer (2000) suggested that eLearning practices could help students to adapt themselves more smoothly to the technological changes that occur in the tourism workplace. This would as well permit them to experience and encounter multicultural diversity and possible future collaborative teamwork by interacting with students of

different social, cultural and language backgrounds via the internet in general and on an eLearning platform in particular.

Online learning experience can improve students' managerial skills and make them ready for the tourism and hospitality workplace, "which is usually comprised of people from different cultural, racial, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds and who therefore learn, think and behave differently" (Sigala, 2002b, p. 41). Ideally, a personalized eLearning model would enable students to learn how to develop certain types of skills and knowledge, as a basis of assuring their successful employability in the future within the industry.

Additionally, as a growing number of tourism and hospitality students are looking continuously for part-time employment positions, eLearning platforms can enable them to be flexible in terms of the time and place of the training delivery (Sigala, 2002b; Baum & Sigala, 2001). McGugan and Peacock have confirmed in their study in 2005 that learning technologies can facilitate hospitality and tourism students, and enhance their learning outcomes at the first working placement within the industry.

Liburd and Hjalager (2010) and Liburd *et al*., (2011) discussed the challenges in tourism education and addressed in brief the declining role of the universities as the unique institutions where students could get knowledge and their emerging role as open knowledge mediators. Moreover, they have proposed the model on how web 2.0 can be used as an experimental innovation hub for tourism education. The authors confirmed that Web 2.0 technologies provide many opportunities to rethink and reorganize knowledge interaction as well as disseminating knowledge between industry, education and research.

Marianna Sigala has analyzed how web 2.0 (Sigala, 2007) and geovisualisation (Sigala, 2012) can be used in the eLearning environments in the hospitality and tourism education. Moreover, she continued her research analysing how evaluating and e-assessment techniques can be used in a pure academic setting. Sigala (2004, 2005) has confirmed that e-assessment of students based on both eLearning outcomes and processes became a highly effective practice for designing collaborative eLearning.

A new approach of using technologies for the knowledge sharing within an academic environment has started to appear in the last five years with the development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), where the universities are opening traditional in-campus courses through an open access portal to students across the globe for free. MIT and Stanford's open courses as well as the Open University's OpenLearn Program are the most prominent examples worldwide (Daniel, 2012). These universities, as well as other providers, share online access to over 13,000 classes and related training content

such as online training programs, lectures, videos and readings (Murphy, 2012). By the end of these online trainings students are not receiving an official degree of the university, but a certification that they have followed the classes of this university. Such courses give access to nearly 150 hundreds of thousands of students in a class (Murphy *et al.*, 2013). Hospitality and tourism open educational resources are expanding as well but still are very limited. The most significant example is "New Media: Social, Mobile, and Search" course provided by Cornell University's School of Hospitality Administration (United States). The expansion of MOOCs within the hospitality and tourism industry depict a new way of using technologies for the provision of education and training globally and is expected to enhance the structure of the online hospitality academic education in the years to come.

1.4.2. eLearning use within industry training context

While presenting the use of eLearning in the hospitality and tourism field, it should be mentioned that eLearning is believed to be able to address the needs of continuous professional development. It enables those who are already in the industry to participate in life-long learning whilst in the workplace (Cuffy *et al.*, 2012; Kasavana, 1999; Sigala, 2002a), or enhance the training experience of those who have just started their professional career (McGugan & Peacock, 2005). According to ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA, 2010), eLearning has been the fastest growing travel trade marketing medium in recent years. Looking at the industry nature with a very high number of SMTEs, where the employees are limited in their opportunity to attend traditional classroom or presence training sessions; high level of turnover and geographical spread of tourism companies – for all of abovementioned structural characteristics of the industry, eLearning systems are believed to be ideally suited to train employees of the SMTEs. eLearning systems give the employees of the industry the chance to advance the core skills and capabilities that are critical to remain in the industry or to become even more competitive in the eMarket space (Braun & Hollick, 2006; Buhalis, 1999; Collins, et. al., 2003).

ICTs are believed to enable the employees of SMTEs to adjust their studying activities according to the seasonality and other operational or management commitments they may have. Other beneficial factors include quick and easy access to course content and up-to-date information. It could be implied that "there is a high demand for online training as it can be delivered at flexible hours to match the yearly seasonality or daily activities of the tourism enterprise" (Collins, et. al., 2003, p.10). The research by Hawela *et al.*, (2007) was undertaken in the exploration on how eLearning techniques are currently used within the international hotel chains. The research shows that eLearning has been implemented on a very rudimental structure among international hotel chains that were interviewed. M. Sarmento in 2010 has investigated if eLearning applications

actually improve the quality and productivity of hotels in Portugal. The research suggests that hotel managers confirmed that eLearning increases productivity and production volume. Moreover, eLearning has significantly contributed to the employees' working motivation in Portuguese hotels.

Even if there was a growing interest in the development and application of the eLearning systems, "little theoretically grounded and rigours research guides the development and implementation of these systems in organizational settings" Alavi and Tiwana, (2005, p.106). Published research on the use of eLearning within the industrial training in the hospitality and tourism sector has been very fragmented, and in most cases was limited to the representation of successful cases of the eLearning integrations. Furthermore, no published academic research has been found on the use of eLearning within the catering, transportation or travel trade sector.

1.4.3. Advantages and disadvantages of the eLearning integration in the hospitality and tourism training

The advantages, challenges and opportunities of eLearning have been extensively exploited and discussed by tourism academics in the last fifteen years. The benefits of eLearning provision should be considered both from the personal and the company perspective. From the personal perspective, the following advantages might be suggested – flexible approach to learning, satisfaction of different learning styles as well as self-paced learning. Additionally, eLearning is believed to provide life-long learning opportunities, flexibility in terms of time and place of delivery, continuous professional development, and the facilitator for tourism institutional transformation (Collins *et al*., 2003; Zhang & Nunamaker, 2003).

From the company perspective, such advantages as the following might be suggested: great accessibility, cost reduction, improvement on productivity, higher satisfaction of the clients and global availability. Additionally, an effective eLearning platform is believed to result in the improved business productivity of the hospitality enterprises (Steen, 2008). eLearning is believed to be the tool, that has supported major developments and improvements in interactivity, collaboration, and delivery of online education (Cho & Schmelzer, 2000; Sigala 2002b).

Moreover, the implementation of eLearning maybe cheaper than sending the employees to a professional training course away from the workplace as well as it will save time on travelling to training or educational sessions. While within the workplace, employees can easily integrate learning with their working activities.

Although an increasing number of tourism and hospitality educators are adopting and incorporating internet tools in their instruction, just a few of them are fully exploiting the

internet's capabilities to transform and extend their pedagogical models (Sigala & Christou, 2002). There are several cases, when eLearning platforms remain very static, where materials are represented as simple digital photocopy of texts and consequently are not interactive. Properly made online instruction requires the development of interactive course materials that offer learners the choice of learning navigation and methods, a range of multimedia content (i.e. video, audio, graphics and text) and opportunities to interact with the content and other users. However, such design of online educational material requires significant human resources and financial involvements.

There are other disadvantages of eLearning platforms especially for SMTEs. They include initial set-up and infrastructure costs. Additionally, tourism professionals may find that eLearning can be impersonal. Moreover, participation in the online training activities request from the participants a high level of discipline and advanced level of technological literacy (Collins *et al*., 2003). It should be acknowledged that online training platforms do limit employees who prefer to learn in a traditional classroom environment (Huang *et al*., 2012). Several researchers as well as industry representatives at the initial stage of eLearning implementation have argued that eLearning is not as effective as traditional training methods (Di Castri, 2005; Van Hoof & Combrink, 1998; Whitford, 2000), especially in delivering "soft" skills which are needed by the employees of the industry, such as communication or leadership (Horton, 2000; Pollard & Hillage, 2001).

The following are the most significant barriers to introducing new technologies in general and online training courses in particular for SMTEs, according to Anckar and Walden (2001); Coulter *et al*., (2000); Schweizer (2004); Succi and Cantoni (2008):

- lack of required funding;
- lack of IT knowledge and experience;
- insufficient resources within the company dedicated to developing and distributing corporate eLearning courses;
- insufficient leadership within the company on promoting eLearning and its benefits;
- resistance to change by the employees and its management;
- peripheral location.

Even if eLearning has been around for the last twenty years, the development of it is considered by many researchers to be in its infancy or in an early emerging phase (Cantoni, 2012; Liburd & Christensen, 2012; Morrison, 2003; Yeh & Lin, 2012; Wallace, 2004). eLearning continues to be the topic for discussions and debate and it is

generally agreed that nowadays both the academic research and industry response are still in the experimental stage for the creation and evaluation of performance within existing online learning and teaching environments. This, coupled with the low completion and effectiveness rates of eLearning (Sigala, 2002a), makes it evident that more is needed to be learned and researched in order to design and evaluate successful online environments, both technically and pedagogically.

1.5 Relationship between Destination Management Organizations and travel trade stakeholders

This paragraph will cover present day relationships between Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and their travel trade partners, as well as other stakeholders they are working with.

The paragraph is structured in the next way: firstly, the notion of DMOs is defined and their characteristics are presented in the sub-chapter 1.5.1. Then tourism distribution channels are discussed, emphasizing the relationship between the DMOs and their trade partners in the sub-chapter 1.5.2. Furthermore, the changing role of the travel agents within a competitive eTourism environment is discussed; presenting the many survival strategies that the travel agent within industry is undertaking in the sub-chapter 1.5.3.

The discussion and evaluation of the knowledge acquisition by travel agents is followed in the sub-chapter 1.5.4, while concluding the paragraph with the general overview of the DMO eLearning courses in 1.5.5.

1.5.1. Characteristics of Destination Management Organizations

The role and importance of DMOs for the tourism industry and the success of some countries, regions and cities, has been and is being widely acknowledged academically (Bornhost *et al.*, 2010; Frew & O'Connor, 1999).

According to the UNWTO (2010), DMOs are the institutions, which are responsible for the management and marketing of tourism destinations. They generally fall into one of the three following categories:

- National Tourism Authorities (NTAs) or Organizations (NTOs), operating at a national level and in most cases represented by the ministries of tourism;
- Regional Tourism Offices (RTOs) are responsible for the management of tourism in a geographic region such as a federation, a county or a province;
- Local Tourism Offices (LTOs) are operating at the local level on a smaller geographic area, such as a city or a town.

In most cases, DMOs are non-profit governmental institutions, which were created with the overall aim of marketing and promoting a specific destination to potential tourists. DMOs are responsible for creating, supporting and promoting a unique positive image of the tourism destination, while coordinating private and public stakeholders within the tourism industry (e.g. trade partners – hotels, transportation companies), as well as providing visitors with pre-trip and on-site required tourism information as well as requested tourism products and aligned services (Gretzel *et al.*, 2000).

There is a growing understanding that if a DMO uses ICTs in the right way, while spreading clear and appropriate marketing messages to their trade partners, and through them to potential tourists, they may have a higher chance to be chosen by consumers among other competitors (e.g. other destinations which are providing similar tourism experiences or are playing in a similar price and niche category). These technological advancements may generate a key value for the country; region or city the DMO presents or promotes (Destination Web Watch, 2011; Inversini & Buhalis, 2009). Destinations worldwide mainly compete based on their perceived images and reputation both online and offline (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2012).

The internet is promoting radical changes in the interaction between tourists and tourism destinations (UNWTO, 2008). In case of DMOs that perform as an umbrella brand for all local stakeholders: tourism suppliers, including accommodation, transportation, catering and attractions, the internet has become the tool for planning, managing and marketing (Xiang *et al.*, 2008). It is important to mention that several DMOs around the globe have understood and embraced potential opportunities that are arising from the ICTs, which are helpful in spreading promotional messages worldwide, as well as improving country's performance on the global tourism market. DMOs around the globe are using official websites for interacting with tourists (Choi *et al.*, 2007) and providing essential information about the destination. Furthermore, the development of Web 2.0 techniques has resulted in additional information sources and more sophisticated and effective campaigns, which can be used by the destination marketers (Lee & Wicks 2010; Sigala, 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2009). Nevertheless, the constantly increasing competitive and dynamic nature of the tourism industry urges tourism destinations to develop and integrate effective marketing plans and strategies for possible collaboration with all stakeholders, including trade suppliers and intermediators.

1.5.2. Characteristics of tourism distribution channels

A distribution channel has been described as a unit of interdependent organizations that are involved in the process of developing a product or a service which will be available for future consumption of users, being either individuals or business organizations. In case of the hospitality and tourism industry, the set of organizations may encompass a different union of providers and intermediaries such as wholesalers, inbound and outbound tour operators as well as retail travel agencies (Buhalis & Laws, 2001). According to Buhalis (2001, p 8), "the primary distribution functions for tourism are information, combination and travel arrangement services. Most distribution channels therefore provide information for prospective tourists; bundle tourism products together, while establishing mechanisms which enable consumers to make, confirm and pay for their reservations". Though, it should be noted that the differences in the tourism distribution structure may happen (Pearce *et al.,* 2004; Pearce & Scott, 2005) due to the

type of tourists which need to be served, for instance, Free Independent Travellers (FIT) or group travellers, leisure or business travellers.

Regardless of the time and size of the company, travel intermediaries work on behalf of the supplier, which can be a destination, a hotel or a transportation provider. Intermediary's receive a payable commission from the stakeholders for their work. At the same time, travel agents work with the clients whom they provide with travel advice or make all the booking arrangements. As a result, travel intermediaries have a dual role, to provide information for the planning provider to service the end clients and provide additional marketing for the distributor of the travel products and services for the tourism stakeholders (e.g. DMOs). The relationship between DMOs and their trade partners in the era of eTourism is described in Figure 1.

| DMOs | Travel agents / Tour Operators → Travel agents / Online Travel Agencies | Potential tourists |
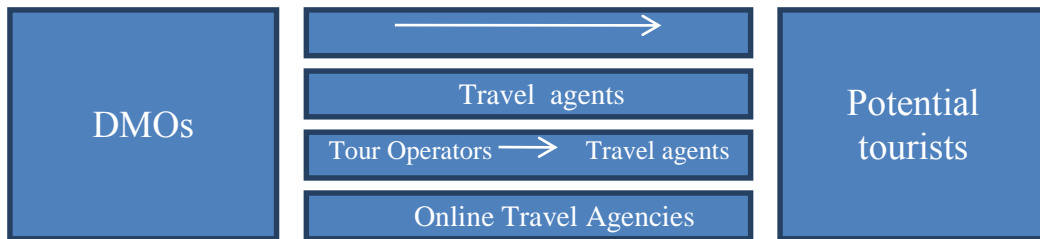
Figure 1. Relationship between Destination Management Organizations, trade partners and customers within eTourism environment

On one side DMOs can interact directly with potential tourists themselves through direct communication, being both online and offline; on the other side, DMOs are using several intermediates (e.g. travel agents; tour operators; online travel agencies, etc.) in order to sell their tourism product. According to Carey *et al*., (1997, p.427) travel agents that sell the destinations' packages are "one of the major powerful and influential bodies for the nature of the tourism demand". They are also involved in the definition of the market trends, as well as being able to influence the image of different destinations among potential tourists. Trade partners may affect the levels of the demand for tourism products and services as well as of the tourism destinations worldwide.

According to UNWTO (2008), there are several inter-mediators who serve as sales channels for tourism destinations:

- tour operators, which offer tours to and within the destination;
- retail travel agents;
- conference and meeting organizers;
- incentive travel organizers;
- exhibition organizers;

- online travel agencies.

For the purposes of this study retail travel agents, including both individuals and organizations, will be taken into consideration. Retail travel agents usually act as a "middleman" that is working in-between tourism product providers, including tourism destinations, tour operators and potential clients (Evans, 2001).

The main role of DMOs is "to improve the development and management of tourism by enhancing coordination and collaboration between the competing stakeholders" (Sigala & Marinidis, 2010, p.238). Also upon leveraging on the new requirements of the competitive market, DMOs worldwide have started to use digital technologies not only to spread marketing messages to potential clients, but also to coordinate all the partners and industries involved in the production and delivery of the tourist activities and tourism related products (Bieger *et al*., 2009).

UNWTO (2008) stated that online sales support for tour operators and travel agents can leverage significant additional business for any tourism destination. Nowadays, DMOs are enabled by ICTs to better support and prepare travel professionals, travel agents and travel consultants, while offering them more extensive, structured and current information. Trade support materials and information are adapted to each major market and segmented in order to make them more effective and efficient. According to UNWTO (2008), there are several ways in which this support can be performed: website, e-newsletters and online trainings: "destination specialist" programs.

The advice for the eMarketing collaboration campaigns that DMOs can undertake with their trade partners, were created by the joint efforts of the World Tourism Organization and the European Travel Commission (UNWTO, 2008, p.197-199) and are presented below:

> "*DMO can give vital information and sales back-up online to travel companies that actively sell the destination in source markets, including the home market. Such companies are usually, though not always, based in the source market(s), or have a dedicated sales activity there. They may operate online and/or offline.*
> *The primary tool for providing support to them are special areas of the DMO's website, e-newsletters and online trainings – all of them can help and encourage travel agents and tour operators to sell the destination rather than a competitor's one.*"

Recommendations of where to go, how to reach a particular destination or attraction, what to see and what to avoid may be critical to the success of various tourism businesses (Klenosky & Gitelson, 1998; Palmer & McCole 1999). According to

Klenosky and Gitelson (1998, p.663) *conceptual model of the process and factors influencing travel agents' destination recommendations* "in order to recommend a destination, travel agents must first be aware that it exists". In the model, destination awareness is viewed as a "function of two agent-knowledge variables. The first one is the agents' degree of exposure to information about a destination (print and broadcast media, media advertising, suggestions from friends and other travel agents) and direct tourism experience that they have had (e.g. familiarization trips). The second stage of the process, destination perception and evaluation, refers to agents' general beliefs and feelings about the place and what it has to offer. Those two factors may affect how travel agents feel about recommending the destination to a client on a given occasion".

In fact the perception a tourist has on the choice of holiday destination has been considered by various academics in consumer behaviour literature (Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Goodall, 1990; Kent, 1990; Klenosky & Gitelson 1998). It is believed that destinations with stronger positive images will have a higher probability of being included and chosen in the process of positive promotion from a travel agent (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Telisman-Kosuta, 1994). As Baloglu and Mangaloglu (2001) confirmed, marketers of the destinations, particularly working for DMOs at national level, can take necessary actions in order to improve their weak or undesirable images and support their strengths in sending out the right promotional message to travel intermediaries.

1.5.3. Changing role of a travel agent within eTourism environment

Travel agents and travel consultants are the front line personnel in retail agencies, which provides services to potential travellers, based on their knowledge and experience and on behalf of tourism suppliers. According to Lewis *et al.*, (1998, p.22), the role of a travel agent includes three main tasks:
- "to perform the function of information broker passing the information between buyers and suppliers;
- to process transactions, including printing tickets and forwarding money to suppliers;
- to advise travellers".

Nearly twenty years ago Bloch and Segev (1996) suggested that technology and electronic commerce will impact travel agents' role as transaction processors, e.g. those who are doing just ticketing or cruise booking as their main business. It was believed that this role could be easily replaced by technological advancements, as suppliers could directly communicate with the consumer, without the need on having an intermediary (Vasudavan & Standing, 1999). It has been also acknowledged in the academic literature that with the development of the internet, the role of a travel agent will be significantly

diminished or even eliminated, as the consumers will be using technologies to purchase their trips by themselves. This belief and understanding has created a contradictory debate about the future of the travel agencies and the sector as a whole. Most of the academic debate has concentrated around the impact that ICTs will have on the distribution and marketing purposes (Buhalis, 2000; O'Connor, 1999; Sheldon, 1997), while very few were looking on the changing role of the travel agents and possible survival strategies (Kendall & Booms, 1989; O'Brien, 1999; Palmer & McCole, 1999; Prideaux, 2001). In fact, in the last decade technology has had a significant impact on the evolution of professional travel agencies worldwide (Buhalis & Laws, 2001; Huang *et al.*, 2011) and have threatened their intermediate role between the supplier and consumer. Travel agents were frightened by the idea of how they could make their business survive while struggling against strong competition within eTourism environment with the growing number of online travel agents (OTAs), such as Expedia, Priceline, Orbitz and Travelocity (Castillo-Manzano & López-Valpuesta, 2010; Cheyne *et al.*, 2006; Garkavenko & Milne, 2008; O'Connor & Frew, 2000; Wilson, 2000).

Nevertheless, current tendencies show that the pendulum between disintermediation and re-intermediation has not reached a stable position. Despite the fact that the number of traditional travel agencies decreased significantly (Alvarez *et al.*, 2007), the recommendations by them are still an important type of information for tourists throughout their decision-making processes (ASTA, 2011; Tnooz, 2011; Travel Market Report, 2011). Travel agents' perceptions and knowledge about tourism destinations have a substantial influence on future travellers' decision-making process about potential places they might visit or not (Carey *et al.*, 1997). As the recommendations by travel agents and travel consultants can influence the clients' satisfaction and the success of any hospitality business, tourism attraction or destinations, it can be predicted, that the role of a travel consultant will be more structured around its third role of "advising travellers", as specified by Lewis *et al.*, (1998, p.22).

The key survival strategies discussed within the tourism academic community are the next ones:
- possible increase of online presence;
- emphasis on the changing role as travel information and advice providers instead of providing bookings;
- greater importance on customer relationship strategies;
- personalized tailored service delivery.

Lyle (1995) and Paulson (1997) advised that a possible survival strategy for travel agents could be the union with others into more powerful entities, such as franchising or consortia. Evans (2001) suggested that travel agents in the future will diversify their

communication items, and will offer consumers every possible way to book their holidays and trips with the help of a call centre, a website, homeworkers and high street shops. In this way, travel agencies will satisfy the sophisticated demands and needs of their potential clients.

The development of the internet, which made information readily available not only to trade partners, but also to the end consumers, resulted in a very vulnerable situation for the travel agency sector. Tourism suppliers need at a lesser extent intermediaries, because they can sell their products directly to potential customers. At the same time, paradoxically ICTs in general and the internet in particular have permitted travel agents not only to better access to consumers, but also to extend their ability to access to a broad number of information sources which are essential to their operational intermediary activities. It should be admitted, that several agencies, those who had a decision to compete in the eTourism market, have adopted the development of technologies, while creating their own online presence, and furthermore managing their businesses both through a dedicated website and through social media profiles, while continuing to maintain a presence on the high street. As a consequence, the adoption of eCommerce and other online services in order to satisfy the needs of the modern tourists has become another survival strategy for the traditional travel agents (Liu & Chen, 2011), so that the internet can still provide an alternative in increasing their competitive advantage.

It is claimed that travel agencies provide not only information, but also advices. This supports the idea that the role of travel agencies is likely to grow in importance, since their greatest ability is "to collate, organize and interpret large amounts of data in a way that delivers the best value and the most exciting travel experiences for the customer" (O'Connor, 1999, p. 114). According to Morgan and Trivedi (2007), in order to survive, travel agents must redesign their job. They may become "travel consultants bureaus" rather than "booking centres", as the main added value of the travel agents has its roots not in making bookings or providing information which is ease of access, but it relies on the deep understanding of the customers and their travelling needs. If travel agents reinforce their advice-giving capacities (Frías *et al.*, 2008; Furger, 1997; Liu & Chen, 2011); concentrate on specific markets and specialise their selling activities (Lowengart & Reichel, 1998), and make a shift from transaction processing (e.g. ticket selling) and being simple resellers of someone pre-packaged product to the provision of advisory services and support with the information, which is not freely available over the internet (McKercher *et al.*, 2003; Standing & Vasudavan, 2000), they may secure their place in the distribution chain and can make it stable in the future.

Additionally, due to the increasing complexity of the tourism context – e.g.: available

number of options, constant natural disasters and political revolutions happening worldwide – as well as due to the so-called information overload, in which there is a great number of factors competing to attract the attention of prospective travellers (Buhalis, 2001; Perl & Israeli, 2011), travel agents are given new opportunities to be in the travel market game again. Travel agents' knowledge of the product (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001), their experience (Bogdanovych *et al.*, 2006) as well as their ability to sell the right destination to the right people (Dey & Sarma, 2010; Morgan & Trivedi, 2007), together with one-to-one relationships with their clients (Milne & Gill, 1998; Novak & Schwabe, 2009) are still their greatest competitive advantages.

It has been stated by Lawton and Weaver (2009, p.76) that traditional travel agents are far more efficient and cost-effective than any OTAs in "arranging complex modes of travel experience". In fact, tourists in developed countries, when making complex travel arrangements (Caragata & Demont, 1999) or to less familiar destinations (Dey & Sarma, 2010) and when buying costly packages, still choose the help of travel agencies (Dolnicar & Laesser, 2007; Lovelock, 2003). Moreover, in some parts of the world, where technology resistance is still rather high and eCommerce is in its infancy (e.g. Russia, India, China and Brazil), traditional travel agents maintain their role. They are the primary service delivery channel in the travel industry and the most reliable channel for potential tourists (CNNIC – China Internet Network Information Center, 2007; Khare & Khare, 2010; Li & Suomi, 2008; Nunes *et al.*, 2011). Other reasons, which justify the main role played by travel agents in the emerging markets are the lack of the so-called Free Independent Travellers, bureaucratic and visa-related issues, as well as cultural and language barriers of tourists (e.g. Chinese or Russian tourists). In some cases, for instance in countries in the Mediterranean region (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001) the level of impact on tourism demand is far greater from the mass tour operators than from the destination's own marketing campaigns, as the travel trade representatives are still the significant decision makers for their clients.

Prideaux (2001) suggested that travel agents can provide a number of unique services, which can't be overtaken by OTAs, e.g. discussion of the advantages and disadvantaged of the destination selection; arranging visas and other travel documentations; presenting travel information (e.g. brochures) in a more acceptable way.

According to Milne *et al.*, (2008), in order to stay on the edge and consolidate their position on the market, travel agents should take advantage of customized IT tools that support their sales activities and constantly upgrade their knowledge and skills. As the satisfaction of tourists depends largely on the knowledge of the travel agents and the quality of information they provide about tourism destinations, activities or products, "training and learning of the employees is regarded primary in travel agents" (Yeh &

Lin, 2012 p.566). Additionally, Slotte and Herbert (2006) have confirmed that learning, qualification, and on-going training should be recognized as vital and crucial components of culture and human resource development in tourism enterprises globally.

1.5.4. Knowledge acquisition by travel agents

According to Pollock and Ritchie (1990, p.58) and the research they carried out around twenty years ago, front line tourism operators, to whom we can include travel agents and travel consultants, needed to have "operational skills, which includes reservations and ticketing, product knowledge, knowing community attractions, history, geography, understanding of the tourism system. Additionally to that front line employees needed to have a sense for future career potential they might have". Pollock and Ritchie suggested that mostly the training of those employees was happening on-the-job, with some pre-employment courses that did not include certificate in tourism or tourism degree, which was needed for the supervisory and management levels.

The education required for travel agent positions varies significantly from country to country. Several vocational school and universities offer degrees tailored to the needs of travel professionals, such as travel agents and travel consultants, though many travel agents are working without having a tourism-associated degree. Some travel agency associations globally offer certificate courses that cover the essentials of the travel sector and the particularities of work of the travel agents.

Additionally, most tourism employers do not require a college certificate or a university degree to begin working within a travel agency, though those who have previous education are at an advantage. Generally, travel agents need to have an advanced level of technical ability in order to make bookings and reservations, have general experience in sales and marketing, as well as need to have an extensive traveling portfolio.

Despite several survival strategies implemented within the travel agency sector, there is still an evident skills shortage within the industry, which is explained by the gap when current tourism workforce does not have enough skills, which are essential to meet competitive business objectives (Purnell, 2005). Moreover, as it has been stated in the Business and Economic Research Limited (2004) as a large component of the travel agents job involves customer service, employees who don't have the required skill set are exposed to the significant pressure which often results in high staff turnover.

Nowadays, modern consumers, who are very experienced with technology and can book trips by themselves are expecting travel consultants to be knowledgeable and to be able to give in depth advises and suggestions on specific destinations, the particularities, weather conditions, etc. At the same time, a travel consultant is expected to provide

recommendations and comparisons on local attractions, transport and leisure activities (Patterson, 2006). As clients are becoming even more experienced than travel agents, they are not asking for travel packages anymore, as they have already experienced the destination, they are looking for in depth information and would like to return to the destination, doing different activities and experiencing the place from a different perspective. As clients are looking to diversify their travelling experience, so travel agents need to upgrade constantly their knowledge. This knowledge, advising abilities, specialization and expertise, as well as personal experience (e.g. travelling to the destinations previously) can give a competitive advantage to current travel agents and differentiate them form their competitors offline – other travel agents and consultants and online – OTAs. According to Kendall and Booms (1989), travel agents who will be looking for a changing role from sales office worker to travel advisors, will need to acquire more knowledge in order to meet the needs of the clients and at the same time bring their organizations, not depending on its size, to survival or prosperity in the competition.

Travel agents should be continually improving their product knowledge in an attempt to specialize, instead of being "generalist" travel agents. While using their unique specialist knowledge, travel consultants will be able to provide useful and unique information to customers, while giving them tailored tips and recommendations. According to Tony Gonchar, chief executive of ASTA "Consumers are looking for specialists. Nowadays they want a destination wedding specialist, an Africa Specialist or a Puerto Rico specialist" (Justfares, 2011). Clients that are looking nowadays for the niche products, such as "religious travel, seniors, wine tourism, golf, honeymoon and destinations weddings" (Lawton & Weaver, 2009, p.84) will address their needs more frequently to niche tourism specialist, who has received adequate education and training.

Personal knowledge, expertise and personalised advice of the travel consultants differentiate travel intermediaries and create a distinction between them. At the same time, the competition between them creates a situation, where travel agents need to constantly evolve, improve their skills and knowledge in order to answer the demand and move the industry forward. Constant acquiring new knowledge is the main component to the competitive success of modern travel agents, whether it's a learning process about tourism product or a tourism destination; sales technique or marketing knowledge. Any learning process is essential in the hospitality and tourism industry, as it is always looking to meet the needs of potential customers. Training and education on tourism products and destinations is what drives travel agents' ability to influence potential tourists according to what agents revealed themselves in the recent PhoCusWright research (2012).

Travel agents nowadays are looking for personalized training, as clients ask them for specifically tailored pieces of information. Travel agents are also looking for certification, which may be helpful to differentiate themselves from their competitors as well as gain credibility in the eyes of potential tourists. In early 2000's traditional teaching methods were adopted by several tourism organizations, which were providing training to their employees in a traditional way – on-the-job or in-house. Many tourism managers were reluctant on delivering the training to their employees outside of their normal working environment, due to the time and costs involved. According to Haveng-Tang (2005), several SMTEs were looking for short training courses with a flexible structure, which could meet the needs of the tourism companies. Online training courses became such a solution, as they were able to customize both individual and company training needs (Schweizer, 2004). Indeed rapid development of ICTs in general and the internet in particular has changed not only lifestyles of modern society and enhanced the communications process, but made the acquisition of knowledge more rapid and convenient. As the technological developments have changed educational structure, nowadays education is no longer restricted to the classrooms or offices and happening in the form of the on-the-job trainings. Furthermore, flexible and problem-oriented forms of continuing learning, such as eLearning, distance-learning or part-time attendance can represent the missing link (Cantoni *et al*., 2009) between the new market requirements and needed qualification strategies as well as continuous educational offer within the tourism sector.

1.5.5. Destination Management Organizations eLearning offers

Meeting current needs of the travel agents, Destination Management Originations started to leverage on digital technologies in order to offer a full online learning environment about the destination and its attractions, so that professionals can better serve their clients, potential tourists, when presenting a given tourism destination. In the last 15 years, DMOs around the globe have started to use the opportunity of involvement of ICTs in the provision of tourism education. DMOs at national, regional, or local level have initiated the offer of online training activities to trade partners, which are involved in selling the country, region or city as a tourist destination. According to UNWTO (2008, p.197-199):

> *"There are some DMOs that offer training and accreditation online to retail travel agents to become 'destination specialists'. This service is delivered online, either direct by the DMO or in conjunction with a specialist company:*
> - *Directly, an example is www.pv-pro.com, the training site of the Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board, Mexico;*
> - *With a commercial company, which may attract a wider range of agents, such as Travel Agent University – www.tauniv.com".*

The eLearning platforms are designed mainly in a specific structure for the needs of travel agents and provide travel consultants and distributors with a comprehensive view of what a destination is about, what it has to offer and give to the trade partners the knowledge and skills to sell the destination effectively to the right people.

The content of DMOs eLearning courses is represented in specially designed learning and teaching modules covering general information about the destination itself, which includes geographical position, demographics, languages spoken, etc., as well as history, culture and traditions, accommodation and transportation systems, formality issues, selling tips, and the help in itinerary planning. The end of the course then evaluates the knowledge received by a travel agent through the testing activities.

The only published research on the use of eLearning training courses by tourism destinations in order to give education to trade partners, which excludes academic and industry papers published by the PhD candidate, is a Master thesis by Donna O'Donnell (2012): "Trading Places with Interfaces: An Investigation into Online Training for the Travel Agency Sector within the United Kingdom".

1.6. Characteristics of the travel agency sectors in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

This paragraph will present the characteristics of the travel agency sector in the three studied countries – in the United Kingdom (1.6.1.), India (1.6.2.) and New Zealand (1.6.3.). It will look in particular at the characteristics of the outbound travel patterns and particularities of the markets in terms of the outbound travel demand in every country. Number of travel agents officially registered or recognised in every country as well as available information on certification practices and knowledge upgrade strategies among travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand will be discussed further.

1.6.1. Travel agency sector of the United Kingdom

The global history of the travel agencies starts in the second half of the XIX century. It is believed that the Cox and Kings is the oldest travel agency, which has started its activities for wealthy clients in 1758 in the United Kingdom (Andrews, 2008). The first modern travel office is believed to be opened by Thomas Cook also in the United Kingdom (Page & Connell, 2006).

Currently travel agency sector in the United Kingdom is very diverse and "comprises many different organizations, each varying in size, specialist or ownership" (O'Donnell, 2012, p.2). Independent travel agencies are mostly located in single offices and are managed privately. Travel agency chains and franchising companies have offices and branches all around the country. In most cases they are taking part of vertically integrated companies, which have been dominating in the British market in the last twenty years, with four main companies competing – Airtours of Going Places; First Choice of Travel Choice; Thomas Cook of Thomas Cook and Thomson Holidays of Lunn Poly. According to the Co-operative Group (2010), the Thomas Cook is the largest travel agency chain in the United Kingdom, which possess more than 1.200 travel retail stores, working on different leisure markets. The company employs approximately 31.000 people globally (Skills Funding Agency, 2010).

United Kingdom is a mature online market, with strong online travel retail sales, that accumulate to £12.3 billion in 2011 (World Travel Market, 2012). Furthermore, the British distribution system has undergone significant change and consolidation in the recent years with online distribution gaining pace. However, traditional distribution channels remain important, particularly key operators who specialise in particular destinations. According to Tourism Australia (2012c) British operators continue to play a key role in converting potential consumers and influencing them to spend more, disperse further and stay longer at the destination.

According to the British Office of National Statistics (ONS, Supply Side of Tourism Report, 2009, 36-39) in 2011 in the United Kingdom there were 10.470 travel agencies. Regional distribution of the travel agency units can be seen in Table 2.

Number of Local Units	England	Wales	Scotland	NI	UK	% change (2010)
Travel agencies & other reservation services	9.010	400	845	215	10.470	-9.5

Table 2. Number of travel agency units in the United Kingdom

In 2010 there were 45.700 employees working within travel agency sector in the United Kingdom (People 1st, 2011, p.37). The majority of the travel agents in the United Kingdom belong to the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA, 2008) which possesses approximately the next number of members: 5.400 travel agencies and 780 tour operators in the country.

According to ABTA (2012a), economic evaluation of the impact of tourism industry on the British economy was traditionally focused on the value of inbound and domestic tourism, with little attention being paid to the contribution of the outbound travel. Currently, outbound travel accounts for 24% of the total British tourism sector and is more valuable to the economy than the inbound one.

As there has been very limited academic attention to the economic value of the outbound tourism, very little data is publicly available on the organisation of the outbound tourism within the country, for instance, which companies are the main players on the market or how those companies are structured. According to Evans (2001), outbound travel in the United Kingdom has experienced an interrupted growth since the invention of the overseas packages in the 1950es. In early 2000es, the British outbound package market has sold approximately 12 million holidays a year, while the independent holidays abroad were growing strongly as well. According to the report produced by ABTA (2012b), outbound travel industry accounts for about 2.6% of the total British employment. This equals with 627.000 full time jobs.

According to ABTA (2012a), in 2011 63% of Brits took a foreign holiday, with a third (34%) taking more than one trip abroad. Top visited destinations by British travellers in 2009 were the next ones: Spain, France, Republic of Ireland, United States of America, Italy, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Portugal and Turkey. Popular long-haul destinations among British travellers are Australia, New Zealand and Thailand.

When it comes to booking habits, travel agents and tour operators remained a popular option in 2011, with over half of consumers who took a foreign holiday booking this way. This method of booking was particularly popular with the younger end of the market, with a third (32%) of 16-24 year old making bookings via travel agents.

The British National Association of Travel Agents suggests that even if the number of the travel agencies is decreasing due to the new habits of the clients, the remaining companies adopt new approaches to better compete with and differentiate themselves from OTAs. Many companies in the United Kingdom are investing more in the training of their frontline staff to ensure they offer customers a high level of expertise, as the customers are increasingly looking from the travel agents of highly personalized inspiration and ideas based on their preferences and budgets.

While according to the "Training in the travel industry" report (ABTA, 2010) even if the United Kingdom were going through an economic recession, British tourism companies were still investing into training opportunities in order to be competitive on the market and achieve company goals. The report suggested that neglecting financial investment which is associated with the training provision; almost all the employers in the United Kingdom (93%) have provided training to their staff recently.

In 2010, ABTA undertook a travel industry employee survey (ABTA, 2010), which looked at 468 profiles of British travel industry employees. According to the survey, the most popular type of training that British tourism employees received was eLearning (54% of the respondents), followed by informal training (53%) and induction or initial training (51%), familiarisation or educational trips (49%), formal training, being held both on- or off-the-job (45%). According to the results of this survey, main reasons why travel businesses in the United Kingdom train their staff were to improve customer service, increase efficiency, motivate staff, generate new business opportunities and ensure consistent quality standards. As indicated in the report, due to the economic crisis, many travel companies' managers believe that the training of the tourism employees in the future will be concentrated along product training and eLearning. While taking about main subject areas of training, the next topics were covered in the training sessions of the British travel trade: customer service (69%), product knowledge (63%), sales (53%), communication skills (47%), destination (46%), etc.

1.6.2. Travel agency sector of India

India has become one of the world's fastest-growing travel markets and have key characteristics of an emerging tourism market. According to the UNTWO' figures for 2008 India ranked 25th worldwide in terms of the international travel expenditure. There are many positive factors that influence Indian demand, for instance, Indian national

economy is getting stronger, with GDP growing by around 8.5% every year. This growth can be explained by the waning of trade and investment restrictions in 1990es as well as due to the new economic policies on the foreign investments, privatization and liberation of the market in India (PATA, 2001).

According to Sharda and Pierce (2006, p.342), economic growth in India and "freeing up of the basic travel quota in 1996 have resulted in a rapid expansion of outbound travel following an earlier surge in domestic tourism".

UNWTO (2009) estimates that India will account for 50 million outbound tourists by 2020 and will make it one of the leading outbound destinations globally. Currently 40% of all outbound trips done by Indians are for business purposes, while leisure, visiting friends and relatives and other reasons each account for 20% of outbound trips from the country. Additionally, middle-class disposable income has been rising very fast. A large number of foreign national tourism organizations are establishing their presence in India, starting an extensive promotion towards Indian customers, and trying to increase outbound tourism demand.

Indian Ministry of Tourism (2010) suggests that leading outbound tourism destinations in 2010 were Singapore, Middle East countries (e.g. Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia), Malaysia, Thailand, China and Hong Kong, United Kingdom and Switzerland. Additionally, for many Indians dual destination visit is common, for example – Australia and New Zealand.

According to the European Travel Commission (2010), the growth of the low-cost carriers and familiarity with the new technologies in general and specifically the internet are encouraging Indians to make direct bookings more frequently of their future trips. Nevertheless, due to the overwhelming and unstructured current information present online, traditional dual visits of tourism destinations along with the visa barriers, make the work of the travel agents more valuable in India and the majority of bookings are still made through traditional travel agents. Furthermore, it is believed that Indian customers rely on travel agents for a very high level of servicing and often make multiple changes to their travel plans.

The research on the Indian tourism profile, which has been undertaken by the European Travel Commission (2010) suggests that, in 2008 70% of the Indian leisure travellers to Europe relied on family and friends for the decision process and the information source. 60% of them relied on the internet, 55% on the travel trade, and 25% on media (various publications, radio and TV programs, etc.).

Indian tourists in general prefer word-of-mouth and personal recommendations, including those of travel agents, rather than detailed reading or browsing through web pages before making their travel decisions. Although they may value literature for browsing through their leisure time, this reading is not as relevant for their travel decisions.

Travel industry in India is booming, though travel market is very competitive. Indian travel distribution system is very fragmented and varies across the country. According to the European Travel Commission (2010) there are over 20.000 retail travel agents spread across the country. Most of them are small and independent businesses that are issuing tickets and focusing largely on the domestic travel market and on selling tickets on pre-packaged tours. Few of those agencies are able to cater to the demands of independent travellers going overseas.

Tourism trade in India is categorised as follows:
- Three big international tour operators, which have an extensive presence in India – Cox and Kings, Thomas Cook and Kuoni.
- Medium sized operators: wholesalers or retailers, catering for Free Independent Travellers (FIT) and travel groups, operating regionally with moderate marketing budgets and specializing in 8-10 destinations: Kesari, Club 7, Dewan Travels, Holiday Representations, International Travel House, and JTB Travel.
- Small operators are the retailers that work in a single city with minimum marketing budgets and catering largely for FIT customers. Although they are usually not very good product planners and in most cases copy the itineraries of the main three tour operators in the destinations in which they specialize.
- Niche operators: retailers providing detailed itineraries in single destination for more sophisticated traveller's (FIT or business travellers).
- Ticketing agents supporting small and niche operators, and working just with the ticketing issues.

Indian Ministry of Tourism (2012b) divides travel trade in the country into five categories:
- Domestic tourist operator.
- Adventure tourist operator.
- Inbound tour operator.
- Tourist transport operator.
- Travel agent.

It is relatively easy to set up a travel agency or a tour operator company in India, as the travel agent's license is not required. According to the European Travel Commission

(2010) there are around 700-1000 start-ups every year. Nevertheless, there is a voluntary certification scheme, which is proposed and implemented by the Government of India – it's Ministry of Tourism to become an Approved Travel or Trade Operator. The scheme is open to all bonafide travel agencies with the main motivation of the scheme is to bring travel agents in an organized sector, to encourage quality standards within the industry as well as to promote tourism in India. In 2009, Indian Ministry of Tourism has approved 1246 providers of the travel trade services.

A travel agency that applies for voluntary certification status should meet the next requirements (Indian Ministry of Tourism, 2012a, pp. 2-3):

> "i)Travel agents (TA) should have a minimum Capital employed of Rs. 3.00 lakh for rest of India and Rs. 50, 000/- for the agencies located in the North – Eastern region, remote and rural areas duly supported by the latest audited Balance Sheet / firm's Statutory Auditor's certificate.
>
> ii) TA should be approved by International Air Transport Association (IATA) or should be General Sales Agent (GSA) / Passenger Sales Agent (PSA) of an IATA member Airlines.
>
> iii) TA should have been in operation for a minimum period of one year before the date of application.
>
> iv) The minimum office space should be at least 150 sq. ft for rest of India and 100 sq. ft for hilly areas, which are above 1000 meters from sea level. Besides, the office may be located in a neat and clean surrounding and equipped with telephone, fax and computer reservation system etc. There should be sufficient space for reception and easy access to toilet facilities.
>
> v) TA should be under the charge of the Owner or a full time member who is adequately trained, experienced in matters regarding ticketing, itineraries, transport, accommodation facilities, currency, customs regulations and tourism and travel related services.
>
> Besides this, greater emphasis may be given to effective communication skills, knowledge of foreign languages, other than English. There should be a minimum of four qualified staff out of which at least one should have Diploma / Degree in Tourism & Travel Management from a recognized University, IITTM or an institution approved by AICTE. The owner of the firm would be included as one of the qualified employees.
>
> The academic qualifications may be relaxed in case of the other two staff members who are exceptionally experienced personnel in Airlines, Shipping, Transport and PR agencies, Hotel and other Corporate Bodies and those who have worked for three years with IATA / UFTA agencies and also those who have two years of experience with MOT approved Travel Agencies.

For the Travel Agents / Agencies located in the North – Eastern region, remote and rural areas, there should be a minimum of two staff out of which one should be a qualified employee with a Diploma / Degree in Tourism & Travel Management from a recognized University, IITTM or an institution approved by AICTE. The owner of the firm would be included as one of the qualified Employees.

vi) TA should be an income-tax assesse and should have filed Income Tax Return for the current assessment year."

Singh (1997) has discussed the development of human resources for the Indian tourism industry, where she suggests that generally secondary school or vocational school degree is acceptable in India for different positions within the tourism and hospitality industry. She suggested that in 70's and 80's a few universities have started offering formal tourism programs, although industry applied knowledge is lacking in most of the programs. No previous empirical research has been found on the level of education, training or certification needed to enter to the travel agents position in India.

1.6.3. Travel agency sector of New Zealand

Tourism plays an important role in the New Zealand economy in terms of the production of goods and services and the creation of employment opportunities. Tourism is one of New Zealand's biggest export industries, earning $9.6 billion or 15.4% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings. Tourism generated a direct contribution to GDP of $6.2 billion, or 3.3% of national GDP. The indirect value added of industries supporting tourism generated an additional $9.7 billion for tourism, or 5.2% of GDP. The tourism industry directly employed 119,800 full-time equivalents or 6.2% of the total employment in New Zealand (Tourism Satellite Account, 2012).

New Zealand is one of the most mature online travel markets globally, and its development stays in line with Canada, Europe and the United States. New Zealand together with Australia leads the industry within the Asia-Pacific region in advanced telecommunications infrastructure, and presents a mature eCommerce and a growing m-commerce market.

With the development of new technologies, and the expansions of OTAs, the travel market in New Zealand has been changing in the last ten years, with the number of traditional travel agencies having shrunken significantly. Furthermore, according to Tourism Australia (2012b, p.13) the New Zealand distribution structure is undergoing noteworthy adjustment, as "online bookings for short haul travel grow and distribution rationalises. In response, traditional distributors are increasing their online capabilities".

There is no governmental travel trade licensing for travel agents in New Zealand and therefore the only official institution to represent travel agents in the country is the Travel Agents Association of New Zealand (TAANZ), which is a self-regulating organization, which promotes quality standards and financial stability in the industry. According to New Zealand Traveltrade (2006, p.10) "TAANZ promotes quality standards for travel services and performances". The members of TAANZ include retail travel agents, tourism companies and car rental organizations. The main goal of the company is to provide additional security for consumers in their deals with the travel trade partners. According to Garkavenko (2007, p.152-153): "TAANZ customer protection scheme is offered through the bonding system, whereby customers are given an insurance that if they deal with a TAANZ member, they will receive protection against travel agent's failure".

According to TAANZ, which represents around 90% of the travel agents in New Zealand, there are over 880 companies in New Zealand, which employ 2.412 travel agents and consultants. Travel agencies in New Zealand range in size from small leisure focused companies to large offices specializing in corporate travel management. The data provided by Net Readiness Statistics and Research on New Zealand Tourism Businesses (Ministry of Economic Development, 2001), which indicates that about 49% of tourism businesses in New Zealand are family or independent businesses. The average office employs four travel consultants. The trend is towards fewer "bricks and mortar" branches located in high streets and shopping malls to more home-based travel brokers who work remotely.

Because of the remote location, New Zealanders enjoy overseas travel and do so frequently for both leisure and business purposes. New Zealand has experienced a major growth in outbound tourism in the last twenty years. New Zealanders take almost two million overseas trips annually, which is rather high considering the total population of the country of 4.2 million people. Australia is the destination for about half of all New Zealand residents departing on short-term trips followed by Fiji, United States, the United Kingdom and other European countries, India and China (Tourism New Zealand, 2009).

Neglecting the fact that outbound tourism from New Zealand has expanded, very little academic attention has been paid to the field, whether more research projects were looking and emphasizing on inbound tourism in New Zealand (Reid & Pierce, 2008). Furthermore, despite the comparatively small size of the industry and market, there are no readily available sources of data on the size and structure of the New Zealand outbound industry, which can be helpful in the quantification of the market share.

While developing consistently with the global travel tendencies, the New Zealand outbound travel market is "dynamic and competitive, exhibiting significant consolidation and integration" (Reid & Pearce, 2008, p.582). Currently there are five main players on the New Zealand outbound travel market – Go, Gulliver, Travel Plan, Air New Zealand and Infinity. Additionally, there is Flight Centre, which works primarily with leisure tourists and Carlson Wagonlit, which is catering for business travellers.

TAANZ works in collaboration with the Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organization (ATTTO) to train employees in the skills required of the modern travel agents – customer relations, selling skills, eCommerce, new technologies and needed knowledge of laws and regulations. This collaboration has been created in order to develop and facilitate excellent workplace training programmes and qualifications within the industry, which are recognised on New Zealand's National Qualification Framework. Currently, most of the employees working in the travel agency sector are getting their education though private vocational training institutions, such as the New Zealand School of Travel and Tourism. Nevertheless, New Zealand Tourism (2007) has indicated that many tourism employers in the country are constrained by the lack of skilled staff, which might have serious consequences for the industry in the future.

The Workforce Strategy, which is currently being implemented by the Ministry of Tourism, Tourism New Zealand and Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand (New Zealand Tourism, 2007, p.71), is looking for a "whole-of-tourism industry approach to identify solutions on making New Zealand tourism an attractive sector by its reputation as a place to gain skills and grow professionally". According to the workforce strategy (New Zealand Tourism, 2007, p.35) the new approach of the training within the hospitality and tourism industry employees in New Zealand will demand "workplace training, creative, innovative and flexible learning solutions that are not restricted by traditional boundaries between business, educational institutions and industry training organizations".

1.7.   Research gap

Despite growing interest from the tourism industry side, to date little academic research has been conducted on the studied subject. The issue of training in the small business sector in general (Jameson, 2000) and within the hospitality and tourism community "has largely been neglected by academic researchers and human resource planning, development and management specialists who, until recently, were comfortable to suggest training solutions which were relevant more to the businesses strategies of bigger companies firms" (Matlay, 1996, p. 648). Little is known about the status of eLearning courses created by DMOs globally in order to train travel trade partners; certification and knowledge upgrade strategies of the travel agents globally.

Academic research on the evaluation of travel agents sector is rather scarce. Additionally, most of the research on the travel distribution in the last years has focused on the structure and particularities of some players, e.g. tour operators (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Gartner & Bahri, 1994; Williams & Richter, 2002). The evaluation of the relationships between travel trade and other partners involved in the tourism distribution circle, for instance, hotels or tourism destinations (Buhalis, 2000; Carey *et al.*, 1997; Garcia-Falcon & Medina-Munoz, 1999) were discussed.

There were several publications in the last twenty years on the role of travel agents, for instance, on the evaluation of their health advice abilities by clients (Lawlor, 2000; Lovelock, 2003; McKercher *et al.*, 2003), and the selection criteria of travel agents (Meidan, 1997; Chen & Chang, 2012), the impact of the travel agents on potential visitors behaviour (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pearce, *et al.*, 2009), as well as the characteristics of the visitors that purchase tourism products from travel agents (Dolnicar & Laesser, 2007).

It should be acknowledged, that most of the academic research about ICTs and travel intermediaries has concentrated on the analysis of the barriers of ICT adoption by travel agencies (Buhalis, 1999; Deng & Ryan, 1992; Evans & Peacock, 1999; O'Connor, 1999). There were trials on understanding the changing role that travel agents play within the new dynamic eTourism market and potential strategies for survival they might have (Braun & Hollick, 2006; Lawton & Weaver, 2009; Prideaux, 2001), acknowledging that the number of travel agents has dropped globally, due to the strong competition from OTAs and changing consumer behaviour (Alvarez *et al.,* 2007).

Additionally, academic research of the travel trade has been very much concentrated on the European and North American perspective (Buhalis & Laws, 2001; Kamarulzaman, 2007; O'Connor, 1999), at the same time, the research from other management sectors suggest that several differences might occur between developing and developed markets (Arnold & Quelch, 1998; Li, 2003b). Few studies have looked at the structure of the

distribution channels in developing/emerging countries. Among them Sharda and Pearce (2006), who have evaluated Indian travel distribution, while analysing tourism channels that are involved in bringing Indian travellers to New Zealand; and King and Choi (1999) paper on the evaluation of the travel industry structure of the travel trade in Korea that work with Australian tourism stakeholders.

Academic research community has done an empirical research evaluating several aspects of the development of the New Zealand travel agency sector. Lovelock (2003) has evaluated the practice of the travel agents based in New Zealand in the provision of advices to tourists about possible travel plans to unsafe tourism destinations, while Lawton and Page (1997) as well as Lee and Spisto (2001) have studied the advices provision process by agents based in New Zealand looking at health issues. Pearce *et al.*, (2004) have analysed the structure and particularities of the distribution channel in New Zealand, based on the Wellington example, while Reid and Pierce (2008) have presented the first overview of the distribution channels for New Zealand outbound tourism. Additionally, Pearce at al., (2009) have looked at the behaviour of New Zealanders in terms of their outbound travels. Furthermore, Garkavenko and Milne (2008) have explored the influence of ICTs development on the travel agents based in New Zealand, looking at the "disintermediation" impact of the business relations between airlines and travel agents. While Garkavenko (2007) within his PhD thesis has investigated the pressure factors and possible survival strategies that New Zealand travel agents might have within the developing eTourism environment. He has studied additionally which technologies travel agents in New Zealand use for their daily office activities. Rachman and Richins (1997) have evaluated the performance of the tour operators' websites to determine their development status in New Zealand. However, no research has been found on the use of technologies for training of the travel agents based in New Zealand.

The research that Hsieh and O'Leary (1993) projected revealed that travel agents are the most frequently used source of travel information planning in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, Davies (2004) has predicted an important threat for British travel agents created by the development of the eCommerce. Hudson *et al.*, (2011) have investigated the recommendation procedure among British travel agents, using mystery shoppers. Research on the provision of health advice by travel agents to potential tourists has been undertaken in the United Kingdom as well (Grabowski & Behrens,1996; Lawlor *et al.*, 2000). While a few studies have looked at the structure of the education and training system in the United Kingdom (Airey & Middleton, 1995; Baum, 2002; Sigala *et al.*, 2001) no empirical academic research has been found on the training strategies used for the knowledge provision among British travel trade in general and for travel agents and travel consultants in particular. Additionally, no academic published research has been

found on the knowledge upgrade needed for travel agents in the United Kingdom, certification practices and educational level requested to enter the market.

Indian travel trade and travel agency system has been poorly studied so far. Sharda and Pearce (2006) have evaluated Indian travel distribution, while analysing outbound tourism channels involved in bringing travellers to New Zealand. Additionally to that, Chand and Katou (2012) have investigated the procedure of the tour operator selection for partner alliance in India. Singh (1997) presented in her research the structure of tourism and hospitality education in India, without looking at the Human Resource Management for the travel trade. Furthermore, no empirical academic research has been found on the level of education, training or certification needed for entry to travel agents positions in India.

Travel agents training and certification processes have been largely excluded from the academic research. No published peer-reviewed academic research has been found on the use technologies for training within the travel agency industry. The first trial of understanding how travel agents in the United Kingdom use eLearning platforms has been done within a Master thesis by Donna O'Donnell (2012). She has evaluated the effectiveness of Tourism New Zealand eLearning courses among British travel agents, while undertaking a usability study and phone interviews with twenty-one travel agent based in the United Kingdom.

While considering the research gap that was raised in the literature review, the decision was undertaken on investigating this emerging area – the use of technologies for training purposes of the travel trade, looking in particular at the eLearning courses about tourism destinations created for travel agents. To our knowledge, this research is the first one that solicits travel agents' way of getting new knowledge and skills with the help of online trainings globally and in three countries in particular: United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

This study intends to fill this research gap, starting with the detailed analysis of the contents, methods and strategies used for the creation and development of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations at the national level. Then the study will evaluate the perceptions of travel agents on studying online, further investigating the motivations of travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on studying with the help of eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

1.8. Research questions

Within this study, the next three research goals were identified:

1. Map eLearning offers about national tourism destinations created for travel agents.
2. Recognise the travel agents' reaction (participation and awareness) on such offers and factors influencing it.
3. Provide a framework to investigate motivational drivers of the travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations and validate it.

In order to achieve above stated goals, the next research objectives were defined:
1. Understand research issue statement and the present eLearning training on offer for different tourism destinations at a national level.
2. Identify and present best practices in the field.
3. Evaluate awareness and actual participation in the DMO eLearning courses among travel agents globally and those based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.
4. Estimate the reaction of the travel agents globally on participating in the DMO eLearning courses.
5. Outline a-motivations and motivations on attending eLearning activities about tourism destinations and test the later ones with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

Research questions were divided into two research areas: the "supply" and the "demand" side of the eLearning offer about tourism destination. In both cases, first the investigation has been done on the global level, taking into consideration tourism destinations globally and travel agents globally, then narrowed down to specific case studies: Tourism New Zealand and Switzerland Tourism, as well as to the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand accordingly. The overview of the research questions is presented further in Table 3:

Supply side	
Global view	**Case studies**
National DMOs globally	**Tourism New Zealand and Switzerland Tourism**
RQ1: How many national destinations worldwide offer eLearning courses?	
RQs2 and 3: How DMO eLearning courses are structured in terms of the used pedagogical strategies, online training content delivery and testing activities design?	
	RQ4: How eLearning courses are structured in terms of the employees' involved, promotional strategies undertaken and performed in terms of the usages and budget spent?
	RQ5: What motivates DMOs to develop eLearning courses for their travel trade partners?

Demand side	
Travel agents globally	**Travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand**
RQs 6 and 10: Is there a demand among travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?	
RQ7. What is the reaction on the DMO eLearning courses from travel agents globally?	RQ11: Does the demand depend on the country where travel agents are based, their gender, age, level of instruction, and type of agency they work for?
RQs 8 and 12: Is there awareness among travel agents on the existence of DMO eLearning courses?	
	RQ13: Does the awareness depend on the country where travel agents are based, their gender, age, educational level and type of the agency they work for?
	RQ14: What are the barriers of possible participation in the DMO eLearning courses?
RQs9 and 15: What motivates travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?	
	RQ16: Do travel agents undertake eLearning courses about tourism destinations because they perceive this activity as being "ease of use" or "useful"?

Table 3. Research questions

Chapter 2. Methods

Overview

The next chapter presents theoretical models, which were used for the design and implementation of current study. Mixed method, uniting qualitative and quantitative techniques (2.1) was utilized in order to reach research objectives and answer research questions.

With the aim of understanding and assessing the supply side of the eLearning courses about national tourism destinations, the benchmarking study has been undertaken, based on the *Triangular model of eLearning course evaluation* (Cantoni *et al*., 2007). The model states that any eLearning training activity can be analysed from three sides: a) *people* involved in the production and delivery of an online training activity, as well as users of this training; b) *methods and strategies* used for the eLearning design, and c) *contents* of the eLearning modules. The model is presented in the sub-chapter 2.2.

In order to complete an overview of the supply side of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations two case studies with the ministries of tourism were undertaken. The *case study* method has been extensively applied as a theory-building approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009), especially in new topic areas, which eLearning in the hospitality and tourism field can be accounted for. The case study method is presented further and featured in the sub-chapter 2.3. Two chosen cases: *Switzerland Travel Academy* and *Kiwi Specialist Program* will be presented along the *ADDIE model*, which stands for -Analysis -Design -Development -Implementation and -Evaluation, where each word represents a step in the lifecycle of an eLearning course. The model itself and its application within this thesis are described in the sub-chapter 2.4.

While analysing the demand side, *Donald Kirkpatrick's model* (1994) of evaluation within a training activity has been used for the preliminary research. This is in the form of an online questionnaire to travel agents in order to evaluate their perceptions of the eLearning activities created by destination management organizations. The model has been extensively applied in the eLearning research context, and suggests that every teaching and learning activity can be evaluated at four levels: -Reaction -Knowledge -Transfer and -Impact. Sub-chapter 2.5. presents the model in detail.

The following two theories were taken into consideration while developing a model to be tested on understanding motivation factors that influence travel agents to subscribe to eLearning courses about tourism destinations: *Self-Determination theory* (2.6) and *Technology Acceptance Model* (2.7).

2.1. Mixed methods research approach

For the purpose of this study mixed method research approach was adopted. Mixed method research is the combination of both quantitative and qualitative techniques used in one single study. It is believed to be a useful and appropriate approach for triangulating data by uniting quantitative and qualitative data in a study (Jick, 1983). According to Creswell (2002), mixed-methods research design can be utilised for one of the following purposes:

- to converge quantitative and qualitative data for triangulation of research findings;
- to explore a central phenomenon using a qualitative method prior to a subsequent quantitative study;
- to explain research findings from a quantitative study by conducting a subsequent qualitative study.

Due to the exploratory nature of the first part of the study, analysis of the demand side, which focuses on a neglected research area, eLearning offers created by tourism destinations in order to educate travel agents and travel consultants, qualitative research instruments (Patton, 2002) were used. Benchmarking study of the existing eLearning courses, which has analysed contents of the eLearning training activities, as well as methods and strategies used for the training delivery, were undertaken. Furthermore, two case studies of the best eLearning courses managed by the ministries of tourism at the national level were generated though semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the ministries of tourism, that were involved in the design, development and implementation of the eLearning courses. The objective of this part of the research was not to generalize and test hypotheses, but to gain an in-depth rich understanding of the studied issue. It is expected that the qualitative data gathered in these two research phases will help to better interpret the findings from the subsequent study. For this reason, quantitative techniques were undertaken.

The second part of the thesis was done in order to enhance the generalization of the results, while having a larger and more representative sample and has used quantitative research instruments: phone interviews and an online questionnaire with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

2.2. Triangular model of eLearning course evaluation

In order to understand and evaluate present training offer, eLearning courses created by destination management organizations at the national level, the benchmarking study has been undertaken. The benchmarking grid (Appendix 24.) has been developed based on the *Triangular model of eLearning courses evaluation*, which has been presented in the book of Cantoni, L., Botturi, L., Succi, C., & New MinE Lab (1997) *E-learning. Capire, progettare, comunicare*.

According to Cantoni *et al.*, (1997), education can be represented as the interaction between people, contents and methods. Furthermore, the triangular model states (Figure 2.) that any eLearning course can be analysed from three sides:

a) *people:* involved in the production and delivery of an online training activity, as well as users of this activity. All involved have their specific roles, for instance, teaching or studying.

b) *methods* and *strategies:* identification of the steps used for the training design. It indicates how something is to be taught as well as specifies the roles involved people should play in the eLearning courses design and delivery.

c) *contents:* information presented in the online training modules.
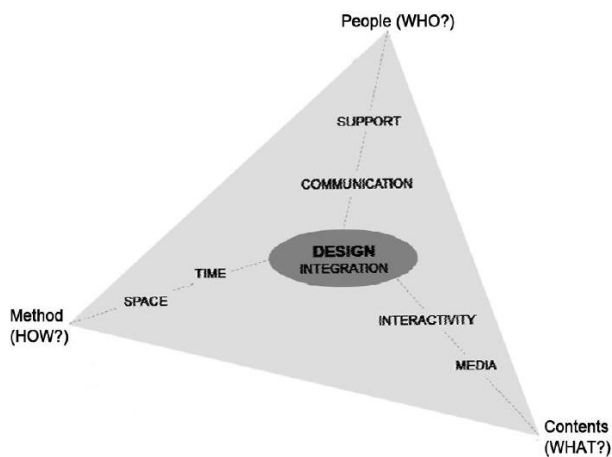
Figure 2. Triangular model of eLearning course evaluation. Taken from Botturi, Cantoni, Succi & the NewMinE Lab (2007)

During the benchmarking study, while analysing "*people*", the next involved stakeholders should be taken into consideration:

- users of the eLearning courses;
- tutors or teachers;
- publishers and providers of the online training service.

By assessing "*methods and strategies*" the following items are to be taken into consideration:

- learning settings,
- teaching tools,
- offered assistance,
- used multimedia,
- interactivity and navigation,
- differentiated levels of the difficulty of the training courses,
- number of training modules and testing activities,
- evaluation process,
- length of the course,
- awarded title or certificate for the eLearning course completion,
- registration and identification process.

By analysing the "content" of the eLearning programs, the topics discussed within the training courses are to be mapped and analysed.

2.3. Case study method

Case study approach facilitates the connection between theoretical concepts and practical environment. Bassey (1981, p.86) stated: "a successful case study will provide a three-dimensional picture and will illustrate relationships, issues and patterns in a particular context". The case study method has been extensively applied as a theory-building approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009), especially in new topic areas, which eLearning in the hospitality and tourism field can be accounted for. Additionally, the use of case studies within the hospitality and tourism research has been well documented (Dale, 2008; Gunn, 2002; Veal, 2006).

According to Flyvbjerg (2006), several types of case studies exist, where each of them can be used depending on the goals and objectives of the research. They can be illustrative, exploratory or pilot, cumulative or critical instance case studies. While the illustrative type of case study is used in order to familiarise with the object of the study and it is primarily descriptive; exploratory or a pilot case study is performed before undertaking a large-scale investigation. Cumulative case studies collect data from several sources at different time, which allows a greater possibility of generalization. Critical instances case study examines one or more cases with little interest in generalization.

A case study approach has been used within this thesis in order to complete an overview of the supply side and explore in-depth cases of two eLearning platforms managed by the ministers of tourism, as well as contextualize presented and explored information.

Within this study multiple cumulative case study type has been utilised, as the information was collected not only through five in-depth interviews with the representatives of the ministries of tourism, which were helpful into getting the "insider perspective" (Liamputtong, 2009), but also though the analysis of secondary data and internal documentation.

Yin (2009) has identified six types of sources for the case study -documentation, -archival records, -interviews, -direct and -participant observation and physical artefacts.

In this concern within this study, the next steps were undertaken:
- *Documentation*. Collection of paper-based materials, such as learning slides and manuals, as well as promotional leaflets distributed among travel agents; communication, such as emails and internal documents; administrative documents, such as eLearning project proposal and progress reports.
- *Archival records*, such as eLearning platform tracking data and learning results; evaluation studies data; company internal organisational records.
- *Interviews*. In-depth interviews were undertaken with the representatives of two ministries of tourism in a one-to-one setting with a semi-structured grid of questions.

- *Direct Observations*. Case studies included expert analysis of the existing eLearning platforms provided by two ministries of tourism as well as the visit to the headquarters of the ministries, which allowed direct observation of the employees involved in the production and delivery of the online training course.
- *Participant observations* included actual process of the eLearning course evaluation by the researcher.
- *Physical Artefacts*. Thanks to the interviews with the representatives of the ministries of tourism, the access to several incentives and gadgets was received, for instance, printed certificates, which can be seen in Appendix 1. and in Appendix 6.

2.4. ADDIE model

In order to present two case studies and their online training offers for travel trade partners, ADDIE model has been utilised. *ADDIE Model* is believed to have been developed at Florida State University (Branson *et al*., 1975), but today "is merely a colloquial term used to describe a systematic approach to instructional development, virtually synonymous with instructional systems development" (Molenda, 2003, p.1).

The model has been extensively used as a framework (Morrison, 2010) by instructional designers and training developers around the globe (Lohr, 1998; Peterson, 2003; Wang & Hsu, 2008). The model in itself stands for -Analysis, -Design, -Development, -Implementation and -Evaluation, where each word represents a step in the lifecycle of an effective instructional system design project (Figure 3.).
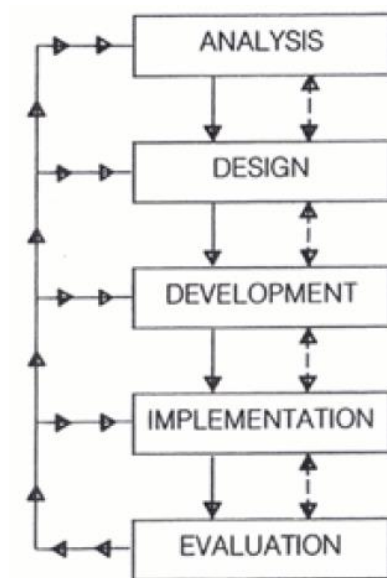
Figure 3. An Instructional System Design featuring ADDIE model. Taken from Grafinger (1988)

The particularity of the model is that it proposes cyclical designing approach, meaning that when the course is already implemented, the designer starts over again based on the evaluation and the desired improvements learnt from the experience they have just had. This approach is believed to be beneficial in saving companies' resources, both financial and time involved, when technical issues can still be fixed easily.

- *Analysis.* The model states that instructional system design starts with the Analysis, which is the most crucial element. The analysis phase clarifies the objectives of the project on behalf of the organization that is initiating it, identifies possible learning

environments, to find out learner's existing knowledge and skills as well as their expectations.

- *Design.* During the second stage, the strategy for instruction and didactic materials of the eLearning platform is undertaken through the information architecture and instructional design. This phase brings a synthetic vision of the didactic activities and the sequence of training items needed to be developed for the successful organization of the contents, ranging from the definition of the learning objectives, design of the training materials, required assessment instruments to the choice of different media to be used. During the Design phase the user interface and user experience are defined and, as a result, the first prototype of the training activity is usually created.

- *Development.* During the development phase, instructional designers and developers technically implement didactical materials and educational support objects, such as slides, tables, multimedia, and graphics. Additionally, appropriate tools for the evaluation are realised.

- *Implementation.* During the implementation phase, procedures for training facilitators and learners are developed. This is followed by an actual delivery of an online training course to students and learners. During the implementation phase, the first evaluation of the design of the training activity is happening.

- *Evaluation.* This step of the ADDIE model involves two phases. The first one explores if online learners have reached educational goals that were predefined during *the Design phase*. Second phase examines if designed and developed educational experience satisfies the organizational needs, which were defined during *the Analysis* phase.

2.5. Donald Kirkpatrick model

The literature on training evaluation has been useful on providing a framework to be used for the assessment process of the preliminary research carried out. This is in the form of an exploratory online questionnaire with the travel agents globally on their perception of the eLearning courses created by tourism destinations.

Donald Kirkpatrick's model (1994) has been extensively used for the assessment of the training activities, including also the assessment of the eLearning courses (Hamtini, 2008; Strother, 2002) and tourism training activities (Frash *et al.*, 2008; Hayden *et al.*, 2001; Weiler & Ham, 2002). The model suggests that every teaching and learning experience can be evaluated at four levels: -Reaction, -Knowledge, -Transfer and -Impact. Those four elements are considered appropriate and useful for assessing training outcomes (Arthur *et al.*, 2003).

The first level measures the *reaction* to the training course from the perspective of learners. This evaluation answers the question on what learners felt and thought about the training; are they comfortable and happy with the content of the training offer; what is their overall level of satisfaction; what were main drivers for them to start this learning experience.

The second level is the trainees learning or their actual *knowledge* and skills. This level of evaluation of a training activity answers the next question: how much and what did students learn within the proposed course?

The third level is the *trainees' behaviour*, meaning how much of the learned information, knowledge and new skills they can *transfer* to their everyday life, including professional activities. For instance: are they able to apply the knowledge they have got to their working activities?

The last level in these hierarchical systems is the organizational results or the global *impact* of the offered training on the actual working activities of the students or learners and can include monetary, performance-based and other types of impacts. This evaluation level is the hardest to measure, but if successfully evaluated it can answer the question on: if the training had a positive effect on the concerned business?

2.6. Self-Determination Theory

Motivation has been defined as "the processes that accounts for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal" (Robbins & Judge, 2010, p.305). Motivation theory looks at factors influencing "an individual's willingness to exert effort to achieve the organization's goals, conditioned by this effort's ability to satisfy individual needs" (DeCenso & Robbins, 1994, p. 327).

Motivational theories have been broadly tested and are looking to describe what stimulates and sustains the behaviour of an individual over a period of time (Krause, 2010). When considering motivation and applying to an educational setting or online environment, it plays an important role in learning and teaching, starting from the initial stages of engagement into an (e)Learning activity, through to the process of staying and continuing to study.

The origins of motivation theory go back to the field of behavioural psychology (Freud, 1962; Skinner, 1953), which focuses upon specific human responses in order to replicate precise conditions and achieve specific outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Several academic and industry articles were written on the relationship between eLearning, the behaviour of individual and learning preferences of those individuals, with motivational frameworks widely utilised to assess effectiveness of eLearning practices and perceptions of the learners.

Self-Determination theory (SDT) is a theory of motivation that has been developed in 1980es by two psychologists: Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (1985). The theory has investigated external and internal drivers that lead human beings to act. This perspective has been extensively tested in the last thirty years and suggested that human behaviours can be seen as intrinsically and extrinsically motivated.

Intrinsically motivated behaviours are those that are engaged in an activity for its own sake, for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from performing them (Deci, 1975; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Those are the activities, which are performed by individuals without any material rewards or constraints (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1987). Therefore, internal forces such as values, passions and interests drive intrinsic motivations. While *extrinsic motivations* refer on any activity for a consequence separable from the activity itself. It can be a reward or the avoidance of a punishment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to the model that is presented in Table 4., there are four types of extrinsic motivation which can be ordered along a self-determination continuum. From lower to higher levels of self-determination, they are: i) external, ii) introjected, iii) identified, and iv) integrated regulation.
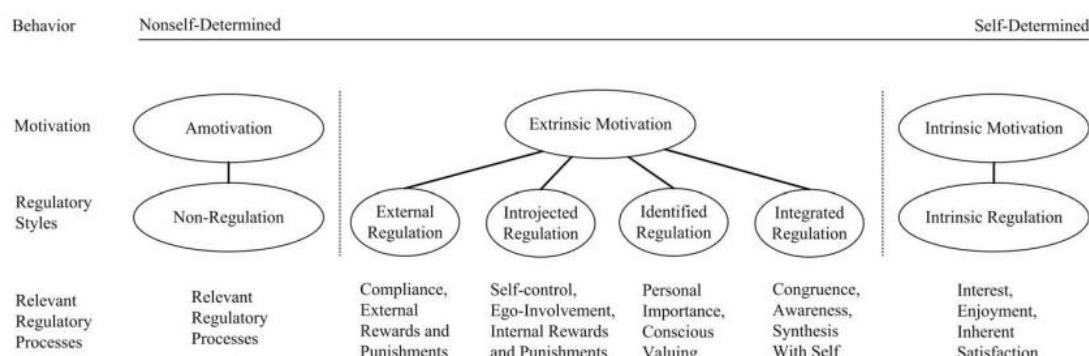
Table 4. Self-Determination Continuum. Taken from Ryan & Deci (2000)

External regulations happen when behaviour of a person is externally regulated through rewards or constraints. Individuals in this situation are undertaking an activity in order to obtain an external reward or avoid a punishment.

Introjected regulations are internal rewards and punishments. Introjected regulations are characterised by ego-involvement of the individuals, their feeling of internal pressure, guilt or shame. For this very reason, the source of control is inside the individual. However, while internal to the person, this form of internalization is not truly self-determined since it is limited to the internalization of external possibilities.

In contrast, *identified regulations* occur when behaviour is valued by the individual and is perceived as being chosen by oneself. Behaviour is internally regulated but in a self-determined way. With the identified regulations, an individual accepts an activity as personally meaningful and important to oneself.

Integrated regulations, the last type of extrinsic motivations happens when the person carries out the behaviour, which is fully integrated with oneself, so they are included in a person's self-evaluations and beliefs on personal needs. Integrated motivations share qualities with intrinsic motivation but are still classified as extrinsic due to the fact, that are trying to be achieved are for reasons extrinsic to the self rather than due to the internal enjoyment or interest in the task, which is being undertaken.

More than thirty years of research has shown that intrinsic motivations lead to better persistence performance and satisfaction in variety of tasks in various domain, such as education, organizational and behavioural health. According to Deci and Ryan (2002), there are three psychological needs that motivate the self to initiate behaviour and are essential for psychological health and the well-being of an individual. The theory proposes that the adoption of *intrinsic motivation* over extrinsic depends on the

satisfaction of three basic psychological needs of *autonomy, competence and relatedness.*

Autonomy is the desire to self-organize one's actions, when individual can freely pursue the activity and feel volitional in doing so (Ryan & Connell, 1989). In case of the eLearning usage, perceived autonomy refers to the eLearning support for the learners' desire to self-organize their actions.

Competence is a psychological need that individuals tend to be effective in their interactions with the environments and when they perform an activity. Perceived competence refers to the belief that one can successfully perform a distinct set of actions required to use effectively eLearning. The concept of competence is very similar to the concept of self-efficacy developed by Bandura (1986).

Relatedness is the psychological need to feel connected and supported by important people, such as manager, parents, teachers and teammates. Perceived relatedness refers to the belief that one feels connected and supported by important people for him or her, such as instructors or other learners.

Several researchers have tested possible variables, which influence intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations of individuals. According to Igbaria, *et al.*, (1995), external factors such as *organizational characteristics* have significant effects on individuals' intentions to use technology system based on the presence or the absence of the necessary skills, opportunities, and resources to use the system. Management support is perceived as one of the most important dimensions in an organization training culture, which includes encouragement and recognition from the management, allocation of resources, and instructional development assistance. Organization support within the companies can be presented through internal policies, procedures and practices that demonstrate the importance of training and development efforts, such as reward systems and resources to acquire and apply learned skills.

Another important discovery within the empirical research in the last thirty years is that rewards (Deci *et al.*, 1999), deadlines (Amabile *et al.*, 1976), evaluation (Amabile, 1979) and threats (Deci & Casacio, 1972) can diminish people's intrinsic motivations both in time spent on the activity during a free choice period and in terms of self-reported interest in the task.

Apart from the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985) claim that there is a third construct, a-motivation, which must be considered to fully understand human behaviour. Individuals are not motivated when they perceive a lack of relationship between their behaviour and the outcomes. According to Deci and Ryan non-motivated

behaviours are neither specifically intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated and any types of rewards will not be able to make the person participate in the activity.

SDT, which was described by Pintrich and Schunk (2002, p.257) as "one of the most comprehensive and empirically supported theories of motivation available today", has been successfully applied to a variety of settings and specific domains, including health care (Williams *et al.,* 2006), politics (Losier, *et al.,* 2001) and religion (Neyrinck *et al*., 2005). However, education has been the most applied domain in the SDT research (Guay & Boggiano, 2001; Harter, 1981; Niemiec *et al*., 2006; Ryan & Connell, 1989), especially considering formal educational institutions (Guay & Boggiano, 2001) as well as motivations in the workplace (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Vallerand, *et al*., (1989) have explored the relationship between motivational styles and educational outcomes. The application of SDT has been also recognized in the last years in the research of the eLearning domain (Chen, 2007; Chen & Jang, 2010; Cheng *et al*., 2012). For instance, Schroff *et al*., (2007) have tested SDT on two online certificate programs that lead to special educational certification for a university in the United States, while Roca and Gagné (2008) examined eLearning continuance intention in the workplace.

Furthermore, SDT was applied to examine the effects of motivational factors affecting TAM constructs in the eLearning in a work setting (Roca & Gagné, 2008). They introduced three motivational factors (perceived autonomy support, perceived competence and perceived relatedness) based on SDT.

According to the research undertaken by Bonk (2002) several students in corporate training environments, while attending eLearning training courses have no desire to learn and their only motivation is to pass the test (Kurse, 2004). Rabak and Cleveland-Innes (2006) investigated the factors that influence employees' acceptance and resistance to a corporate eLearning initiative provided by a large retail chain. Their findings indicate that time, meaningful recognition for participation, personal and technical support are the main factors that affect successful implementation of corporate eLearning initiatives.

2.7. Technology Acceptance Model

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a model that has dominated the research on individual adoption of information systems by individuals and within organizations. Davis (1989) has introduced the TAM model in order to explain computer-usage behaviour. Since then, TAM has been the most frequently cited and influential model for understanding the acceptance of information technology and has received extensive empirical support (e.g. Venkatesh, 2000). Moreover, several researchers have empirically confirmed full causal relationship between TAM model constructs. The model has been used widely also by the researchers studying eLearning integration into training curricula (Roca *et al.*, 2006; Roca *& * Gagné, 2008).

TAM claims that the most important determinants of the individual's acceptance of information technologies are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. According to Davis (1989, p.320)

- *perceived usefulness* is "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance";
- *perceived ease of use* is "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of physical and mental effort".

The most important determinant of the users' behavioural intention and actual usage attitude is a combination of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. According to Davis (1989) perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use positively influence acceptance of information technologies. Additionally, Roca and Gagne (2008, p.1587) have suggested: "perceived usefulness is a form of extrinsic motivation and perceived enjoyment is a form of intrinsic motivation".

Chapter 3. Analysis of the supply side: eLearning courses provided by National Tourism Organizations

Overview

This chapter is dedicated to the overall understanding of the "supply side", presenting National Tourism Organizations' (NTOs) eLearning offers. This chapter has been elaborated and organized into five sub-chapters.

The first sub-chapter 3.1 will present a comprehensive overview of the existing eLearning offers through a complete benchmarking study of all NTOs worldwide, which were available online in fall of 2012.

The next three sub-chapters 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 will proceed with a presentation of two case studies among best-evaluated eLearning courses about tourism destinations at the national level: Switzerland Travel Academy, created by Swiss National Tourism Office (Zurich, Switzerland) and Kiwi Specialist Program, delivered by Tourism New Zealand (Wellington, New Zealand).

The development strategies (including technical and content development), motivations of the respective destinations on having such a training tool as well as the history of the platforms, management structure, usages will be discussed based on two analysed cases. The study will be conducted in two phases, combining both primary and secondary data analysis. The use of secondary data analysis (e.g. internal corporate reports) helped to build on existing knowledge and therefore enhanced understanding for professional theory and practice within eLearning in the hospitality and tourism field.

The last sub-chapter – 3.5 will present conclusions from both the benchmarking study and two discussed in-depth case studies.

Parts of this chapter have appeared in the following publications:

Kalbaska, N. (2012). Travel Agents and Destination Management Organizations: eLearning as a strategy to train tourism trade partners. *Journal of Information Technology & Tourism, 13*(1), 1-12.

Kalbaska N., Jovic A., & Cantoni L. (2012). Usability evaluation of an eLearning course presenting a regional destination. The case of "Ticino Switzerland Travel Specialist". e-*Review of Tourism Research (eRTR), 10*(2), 31-34.

Cantoni, L., & Kalbaska, N. (2010). eLearning Offers by Destination Management Organizations. In U. Gretzel, R. Law., & M. Fuchs (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism* (pp.247-259). Wien – New York: Springer.

Колбаско, Н., Кантони, Л. (2010). Дистанционное образование в сфере туризма и гостиничного дела на примере mySwitzerland.com онлайн платформы обучения. *eLearning Conference*. Vilnius (Lithuania): European Humanities University

Cantoni, L., Kalbaska, N., & Inversini, A. (2009). eLearning in Tourism and Hospitality: A Map. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 8(2), 148-156.

3.1. Benchmarking of existing National Tourism Organizations' eLearning courses

This subchapter offers an overview of existing online courses, which are run by National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) worldwide in order to better equip travel agents and travel consultants in selling a specific tourism destination. These online training courses present one of the Business-to-Business (B2B) offerings by NTOs, and a good opportunity for travel agents, who are trying to find their identity and competitive advantage within the complex context of eTourism environment, which is being characterized by a strong disintermediation trend.

All the websites of ministries of tourism and national tourism boards of the 193 officially recognized United Nations member states have been taken into consideration within this study. In a preliminary analysis for this research (Cantoni & Kalbaska, 2010), which was undertaken in 2009, 37 eLearning courses offered by NTOs worldwide were tracked, attended, studied and analysed. This research has been repeated and explored in the same area again, while updating the existing map. The results of the research show that in three years' time, the offering has doubled, as 75 online training courses about national tourism destinations were available as of fall 2012.

This subchapter yields to an updated and comprehensive map of eLearning courses offered by destinations worldwide at the national level. Accordingly, it is organized as follows: starting with the purpose of the study and research design, the methodology chosen is followed. Further the research results are presented along with the eLearning training courses analysis model (Cantoni *et al.*, 2007), which investigates online training courses with a triangle-shaped framework, encompassing all stakeholders involved, learning strategies and methods used for the eLearning courses creation and delivery, along with the analysis of the training content and testing activities.

3.1.1. Research objectives and research questions

The purpose of this study is to map and analyse existing online training courses for travel agents and travel consultants offered by NTOs directly or through a third service-provider. The study intends to understand the main characteristics of those courses, their settings, key providers, as well as major motivations of the tourism destinations on creating such a type of a training activity, while expending their strategies on the travel agents training delivery process. Additionally, the main incentives that travel agents might receive after completing eLearning courses on national tourism destinations will be discussed as well. Consequently, the main research objectives are:

   i.) to identify presence of eLearning training courses created by NTOs with the main goal of training travel agents and travel consultants;
   ii.) to identify the providers and core characteristics of these training courses;

iii.)   to identify whether the presence and main characteristics of eLearning practices created by NTOs have changed in comparison to the preliminary research which was done in fall of 2009.

This paragraph will answer the next research questions:

Research Question 1: How many national destinations worldwide offer eLearning courses?

Research Question 2: How DMO eLearning courses are structured in terms of the used pedagogical strategies, online training content delivery and testing activities design?

3.1.2. Research design and limitations

In order to fulfil abovementioned goals the investigation used a multiple case study research approach. Looking for existing eLearning practices for travel agents that are currently administered by Destination Management Organizations, the study concentrated on national cases. All 193 officially recognized United Nations member states were taken into consideration within the research. Authorized websites of the national tourism boards and ministries of tourism were tracked through the most popular search engine – www.google.com (ComScore, 2012). Once official national tourism board websites were identified, all eLearning practices for travel trade partners were extracted from them.

eLearning courses were attended and analysed in the period from the 1st of September until 28th of October 2012 from Glasgow (United Kingdom). The preliminary research was undertaken from the 4th until 23^{d} of May 2009 from Lugano (Switzerland).

English versions of the online training courses were taken into consideration within this research and analysis, while the presence of the eLearning offers in other languages was only identified and noted.

A matrix for the analysis was created to be used as an instrument for the eLearning courses content and functionalities analysis. The codebook created for the content analysis of existing online trainings proposed by NTOs was composed by four sections and was developed based on the eLearning training courses analysis triangular model (Cantoni *et al.*, 2007). A sample of the codebook can be seen in Appendix 24. The structure of the codebook used for this analysis has been tested within the preliminary research, which was held in fall of 2009 and analysed 37 existing by then eLearning

courses about national tourism destinations. A triangle-shaped framework included the next sections:

- people involved in the production and delivery of the eLearning courses;
- methods and learning strategies used;
- online training courses content.

Moreover, general information about the courses (e.g. title of course, language, time spent on the training, etc.) became an additional category in the benchmarking study and has been named "general information".

All NTO's eLearning courses were analysed with a codebook structured as follows:
i) "General information" about the course:

- official name of the NTO;
- title of the course;
- presence or absence of the official logo of the NTO on the eLearning course website;
- cost to follow online training course;
- time needed to complete online training activity;
- date of the last access to the course by the coder;
- declared benefits for travel agents;
- declared incentives for travel agents on participating in national destinations eLearning courses;
- evaluation if the information in the course (e.g. news, newsletters, list of winners, etc.) is current and updated.

Additionally, comments where the particularities and unique selling points of the courses were tracked, as well the changes that happened in three years period from the preliminary research in 2009 were noted.

ii) "People"
Within this section, the next points were taken into consideration:

- intended users of the eLearning courses (e.g. travel agents or general public);
- publishers or providers of the online training service (e.g. NTO itself or an external company – provider of the eLearning service).

iii) "Methods and Strategies", were tracking the following items:

- learning settings;
- offered assistance;
- teaching tools;
- number of training modules;

- evaluation process (e.g. tests, essays, etc.);
- multimediality and interactivity;
- awarded title and/or certificate upon the course completion.

iv) "Contents", where presented training topics and modules within the eLearning courses were analysed and mapped.

In this research, both quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods were used. Quantitative analysis was used to count the frequency of items, which represent content and functionalities of the eLearning platforms, while qualitative content analysis is used to find out and describe the quality, currency and authority of the training materials. The results of the analysis will be introduced in the following paragraphs. Several screen shots, representing typical content, structure of online training materials or testing activities will be presented as well.

Even though present study has provided valuable insights into the first understanding and evaluation on the structure of the eLearning courses provided by NTOs, as well methods used for the creation of the content and testing activities, these findings should be interpreted in the light of the next limitations. Available online training courses were analysed only in English, while the presence of the eLearning courses in other languages has been just mentioned and tracked. Future analysis of the online training activities in different languages may reveal different research results. Additionally, the studied courses represent national tourism destinations, while regional tourism offices might have different strategies on training content creation and delivery. Future research may concentrate on the analysis of the "technical" development of the eLearning courses, which was not included within this study.

3.1.3. Research results

Beginning in early 2000s, ministries of tourism worldwide have been building eLearning courses with the main goal of training travel agents about tourism destinations, hence giving them the opportunity to better serve clients, potential tourists, when presenting a tourism destination. The eLearning courses were designed mainly to provide travel agents and travel consultants with core knowledge and skills to effectively sell tourism destinations at different levels: national, regional or local.

Figure 4. maps the countries in dark blue that in the fall of 2012 had online training courses about national tourism destinations, while the grey colour shows the absence of the courses on the websites of the national tourism boards. 75 countries out of 193 official members of United Nations present a destination online training course for travel agents. This number accounts for 39% of the total number of the officially recognized countries worldwide.

Figure 4. Geographical distribution of available (in dark blue) national eLearning courses as of fall 2012 (Total N = 75)

The list of the countries that have got eLearning courses for travel agents as of fall 2012 is presented below in Table 5.

Antigua and Barbuda	A-Z Antigua and Barbuda
Australia	The Aussie Specialist program
Austria	Austrian Certified Travel Specialist
Bahamas	Bahamas Specialist Program
Barbados	Barbados Travel Specialist
Belize	Belize Travel Specialist
Bhutan	Basic Course on Bhutan
Botswana	Botswana Tourism Training Course
Brazil	The Brazilian Specialist Travel Agent Program
Canada	Canada Specialist Program
Cambodia	PATA Academy - Indochina
Chile	Chile Destination Specialist Program
China	PATA Academy - China
Costa Rica	Costa Rica eLearning
Cuba	ASTA training - Cuba
Cyprus	Cyprus Specialist
Czech Republic	Czech out Prague & beyond
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Congo specialist
Denmark	Scandinavia Specialist
Dominica	Discover Dominica
Dominican republic	Expert in Dominican Republic

Egypt	Egypt Specialist Program
El Salvador	El Salvador Specialist Graduate
France	ATOUT FRANCE online training space
Grenada	Grenada Ambassador
Guatemala	Guatemala Specialist Program
Honduras	Honduras Specialist
Hungary	European Quartet Specialist
Iceland	Iceland Informer
India	India Destination Specialist course
Indonesia	PATA Academy - Indonesia
Ireland	Shamrock Agent
Israel	Israel Specialists
Italy	Ciao Italia
Jamaica	Jamaica Training Program
Japan	Japan Travel Specialist
Jordan	Jordan Travel Specialist
Kenya	Jambo Kenya
Korea (South)	Korea, Be Inspired'
Laos	PATA Academy - Indochina
Lithuania	Lithuanian Tourism training course
Malaysia	Tourism Malaysia e-training
Maldives	Basic Course on Maldives
Malta	Learn Malta
Mauritius	Mauritius Destination Training Programme
Mexico	Mexico Travel Specialist
Morocco	Morocco Champions Program
Namibia	Namibia Know It All
New Zealand	Explore New Zealand Programme
Norway	Norway Knowledge
Oman	Oman Academy
Panama	Panama Specialist Program
Peru	Peru Travel Specialist
Philippines	Philippines Specialist
Poland	European Quartet Specialist
Portugal	Portugal Specialist
St. Kitts and Nevis	St. Kitts Destination Specialist Program
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	St Vincent & the Grenadines
Samoa	Sell Samoa

Saint Lucia	Saint Lucia Expert
Seychelles	Seychelles Training Programme
Singapore	Singa Pro
Slovakia	European Quartet specialist
South Africa	The South African Expert Training Program
Spain	Spain Specialist
Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka Training
Sweden	Scandinavia Specialist
Switzerland	Switzerland Travel Academy
Tanzania	Tanzania Travel Specialist
Thailand	Training Tourism Thailand
Trinidad and Tobago	Trinidad and Tobago - The true Caribbean
Tunisia	Teach me Tunisia
United Kingdom	Britain Agent
United States of America	Visit USA Training
Viet Nam	PATA Academy - Indochina

Table 5. List of eLearning courses about national tourism destinations

As of 2009 only 37 nations had such an eLearning offer (Figure 5.), over three years' time the number of eLearning courses run by NTOs has doubled. This suggests a growing interest in the subject from the NTOs as well as from travel agents themselves.

Figure 5. Geographical distribution of available (in dark blue) national eLearning courses as of fall 2009 (Total N = 37)

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that there are countries, which have had active courses in 2009, but have suspended their online training activities for trade partners. Those countries are Andorra, Estonia, Papua New Guinea, Montenegro and Finland. The

training courses, which were not available in fall 2012, were not considered for the benchmarking study of this research and further presentation of the results.

i) General information about National Tourism Organizations' eLearning courses
General information, beneficial for the overall understanding and evaluation of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations, were tracked through the benchmarking study and will be presented below.

In every online training course, the official logo of the NTO was present, which shows strong ties between the training website and official country portals. Moreover, in most training courses, the official country tourism online portal (being designed either for the end clients or for the trade partners) was mentioned several times within the content. It has been presumably done in order to redirect travel agents to the main and regularly updated information source.

The time that the coder needed to subscribe and then complete an online training course varied significantly. The coder needed 40 minutes to accomplish *Mauritius Training Course* and more than 30 hours to be able to finish *Explore New Zealand Program* or *Aussie Specialist Program*. On average, from four to five hours were enough for a successful online training course completion.

Due to the fact that for any NTO such a training course can generate significant marketing revenues as well as can serve as an important financial channel, most of the courses were free of charge for travel agents. Nevertheless, in the last three years (2009-2012) a few courses appeared for which travel agents need to pay in order to participate. Among 75 courses, there are four paid ones: *Basic course on Bhutan, India Destination Specialist course, ASTA Travel-Cuba, and Basic course on Maldives*. OnlineTravelEdu along with ASTA – the Association of American Travel Agents provide paid online training courses.

Several other changes have been noted within the period of the last three years. Firstly, from 2009 when the preliminary research has been carried out, the number of courses has doubled from 37 to 75 eLearning training courses at a national level. Several aspects have remained the same, e.g. training and learning goals, strategies, intended audiences and main stakeholders. Meanwhile interactive and multimedia contents are more frequent nowadays. Hence, in 2012 a richer and more exciting learning experience is provided to travel agents that want to use eLearning courses in order to enhance their knowledge and skills, serve clients, and as a result sell more and earn more. Nowadays a number of courses include links to social media sites (e.g. Facebook and Twitter), which give the possibility to share the course content, multimedia materials, as well as news

about travel agents who have just obtained a specialist certificate. Additionally, the first mobile eLearning site (www.godominicanrepublic.com/mlearning/) became available in 2012. *Expert in Dominican Republic course* has been created and is provided by the tourist office of the Dominican Republic to travel agents worldwide, so those concerned can go ahead with the course content and evaluation practices while travelling and studying with the help of their smart phones and tablets.

Furthermore, information within online training and educational courses is currently updated regularly. Most of the online training courses feature fresh news, current newsletters, updated winner notification pages or calls for familiarization trips. This tendency was not observed in 2009.

Another interesting finding is the appearance and co-promotion of supra-national courses such as: *European Quartet Specialist*, created by Travel Agent Academy, which presents a common online training platform for four Central European countries: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

Reasons to take part in an online training course for travel agents were mapped from the official descriptions on the NTO eLearning websites and are presented further:

- Increased knowledge.
- Additional sales.
- A specialist certificate, which can be displayed in store and can serve as a key competitive advantage of being a recognized specialist.
- The chance to participate in an educational or familiarization trip, which is organized by tourism boards. The main aim of such trips is to take selected travel trade to visit the destination and experience it first-hand. All the expenses are usually paid for and include trips to tourist attractions.
- Access to special offers from the destinations and other tourism and hospitality suppliers.
- Registration in the official travel agents-list (database) on the destination website, as suggested travel specialist in the region where travel agents operate.
- Additional gifts and gadgets, featuring and promoting destinations and its tourism and hospitality products with pens, maps, travel kits, T-shirts, etc.

Course providers suggest that training courses will make learners of the online training courses (e.g. travel agents) active participants as they can expand their understanding and confidence in selling any tourism product, destination or resort. Additionally, they will be able to enrich their curriculum, respond better to their managers' requests and better serve their clients. Online training courses can increase learning results of the

travel agents, and will decrease the training costs for the destination. Furthermore, online training sessions can give an opportunity to the destination managers to build new contacts in the travel industry among those travel agents who are potentially interested to sell this destination, while strengthening existing ones, and widening their marketing outreach around tourism trade community. Additionally, eLearning courses can help a destination to implement innovative communication and as a result increase their chances to be selected among competitors – other tourism destinations. Moreover, this training technique can help a destination to be positioned at the top of the benchmarking as an innovative and creative eTourism destination.

While assessing the overall benchmarking of the present courses and acknowledging significant improvements that were done in the last three years, several issues still should be raised and possibly solved in the future by NTOs in order to improve the overall training experience of the travel agents.

For instance, nowadays, with the help of eLearning courses, which are created by NTOs, travel agents are getting a "clean" or "promotional" version of the representation of a destination. Travel agents might look for more profound and unbiased information, and not just as a point of interest or as a selling tool. Moreover, it can be presumed that travel agents in the future will need and look for information about a place or a destination from the travellers' point of view. The destination managers can solve this issue while integrating travellers' comments from "Tripadvisor" or any other rating website into the training materials in order to give travel agents an overall unbiased view of the destination.

ii) Evaluation of people involved

The main public of eLearning courses created by NTOs comprises trade partners: travel agents and travel consultants. In fact, an official registration number of a travel agent was requested during the course registration in 68 out of 75 cases. Travel Agent University is the only provider of eLearning training activities, which automatically controls if the code is real and belongs to officially registered travel agent lists (e.g. an ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents), IATA (International Air Transport Association), or ATOL (Air Travel Organizers License). Others were just asking the users if they are travel agents and were permitted other users (e.g. students and media partners) to participate in the online training courses. Within the registration process travel agents were also asked to provide their personal information and professional data, such as previous sales volumes, specify markets and tourism destinations they are selling, types of clients they are working with, etc. Once registered to the course, travel agents get their personal profiles that tracks learning performance in terms of modules completed and testing activities passed.

Very little data is publicly available on the number of training agents who follow eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Publicly available data is presented below. Shamrock Agent eLearning course, created by Tourism Ireland, claims to have 1.923 officially registered travel agents as of October 2012 (Shamrock Agents, 2012).

On the official website of Tourism Australia (Tourism Australia, 2012a), it was indicated that in January 2010 a new version of their training program was launched and it is available now in 14 languages. Globally, the Aussie Specialist course has more than 20.000 registered agents across more than 110 countries including the key markets of the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe, North America, and Asia.

By September 2012, there were 1.100 graduates in the Middle East market, and 2.110 specialists were registered in the Indian market within the Austrian Certified Travel Specialists (Austria info, 2012).

Smaller destinations have high volumes of registered travel agents on their online training courses. For instance, Mauritius training, 6 months after the launch of the course in February 2011, 1.700 travel agents have signed up for the online training. 170 agents have been certified (Interfacetourism, 2012).

The above presented numbers, show that a well-structured and thoughtfully promoted eLearning course can attract a solid number of travel agents globally, who then promote and sell the destinations with the right knowledge to the right people, generating as a result additional marketing and financial revenues for tourism destinations.

Apart from 14 National Tourism Organizations that directly manage their training courses, there are several private companies creating Learning Management Systems alongside managing marketing and promotional activities for online training. These companies are: Destination Ventures, EDU-recommend, Equator Learning, Online Travel EDU, Online Travel Training, Travel Agent Academy, Travel Agent University, Travel Institute, and TravelUNI. All providers of eLearning services are registered in the United Kingdom, the United States of America or India.

iii) Analysis of used methods and strategies

Within a three years period from the preliminary research, a significant change has occurred in the way providers of the eLearning services consider and pay attention not just to the training course content but also to the way, this content is represented.

As stated by the developers of the "Aussie Specialist", due to the growing competition with other destinations, who started to copy the idea and develop their online training courses for travel agents, Australian Tourism Board ended up in the re-design,

improvement of the training strategy as well as of the content and final re-launching of the eLearning platform. In the new version, various improvements have been made to the "Aussie Specialist" program (Interfacetourism, 2009):

"- content was adapted with more relevant information;
- program length has been considerably reduced, making it easier for agents to earn their certificates;
- program became more user-friendly and interactive with more images, videos and weekly updates;
- the promotional plan among travel agents has been designed and implemented".

As of fall 2012 an increasing number of online training providers use reach media, flash animations, videos, interactive maps, high-impact images and straightforward navigation, hence making online training experiences more engaging for travel agents.

Most of the courses have integrated official promotional videos (53), glossaries (46), and suggested websites (66) to convey more profound information to trade partners on the most interesting topics. Nevertheless, more multimedia content of a high resolution can be added to the online training courses, as the research in the field of psychology (Jarvis, 2007) and education (Reece & Walker, 2000), suggests that images and other multimedia materials can enhance learning, engagement with training content as well as the potential to increase motivation of learning participants.

In thirty cases, travel agents have the option to print the content of the training course in order to study offline and then return to the online training modules to take the final test.

Currently all NTO's eLearning courses are delivered in a self-study asynchronous format with an absolute non-presence of an instructor. This situation does not involve any interaction between users in most of the online training contexts. In nine cases, the user has the possibility to interact with other travel agents through a forum or a chat, though as the discussions were not moderated, the users rarely utilised the chats. Since group activities increase motivation and initiate critical thinking skills and abilities, more moderation, team tasks or further activities might be added as well to the eLearning courses, as travel consultant working in one company or one branch has the option to work together in order to secure a sale. Group training activities might enhance teamwork within the travel company as well.

None of the courses provided a videoconference possibility or tutor assistance option, with the exception of the Virtual Travel Professor, a tool created within the "Egypt Specialist Program". This instrument gives the users an opportunity to ask questions and

receive answers directly from the destination. Still, the users of all the training courses have the possibility to e-mail and get technical or content support.

Currently very low interactivity, limited assistance from a destination side as well as minimum collaboration with other travel agents or with a tutor has been seen within online training offers. Most probably, this happens due to high financial involvement and employees' time needed in the development of a fully interactive eLearning course. The improvement of this training strategy into a more interactive one can increase the number of the travel agents who will be joining and fruitfully using the knowledge received from the online training.

There is only one training course – "Visit USA Training", which proposes two levels of difficulty of training contents and testing activities. This strategy makes the eLearning course more engaging, especially for the agents who possess previous background knowledge about the destination or have visited it before. This can be rethought in the future by course developers in order to deliver most appropriate learning content and testing activities and as a result enhance training experience and the value of the training.

Currently none of the course providers has used audio files as a representation of training materials. The course developers have the potential to implement those in the future. For instance, audio pronunciations of destinations' names, particular foods or historical personalities, can be very helpful for travel agents who are not native speakers of a destination main language (e.g. Indian or Chinese travel agents organizing trips in Italy or Switzerland). Additionally, mobile or iPads versions of the platforms can be implemented in order to give the possibility to travel agents to study while travelling or visiting clients.

As the main intended users of the online training courses are trade partners based worldwide, all the courses are offered in English language. Moreover, several destinations started to diversify their eLearning offer while creating online courses for different markets in their languages. In the last three years, 12 courses appeared in other languages, trying to attract travel agents from other markets and give them market specific knowledge. For instance, "Expert in Dominican Republic" course is offered in Spanish, German, French, Italian, and Russian. The example of the Spanish version of the "Expert in Dominican Republic" training course can be seen in Appendix 8.

Another example of language diversification strategy can be mentioned. For instance, Swiss Tourism has got five different online training courses in English language: an International version, USA & Canada, UK & Ireland, Australia and Indian platforms. The decision to manage different exclusive programs, which are still in English but for five different markets, was taken "as the priorities, needs and requirements of Indian,

American, British and Australian customers and consequently of the travel trade are different" (Travelbizmonitor, 2011).

As for the evaluation techniques, all 75 courses use objective tests (e.g. multiple choice questions, True or False questions), which can be directly managed by an automatic system. None of the eLearning courses provides a subjective test option (e.g. a short essay or a paper). A typical testing activity of an NTO eLearning course can be seen in Appendix 9 and shows how an evaluation test looks like in the Mexico Travel Specialist eLearning Program.

Thirty six course providers have integrated timing within the evaluation process in the eLearning courses, which is simulating a stressful and realistic atmosphere that could be found daily at the travel agency, where the clients are asking questions about destinations and tourism products and are waiting for an immediate response. However, in all 75 training cases, a user has the opportunity to return to the training materials and revise missing information before taking the final test. In case of "Panama Specialist", online training course provided by Panama Tourism Authority, there is a possibility to print final questions, answer them with the help of all available materials, and then send them by land post to the NTO for an assessment. The example of the exam of the Panama Specialist course can be seen in Appendix 16.

At the end of 69 online training activities, the users have the possibility to receive an official recognition, which confirms their ability to fulfil online training course and pass the test successfully. The certificate usually can be downloaded and printed from the platform. In six cases, the recognition certificate is mailed to the users by the land post. The examples of Aussies Specialist, South Africa's Destination Specialist, and Panama Specialist certificates can be seen in the Appendices 13, 14 and 15. The issue, which should be raised in the future, is the credibility of the certification that is given by an NTO. Evidently, certificates do help travel agents to differentiate themselves from other agents as well as market their activities. Nevertheless, such certification programmes in general do not protect the public from potentially incompetent travel practitioners. Moreover, in most countries, such certificates don't possess any legal value.

Travel agents that successfully finish eLearning courses about national tourism destinations are automatically involved in all the marketing activities of the tourism boards. They become eligible for the incentives, familiarization and educational trips, promotional gadgets and various prizes drawn. An example of the media coverage of a familiarization trip of certified German travel agents to Dubai, after they have successfully graduated from the course "Dubai Expert Online Program" can be seen in Appendix 10. It should be admitted, that nowadays competitions and familiarizations, as well as other incentives are in most cases open for travel agents from specific markets

(e.g. the UK). They might be opened internationally, especially for those travel agents that are not able to visit easily foreign destination due to visa or long haul flights issues.

Furthermore, by the completion of an online training course, travel agents' names and contact details are featured on the destination websites as "suggested travel consultants". An example of South African certified travel agents who are based in Italy can be seen in Appendix 11.

iv) Assessment of the presented training contents

The structure of learning and training contents, presented within eLearning courses created by NTOs in most cases is very similar. All investigated courses start with the general information about the destination, which presents geographical position, demographics, languages spoken, etc. Then the learning navigation proceeds to more detailed information on featured tourism products or geographical regions. Sixty-eight courses out of 75 that were analysed during this research had dedicated training modules covering history, culture and traditions; 64 courses presented general data on accommodation and transportation systems within the destination, whereas 62 included formality issues. Sixty-two eLearning courses present selling tips to travel agents, such as how to offer family or honeymoon-appropriate resorts, etc. Meanwhile, just 35 online training activities offered help to travel agents on itinerary planning (e.g. presenting pre-defined packages for winter tourism or for eco-tourism). On average, the content was structured in five or six modules per online training course. An example of a course content structure can be seen in Appendix 12.

Even though the learning architecture has been thought and designed by the eLearning course developers and they have structured the courses in the form of training modules, at the same time eLearning training course allow a non-linear format of training, where the hyperlinks are used in order to create individual learning paths for travel agents and other learning users. Furthermore, eLearning courses give to travel agents an opportunity to choose relevant content and online training tasks in order to suit their individual learning and organizational training needs.

It should be acknowledged, that several existing online training sessions are very detailed, which is very time consuming and makes it difficult for a travel agent to concentrate and maintain motivation to complete the training. This situation can be solved by the integration of different levels of difficulty and depth of the course materials as well as of the testing activities.

Different learning styles and levels of acquaintances about the destinations should be recognised by the developers of the courses in the future. Most of the online training

courses are currently designed in a way that gives a very general and basic overview to those who have never experienced the destination.

Online training courses about special travel needs (e.g. safari, educational tours; accessible or luxury tourism) are currently missing as well. Such diversification may also increase the number of travel agents following online trainings about tourism destinations globally.

3.2. Case studies

The next three sub-chapters present two case studies chosen among the best-evaluated online training courses of tourism destinations at the national level. The development strategies, involving pedagogical, technical and content development, motivations of the destinations on having such a training activity and the success stories of the online training courses about tourism destinations will be discussed.

Each case will be presented along the next structure. The description of the respective countries tourism product will initiate the case, followed by the management structure of the involved NTO, the discussion of the online presence of the destination and strategies used in order to support trade partnerships globally. Further, the history of the platform, its budget, and success in terms of the eLearning usages will be discussed in order to generate an overall context and understanding.

Online training options will be presented alongside ADDIE model. Each case will be concluded with the discussions of the findings and an overall evaluation, taking into consideration both strengths and weaknesses. It will conclude with a summary of the results and research limitations.

3.2.1. Research objectives and research questions

In order to identify best practices in the field of eLearning courses created by Destination Management Organizations at the national level, as well as to answer below stated research questions, the next research objectives were defined:

i)   describe strategies, that were used in two cases for pedagogical, technical, content and testing activities development;
ii)   present integrated approaches for online training promotion and positioning;
iii)   evaluate the history of the courses, their management structure, budget involved, and statistical data;
iv)   understand the main motivations of the respective destinations on having such a training activity.

The next research questions were defined for the case study research step:

Research Question 3: How eLearning courses are structured in terms of the used pedagogical strategies, online training content delivery and testing activities design?

Research Question 4: How eLearning courses are structured in terms of the employees' involved, promotional strategies undertaken and performed in terms of the usages and budget spent?

Research Question 5: What motivates DMOs to develop eLearning courses for their travel trade partners?

3.2.2. Research design and limitations

From the preliminary online questionnaire that has been undertaken in summer 2010, and presented in detail in the sub-chapter 4.1., the list of 15 best-evaluated online training courses about tourism destinations were received. All 14 providers of the national eLearning courses about tourism destinations were contacted with the proposal on undertaking interviews in order to evaluate their experience and present in the form of best case studies. Two course providers agreed on participating in current research, one representing a European destination and another one representing a destination situated in Asia-Pacific region. Those courses are the next ones:

- *Switzerland Travel Academy* created by Switzerland Tourism (Zurich, Switzerland);
- *Kiwi Specialist Program* delivered by New Zealand Tourism Board (Wellington, New Zealand).

Both destinations provide multilingual eLearning practices with highly evaluated content and structure. Both online training courses also offer localized training offers for different markets.

The best practices in the field will be analysed and presented based on semi-structured interviews, analysis of the usages of eLearning courses, internal communication reports, historical records on the courses development, promotion and delivery, and other available data.

The first step of the research study was designed in a form of semi-structured interviews with the representatives of two NTOs, that were involved in the production and delivery of the eLearning offer. The next employees of NTOs were interviewed: responsible for online communication and marketing; responsible for trade partnership, product manager, and market managers in several offshore offices. While several variations did occur in the questions, which were asked to different involved employees of the ministries of tourism, the overall structure of the questions was comparable. The topics that were covered during semi-structured interviews are presented in Appendix 19.

For the first case study, two semi-structured interviews were undertaken. The first one with Ms. Monika Müller, who at the time when the interviews were undertaken held the position of Project Manager Market Services at Switzerland Tourism. The interview was carried out in February 2012 in the headquarter of Switzerland Tourism in Zurich (Switzerland). The interview lasted two hours. The second interview was completed

through the VoIP service – Skype with Ms. Seema Kadam, Market manager Western India, who is also responsible for education and training in India within Switzerland Tourism. Ms. Seema Kadam is based in Mumbai (India). The interview took place in March 2012 and lasted 55 minutes.

For the second case study, three semi-structured interviews were done in February 2013 in Wellington, New Zealand, at the headquarter of TNZ. The first interview was with Belinda Chu, who currently holds the position of Online Manager Trade. The interview lasted three hours.

Two further interviews were done and recorded through a video conference with Carolyn Pope, Trade Development Consultant for North America, based in Los Angeles (USA) and Cindy Chen, Trade Training Manager from Greater China, based in Shanghai (China). Those interviews lasted one hour and one hour and a half accordingly.

Two versions of the eLearning modules provided by Tourism New Zealand will be presented further. The first one, which has been online during the interviews with the representatives of the NTOs in February 2013, will be presented in the sub-chapter 3.4.5. Additionally to that, the adjustments to the new version of the online training courses, which went online in June 2013 are documented and presented in the sub-chapter 3.4.7.

The second step of the analysis involved the exploration of the usages of the eLearning courses; internal reports on the online training platform development and delivery; historical documents and other available data.

Although present study identifies and provides successful case studies and generates best practices in the field, the results and conclusions should be discussed under the next limitations. The interviews were conducted with the employees, who are currently working with online training. Those who have started and left the company meanwhile could have a different perspective on the platform development, history, success strategies or failures. Additionally, the interviews were carried out in conjunction with the destinations that possess successful eLearning courses, while in the future the interviews could be done also with the NTOs that are not undertaking such a training activity or those that were doing but suspended online training courses. Their motivation and lack of motivations can be analysed in order to provide an overall picture of the studied issue.

3.3. Switzerland Travel Academy

3.3.1. Characteristics of Switzerland Tourism

Switzerland has been a tourism destination for a long time, given the country's exceptional geographic location in the middle of Europe and its appealing recourses, including both natural (mountains, valleys and lakes) and man-developed (cities and transportation system). The Alps are the main attractions of the country during both seasons, while urban tourism and convention-related tourism have taken on extensive importance in the last twenty years. According to the business plan of Switzerland Tourism for 2010 (Switzerland Tourism, 2009); there are five main products that Swiss National Tourism Office recognised as the most important ones to be promoted in the next years: Summer, Winter, Cities, Meetings (MICE), and Theme Products.

Tourism ranks third amongst Swiss economy's exporting sectors and it has a significant impact on the country's growth and employment. According to the Federal Statistical Office FSO (2012), from 2005 until 2010 the share of the tourism sector in Switzerland's GDP remained unchanged at 2.9%, while share of tourism employment in total employment declined, and stood at 4.2% in 2008.

According to the Switzerland Tourism medium-term planning for 2014-2016 (Switzerland Tourism, 2013, p.25-26), "Swiss Tourism incoming market is divided into four main sub markets:

ii)   *priority markets*, are the countries where there is a strong national presence and an integrated and comprehensive marketing strategy is being implemented (France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland – home market, United Kingdom and Ireland, United States);

iii) *strategic growth markets*, described as countries with above-average growth opportunities and potential (Brasil, China, the Gulf States, India, Poland, and Russia);

iv)   *active markets*, where national presence and marketing strategy are currently in the active development process (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Japan, Nordics, South East Asia, Spain, and South Korea);

v)   *development markets*, where Switzerland Tourism board has got a comprehensive collaboration on tourism product promotional activities, which are managed and provided by Swiss embassies, chambers of commerce, Swiss International Airlines and Swiss expat communities (Israel, Turkey, and Ukraine)."

3.3.2. Swiss National Tourism Office, its online presence and trade partnership

Switzerland Tourism is the national tourism board of Switzerland, whose main purpose is to encourage demand for trips and holidays in the country by foreign and local visitors. Switzerland Tourism is a complex institution whose main aim is to market products and services for Swiss tourism in a given number of countries. Subsequently, it is responsible for the evaluation and the response to the international tourism trends, market analysis as well as design and implementation of promotional campaigns about the country. Switzerland Tourism is in charge of organizing of promotional events as well as the provision of services for the media and trade partners. Switzerland Tourism also works with regional and local tourism agencies on promotional activities. Organizationally Switzerland Tourism is divided into six different units:

- market services department and meetings;
- portal management, eMarketing, and IT;
- corporate communication, media and market research;
- marketing and strategic partnerships;
- business development;
- finance, controlling, and human resources.

Switzerland Tourism appreciated and embraced all the possibilities that the development of the ICTs and the internet has brought. The later one is believed to be the most important source of tourism information and one that comes into contact with all potential tourists planning to visit the country.

In the online market sphere, Switzerland Tourism operates mainly with a website named www.myswitzerland.com. It performs as a hub for all required information that potential clients might look for while preparing their trips to the country. The website acts as the central unit for online communication of Switzerland Tourism, enabling marketing and sales activities on the website itself. Moreover, both textual and multimedia content, which are present on the main website can be adapted and published on partners' websites and/or distributed via other applications e.g. iPhone applications (Inversini, *et. al,* 2012). Additional data sources such as Panoramio, Swiss Webcams and YouTube, complement the content, which has been produced by Switzerland Tourism itself.

Switzerland Tourism is managing also an online trade corner, which can be found at the next web address: www.tradecorner.stnet.ch. This website provides travel consultants, travel agents and wholesales with important information and current updates about Switzerland, enabling effective design and planning of a tourist visit to the country. Moreover, it serves as a core component to provide additional support and resources to assist trade partners with travel sales activities. Along with the trade corner, Switzerland

Tourism has an extensive policy of trade partners' coordination and their expertise and knowledge development. This happens through the next initiatives by Switzerland Tourism: sales calls and one-to-one meetings with market representatives, road shows, webinars and familiarization trips, as well as through online trainings.

Switzerland Travel Academy, which can be found under the next web address www.elearning.myswitzerland.com, is an eLearning training course created by Switzerland Tourism for travel professionals, and is being promoted through the trade corner of the official website. Online training courses have been created as the main tool to educate trade partners on practical information on how and where to travel in the country, enhancing their knowledge to plan and market trips. This eLearning course is being offered free of charge to travel agents globally.

3.3.3. History of Switzerland Travel Academy and its management structure

The idea of Switzerland Travel Academy eLearning course creation came up in January 2004. After a series of internal discussions and developments, the training program was launched as a pilot project for Chinese and Korean market in December 2005. At that time, the platform was managed internally at the head office in Zurich (Switzerland) within the IT department. Then when the person in charge of the online training left the IT department, management duties were delivered first to the Content management team, and lately were passed to the Market services department, which is currently in charge of the eLearning course.

The *Market services department* is currently coordinating all the activities involved in the platform support and delivery. The employees of this department have decided on the information architecture of the current version of the online training, for instance, which modules and which type of evaluation activities should be presented in the online training. While the *Marketing team* was responsible for the content and testing activities creation for the international version of the platform. Centralized contents and testing activities were passed to the markets where Switzerland Tourism has representatives, and then different markets adapted the content to the specific needs of the travel trade. For instance, the Indian version of the online training has a reduced "winter module", as tourists from this country do not come to Switzerland for skiing, snowboarding or undertaking other winter sports.

3.3.4. Budget and usages

Taking into consideration the budget, which was spent on the eLearning course in 2011, Ms. Müller informed that the headquarter of Switzerland Tourism spent around 70.000 CHF, which were used for the translation of the contents into different languages. While different markets then spent their budgets allocated for marketing activities in order to

support eLearning promotion and incentives. For instance, Chinese market had planned to spend 2.200 CHF in 2012 for the online training promotion, graduation gift packages and familiarization trips (Switzerland Tourism, 2012).

Switzerland Travel Academy has rather different levels of success on different markets, possessing a varying number of users accordingly. According to the internal evaluation of the online training course performance by the management, the best examples of the eLearning platform management and delivery by the markets are German and Indian versions. For instance, German version of the course has had nearly 3.000 registered people since 2006. Ms. Müller informed:

> "*Most of the agents are active in the online training and actively follow online training modules. It happens also thanks to the incentives, which were initiated by the German market representatives.*"

Another successful example of the eLearning course management is the Indian version, which was started in June 2011. Market representatives have created specific content, that has been designed specifically for their market needs. Before 2011 travel agents based in India were able to access an international version of the online training content, which was not specifically designed and catered for them. Within the first nine months of the activity, the Indian platform attracted 1.347 registered travel agents. Out of them, 131 successfully completed the course and received official certification. On average the Indian version of the eLearning platform receives around six to seven new registrations every day.

According to the Indian market representative:

> "*Indian version of the platform became very successful for several reasons. First of all, due to the fact that Switzerland is a very popular tourism destination among Indian tourists. Additionally to that, very few agents and front desk personnel that are based in India have the possibility to get visa and travel to Switzerland. For those very reasons, with the help of the eLearning courses travel agents are getting much more information about the destination itself and the way it should be sold properly to the clients. Moreover, they are getting the possibility to visit the destination one day, while being eligible to participate in familiarization trips.*"

In 2011 in the Korean version of the eLearning there were 60 registered travel agents and no one certified. The Chinese platform certified 20 travel agents that same year, while the American and Canadian course has certified 38 travel agents. In the same year the

Gulf Countries certified 10 travel agents. Russia and Brazil have started their eLearning courses at the beginning of 2013 with no usages data available so far.

Spain and Poland are planning to start their own eLearning courses. Nowadays travel agents from those regions can access the international version of the online training course.

It should be mentioned, that according to the representatives of Switzerland Tourism head office, managing eLearning is not a primary activity neither in the headquarter in Zurich, nor for the market representatives. Moreover, also in terms of the budget distribution, eLearning is not the first priority, and usually accounts for non-primary marketing activities.

3.3.5. Switzerland Travel Academy presentation along ADDIE model
Course developed and implementation procedure will be presented along ADDIE model, which stands for -Analysis, -Design, -Development, -Implementation and -Evaluation.

i) Analysis
The analysis of the needs and the definition of educational and business goals of the Switzerland Travel Academy eLearning course were undertaken by its managers through two main steps:
- goals and strategies definition;
- instructional and content analysis through a benchmarking study of similar courses provided by different NTOs worldwide.

In order to acquire and strengthen online business-to-business communication with national and international travel professionals, enhance training activities and deliver a modern-day brand identity for Switzerland as a destination, the opportunity for creation of an eLearning course has emerged within the head office of Switzerland Tourism.

As has been stated by their headquarters, the main goal of the project was to create a web-based platform for training and certification of tourism agents in the markets in which Switzerland Tourism is represented (Switzerland Tourism, 2005). Ms. Monika Müller pointed out that it is crucially important for destinations worldwide to use new technologies for training as the internet and eLearning businesses are growing, and people are used to getting their knowledge with the help of technologies. Moreover, she suggested that:

> "*Not all our trade partners are able to come to Switzerland and see the destination first hand. Additionally, Switzerland Tourism is not able to invite every travel*

consultant to come and see the destination. In this situation eLearning platforms can become a medium for those agents and will help them to learn what the destination is like".

Nevertheless, according to the Market Manager not every market needs an eLearning course about Switzerland. For instance, there is no need to create an eLearning course to educate trade partners in Italy or in the Netherlands, as the end clients in those markets are mostly not using travel agents in order to plan their trips to Switzerland. Additionally, most likely trade partners in those countries have previously visited Switzerland on their own.

Additionally to defining the goals and strategies on eLearning course development, Indian market representatives have done benchmarking research on how other destinations worldwide are developing and supporting their eLearning courses. The next eLearning offers about tourism destinations were taken into consideration within the research: Aussie Specialist, provided by Tourism Australia; Kiwi Specialist program, provided by New Zealand Tourism Board and South African Expert training program, created by South African Tourism Board. According to the benchmarking study, the Aussie specialist was evaluated as the best course from the point of view of the content structure. Moreover, also from the point of view of the incentives procedure, Australian Tourism Board was performing very well. For instance, Australian Tourism Board gives the priorities for the visa application processes to the travel agencies that have got the certificate with the help of online training. Indian market representatives have used the results of this benchmarking study in order to develop and adopt eLearning courses that they manage for the needs of the travel agents based in India.

ii) Design
Instructional strategy and didactic materials of the eLearning course were undertaken through the information architecture and instructional design. Within the Design phase the structure of the training, content materials, interaction elements, and course functionalities were defined by the *Market services department*. Information architecture enabled the formation of concrete steps for successful navigation within the training course, and then helped to allocate possible interaction and activities in the online training. Instructional design clarified the structure of the online training modules, their functionalities and possible interaction of the users within and after each training module.

The international version of the online training course was designed in a way to present general training content about Switzerland. It was structured into eight online training modules, which allowed travel agents based worldwide to study at their own pace. The

first module provides a detailed overview of the country, while the rest focus on various topics of use for the planning and selling trips to Switzerland:

  i)   "welcome to Switzerland";
  ii)   "summer";
  iii) "winter";
  iv)   "cities";
  v)   "accommodation";
  vi)   "transport";
  vii) "meetings/MICE";
  viii) "top attractions".

Course materials for the "international version" of the online training course were developed in English and are presented mostly in the form of texts with descriptions. On nearly every page there is a representative image, which in most cases is modified for the web, meaning that is presented in a small resolution and not particularly effective for the user. On a few pages video links about the destination, tourism product, food or traditions are integrated. No audio materials are found within this training course.

Each seminar was designed approximately of two to four hours of the study time. In order to get a certificate, participants need to go through all training materials while reading slides, watching videos and passing a test after each module. The tests were designed in the form of multiple-choice questions, which should be answered correctly in order to proceed to the next training module. There are twenty multiple-choice questions per training module. Online training course possesses a randomized question database with 500/600 testing items, which allows a constant rotation of testing questions. Participants get a maximum of three attempts to pass the final exam. Once completed the travel agent becomes a Certified Switzerland Specialist. The awarded status is proved by a certificate, produced at the headquarters and sent to the certified specialist.

Content and testing activities were developed by the *Market Services* of the headquarter of Switzerland Tourism and then passed to the markets. Market representatives were responsible for the translation of the content from English into their languages (e.g. Chinese, Japanese), while elaborating training contents and testing activities according to the specific market needs. For instance, pieces of information such as "how to arrive to Switzerland", "local money exchange", "flights and airports" are adapted to the market needs by market representatives.

Starting from 2010, with the upgrade of the used Learning Management System, the markets can update and create their own content. For instance, in the Indian version of the course, in the "Winter" training module there is no information about skiing resorts, even if Switzerland is being promoted as all year round destination. Ms. Kadam confirms on content creation:

> *"Our main aim with this platform is to make Indian people to visit Switzerland again, and going not just to the region of Luzern. We want to show Indians other regions, such as Lac Leman and Geneva, as well as Ticino, etc."*

At the beginning of 2013, apart from the international version of the eLearning course, there were nine other active platforms for different markets: Australia, Brazil, China, Germany, India, Korea, United Kingdom and Ireland, Russia, United States and Canada. Two other countries, where Switzerland Tourism is represented and looking for enhanced communication with trade partners are currently designing their own online training offer: Poland and Spain.

As a general strategy, during the registration process Switzerland Tourism is not checking if travel agents possess an official IATA code. Therefore, the course is open also to potential tourists, media partners and tourism students. However, the market representatives are managing single registrations manually. For instance, on the Indian market there is a differentiation on obtained certificates and degrees upon the online training course completion:

- individuals or companies which are working in the Indian outbound travel trade are gaining a "Certified Switzerland Specialist" diploma;
- Indian students studying hospitality and tourism are getting the certificate for passing the exam.

iii) Development
An external agency, which is based in Zurich (Switzerland) – Xiag AG, has developed the eLearning tool in collaboration with the IT department of Switzerland Tourism, which has coordinated the development process.

According to the developer of the platform (Xiag, 2012), based on the requirements expressed by Switzerland Tourism, XIAG AG has designed the eLearning solution and developed the next features:

- an eLearning environment for the end user – travel trade representatives. This eLearning environment includes online registration process, content interface, testing activities and the possibility to check certification status online;

- a management interface for the market representatives, with the possibility of content management, monitoring user registrations and certification processes;
- content management system for the creation and management of learning contents was implemented in English and then translated into other languages – Japanese and Chinese;
- XML interfaces for the integration of external content;
- import and export of training seminars and tests;
- the option to transfer training information – content and testing activities between different markets.

An internal mailing tool has been developed as well, so the market representatives can pass their direct communication to travel agents in order to remind them about the course, congratulate on the obtained certificate or send out promotional brochures.

As for the technologies that were used for the platform development, the next should be mentioned:
- UNIX / Linux;
- programming language: PHP5;
- database: Oracle 10g;
- user-Interface/CMS: AJAX, DHTML.

The overall graphic design of the eLearning course was developed to follow the corporate identity and image of Switzerland Tourism and replicates the design of the www.myswitzerland.com website. Graphic design of Switzerland Tourism online training platform can be seen in Appendix 3.

iv) Implementation
The implementation of the Switzerland Travel Academy course happened in the form of the delivery of the course to travel agents. In this subchapter promotional and incentive activities initiated by the headquarter of Switzerland Tourism and the markets will be presented. Particularities of incentives strategies on different markets will be discussed further.

a) Promotional activities
Centralized promotion of the eLearning course is done through the trade corner on www.tradecorner.stnet.ch and is rarely featured on the printed materials issued by Switzerland Tourism. Online training modules are being promoted by market representatives at sales calls, workshops, fairs, and meetings with tour operators and travel agents.

Ms. Seema Kadam, who is managing the eLearning course for the Indian market, confirms telling that they are promoting the platform through in-presence trainings for travel agents, which are organised by the Switzerland Tourism Indian branch around the country. The training activities are done in the form of a half-a-day seminar where market representatives are presenting the information to travel agents about Switzerland. At the same time, the eLearning course is being promoted as a tool, which can help travel agents to get in-depth knowledge and selling tips, as well as to become certified and recognised by Switzerland as "destination specialists".

b) Incentives
According to Switzerland Tourism head office representative, there is no centralised strategy on the continuous relationship and incentives program with agents after the certification. From the head office there is a decision to offer certificates as well as the Swiss Specialist logo (see in Appendix 2) to those who have successfully completed the course, while then markets decide for themselves on other incentives.

Together with an individual certificate, a travel agent receives a transparent door sticker, which enables clients to recognize the knowledge and specialization as a fully trained and qualified Switzerland Specialist. Moreover, a certified travel agent receives the rights to use the Certified Specialist logo for business letters, brochures, and within online marketing strategies. Additionally, if three travel agents who are working under one branch are certified, the agency is listed on the website of www.myswitzerland.com, as a suggested Switzerland Specialist in the region.

All Switzerland certified agents are automatically subscribed to the newsletter of Switzerland Tourism with the latest news and updates, as well as special prices and discounts for trade partners.

c) Particularities of the incentives by the markets
Because of the structure and the requirements of the markets where Switzerland Tourism is present are different, also the needs of travel agents in incentives differ. For instance, Indian market is completely different from the German one, as Switzerland Tourism head office cannot invite Indian travel agents for familiarization trips, by means of then their flights and accommodation should be paid. At the same time, Switzerland Tourism can organize educational trips for German travel agents, while providing them with a Swiss pass – a commutative ticket for transportation and attractions in Switzerland. Consequently, the decision on the incentives strategies is on market representatives and is accounted on their marketing budgets.

German market representatives organize yearly familiarization trips for certified travel agents. They provide travel agents with selling benefits, as well as T-shirts. Several travel agents from German market attend Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin – ITB Berlin to get their T-shirts of the Switzerland Certified Specialist ("Schweiz Specialist").

Certified travel agents receive exclusive invitations to Switzerland Toruism workshops on the Chinese market. Those meetings are organized with Swiss travel trade suppliers and key partners of Switzerland Tourism and give the agents updates on destinations and products as well as give them the opportunity to network with other Switzerland Certified Specialists.

Travel agents that follow eLearning courses on the American market are automatically invited to participate in webinar sessions, which give the knowledge about Switzerland as a tourism destination as well as the products on offer. The webinars are organised by Swiss tourism product providers and happen every other week. Travel agents in the United States highly appreciate promotional gadgets, e.g. T-shirts and pens. On some markets instead e.g. China, India and the Gulf Countries, stickers with the Switzerland Tourism logo, as well as certificates are very popular. According to the Indian market representative:

> *"Indian travel agents are very proud of their certificates. Most of them are putting certificates into frames and placing on the walls of their travel agencies. Even if the certificate is valid for two years, some agents are using it also afterwards. Certified travel agents in India receive discounts on hotels and destination packages as well."*

15 certified travel agents from the Indian market were chosen to visit Switzerland on the first familiarization trip in September 2012.

v) Evaluation
No formal evaluation activities on the quality of the training materials or testing activities, overall eLearning performance or impact of the received training on current business activities of travel agent has been done centrally from the head office of Switzerland Tourism. According to the headquarter representative those evaluation activities should be initiated and undertaken in the future by market representatives. Moreover, no activities on measuring the return on investment of such a platform development were done or are planned in the nearest future.

3.3.6. Switzerland Travel Academy overall assessment
Switzerland Travel Academy case study has shown a successful performance of the eLearning course, despite the fact that the management of the platform and its support is

not a primary activity of Switzerland Tourism in terms of neither the employees, time nor financial involvements. The next strengths and limits can be highlighted from this case:

Strengths:
- Switzerland Tourism follows the strategy for developing and expanding online trainings for BRICS countries, which are strategic growth markets also in terms of potential tourists, for instance, the new platforms that have been launched by the Brazilian and Russian market at the beginning of 2013. The first results from the performance of the Indian platform confirming the success of this strategy.
- Developing a careful strategy for online training courses for different markets e.g., the eLearning course hasn't been even started on Italian and Dutch markets, due to the particularities of the travel demand and travel trade necessities.
- The content is adapted for different market needs and it is aligned with the language preferences of the respective markets.
- Switzerland Tourism has different strategies for the incentives on different markets, which analyse and reflect market needs.
- eLearning course is open not just to officially registered travel agents, but also to the end clients, media partners, hospitality and tourism students, which can serve as an additional marketing or sales tool.

Limits:
- No formal evaluation activities, such as eLearning course usability or usages studies were undertaken or are planned to be undertaken in the future by Switzerland Tourism.
- There is a very low visibility of the training on the NTO official website or any other online channel, where Switzerland Tourism is present, as most of the promotion is done through direct marketing and in-presence training activities with travel trade.
- Low promotion and integration into marketing and training activities of the NTO has been undertaken so far.
- Low budget for promotional activities of the online training course has been assigned.
- There is no centralized strategy on the relationship with the travel agents after the course completion.
- Possibilities of social media integration for platform promotion and support haven't been discussed so far within Switzerland Tourism.

3.4. Kiwi Specialist Program

3.4.1. Characteristics of New Zealand Tourism

Tourism plays a significant role in the New Zealand economy in terms of the production of goods and services and creation of employment opportunities. In 2011 New Zealand tourism industry generated direct contribution to GDP of NZD 6.2 billion that accounts for 3.3% of the national GDP (Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand, 2012). The indirect value of industries that are supporting tourism generated an additional NZD9.7 billion for tourism, or 5.2% of GDP. Furthermore, tourism is one of New Zealand's biggest export industries – earning NZD 9.6 billion or accounting for 15.4% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings. The tourism industry directly employed 119.800 of full-time equivalents, which accounts for 6.2% of total employment (Tourism Satellite Account, 2012). In 2011, more than 2.5 million foreigners came to New Zealand as tourists. Additionally, New Zealanders are believed to be a very well travelled nation, even if the distances they cover to experience other countries are extreme.

3.4.2. Tourism New Zealand, its online presence and trade partnership

Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) is a national tourism organization, which is responsible for marketing New Zealand to the world as a tourism destination. The main marketing tool that has been used by TNZ is called "100% Pure New Zealand" marketing campaign. It is known worldwide and is one of the most recognizable tourism brands.

TNZ is addressing its marketing campaigns to three main publics: potential international and local consumers, travel trade, and global media. At the same time, TNZ encompasses work with tourism stakeholders in New Zealand in order to ensure high quality of local products and services for the tourism market.

While looking for potential tourists, TNZ is trying to attract "active considerers", those potential travellers who are not just aware of the existence of New Zealand as a tourism destination, but are already interested to come and visit this country one day.

According to TNZ official website (2013c) they are "the oldest tourism marketing department in the world", as it was established by the New Zealand Government in 1901. Currently the working team of TNZ consists of around 120 staff working in two offices in New Zealand – Wellington and Auckland. There are other eleven offices, which represent TNZ around the world. Offshore offices are based in London and are responsible for the United Kingdom and other European markets; Bangkok, Mumbai and Singapore, working for promoting New Zealand in the South East Asia. Other offices are based in Sydney in Australia; Seoul and Shanghai, China and North Asia; Tokyo in Japan; Los Angeles in North America, symbolizing strong presence of the destination

New Zealand working with potential tourists, trade and media in the above-presented markets. New offices are planned for the future in Indonesia and South America.

New Zealand's key international tourism markets are the next ones: Australia, China, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, United States, South Korea, Canada, Singapore and India. Australia, China and the US represent the markets with the greatest value or potentiality, and as a result attract the highest marketing attention from TNZ. At the same time, the growth areas are believed to be in the South East Asia (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia) as well as in South America.

Partnership with the travel trade is an important activity for TNZ. Several trade activities that are organised by TNZ include, but are not limited to the following:
• trade familiarization visits to New Zealand;
• assistance in the development of New Zealand travel on offer;
• online training modules about regions and different tourism products – Kiwi Specialist Program.

Eleven offshore offices are focused on managing the relationship with the travel trade through the organization and provision of:
• daily marketing support;
• trade events;
• in-market face-to-face trainings, which includes product marketing and selling seminars;
• webinars, which are particularly active in the North American market.

As reported by the Tourism New Zealand Annual Report (2013a), 137 face-to-face trainings were delivered in 2012 and accommodated around 6800 trade participants. Additionally, 485 trade partners came to New Zealand for a familiarization trip same year.

According to TNZ representatives, online training modules are just a part of the training program dedicated to travel trade partners, and it should be seen and recognised as a whole and not something autonomously provided by the destination. According to Tourism New Zealand (2012a, p.25), the training activities dedicated to the travel trade partners as well as the growth of their capabilities to sell New Zealand, "is an important way to drive more conversions of interest into a real purchase".

In terms of its online presence, New Zealand is one of the most mature online travel markets globally. Digital marketing is a core focus for TNZ promotional strategy, as it "enables to reach a large and targeted international audience and engage with people considering a visit to New Zealand" (Tourism New Zealand, 2013a, p.5). In terms of the

online presence, TNZ is very active on social media websites, such as "Facebook" and "Twitter", which has generated a total fan base of 713.065 international users (Tourism New Zealand, 2013a).

Additionally to its social media presence, TNZ has created and is actively supporting three main websites:

i)   Corporate website, www.tourismnewzealand.com, which gives official information about national tourism industry, presents statistics, and is aimed at the New Zealand industry representatives.

ii)   Consumer website, www.newzealand.com, which performs a dual role. On one hand it serves as a marketing tool, which tries to convert potential tourists into actual ones. On the other hand, it has a role of enabling visitors to engage with each other and with travel sellers in order to share information and travel advices on their possible trips to and within New Zealand. The website is available in five languages.

iii)   Trade website, www.newzealand.com/travel/trade, was designed and developed by TNZ as a major component of the relationship with travel trade partners. The website has been created in order to collect all the resources that might be helpful for those selling travel in their daily activities. The trade site presents the next sources:
    - multimedia resources which can be used for the promotion of trips to New Zealand by travel trade;
    - events calendar;
    - help in designing holidays at the destination New Zealand;
    - help in itinerary planning;
    - online training modules;
    - trade news.

Online training modules form part of the "*Kiwi Specialist Program*". This online training programme is an important part of Tourism New Zealand's work with agents that are based in other countries. Online training offers professionals e.g. high street travel agents, niche travel sellers, retailer consortiums, such as STA Travel or wholesalers, a chance to build in-depth destination knowledge, get the latest updates about New Zealand tourism products and further opportunity to grow their sales globally. The program can be found at the next URL: www.newzealand.com/travel/trade/training/specialist-programmes/specialist-programmes.cfm

3.4.3. History of Kiwi Specialist Program and its management structure

Kiwi Specialist program is believed to be one of the first online training programs provided by a tourism destination that was designed and implemented in the field. The first idea of the eLearning course appeared in approximately 2003, while the implementation and delivery of the online training platform happened in 2004. The same year the first travel agents successfully finished the course and received their official certificates (SeaEscapeTravel, 2012).

According to the headquarter representative, general mission of the platform creation was to be able to provide information about New Zealand and upscale travel agents in a way that TNZ could save on costs, as there would be no need on employing a person in every country to train of the travel trade. Moreover, the platform was designed in order to become a training tool for trade partners from the markets where the New Zealand Tourism office did not have any representatives. Additionally, at the beginning of 2000 TNZ had a need to differentiate two main websites – the one for potential clients and the one for trade partners. Previously, there was a crossover in terms of the contents presented on both websites, now the second one is clearly positioned as a learning hub for the travel trade.

Online training modules, which were available in February 2013, when the interviews with the representatives of the Ministry of Tourism were undertaken, were designed in 2008 in terms of the present content. The only module that has been changed from then is the one of "Christchurch and Canterbury", due to the earthquake that happened in the region in 2010. As several tourism activities do not exist anymore in the region, the content of the online training was adapted accordingly. The graphical part of the online training modules has been developed in 2010, and it is aligned with the corporate identity of TNZ.

The main idea and the development of the online training modules appeared in the Wellington office, which is the head office of TNZ. However, the head office employees consulted with the offshore markets during all the processes of the eLearning course development and implementation.

Within the head office, there is the Business Development team, which works on business events and the trade space. This team is responsible for the trade website and online training modules. Online Manager Trade was in charge of the coordination process, the development of the concept and then definition of the learning objectives for every training module. Additionally, its main responsibility was to provide all stakeholders involved with the main strategy and directions for the online training development and further support.

The New Zealand Product manager, who also works from the head office created the content and testing activities, while collaborating closely with the regional tourism offices, which provided the core content. When the content was ready from TNZ head office perspective, it was delivered to an external developer, eLearning company, which put the content into an eLearning context, developed the look and feel of the eLearning courses, as well as designed scenarios and scripts.

When the content and testing activities of the eLearning course were developed, the offshore offices were asked to promote it. Each offshore market has a staff member who is responsible for all sorts of activities connected to trade partnership (e.g. events, local marketing, business partnerships, etc.), which makes the support of the online training an additional activity to their core responsibilities. Market representatives provide the delivery of the training as well as offer daily support for travel agents who are based in the region.

Since its first development in 2004, the platform has been running successfully with particular achievements in two regions – North America and China, which can be explained for the reasons provided below.

Demographics of the agents on the American market help to make the performance of the online training quite unique. According to Carolyn Pope:

> "*most of the agents working on the market are older and home based. It is not common for other markets where New Zealand is active. Travel agents that are based in North America appreciate the use of the "Kiwi Specialist" logo and the certificate. They often use it on their websites, email signatures and business cards. The "appreciation" by the destination and the ability to show their certification serves as a status symbol for the agents based on the North American continent.*"

Cindy Chen has explained the popularity of the online training modules in the Chinese market due to "*the size and the structure of the Chinese market, where travel patterns and itinerary development differ significantly.*"

The first type of the travel pattern happens within prosperous cities, e.g. Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, where people tend to travel in small groups, families as well as individually, as Free Independent Travellers (FIT). They address travel agents in order to book hotels or to process visa orders. Sometimes they choose to go on complicated special interests trips (e.g. safari, gastronomic or wine tours), where the help of travel agents is essential.

On the other hand, there are cities, which in terms of the economic development are not so prosperous. The income of the population is much lower, so tourists from those cities still prefer to visit other countries in organized groups. For the above-mentioned reasons the importance of the travel agents on the Chinese market is indispensable. Additionally in most cases, the trips of Chinese tourists include two or three countries, which make the planning process more complex. For instance, combining the trip to Australia and New Zealand is a common behaviour among Chinese tourists.

There is an important consideration, which should be noted according to the provision of the online training modules in China, as the National Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China (2011) perceives and recognises the certificate of "Kiwi Certified Specialist" as an official document. The official ADS scheme, which stands for "Approved Destination Status" (Tourism New Zealand, 2013b) is an arrangement between the Chinese Government and another country that allows Chinese holiday travellers visit a country in an organized group. This initiative states that a travel agent, who is based in China and wants to organize outbound tours, needs to get an official governmental issued license. One of the criteria in order to get this license is the ability to have at least three specialists' certificates. These certificates are perceived to be an endorsement of the product and allow travel agents based in China to organise tours to previously studied countries. Other criteria on license acquisition depend on the size of the company and its business scopes, as well as on the quality of the organised tours.

According to Cindy Chen:
> "This situation is quite unique comparing to other markets where TNZ is operating. This scheme is an important motivation for Chinese agents to use offered training modules. At the same time, being part of this official schema makes it much easier for any tourism destination to promote online training."

A particularity of the Chinese market is the next one: word of mouth and the suggestions of colleagues or friends are culturally very important in this country. This is the reason why the number of the agents joining the "Kiwi Specialist Program" program is increasing quickly in China, as in most cases it is referred from a friend, a colleague or a manager.

3.4.4. Budget and usages
According to the head office representative, the main expenditures were from the development of the platform including both technical and content development. There was also a significant cost involved in the setting up the technical side of the training service. As a current training system had not been developed as a Learning Management

System (LMS), it gave another level of complexity to the project, especially from the on-going maintenance perspective.

While giving the example of the new eLearning course development, which came online in June 2013, the main cost both in terms of a financial investment and time spent were in merging two systems and two different programming languages involved, as well as into the conservation of the historical data on usages of the eLearning course. Another challenge, which TNZ expects both in terms of financial involvement as well as in time spent with the eLearning course redesign is the translations of the new training modules into three languages: Chinese, Korean and Japanese.

The total number of accounts in the online training database of TNZ is of 28.383 users. Among them 20.982 are travel sellers, those who have proved their official trade status. The number of agents who have successfully completed the requisite of 10 online modules and have got an official certificate is around 5.000, which accounts for approximately 25% from those initially subscribed to the training course. Around 420 travel agents, that have received Kiwi Specialists status, have successfully fulfilled three needed criteria:

- completion of the eLearning modules about New Zealand;
- attendance of another training activity organized by the market representatives;
- visit of the destination.

Unfortunately, current user management system of the online training course does not give an opportunity to understand how many of the users are actually "active" ones. It is the same situation with the breakdown of users by different markets. The US market used to be the most active in terms of the number of travel agents subscribed, but its being currently overtaken by the growing Chinese one.

TNZ representatives do recognize a rather moderate ratio of agents who successfully finish the course and get the certificate. They are planning to see the growth with the development of the new online training, as well as looking forward to see the agents to be more engaged and much more interacted. Additionally, new online training system will incorporate a thorough LMS, which will be able to give more data on the user behaviour within the online training course.

3.4.5. Kiwi Specialist Program presentation along ADDIE model
Kiwi Specialist eLearning course development and implementation procedure will be presented with the help of the ADDIE model, which stands for -Analysis, -Design, -Development, -Implementation and -Evaluation. The eLearning platform, which was online in February 2013, will be presented in this sub-chapter.

i) Analysis

TNZ as a DMO was looking for the last twenty years to push marketing to the end consumer through the distribution chain. Additionally, it was in a constant search for possible ways to educate travel agents on selling New Zealand as destination, its activities and experiences, and had a strategy on providing as many online activities as possible in order to reduce dependence on TNZ employees.

At the same time, TNZ acknowledged that their trade partners globally were looking for specialist knowledge; needed a general genuine understanding of the overall destination and its experiences; as well as desired to generate new revenues. After the understanding of those internal and external needs, an initiative on developing a new training strategy with the use of ICTs has emerged in 2003.

While constantly benchmarking the activities of other ministries as well as what regional tourism offices were doing, representatives of TNZ confirmed that the use of such training has proved to be successful around the globe. From the point of view of a national destination such as TNZ, the use of online training is an effective strategy, as it is a very cost-effective tool that gives education to travel sellers globally. At the same time, from the head office perspective:

> *"There is a need to invest time and money for the online training development or redevelopment. The main input by the destination is needed in the design and development phase, but as soon as the platform is up and running, there is no need to undertake any major adjustments for the next five years."*

TNZ head office acknowledged that the technology is developing quickly, but also in the next five years, it will still deliver what the destination is looking for in terms of the training content, as it will always be aligned with the strategic goals of Tourism New Zealand, which is marketing New Zealand as a tourism destination.

While looking at how other courses are performing today, TNZ representatives suggest that New Zealand online training course is one of the best worldwide. They do concede that there are other courses, which are better than Kiwi Specialist, but mostly in terms of the incentives that agents get from the DMOs or their market representatives.

Within the head office of TNZ there is a clear understanding that the course created and provided by Tourism Australia – "Aussie Specialist" is their main competitor. This is not only due to the content training, but also because the countries are direct competitors from the tourism product perspective, as well as their geographical location. Therefore, the competition is not just within online modules, but also generally within online sales and general overall marketing.

From the American market perspective, the competitors, both in terms of the similarity of the tourism product and the quality of the online training are Australia, Fiji, Hawaii, South Africa and Switzerland. Yet, according to Carolyn Pope:

> "*In most cases travel agents in the USA if they have done the courses of the competitors, they have done also the course of TNZ. Travel agents in the US, when they start doing online training programs – they do them all*".

TNZ has decided that their online training program should have an expiry date, so travel agents are asked to upgrade their knowledge constantly about the destination they work with. As a result, trade partners need to do online training modules every two years in order to refresh what they know about the destination, its particularities, attractions, activities and main events.

The general strategy of TNZ head office is
> "*to choose "quality" over "quantity" in terms of the number of agents following the course. TNZ is looking forward to be able to say: "This is a New Zealand Specialist", who actually guarantees to the clients the level and the quality of knowledge that the agent possesses*".

ii) Design
Overall, the eLearning course has been designed in a way to be integrated in the trade corner of TNZ website, all main marketing and trade activities of TNZ.

Based on the above stated goals and benchmarking studies, the Kiwi Specialist program has been designed in the following way: there is an international version of the platform where the training content is provided in English and attracts trade partners globally. Additionally to that, there are other nine platforms, which are customised for the needs of the travel trade partners based in India, Singapore, Malaysia & Indonesia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, Korea, Thailand, UK & Europe and North America. Nevertheless, the content is rather generic across the different markets, part of it also for the budget and resources constraints of TNZ. If an agent reads training modules in the American or in the Chinese version of the platform, presented content is comparable. What actually differs is the language of the course. Initially the content has been developed in English, and then translated into Korean, Japanese and Chinese. The strategy of language translations is aligned with the travel trade website.

A similar approach has been undertaken also for the multimedia, pictures and videos that were used in the online training course. Currently there are the same multimedia materials being used along all markets, though if the resources permit, TNZ is planning to change them in the new version of the online training course.

Current online training content has been designed in ten mandatory modules and six optional ones. Ten mandatory modules are the next ones: the first one gives an overview of New Zealand, its regions and accommodation offers. It also introduces a general understanding and particular suggestions for travel agents on how to sell New Zealand. The next nine modules cover the most important information about each region and what kinds of tourism activities can be undertaken: "Auckland and Northland", "Eastern North Island", "Central North Island", "Western North Island", "Wellington and Wairarapa", "Nelson and Marlborough", "Canterbury and West Coast", "Fiordland, Wanaka, Queenstown & Central Otago", "Dunedin, Coastal Otago and Southland".

Additional six modules are optional for travel agents. They present hints that are more practical on how to sell different experiences in New Zealand and being able to satisfy different needs of the clients. The modules include "Māori Experiences", "Food and Wine Experiences", "Walking in New Zealand", "New Zealand Ski", "Youth and Backpacker Holiday", "Air New Zealand Mega Familiarization Module".

While the mandatory modules are available in all markets, not all of the optional modules are offered in every market. "Selling Youth and Backpacker Holiday" appears in the international version of the site and in the American one. This module is not offered in the Chinese, Korean or Japanese markets, as youth from those countries do not tend to travel to New Zealand for backpacking holidays.

At the same time, there are some market specific modules, these are planned for the future within the online training course. For instance, "Cruise trips to New Zealand" module does not apply to every market. It would apply and will be developed only in the American and Australian markets.

Each training module requires from two to three hours of studying time, which in total accounts for twenty to thirty hours. However, the length actually depends on how and where travel agents prefer to study. For instance, if travel agents are studying from the office they might have clients, which interrupt, and as a result prolong the training session. If the users stop half way through the training or through the evaluation activities, the system remembers where they were, so with the next login the system will bring the learners to that exact point.

According to Belinda Chu,

> *"The option to bookmark modules and resume where the module was left off is highly appreciated by travel agents, as lots of them are very busy with their daily business activities, so it's an important opportunity for them to come back to the point in the course where they were interrupted."*

In order to get to the testing activities, travel agents need to read training texts, observe associated images, which visually present the destination and its attractions. Additionally to that, travel agents within training materials can watch videos about the destination or its particularities and look at additional links in order to enhance their knowledge. No audio materials or interactive activities were tracked within the training course.

Every online training module has at least 25 questions to complete. Only 20 of them are presented to the user. Twenty-five questions in the database rotate constantly. At the very end of every training module, travel agents can submit their answers and automatically be told whether they are right or wrong. Users have an unlimited number of possibilities to pass the test, but need to get 100% of answers correctly, which makes the overall testing experience a rather demanding one. The certificate, which the users get upon the completion of the training course, is valid for two years. After that, learners need to refresh their knowledge by completing the course again, get news about the destination and reconfirm their status as destination specialists.

If a travel agent or anyone interested in the destination New Zealand would like to read the content of the training without an account they can do it, as the content is not password protected. However, if the user wants to undertake testing activities, and as a result be eligible to receive a certificate and incentives, there is a need to create an account with login details. While registering for the online training courses the user doesn't need to prove their status with official travel agent ID number (e.g. IATA code). It has been done on purpose by TNZ, as they believe that there is no harm on opening the training course also to potential tourists who would like to learn more about the destination New Zealand.

iii) Development

The Kiwi Specialist program has been designed and built on request by TNZ to fill the training needs gap as a new educational tool in 2004. Technically the eLearning tool has been built by an external, New Zealand based company, on a custom build content management system, which is called "Shado".

Design and graphical part of the online training offer were customised externally and aligned with the corporate identity of TNZ. Additionally to that, representatives of the external agency put the content into an eLearning format, developed the look and feel of the online training, as well as designed learning scenarios and teaching scripts. Since then until February 2013, when the interviews and the analysis took place, neither technical part nor design or learning experience of the platform have undergone any change.

Current eLearning course, which is managed by TNZ, gives a very limited output in terms of usages' analysis. The training does not have a mobile version, as it is believed in the head office of TNZ that most of the agents complete training modules on their PC's in the office and not outside of the working time.

iv) Implementation

In this subchapter promotional and incentive activities initiated by the headquarters of TNZ and the offshore markets will be discussed. Particularities of incentives strategies on different markets will be presented as well.

a) Promotional activities

According to those responsible for the online training in the headquarters of TNZ:

> "*the relationship with the agents after they graduate is rather passive. There aren't any structured aggressive programs on keeping travel agents engaged, except letting them know that the training is still available.*"

eLearning course promotion is happening during face-to-face training, which are organized by market representatives, webinars and other trade events. Usually 70-80 trade agents attend the events at any one time, which is a good chance to promote online training courses about New Zealand Tourism, its structure and particularities and attract new travel agents to attend.

Additionally, the partnership with big agencies on the British market (e.g. STA), which actually include in their agents' KPI the completion of the online training modules provided by TNZ, pushed the visits to the online training website. Further similar partnerships are planned in the future by TNZ on other markets as well.

Online promotion strategies have also been undertaken. For instance, in the Chinese market online banners and display ads were bought on the main search engine – Baidu. At the same time, market representatives use emailing campaigns in order to communicate and promote online training modules among travel agents that might be interested to complete.

The North American market representative confirmed that they have previously used a Facebook page in order to promote the training course and other trade activities. However as most of the agents in the USA and Canada are older and not active on social media, the page was not really used.

There was an attempt from the Head Office to initiate a campaign of Search Engine Marketing, which increased the traffic to the website, but didn't significantly increase the level of sign-ups to the online training as was expected and anticipated.

b) Incentives

The strategy of the incentives program (e.g. certificate) and branding (e.g. use of logo) is developed by the Wellington office, while then administering of the programme is undertaken by staff offshore in each office. For instance, without having a centralized strategy on the form of presenting the certificate to the travel agents, market representatives analyse and decide what is important for the travel agents based in their regions. For instance, in India certificates are laminated in order to give them a more tangible value. In the Singapore market representatives present the certificate to the agents in a wooden frame in order to make it even more valuable. Additionally, the respected offshore markets decide on the familiarization trips.

Below the list of incentives that TNZ is providing to travel agents who have successfully graduated from the online training course is presented:
- access to logo (see in Appendix 4), which can be used on stationery and other communications, such as business cards, letter heads, email signatures, etc.;
- certificate (see in Appendix 6) and window decals for display in the agencies;
- priority invitations to training sessions and familiarisation trips;
- preferential listing on the customer website – www.newzealand.com, as suggested destination specialists.

There are two different certificates that an agent who graduates from the online training course can get. The first one is the online certificate, which is emailed to the agents or can be downloaded and printed out from the eLearning course while they have completed required online training modules. This certificate serves mostly to thank travel agents for their time completing the training and congratulate them.

If travel agents want to get an official "Kiwi Certified Specialist", they need to fulfil the next three criteria:
- complete ten mandatory modules every two years;
- attend another training session, which is provided by the offshore markets (e.g. webinar or in-presence market training);
- make a trip to New Zealand. A qualifying trip to New Zealand can be obtained either via a familiarization opportunity organised by TNZ or any other agency or via a personal trip to the country. Travel agents need to show proof of their trip by sending market responsible a scan of their passport stamp or an airplane ticket.

Generally, travel agents around the globe need to complete ten mandatory modules in order to graduate. Only five of them need to be completed on the Chinese market. The reason for that is that traditionally Chinese tourists go to New Zealand to do just the "Golden Route", which include Auckland, Rotaroa, and few other places on the Northern

Island, without going to the Southern island. Consequently travel agents in China are tested only on the main relevant modules.

Additionally, certified travel agents are invited to participate in "Explore New Zealand" program, which is open to media partners and travel agents who are coming to New Zealand, but not on a familiarization trip. This program enables registered and approved trade partners to explore a number of travel experiences in New Zealand and have access to a number of activities at a discounted price.

Meanwhile, during the designing of a new version of the eLearning course, the idea to create a special dedicated area on the trade website, which will be available only to "Kiwi Certified Specialists", has been discussed.

c) Particularities of the incentives by the markets
On both studied markets, Chinese and American ones, travel agents believe that the certificate and the logo they get from TNZ is very valuable for their customers. On the North American market, additionally to the benefits which are available for the agents worldwide (e.g. logo, certificate, and website listing as suggested destination specialists), the agents are encouraged to attend webinars or other in-presence trainings with invited speakers from New Zealand tourism trade companies. As the market structure is evolving and changing, the agents who are based in the North American Market are not invited automatically to the familiarization trips to New Zealand. Most of the trips organized nowadays on the American market are with tour operators, where ROI from the organized familiarization and educational trips can be better calculated.

While on the Chinese market ten agents every year are being sent to New Zealand for an educational program or a familiarization trip in order to enhance their knowledge and furthermore expand their marketing and sales activities.

d) Evaluation
TNZ has done a thorough evaluation of the performance of current eLearning course, which included two main steps:
- usability test, which was undertaken by an external company in 2010;
- survey with the off shore travel agents in 2012.

The first step of the evaluation process, a usability test, has been done in 2010 by an external company. It included a usability test analysis of the trade website and of the online training modules. The usability test has been done on two markets – on the Asian market (in Singapore) and on the American one (in Los Angeles). Five frontline travel sellers in both markets undergo the training modules while "thinking aloud" their

understanding and perception of the online training. Travel agents' navigation on the online training was video-recorded. According to Tourism New Zealand (2012a), most of the results of the usability tests confirmed the concerns that TNZ representatives had about the online training course performance. While the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the content of the modules, there were some suggestions that need to be solved by TNZ. Generally, travel agents have asked for less text and more engaging content, e.g. games. The users on both markets have suggested having a more customised content for their specific market needs, as well as more detail, which will help them to generate or push extra income. Additionally, travel agents suggested that within the current platform there is a lack of imagery (photos, videos, explanatory maps, etc.), which is an important issue for those users who are less likely to make the trip to New Zealand.

Another issue was the overall evaluation of the incentives strategy, as the rules within Kiwi Specialist Program were rather complicated, when the dates for three different activities (online training course, in-presence training and a trip to New Zealand) had three different deadlines. This issue has plans to be simplified and changed for the new version of the online training.

Planned changes of the online training modules are also a result of a review process that was undertaken in late 2011, which was looking for the feedback from the offshore travel agents. The survey received feedback from over 2.300 agents, who helped to identify the strengths of the online training program, weaknesses and the key areas for improvements.

Those evaluation steps were done in order to understand the direction, which TNZ needs to move in order to re-launch the program. The analysis has helped to develop a new road map and the structure for the trade site as well.

3.4.6. Kiwi Specialist Program overall evaluation

Kiwi Specialist Program case study has shown an interesting example of the online training course about national tourism destinations management and its perceived success. The next strengths and limits can be highlighted from this case study:

Strengths
- Kiwi Specialist Program is one of the first online trainings globally that was initiated by a national tourism destination.
- TNZ is constantly implementing evaluation activities in order to understand the performance of the online training and its potential.

- TNZ is doing continuous benchmarking on the availability, structure and performance of other online training courses provided by tourism destinations at national and regional levels.
- TNZ has identified a clear competitor, both in terms of the tourism product and in terms of online training modules.
- According to the feedback received from the eLearning course evaluation, TNZ has planned activities for the eLearning redesign and redevelopment, which might enhance training experiences for potential online users.
- TNZ has appointed offshore markets to be responsible for the platform delivery and integration of the incentive strategies.
- TNZ is undertaking a strong collaboration with wholesalers (e.g. STA UK) for the online platform promotion between their employees.
- TNZ is collaborating with the Chinese Government on the official "Approved Destination Status", which has motivated more travel agents in this emerging market to participate in the course.
- TNZ has decided to keep training content open to every user, which it hopes will increase the overall awareness of the destination New Zealand not only among trade partners, but also among potential tourists and media.

Limits
- Content and testing activities within online training course are not adapted to market needs, which make the overall training performance not relevant in some training contexts.
- Current strategy on maintaining the status for travel agents is rather complicated and has led to a lower number of agents who has qualified for a specialist certificate.
- The title, which needs to be renewed every two years, has also led to a diminishing number of travel agents participating in the online training.
- TNZ does not have a dedicated person on each market to deal with the online training course.
- TNZ does not provide any promotional gadgets; special packages or discounts for the certified travel agents, which may also lead to the lower motivation of travel agents to participate in the online training course.
- Travel agents are poorly involved in the sales and marketing activities of TNZ after the completion of the online training course.

3.4.7. Development of new online training platform – 100% Pure New Zealand Specialist

Following the results of the evaluation activities, which were undertaken in 2010 and 2011 – usability test and online questionnaire of the offshore travel agents accordingly, the decision on the "Kiwi Specialist Program" overall redevelopment and training experience redesign has appeared. The new eLearning course has been launched in June 2013. It is expected that undertaken changes of the online training program will deliver a more engaging training experience to New Zealand sellers offshore and will encourage them to sell more tourism and hospitality products of New Zealand. It is also expected that the new training program will attract more agents to the training on all the markets where TNZ is present. Additionally, it is predicted that it will be easier to maintain the status for travel agents with less complex expiry dates.

TNZ is currently designing a thorough communication plan in order to deliver the message of the future changes to the users, especially to those who have been interacting with online training for a long time. The information about eLearning course adjustments will be sent to all travel agents who have subscribed to the course, as well as to the industry partners, regional tourism organizations and other involved stakeholders. Media trade reports (eGlobaltrademedia, 2013; Travelbizmonitor, 2013; Traveldailynews, 2013) have already appeared in international journals in order to prepare travel agents for this change.

The overall corporate identity of the training will be changed, as well as the new online training offer will be renamed as *"100% Pure New Zealand Specialist"*, in order to identify it more precisely as a New Zealand Program and in keeping with TNZ's overall branding. Moreover, the graphic design of the platform and the logo will be adapted as well. The new logo of the eLearning course and the print screens from "100% Pure New Zealand Specialist Program" can be seen in the Appendices 5 and 7.

i) Technical implementation

From the cost to benefit ratio TNZ made a decision on installing a readymade Learning Management System (LMS), instead of creating a new training program from scratch, while implementing a new training course. The new LMS is called TOTARA (www.totaralms.com), which customizes Moodle developments for corporate needs and integrates advanced user management profiles. TOTARA is an open source LMS, which allows hosting, tracking and reporting of online learning and teaching. Training content will be created within the TOTARA functionalities or by launching SCORM objects (e.g. using Articulate Storyline HTML5). TOTARA LMS has a device-detection on the access, which enables a mobile theme to be applied for tablets and phone users.

Technically modules were developed in eLearning software "Articulate Storyline" (www.articulate.com/products/studio.php), which is used to create interactive online learning modules. The tool produces Flash output with HTML5 alternative fallback, using Javascript feature detection.

As current online training "Kiwi Specialist Program" is able to give very limited reporting data on the usages, the new platform has been designed for this reason as well. The eLearning system will be able to provide different reports on the eLearning course performance and the behaviour of the users, e.g. users subscribed and those who passed the test; where users are dropping out; how much time do they spend on each training module and on the course in general. The analysis of the results of the eLearning performance might help the developers and destination representatives in understanding if any modifications and adjustments to the new eLearning course should be done in the future (e.g. the length of the training models).

ii) Creation of training content and evaluation activities
Current online training course has been designed for a passive learner, where the user needs to read present content modules and then answer a number of evaluation questions. Moreover, it has been perceived as a rather "text heavy one". Moreover, the usability study, undertaken in 2010, has shown that a very high number of learners actually were looking for answers with the help of Search Engine (e.g. Google), instead of following online training.

The new training modules will be structured in a completely different way and as such will take a different learning path. The new modules were fundamentally redesigned in order to make them more visually engaging and captivating, fun and easy to complete. They will force travel agents to use training modules, as they will receive evaluation questions along the way, and then will be assessed at the very end. The assessment at the end can actually affirm that travel agents have learned something about the destination New Zealand and its particularities. eLearning developers believe that the new modules will become a more interactive and engaging training tool.

The content of the new online training will be redesigned as well. The first "Introductory module" will be divided into two training parts and will present the main selling tips for travel agents. The first one is called "An introduction to New Zealand" and will give a general overview of the country. While the second one is called "Practical information" and will present the next data: which objects and products tourist can't bring to the country; what weather condition to expect from certain seasons, driving rules in New Zealand, etc. Nine additional modules will cover all geographical regions in New Zealand. Furthermore, the template for the new regional modules will be changed as well. The information will be presented in the way of "10 hot spots for every region",

that will show key selling points. As regional representatives know their local tourism product best, they were asked to provide the head office with information on the best things to see and to do for potential tourists in their regions. Four modules on special interests will be provided as well e.g. "Skiing", "Cruising", "Hiking" and "Luxury travel". The new training modules will be shortened so that they will take from thirty to forty-five minutes to complete. The new approach will be undertaken also in the evaluation activities for travel agents based in China. As a general strategy, TNZ is looking to push Chinese tourists to travel to the Southern island as well, so most probably the number of mandatory modules for Chinese agents will increase from five to ten and will cover all regions in New Zealand.

iii) Specialist status

All the technical details and historical records from the previous eLearning course such as registration and login details, module completion, certification, etc. will be transferred over to the new system, so that the users will maintain their previous status. Generally, the criteria to maintain the status of a New Zealand Specialist will be reduced in order to make it easier for the agents to stay in the program, once they initially qualified for the status. An agent will be required to complete ten training modules in order to qualify for "100% Pure New Zealand Specialist". Additionally to maintain their status, travel agents will need to complete two additional modules in the following two years.

As for the trip to New Zealand, an agent will still need to make a trip to the country, but it will be valid for a lifetime. Furthermore, an agent will need to attend any other additional training session organized by the market representatives, which can be a face-to-face training or a webinar. In order to maintain the status such training should be undertaken every two years. In case if there is no training offered in the market that an agent works for, then TNZ will addresses this issue on a case-by-case basis. For instance, TNZ can decide on making an agent a "100% Pure New Zealand Specialist" if they see that an agent is a dedicated seller of New Zealand as a tourism destination.

iv) Incentives and benefits

TNZ head office is planning to expand the range of benefits and incentives (e.g. gadgets and merchandising) which travel agents receive while successfully finishing online training courses. This is done in order to keep those agents who have already subscribed to be more motivated and excited to sell New Zealand as well as to attract and encourage new agents.

v) Evaluation activities

According to Bjoern Spreitzer, Business Development Manager of New Zealand Tourism Board:

> "*Pilot testing of the new online modules in Australia has been done in late 2012. Responses so far have been very positive and the feedback has been reviewed to continue refining the programme ready for its anticipated rollout in June 2013*" *(eGlobaltrademedia, 2013).*

Similar responses were received from the pilot testing activities that were undertaken on the American and the Chinese markets. According to both interviewed market representatives, travel agents believe that the new online training is fun and rather engaging, which gives positive prerequisites for the growth of the passing numbers in the near future.

3.5. Conclusions

The next paragraph presents conclusions out of two research steps, which describe the "supply side" of the destinational eLearning on offer. Firstly, the conclusions of the benchmarking study (sub-chapter 3.5.1.) of all available national eLearning courses about tourism destinations are presented, featuring the answers to *Research Question 1* and *Research Question 2*.

Then the conclusions from the case studies with Tourism New Zealand and Swiss National Tourism Office are presented in the sub-chapter 3.5.2, answering *Research Question 3*, *Research Question 4* and *Research Question 5*.

3.5.1. Benchmarking study

This study has analysed the courseware offered by NTOs globally, and as a result, it has answered the next research questions:

> *Research Question 1: How many national destinations worldwide offer eLearning courses?*

The study has shown a clear interest on the side of 75 National Tourism Organizations towards exploiting the opportunities presented by eLearning in order to provide travel agents and consultants with a comprehensive training option, while using ICTs for a proper training development of their travel trade partners.

Even if no extensive data is available, the very fact that in three years (2009 – 2012) online courses on a national level has doubled, suggests that NTOs are able to attract their intended audiences, hence fulfilling their marketing and educational goals. This means, on one hand, that destinations are developing B2B online activities to involve travel agents, thereby leveraging not only on the disintermediation (as in B2C websites), but also on the intermediation. On the other hand, the study suggests that NTOs also perceive themselves as training bodies, meeting the emerging needs of travel agents to find their benefit or unique selling point in the complex eTourism environment.

> *Research Question 2: How DMO eLearning courses are structured in terms of the used pedagogical strategies, online training content delivery and testing activities design?*

Contents, methods and strategies of 75 available eLearning courses about tourism destinations have been assessed within this study. While looking at the content of the NTO's eLearning courses, most of them are represented in specially designed learning modules covering general information about the destination, which includes geographical position, demographics, languages spoken, etc. Information on the history,

culture and traditions, accommodation and transportation systems as well as formality issues, such as visa, insurances, vaccinations, etc., is presented additionally in the online training modules. Furthermore, selling tips, along with the help of itinerary planning are also provided. In order to deliver a high-quality training experience, promotional videos and images, interactive maps along with the textual contents can be found. As a general practice, at the end of the course, after passing an evaluation exam, the learner receives a certificate of completion, which may then be displayed in the travel agency. Time needed to complete an eLearning course ranges from 40 minutes to 30 hours, with an average of 4 to 5 hours. Most of the courses offer a simple and straightforward navigation. All course developers have chosen self-study and objective tests as a strategy for course delivery, which shows low interactions and minimal (if any) assistance from the side of the destination. While for the most part the core audiences and basic contents remained the same as in 2009, three years later used media have improved, offering more interactive features as well as more advanced multimedia contents. No significant changes have been noticed though when it comes to human assistance available to learners. Most likely due to high cost of maintenance and constant support, eLearning courses are mainly designed as self-learning experiences and their development is outsourced from external companies.

3.5.2.   Case studies

Case studies have answered the next research questions:

> *Research Question 3: How eLearning courses are structured in terms of the used pedagogical strategies, online training content delivery and testing activities design?*

Theoretical investigation resulted in the presentation of two successful management cases of online trainings initiated by NTOs. Two case studies: *Kiwi Specialist Program* and *Switzerland Travel Academy* proposed the first understanding and evaluation of the pedagogical and technical strategies that have been used by those destinations for the online training creation.

Initially in both cases, destination managers have chosen a "passive" learning strategy with minimal involvement and interaction from the NTO side and among users who are attending training activities online. However, after the results of a thorough evaluation, TNZ is planning to change this strategy into a more "active" one, while expecting to enhance the training experience for travel agents with the new online training course. Additionally TNZ is expecting travel agents to repeat online training every two years in order to maintain their status and upgrade their knowledge about the destination they sell.

Research Question 4: How eLearning courses have been structured in terms of the employees involved, promotional strategies undertaken and performed in terms of the usages and budget spent?

Both eLearning courses have been initiated and are currently managed from the head offices, while the delivery, daily support to travel agents and incentives strategies are implemented within the respected offshore markets. In both cases platform management and delivery is not a primary activity of a destination in terms of the employees and the budgets involved. In both cases, an external company was responsible for the technical development of the training courses, while NTOs were providing them with the needed content and testing materials.

As for the presented training content, in case of Switzerland Travel Academy, the content is adapted for market needs and is aligned with the language preferences of the respected markets. Tourism New Zealand due to the scarcity of recourses didn't adapt content and testing activities, which might make the overall performance not relevant in some training contexts.

Both presented destinations have done the minimum of integration of the certified travel agents into their marketing activities, and are planning to expand this in the future. In both cases offshore markets are responsible for the platform delivery and integration of the incentive strategies.

It should be mentioned that both destinations decided to keep the course open not only to the officially registered travel agents, but also to the end-client, media partners or hospitality and tourism students, hoping that it can become an additional marketing or sales tool.

The performance of the eLearning courses on different offshore markets varies significantly, which confirms different needs and structures of the travel trade markets globally, and should be addressed on a case-by-case basis. For instance, it has been revealed that not all the markets need to have an online training. An example of the Italian and Dutch market can be mentioned from the Switzerland Travel Academy case, where there was no need on such a platform development and integration due to the market structure and training needs.

Research Question 5: What motivates DMOs to develop eLearning courses for their travel trade partners?

Cases discussed within this study confirm that with the help of eLearning courses both destinations were able to achieve their internal goals in terms of the coordination and training of the trade partners globally.

Thanks to the interviews with the destination representatives, it can be concluded that the main motivation of a destination to have an online training is to have well-educated travel

agents who can actively sell the country as a tourism destination. Another key driver for the implementation of the eLearning platform is that with its help any tourism destination can enhance educational opportunities globally. This "accessibility" issue enables tourism destinations to upscale agents in the areas that are not easily physically reachable and where an NTO does not have active market representatives. Such training options can be very successful in geographically dispersed countries (e.g. Russia, USA or Canada), where market representatives are not able visit in order to deliver in-presence training, while with the help of technologies destination training become accessible to every travel agent.

According to the interviewed NTO representatives, online training courses can be very helpful for travel agents in order to improve their capability to plan, promote and sell high quality holidays to a destination they are interested in. Additionally, online training courses can give credibility to travel agents in the eyes of potential tourists, as they are officially certified by a credible institution, such as a ministry of tourism. So then clients may have confidence that travel agents know the destination they are selling well and potentially have made a trip to a destination themselves.

Though in order to give an opportunity to travel trade to learn about and engage with the destination, NTOs need to compliment an eLearning course with other training activities and various facets, such as familiarization trips, webinars and road shows.

Chapter 4: Analysis of the demand side: travel agents' perceptions and motivations of the DMO eLearning offers

Overview

The purpose of this research is to understand what drives travel agents to subscribe to eLearning courses about tourism destinations, besides browsing destinations' websites, attending in-presence training workshops or undertaking any other form of knowledge upgrade. At the same time, this research will enlighten on what discourages travel agents in participating in online training activities while learning about tourism destinations.

Three main research steps were planned in this concern. The first step is an exploratory study, designed in the form of an *online questionnaire with travel agents worldwide (4.1)*, which was utilised for general insights into travel agents' reaction and satisfaction of the eLearning courses created by destination management organisations or by third parties on their behalf. Exploratory online questionnaire has been designed as well in order to evaluate usefulness of eLearning courses for travel agents' current business activities, and finally get a list of best-evaluated eLearning courses.

The second step was designed in a form of *phone interviews (4.2 and 4.3) with the outbound travel agents working in three countries*, based in three different geographical regions – Europe, Asia and Pacific and representing two developed and one developing/emerging nation: United Kingdom, New Zealand and India. This research design helps to understand and evaluate the rates of usages of eLearning courses in three respective countries as well as to get the rates of awareness for such training activities. Moreover, phone interviews helped to define categories of motivations and barriers to participate in eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

Motivational categories on attending eLearning courses will be tested within the third research step – *online questionnaire (4.4 and 4.5) on motivational factors of the travel agents* from three countries: United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. The relationship between ease of use and usefulness (Technology Acceptance Model) of such training activities will be evaluated as well.

Parts of this chapter have appeared in the following publications:

Kalbaska N., & Cantoni L. (2013). *eLearning courses on travel destinations. An exploratory study on Indian Travel Agents perspective*. Proceedings of CAUTHE2013 Conference in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Kalbaska, N., Lee, H.A, Cantoni, L., & Law, R. (2013). UK travel agents' evaluation of eLearning courses offered by destinations: an exploratory study. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, *12*(1), 7-14.

Kalbaska N., Inversini A., & Cantoni L. (2012). *Evaluation of eLearning offers by Destination Management Organizations: Middle East Travel Agents' Perspective*. e-Learning Excellence in the Middle East. Dubai: Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University.

Kalbaska, N., Van Zyl, I., & Cantoni, L. (2012). *eLearning Courses on Travel Destinations: Perceptions of African Travel Agents.* Proceedings of eLearning Africa – International Conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training. Benin: Cotonou.

Kalbaska N., & Cantoni L. (2011). *eLearning Courses on Tourism Destinations: Travel Agents' Perceptions*. Industry report. Retrieved in June 2013 from www.webatelier.net/research/reports/elearning

4.1. Exploratory online questionnaire with the travel agents worldwide

This subchapter will discuss the first research step undertaken in order to evaluate the demand side of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations. It has been done in a form of an exploratory study – online questionnaire with travel agents globally.

This subchapter is structured as follows: it initiates with the research objectives and research questions (4.1.1); followed by the research design of the online questionnaire and its limitations (4.1.2), and concludes with the presentation of the results (4.1.3).

4.1.1. Research objectives and research questions

To date no data has been available from the point of view of the travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Furthermore, to the author's knowledge, no empirical research has been undertaken on the evaluation of the eLearning training offers within the travel trade context. This research offers the first trial on understanding travel agents perception and evaluation of the eLearning courses created by tourism destinations globally. The main research objectives of this exploratory online questionnaire are as follows:

- gain an overall understanding of the travel agents' demand, awareness and reaction on attending eLearning courses created by tourism destinations;
- compile indicative figures of eLearning usages among travel agents globally;
- get an understanding of possible motivations travel agents might have on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations;
- accumulate a list of best-evaluated eLearning courses about tourism destinations worldwide.

In order to answer above-mentioned research objectives, the next research questions were formulated:

Research Question 6: Is there a demand among travel agents globally on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?

Research Question 7: What is the reaction on the DMO eLearning courses from travel agents globally?

Research Question 8: Is there awareness among travel agents globally on the existence of DMO eLearning courses?

Research Question 9: What motivates travel agents globally on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?

4.1.2. Research design and limitations

This research aims to fill the gap identified in the literature review by exploring the perceptions of travel agents globally towards eLearning courses about tourism destinations. As no empirical research has been previously done on the subject matter, this step is thus exploratory in nature, with the aim of subsequently carrying out a deeper investigation of this topic.

With the purpose of collecting data worldwide, the questionnaire was conducted online in order to reach as many travel agents as possible, independently from their previous knowledge and use of eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Indeed, the research was concerned with both the perceptions and interests of non-users, as well as on the opinions of eLearning users.

The questionnaire was pre-tested at the beginning of April 2011 in Lugano (Switzerland) with a focus group of ten international travel agents. The main aim of the pre-test was to reduce ambiguity and ensure that questions were clearly worded. Revised questionnaire was then administered online from April to June 2011. Non-probabilistic accidental sampling has been used within this research step. Invitations were sent directly to the members of the next associations and companies:

- World Association of Travel Agents;
- International Federation for Information Technologies in Travel and Tourism;
- Training and Development Institute of IATA;
- PromAx Communication SA;
- Online Travel Training.

Additionally, travel agents were contacted through professional social networks (e.g. LinkedIn, Xing and Travel Professional Network). An explanatory email (Appendix 17) was enclosed with the online questionnaire outlining the purpose of the survey, the length of it, and voluntary nature of the participation in the research. In total, about 60.000 potential respondents worldwide were invited to complete online questionnaire. After three-months period, 1004 responses worldwide have been received giving a 1.67% response rate. It should be noted that low response rates ranging from 1 to 20% are common in organizational surveys (Anseel *et al.*, 2010).

An online questionnaire was designed along *Donald Kirkpatricks' model of evaluation of a learning activity* (1994), which evaluates training activities along Reaction, Knowledge, Transfer and Impact.

The exploratory online questionnaire included 34 questions structured into four main categories:

- demographics of the respondents;
- strategies of their knowledge acquisition;
- investigation of eLearning courses about tourism destinations usage and non-usage;
- evaluation of the acquired knowledge application and possible transfer to professional activities.

Travel agents who had previously done eLearning courses were asked to answer 34 questions, while those who had no previous experience on studying online had 14 questions to respond. The questions can be seen in Appendix 18.

Respondents required approximately 15 to 20 minutes in order to answer the online questionnaire and were offered no financial incentives to do so. A dedicated website to support and provide details about this research was launched under the next web address www.elearning4tourism.com.

Although present study might provide valuable insights into travel agents' perception of eLearning courses created by tourism destinations worldwide, the findings should be interpreted in light of the limitations of the research. Due to the non-probabilistic accidental sample that produced a self-selection of the respondents there is a high probability that the answers were received from the most motivated and interested travel agents. Additionally, the response rate was rather low, as accounted for less than 1.7%. The findings in this study might be distorted by these facts and could not be generalized. For the same reason, it was impossible to get reliable proportions of those who participate in the eLearning experiences about tourism destinations, so only indicative number on the usages will be reported further.

However, this study provided critical insights on the state of the eLearning usages within the tourism education, while looking in particular at how eLearning courses about tourism destinations are perceived by travel agents globally. The results of this ground-base and exploratory study will be analysed further within this study through phone interviews and an additional online questionnaire, which will use larger and more precise sampling strategies.

4.1.3. Research results
A total of 1004 valid questionnaires were received through this exploratory online questionnaire, with several nationalities represented. A descriptive analysis was performed for the purpose of this research. The most represented in the sample were travel agents based in the United Kingdom (30%), India (16%), United States (4%), Pakistan (4%), Italy (4%), and Nigeria (3%).

Thanks to the online questionnaire, indicative numbers of the actual use of eLearning were received. Among respondents, 571 travel agents (57%) confirmed that they have previously attended eLearning courses in the hospitality and tourism field. While 466 respondents (46%) have confirmed that they have previously undertook eLearning courses, which were provided by DMOs. Among those respondents who haven't previously done eLearning courses, 66% knew that such a training offer exist, but for several reasons, such as the absence of time for knowledge upgrade, absence of interest or belief that online training will not be useful for their business, made them decide to not attend such a training activity.

i.) Satisfaction and transfer to profession

Among DMO eLearning users, the level of satisfaction is very high. 88% of the respondents are "significantly satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" (41% and 47% respectively) about the courses they have followed.

Moreover, 83% of the travel agents have recommended such a training activity to a colleague. Those travel agents that were doing the courses were rather satisfied and have done several courses. On average, the respondents have undertaken six eLearning courses about tourism destinations at different levels: national, regional or local.

While analysing the impact of eLearning courses about tourism destinations on travel agents' current working activities, the next response could be of interest: 67% of travel agents claim that they have sold a destination package as a result of taking such eLearning courses.

ii.) Confidence and knowledge application

More than half of the respondents (53%) after completing eLearning training about tourism destinations feel to be "significantly more confident" about selling the specific destination, followed by 29% who are "somewhat more confident", and 14% "slightly more confident". In addition, 56% of the travel agents believe that their knowledge about studied destinations significantly improved thanks to the courses previously undertaken online.

The above-mentioned results are aligned with the only published research in the master thesis of O'Donnell (2012, p.88), where the author suggests that 86% of the respondents in mentioned research agreed that eLearning modules about Tourism New Zealand "were relevant for their business needs. Additionally 85% of the participants thought that their personal knowledge and confidence in New Zealand had increased. Furthermore, 81% of the participants now feel to be confident in making personal recommendations to

consumers. Some travel agents suggested that thanks to the eLearning course, it's easier for them to make recommendations and they will sell more trips to the country".

iii.) Motivational items

The following table presents the main reasons for travel agents to decide to subscribe to eLearning courses offered by tourism destinations worldwide. Multiple answers were possible.

to acquire new knowledge about tourism destination	81%
to be able to better serve clients	42%
to sell more and earn more	39%
to win an educational / familiarization trip	29%
to enrich my curriculum	29%
to get incentives and prizes from the destination (e.g. pens, maps)	21%
to be registered in the official travel agents list of the destination	20%
to display an official certificate in my office	10%
to access special offers	7%
to respond to my manager's requests	2%

Table 6. Travel agents' main reasons on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations

More than three quarters of the respondents listed "to acquire new knowledge about tourism destination" as one of the main reasons on why they undertook eLearning courses, while fewer travel agents declared that they were following eLearning courses due to other benefits they may receive (e.g. "familiarization trips" or "access to special offers"). Additionally to this, the category "other" was proposed with an opportunity to suggest their reasoning on learning about tourism destinations they sell with the help of the online training courses.

iv.) Most appreciated eLearning courses

Travel agents globally were asked to suggest the eLearning course about tourism destination they have previously followed they have liked most. Every travel agent could suggest up to three courses. Most appreciated course suggested by 84 travel agents globally is the "Aussie Specialist Program", run by Tourism Australia. The second one is that presenting destination Dubai, with 48 preferences. On the third position, there are two courses: the Caribbean region and Mauritius with 34 preferences. The list of 15 best-evaluated courses can be seen below in Table 7.

Australia	84
Dubai	48
Caribbean	34
Mauritius	34
Malta	32
USA	31
Canada	27
New Zealand	27
South Africa	27
Thailand	25
Ireland	20
Spain	20
St. Lucia	20
Switzerland	20
Jamaica	19

Table 7. List of best-evaluated eLearning courses about tourism destinations

4.2. Phone interviews with travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

This sub-chapter will present phone interviews – the second step in the research on the analysis of the demand side of the use of eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

The sub-chapter will start with the research objectives and research questions (4.2.1); will follow with the research design and the limitation of the chosen research method (4.2.2). Then the sub-chapter will proceed with the rationale of the selection of three countries: the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (4.2.3.) and the description of the sample selection and evaluation of the sample size (4.2.4.).

4.2.1. Research objectives and research questions

The purpose of this research is to understand what drives travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand to subscribe and actively study with the help of eLearning courses about tourism destinations, besides browsing destinations B2C websites, attending in-presence workshops, or attending any other available at their market formal or informal learning and training opportunity. At the same time, this research will attempt to understand what discourages travel agents in three studied countries to participate in the eLearning activities.

This research step will try to assess the number of travel agents that are currently doing eLearning courses in the three studied markets, the rates of awareness about the existence of such courses among travel agents that have not done them before, as well as look to provide assumptions on potential usages.

The main objectives of this research step are as follows:
- get the rates of current usages and awareness of eLearning courses about tourism destinations by travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand;
- understand what motivates travel agents to subscribe to eLearning courses about tourism destinations besides of other methods of knowledge upgrade;
- understand what discourages travel agents in three countries to participate in online training activities;
- analyse if the country where travel agents are based, their age and gender, their educational level and type of company they work for influence participation in, and awareness of the existence of eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

In order to reach above presented research objectives, the next research questions were formulated:

Research Question 10: Is there a demand among travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?

Research Question 11: Does the demand depend on the country where travel agents are based, their gender, age, educational level and type of the agency they work for?

Research Question 12: Is there awareness among travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on the existence of DMO eLearning courses?

Research Question 13: Does the awareness depend on the country where travel agents are based, their gender, age, educational level and type of the agency they work for?

Research Question 14: What are the barriers for travel agents of possible participation in the DMO eLearning courses?

4.2.2. Research design and limitations

Exploratory study, which was undertaken in the form of an online questionnaire, gave general and important insights on the evaluation and perception of travel agents on the eLearning practices about tourism destinations worldwide. However, due to the limitations of the research design it did not allow estimations on the real proportions of the usages, awareness and potential usages of the eLearning courses by travel agents.

This research step involved phone interviews, the method, which has become the most preferred mode of data collection in order to survey businesses organizations, as well as to conduct multi-stage academic research projects (Opdenakker, 2006; Schmitt & Klimoski, 1991; Williams, 1993). Moreover, market research companies also commonly use phone interviews in order to identify and interview quota samples of consumers (Thomas & Purdon, 1994), which is the case of current study and it is beneficial in order to answer *Research Question 10* and *Research Question 12*.

The decision to use phone interviews as the method to answer above-stated research questions was taken due to the next reasons:
- Phone interviews allow reaching high response rate, which makes the results more representative of the population and under certain conditions easier to generalize and apply to the full spectrum of travel agents in every studied country.

- Phone interviews give the possibility to decide and control the structure of the population, and make the results comparable between the three studied countries – United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.
- As travel agents work on the phones, are based in formal office or at home, it makes phone interviews the most beneficial method aligned with their working experience.
- Phone interviews by nature help to get the highest response rates of the unmotivated user, in case of this study – of the travel agents who have not previously done eLearning courses.

The next limitations of phone interviews as a chosen research method should be mentioned as well:
- Phone interview method is a highly time-consuming process.
- Supervisors or colleagues who are present during the interview in the office might influence the answers of respondents. In addition, the information provided could be particularly hostile to the company's internal training process policy or managers. However, such situations are beyond the researcher's control and couldn't be tackled.
- Few questions with a simplified structure could be asked both due to the nature of the phone interviews and that travel agents are being disturbed during their busy working hours while the interviews were happening.

As a solution for the mentioned limitations, a further online questionnaire, which was evaluating motivation factors of the travel agents who have previously followed eLearning courses about tourism destinations has been designed and implemented. It is presented in the sub-chapters 4.5 and 4.6.

Chosen strategy on undertaking phone interviews through simple random sampling of officially registered travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand in order to answer research questions has resulted in rich and deep data that is unlikely to have emerged from the use of other research techniques. Phone interviews undertaken confirmed to be a successful method to carry on with current research and be able to answer the above stated research questions with the highest level of precision, as the response rates were ranging from 42% to 75%.

Assuming the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the behaviour towards research questions between respondents and non-respondents, and associated to the fact that the sample has been randomly selected in the three studied countries, it becomes possible:

- to generalize the results on all the society of the travel agents in the three studied countries and to provide estimation of rates of participation and awareness;
- to compare the results among three populations of the travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

This part of the research has been done in the form of random sampling phone interviews of officially recognised travel agents in the three studied countries. The lists of the officially registered travel agents were extracted from the next sources:
- Yellow pages in the United Kingdom (www.yell.com – accessed in September 2012);
- List of approved travel agents by the Ministry of Tourism of India (www.tourism.gov.in/TourismDivision/TTList.aspx?Name=Travel%20Trade&T CID=Travel%20Agent – accessed in October 2012);
- List of registered travel agents within TAANZ – Travel Agents Association of New Zealand (www.taanz.org.nz/find-an-agent – accessed in February 2013).

After the extraction of the lists of officially registered travel agents in every studied country, every agency has got an associated number, then with the generator of the random numbers in IBM SPSS Statistics 19, the lists of the travel agencies to be contacted for the research purposes has been created. Only travel agencies that are working with outbound tourism products were interviewed in all three countries.

The phone interview process was guided by a phone interview protocol, as seen in Appendix 20. Interview protocol consisted of the next informative parts: an introduction to the interview, where the purpose of the study and the information on the confidentiality of the participant's responses were explained. The institutions, which were carrying out the research, were nominated. The format in which the interviews happen and the time needed for completion was stated. Furthermore, the voluntary nature of the participation was outlined to the respondents, as well as the possibility to withdraw from the phone interview at any point was also proposed.

Phone interviews were done with the help of VoiP system – Skype. Their lengths was usually from six to eight minutes. A mix of close-ended and open-ended questions was asked. Those travel agents who have done eLearning courses previously, had fourteen questions to answer, while those who have no previous experience on studying online had eight questions to respond to. A few questions on the participant's professional and educational background and experience were asked at the beginning of the interview. Then the questions about travel agent training strategy were asked, followed by the leading research questions, which included participants' motivation and lack of motivation to begin an eLearning activity. Those travel agents who have taken

previously eLearning courses about tourism destinations were asked to specify, if the decision to participate was voluntary, mandatory or it was encouraged by the management of the company. Additionally, they were asked how they have learnt about the existence of such courses; how many of them they have taken in the last two years, additionally the best courses they have taken were asked as well. The questions for the phone interviews can be seen in Appendix 21.

At the end of the phone interview, those travel agents who have previously followed eLearning courses were invited to give their email addresses for a possible follow up with the online survey, which assessed their motivations.

A pilot study was undertaken with three British, three Indian and three travel agents based in New Zealand working in different types of agencies in order to minimize the ambiguity and wording, as well as ensuring the content validity of the research questions (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The pilot study ensured the right flow of the questionnaire, proper usage of the terminology, which can be appropriate and understandable in all three studied countries as well as to give an indication on the time needed for the completion of the phone interview (Burke & Miller, 2001). Phone interview questions have been modified based on the feedback obtained. The pilot study also enlightened on the value of the planning of timing, as travel agents could be contacted only during working hours (9am to 5pm in the United Kingdom; 8am to 8pm in India and 10am to 4pm in New Zealand). Additionally, as travel agents were contacted by phone, while being busy with their working commitments, the decision was undertaken on contacting them in less busy periods of the day. National celebrations and holidays were also taken into consideration in the time planning process.

Current research has been done in three consecutive stages: first phone interviews were held with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom from October to November 2010; then with those based in India from November to December 2012, concluding with the travel agents based in New Zealand. Phone interviews with the last group were undertaken from February to March 2013.

Phone interviews were done with the sales staff – travel advisors and travel consultants, as well as with managers, if those were working with the end-clients, and one of their responsibilities was to sell package or tailored holidays, book accommodation or transportation as well as to provide advice and recommendations on holiday destinations to individual leisure customers, groups or business travellers. While in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand employees answering the phone were actually travel agents and travel consultants themselves, in India, in most cases the employees working on switchboard have answered the phone, and then the call had to be redirected to the responsible agent. Additionally, as there is a very strong hierarchical system, the

responses on the phone within the agencies in India were strictly managed. Travel agents in several cases passed the phone calls to the managers or mid-management, as they are responsible for having contacts with researchers and foreigners. In those cases, the researcher has asked to transfer the call back to the agents that were working directly with the end-clients.

Quantitative data from phone interviews were entered into the IBM SPSS Statistics 19. General descriptive statistics procedures were first applied. Additionally, correlations among variables were done using Pearson Chi-Square test, Univariate Analysis of Variance and pairwise marginal comparisons.

4.2.3. Rationale of selection of three nations

Within this study, the behaviour and perceived experiences of the travel agents based in the three nations – United Kingdom, India and New Zealand will be analysed. Three chosen countries are based in two different geographical zones: Europe and Asia-Pacific, and represent one European, one Asian, and one Pacific country.

Furthermore, selected countries represent two mature tourism markets, which were benefiting from the outbound tourism development during the last century; as well as an emerging one – India, where outbound tourism has started to develop in the last few years. According to Li (2003a), developing tourism markets have a low level of tourism market penetration, higher market growth than developed ones, and require higher investments into the establishment of the tourism distribution channels and development of market-specific knowledge.

Nowadays the needs of travellers in the three studied markets are different, where in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand, many tourists have been travelling as Free Independent Travellers in the last forty-fifty years; Indian travellers are starting to discover this travelling opportunity, hence still relying significantly on the help of the travel agents and travel consultants. Additionally to that, Indian travellers need to possess a visa in order to enter the majority of the countries around the globe, which means that they still rely most on the help of the travel trade (UNWTO, 2009). At the same time, developing and emerging countries (including India) occupy leading positions in the international tourism growth records (UNWTO, 2011).

All three markets have different levels of ICT and internet adoption and penetration, as well as a different culture of service. Furthermore, travel agencies in the developed countries have seen a significant impact on their business activities with the development of the ICT technologies and a growing competition from OTAs (Buhalis, 2001; Reid &

Pearce, 2008; Garkavenko & Milne 2008). At the same time, this competition is not as strong on the Indian travel market (Khare & Khare, 2010).

All three countries still have a very fragmented travel trade industry, where in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand the process of the travel trade industry consolidation has started (Reid & Pearce, 2008; Cope, 2000), it's in the initial stages in India.

In all three studied countries there is no strong certification process, training and development culture of the travel trade, where the employees of the companies need to upgrade their work-related knowledge on their own (Business and Economic Research Limited, 2004; Sheldon, 1989).

While analysing the exposure of the studied markets to the eLearning techniques in training, United Kingdom and New Zealand were the pioneers in the field, they were followed years later by India.

4.2.4. Sample selection and sample size
i) United Kingdom
According to the National Statistics Office (2011), in 2010 there were 10.470 agencies in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, in 2010 there were 45.700 employees working within travel agency sector in the country (People 1st, 2011, p.37). Due to the fact, that there is no official list of the travel agents and travel consultants registered in the United Kingdom, travel agents were randomly selected from British yellow pages list www.yell.com.

The profiles of the travel agents that were contacted appeared under the next search keywords: "travel agent", "travel consultant", "travel expert". The selection process also took into consideration:
- *Geographic distribution of the agencies.* Agents being based in major regions and cities, as well as rural areas and islands were contacted.
- *Type of the company.* Travel agents who were working for chains or franchising companies, as well as independent companies and self-employed were contacted.
- *Types of the business.* Only those travel agents that were selling tours and trips abroad were contacted

Out of available 8.151 travel agencies' contacts in the yellow pages list, 341 travel agencies were approached randomly.

ii) India

According to the European Travel Commission (2010), Indian Ministry of Tourism has approved 1.246 travel agencies that employed in 2010 over 20.000 people. Travel agents in India were contacted from the list of approved travel agents by the Government of India, its Ministry of Tourism (www.tourism.gov.in/TourismDivision/TTList.aspx?Name=Travel%20Trade&TCID=Travel%20Agent). Out of the available contacts in the list of the Ministry of Tourism, 364 travel agencies were contacted randomly. Geographical distribution, type and business of the company were taken into consideration.

iii) New Zealand

A similar procedure has been undertaken in New Zealand. As there is no official data available on the number of travel agencies existing in the country, travel agents registered in the list of TAANZ – Travel Agents Association of New Zealand were contacted (www.taanz.org.nz/find-an-agent). According to TAANZ, which represents around 90% of the travel agents in New Zealand, there are over 880 companies in New Zealand, which employ 2.412 travel agents and consultants. 388 travel agencies were chosen for the participation in the study. Geographical distribution, type and business of the company were taken into consideration in the process of the sample selection.

4.3. Phone interviews. Research results

Within this study, 1.093 phone call were completed, which allowed receiving 627 successful interviews with the travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. On a country-by-country basis the next results were obtained:

- *United Kingdom* – 341 calls brought 190 interviews, which accounts for 55% of the response rate;
- *India* – 364 calls brought 272 interviews with 75% of the response rate achieved;
- *New Zealand* – 388 calls brought 165 interviews and 42% of the response rate achieved.

Research results will be presented along the following structure: first, the characteristics of the respondents will be shown (4.3.1), looking at the gender of the respondents (i); their age and years of work in the tourism industry (ii); their level of education (iii), and the agency type they work for (iv).

Then the knowledge upgrade strategies (4.3.2) of the travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand will be discussed along with the context of their eLearning participation, such as: the source of information from which travel agents discovered that such training activity exists (ii); understanding of the decision on attending an eLearning activity (iii); number of the eLearning courses travel agents have completed in the last two years (iv). Additionally, the list of the best-evaluated eLearning courses by travel agents is presented (v) along with the willingness of the travel agents to participate further in eLearning experiences (vi). It will be concluded with the motivations nominated by the travel agents in the three studied countries (vii.) on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

This sub-chapter will proceed with the assessment of participation (4.3.3) and awareness rates (4.3.4) of the travel agents in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

4.3.1. Characteristics of the respondents

The next sub-chapter will present characteristics of the respondents to the phone interviews in three countries where the research was undertaken: United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. The sub-chapter will include the specification of the gender of the respondents (i.); their age and number of years they have been working within the hospitality and tourism field (ii.); their level of education (iii.); and the type of the agency they work for (iv.), which can be an independent enterprise, a chain or a franchise company.

i. Gender

From the obtained results, which are synthetically represented in Table 8. it can be noted that in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand more than 60% of the respondents were women, while in India women accounted for 43.4%.

	Male	Female	Total
United Kingdom	71 (37.4%)	119 (62.6%)	190 (100%)
India	154 (56.6%)	118 (43.4%)	272 (100%)
New Zealand	65 (39.4%)	100 (60.6%)	165 (100%)
Total	290 (46.3%)	337 (53.7%)	627 (100%)

Table 8. Gender distribution among phone interview respondents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

The above-mentioned numbers are aligned with a common gender distribution in the hospitality and tourism field in the developed countries, where female employees prevail. For instance, the Department of Business Innovation and Skills of the Office of National Statistics (2009), suggested that in 2009 in the United Kingdom 82% of the workforce within the tourism industry were female.

ii.   Age and years of work

Three main age groups were identified within this research (Figure 6.). The first group, includes the respondents that are younger than 32 years and represents the employees of the so-called generation Y, those who were born and raised with a different use of technologies and are believed to have different use of technologies for working purposes as well as for knowledge upgrade (Billings & Kowalski, 2004; Rapetti & Cantoni, 2010; Selwyn, 2009). While the other two groups represent each circa fifteen years of professional life.
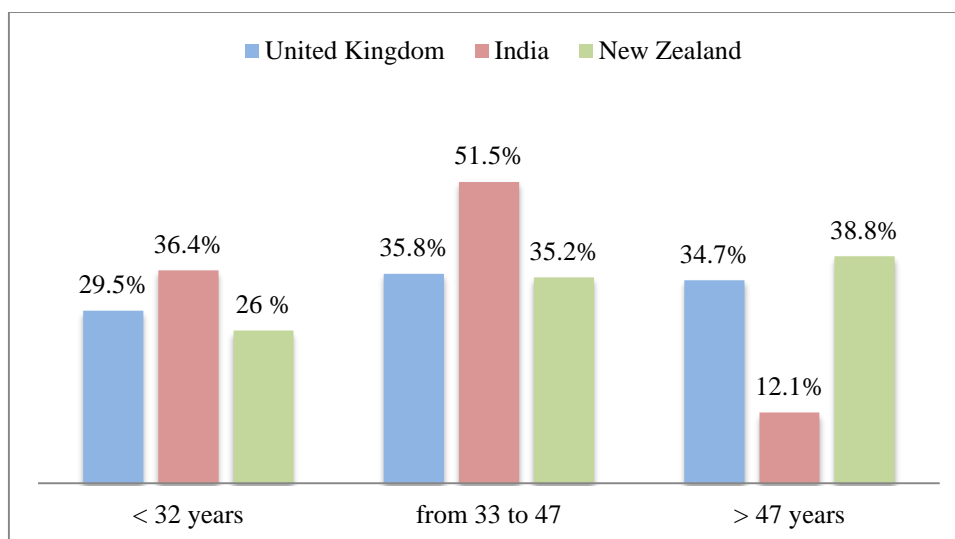
Figure 6. Age distribution among phone interview respondents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (Total N = 627)

In the United Kingdom and in New Zealand three age groups are equally distributed, with about 88% of Indian travel agents that are younger than 47 years old, and as a result Indian respondents were younger than those in other two nations.

The years of work follow age distribution of the respondents and it is depicted in Table 9. In terms of the number of years working within the hospitality and tourism field, it will be interesting to mention that the number of travel agents who have worked for more than 15 years in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand represent 43.7% and 46.7% accordingly. Only 25.0% of the travel agents based in India have worked for the same period of time.

	<5 years	from 6 to 15	>15 years	Total
United Kingdom	24 (12.6%)	83 (43.7%)	83 (43.7%)	190 (100%)
India	62 (22.8%)	142 (52.2%)	68 (25.0%)	272 (100%)
New Zealand	42 (25.4%)	46 (27.9%)	77 (46.7%)	165 (100%)
Total	128 (20.4%)	271 (43.2%)	228 (36.4%)	627 (100%)

Table 9. Years of work distribution among phone interview respondents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

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iii. Level of education

In terms of the level of education among interviewed travel agents, one can observe significant differences in the three studied countries (Figure 7.).
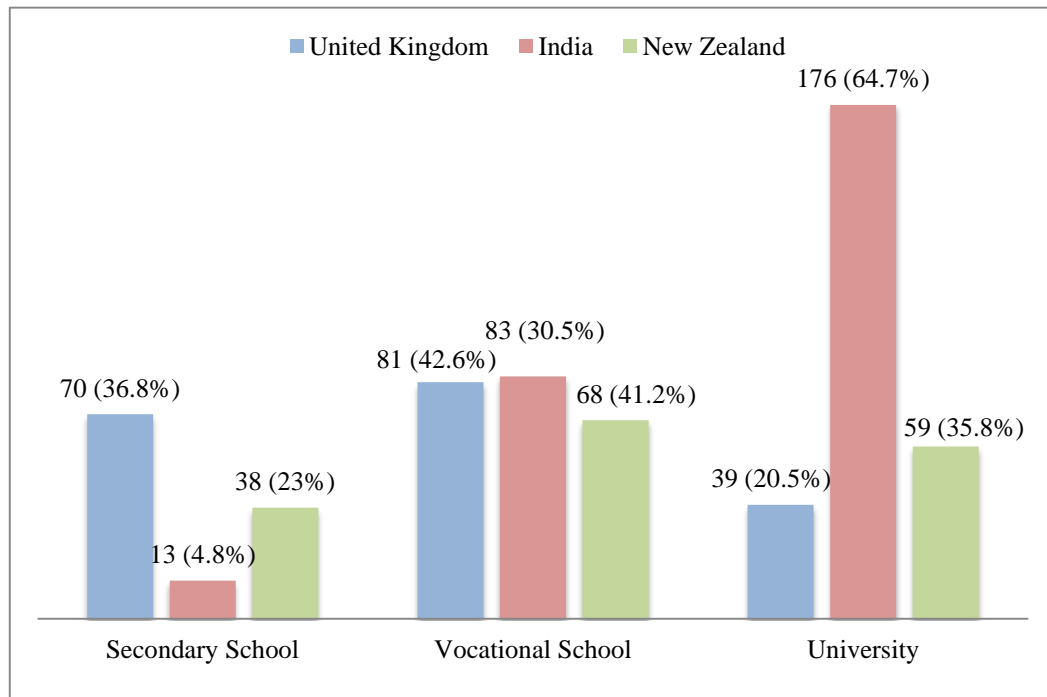
Figure 7. Level of education among phone interview respondents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (Total N = 627)

The biggest difference in the level of education is seen among travel agents based in the United Kingdom and in India. Indian agents are mostly very well educated, where 64.7% of them possess a university degree, followed by 30.5% of the respondents in this country, who hold vocational school degrees, while less than 5% are working in the travel agency after graduating from a secondary school. This can be explained by the importance of the role that is given to the work in the travel agency sector in India, as well as by a higher entry level for these types of jobs, which is set by the employers in developing countries due to the scarcity of working positions.

While looking at British travel agents, it can be noted, that 42.6% of them possess a degree of the vocational school, followed by 36.8% with a secondary school diploma and 20.5% of the employees of the travel agency sector have graduated from a university. The majority of the travel agents who are based in New Zealand (41.2%) have been educated to satisfy vocational school standards, while 23% having completed high school. 35.8% of the travel agents based in New Zealand were educated to a University level.

iv.   Agency type

As for the professional and employment factors involved, the distribution respondents according to the type of the agency they work for can be seen in Figure 8.
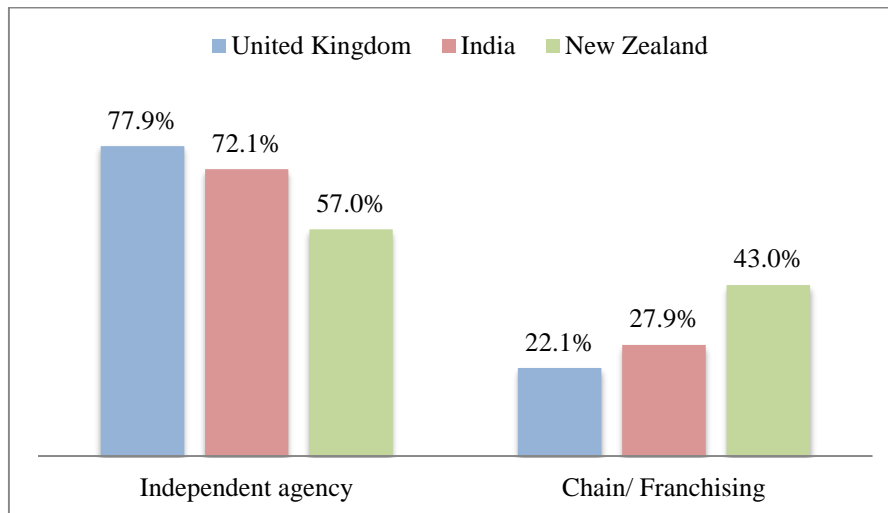
Figure 8. Agency type distribution among phone interview respondents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (Total N = 627)

In the United Kingdom 77.9% of the travel agents were working in independent agencies and 22.1% in chains or franchising companies. In India those proportions are 72.1% and 27.9%; while in New Zealand 57.0% and 43.0% accordingly.

In order to possess larger information in the collected data set with the phone interviews and having a hypothesis that the employees of the chains and franchising might have similar internal training strategies and human resource development approaches, just one person per chain or franchising company was contacted. Furthermore, proportionally, the employees of the individual enterprises where contacted more in the United Kingdom and in India. Within the research process, the difficulty on accessing independent travel agents based in New Zealand by phone has emerged, and as a result, more employees working in chains or franchising companies were interviewed proportionally to the other two countries.

4.3.2. Knowledge upgrade strategies and eLearning participation context

The next sub-chapter will present the strategies that the travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand have on upgrading and gaining new knowledge about tourism destinations that they sell (i.).

The sub-chapter includes the source of information (ii.) from which travel agents got to know about the existence of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Furthermore, the information on whose decision (iii.) to undertake eLearning course about tourism destinations has been prevailing when the agents have started to do the courses: their personal decision, the one of the manager or a particular training strategy has been supported within the company a travel agent is working for.

Furthermore, the number of completed eLearning courses about tourism destinations (iv.) by the travel agents in three countries is discussed, followed by the list of the best-evaluated courses (v.).

The sub-chapter concludes with the assessment of the willingness of the travel agents on attending eLearning courses (vi.) in the future.

i.   Knowledge upgrade strategies

While assessing the strategies that travel agents have on getting new knowledge or updating the existing one about tourism destinations (Figure 9.) the most nominated strategies in all three countries were the following:

- "on-the-job" training (51.5%);
- "travelling" to tourism destinations (38.9%);
- "online search" (36.4%);
- attendance of "road shows" (32.9%);
- reading "books" and other printed materials (22.0%).
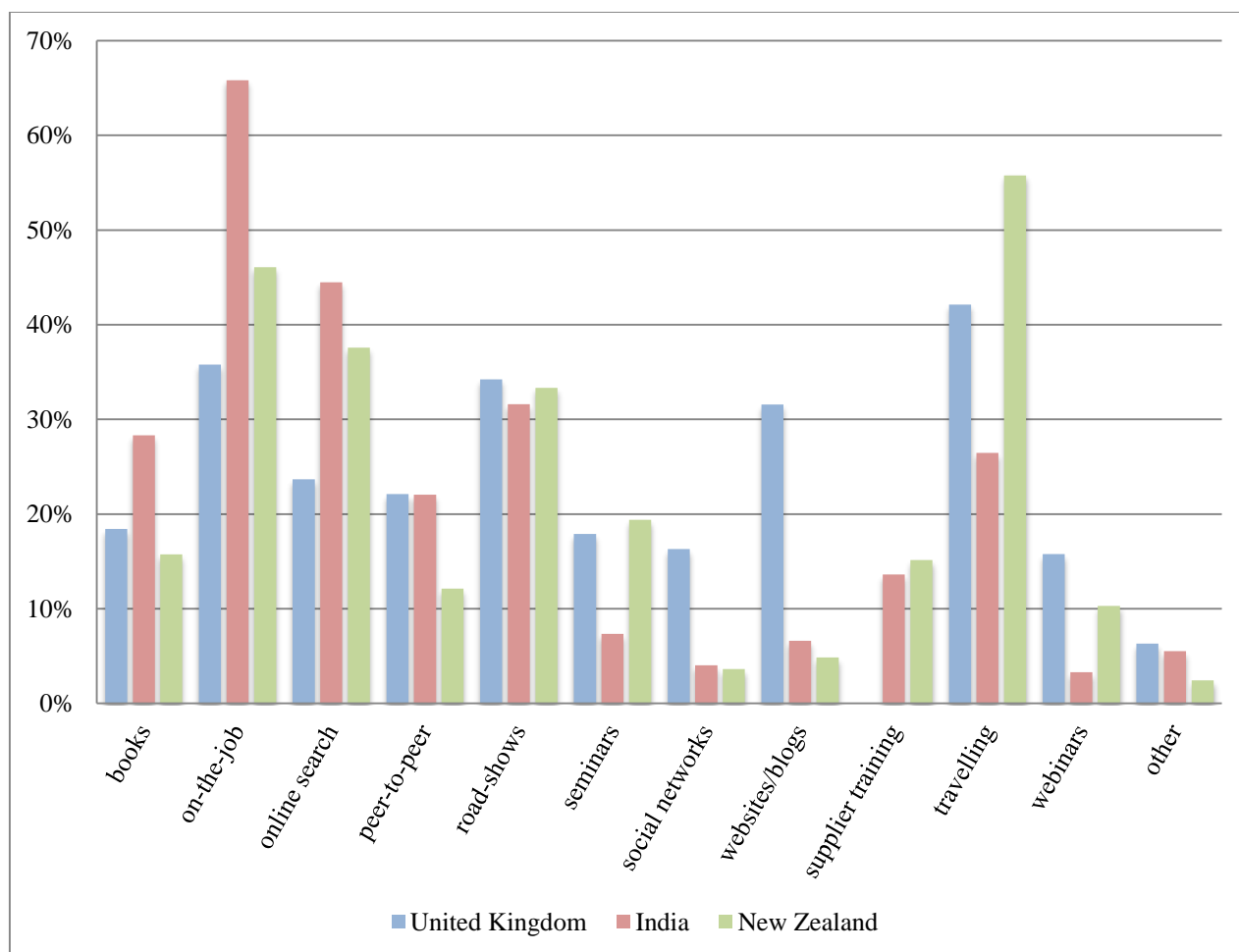
Figure 9. Knowledge upgrade strategies among phone interview respondents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (Total N = 627)

A respondent could give up to three answers to this question. Detailed responses to this category are presented in Appendix 25.

Among Indian travel agents, "on-the-job" training, when the manager provides needed knowledge, has been mentioned as the most popular (65.8%) mode of increasing knowledge about the tourism destinations they need to sell. This mode is significantly different than in the other two studied countries, and has been shared by 35.8% of British travel agents and 46.0% of travel agents based in New Zealand.

At the same time, the most shared mode of knowledge upgrade in other two countries was "travelling" to tourism destinations, which in New Zealand has been nominated by 55.7% of the respondents and by 42.1% in the United Kingdom. Among travel agents in three countries Indians have nominated "travelling" less (26.4%), which can be

explained by a difficulty on access travel options even among travel trade in India, financial costs involved, as well as by visa barriers that people, including travel trade representatives, have in this country.

Another interesting result, which has been received during this study is the use of "books", including journals, brochures and other printed materials, as a knowledge upgrade strategy by travel agents in India: 28.3% nominated it as the way they learn about tourism destinations. Around 18.4% of the respondents in the United Kingdom and 15.7% in New Zealand have nominated it as a strategy to upgrade their knowledge about tourism destinations. At the same time, travel agents that are based in India (44.9%) are extensively using "online search", as a mode of getting needed information about tourism destinations they sell. Additionally, only 7.3% of the travel agents based in India have mentioned attendance of "seminars" and other events, e.g. conferences, as one of the strategies of the knowledge improvement about tourism destinations. Attendance of seminars has been used by nearly 20% of the respondents in other two countries. This can be explained by a wider interest and involvement of the British and New Zealand market into the travel trade training activities of tourism destinations globally.

The use of specialized blogs and websites (e.g. official websites about tourism destinations) is very common among British travel agents, which accounts for around 32%. This strategy is shared only by 6.6% of Indian and 4.8% of New Zealand travel agents. Additionally, British travel agents (16.3%) are using more social networks than in the other two studied countries (India: 4.0% and New Zealand: 3.6%). At the same time, "supplier trainings", e.g. from tour operators, hasn't been nominated as a mode of knowledge upgrade about tourism destinations by British travel agents.

ii. Source of information

Among the sources of information from which travel agents get to know about the existence of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations (Table 10.), "company internal information" has been nominated most frequently in New Zealand (50.9%) and in the United Kingdom (37.9%). It has been followed by the "destination communications", which is the most popular source of information in India (43.1%).

While the second source of information about the existence of the eLearning courses for New Zealand travel agents is "online search", which has been nominated by 23.6% of the travel agents based in this country.

	United Kingdom	India	New Zealand	Total
company internal info	39 (37.9%)	26 (36.1%)	28 (50.9%)	93 (40.4%)
destination communication	21 (20.4%)	31 (43.1%)	6 (10.9%)	58 (25.2%)
online search	6 (5.8%)	9 (12.5%)	13 (23.6%)	28 (12.2%)
colleagues	14 (13.6%)	1 (1.4%)	6 (10.9%)	21 (9.1%)
mailing list	13 (12.6%)	5 (6.9%)	0 (0.0%)	18 (7.8%)
social media	6 (5.8%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.8%)	7 (3.0%)
promotional brochures	4 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.8%)	5 (2.2%)
Total	103 (100.0%)	72 (100.0%)	55 (100.0%)	230 (100.0%)

Table 10. Source of information about the existence of eLearning courses about tourism destinations

An interesting finding has also been seen within the category "colleagues", which is shared by 13.6% of the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, 10.9% in New Zealand. It was nominated just once by an Indian travel agent.

Nearly 13% of the travel agents in the United Kingdom have got the information about eLearning courses from "mailing lists". This can be explained by relevant campaigns done by providers of concerned eLearning services such as OTT (Online Travel Training) within this market.

iii.   Decision to undertake eLearning courses

Analysing the source of decision on starting eLearning courses about tourism destinations (Table 11.) it can be noted that the primary decision in all three countries belongs to the travel agents themselves and is shared by 67.0% of the travel agents in the United Kingdom, 66.7% in India and 58.2% of the travel agents based in New Zealand. The second source of decision comes from the "manager" of the enterprise, when it is mandatory for the travel agents to do eLearning courses about tourism destinations in order to upgrade their knowledge.

The third presented category is the "internal promotion", which means that travel agents are encouraged to do online training courses by the management of the company but it is not mandatory for them. For instance, travel agents can get financial benefits or possible promotion within the company based on the results of their eLearning experience. 11.7% of the travel agents in the United Kingdom, 6.9% in India and 10.9% in New Zealand share this category.

	Myself	Manager	Internal promotion	Total
United Kingdom	69 (67.0%)	22 (21.4%)	12 (11.7%)	103 (100%)
India	48 (66.7%)	19 (26.4%)	5 (6.9%)	72 (100%)
New Zealand	32 (58.2%)	17 (30.9%)	6 (10.9%)	55 (100%)
Total	149 (64.8%)	58 (25.2%)	23 (10%)	230 (100%)

Table 11. Source of decision on attending eLearning courses among travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

iv. Number of completed eLearning courses

The number of completed eLearning courses about tourism destinations in the last two years by the travel agents in the three studied countries is presented on a country-by-country basis in Table 12.

	from 1 to 3	**from 4 to 10**	**from 11 up**	**Total**
United Kingdom	11 (10.7%)	47 (45.6%)	45 (43.7%)	103 (100%)
India	27 (37.5%)	34 (47.2%)	11 (15.3%)	72 (100%)
New Zealand	18 (32.7%)	26 (47.3%)	11 (20.0%)	55 (100%)
Total	56 (24.3%)	107 (46.7%)	67 (29.1%)	230 (100%)

Table 12. Number of completed eLearning courses among phone interview respondents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

Travel agents based in the United Kingdom have previously completed more eLearning courses than those in the other two nations. Around 44% of the travel agents who have previously done eLearning courses about tourism destinations and are based in the United Kingdom have done more than ten courses, which can be explained by a higher awareness of the travel agents in this market on the existing courses as well as by their previous exposure to such training activities. 15% of the travel agents based in India and 20% of the travel agents in New Zealand have done more than ten eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

v. Best nominated eLearning courses

Sixty different eLearning courses, presenting tourism destinations at three levels: national, regional, and local, were nominated as the best courses that the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand have experienced so far. Each respondent could provide up to three nominations. The list of ten best-evaluated courses is presented below in Table 13.

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Destination	N (%) of nominations
Australia	113 (49.1%)
New Zealand	60 (26.1%)
South Africa	40 (17.4%)
Canada	31 (13.5%)
Thailand	27 (11.7%)
Switzerland	25 (10.9%)
Dubai	25 (10.9%)
Austria	16 (7.0%)
Florida	15 (6.5%)
Hong Kong	15 (6.5%)

Table 13. Best evaluated eLearning courses about tourism destinations suggested by travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (Total N = 230)

While looking at the evaluation of the travel agents in the three studied countries and their perception of the best and most useful courses, some differences can be noted (Tables 14, 15 and 16).

Destination	N (%) of nominations
Australia	42 (40.8%)
New Zealand	36 (35.0%)
South Africa	22 (21.4%)
Canada	21 (20.4%)
Dubai	13 (12.6%)
Florida	13 (12.6%)
Jamaica	12 (11.7%)
Switzerland	9 (8.7%)
Botswana	7 (6.8%)
Austria	6 (5.8%)

Table 14. Best evaluated eLearning courses about tourism destinations suggested by travel agents based in the United Kingdom (Total N = 130)

Destination	N (%) of nominations
Australia	38 (52.8%)
New Zealand	22 (30.6%)
Thailand	17 (23.6%)
Switzerland	15 (20.8%)
South Africa	14 (19.4%)
Canada	9 (12.5%)

Austria	8 (11.1%)
Dubai	7 (9.7%)
United Kingdom	6 (8.3%)
California	5 (6.9%)

Table 15. Best evaluated eLearning courses about tourism destinations suggested by travel agents based in India (Total N = 72)

Destination	N (%) of nominations
Australia	33 (60.0%)
Hong Kong	10 (18.2%)
Thailand	8 (14.5%)
Hawaii	5 (9.1%)
Dubai	5 (9.1%)
Fiji	5 (9.1%)
Japan	4 (7.3%)
New York	4 (7.3%)
Singapore	4 (7.3%)
South Africa	4 (7.3%)

Table 16. Best evaluated eLearning courses about tourism destinations suggested by travel agents based in New Zealand (Total N = 55)

It can be noted, that the "Aussie specialist" course, which is provided by Tourism Australia has been nominated as the best course among three nations, followed by the "Kiwi Specialist Program", which is delivered by New Zealand Tourism Board. This course was nominated as the second best among travel agents based in the United Kingdom and in India, while evidently travel agents that are based in New Zealand did not mention it. Other nominated courses actually mirror the structure of the tourism product in respected countries. This may suggest that the best courses were evaluated not only based on the quality of the online training experiences, methods and strategies used, but also on the interest of the agents on studying one or another specific tourism destination, which is connected to their core business and preferences of their clients.

vi.   Willingness to further knowledge with the help of eLearning courses

Travel agents who have previously completed eLearning courses about tourism destinations in all three studied countries have confirmed that they intend to proceed on using this technique in the future as one of the strategies to upgrade their knowledge about tourism destinations they need to sell (Table 17).

97.2% of the travel agents from India declared that they would undertake further courses, while 92.2% of the travel agents in the United Kingdom and 87.3% of the agents in New Zealand follow them.

	Yes	Not	Total
United Kingdom	95 (92.2%)	8 (7.8%)	103 (100.0%)
India	70 (97.2%)	2 (2.8%)	72 (100.0%)
New Zealand	48 (87.3%)	7 (12.7%)	55 (100.0%)
Total	213 (92.6%)	17 (7.4%)	230 (100.0%)

Table 17. Willingness of travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on attending further eLearning courses about tourism destinations (Total N = 230)

vii.   Nominated motivational items

The following motivations on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations were mentioned during phone interviews in the three studied countries. Travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand proposed 21 motivational items. A respondent could answer up to five times to this question.

The most important motivation was the following: "*because they help me to better serve clients*". It has been mentioned by 54.3% of the travel agents in all three countries. It has been followed by the reasoning that with the help of the eLearning courses travel agents "*can study from the office*" (47.4%); "*can update their knowledge*" about tourism destinations (47.0%); "*get certified*" (34.8%), and become "*recognized by a DMO*" (31.7%) as destination specialists.

Other mentioned reasons were the next ones: eLearning courses about tourism destinations are helpful to "*sell more*" (23.0%) and "*be more confident*" (23.0%) while serving clients. They give a possible access to "*familiarization or educational*" trips (18.3%) as well as to "*get discounts from a DMO*" (16.5%) on tourism packages and offers. Additionally, interviewed travel agents appreciated an opportunity to "*study from home*" (15.7%) and get the information about "*the destinations they have not visited so far*" (13.5%).

National differences on motivations are presented in Table 18. in the form of global and national rankings (r.).

	United Kingdom		India		New Zealand		Total
	N (%)	r	N (%)	r	N (%)	r	N (%)
it helps me to better serve clients	57 (55.3%)	(1)	41 (56.9%)	(1)	27 (49.1%)	(2)	125 (54.3%)
I can study in the office (e.g. when there are no clients)	43 (41.7%)	(3)	38 (52.8%)	(3)	28 (50.9%)	(1)	109 (47.4%)
I can acquire new knowledge about the destination	51 (49.5%)	(2)	41 (56.9%)	(1)	16 (29.1%)	(5)	108 (47.0%)
I receive an official certificate	32 (31.1%)	(5)	30 (41.7%)	(5)	18 (32.7%)	(4)	80 (34.8%)
I can be registered on the official travel agent list of the destination better serve clients	17 (16.5%)	(9)	33 (45.8%)	(4)	23 (41.8%)	(3)	73 (31.7%)
I can sell more and earn more	36 (35.0%)	(4)	8 (11.1%)	(12)	9 (16.4%)	(10)	53 (23.0%)
I feel more confident in serving clients	19 (18.4%)	(8)	23 (31.9%)	(6)	11 (20.0%)	(8)	53 (23.0%)
I can win an educational/ familiarization trip	11 (10.7%)	(12)	20 (27.8%)	(7)	11 (20.0%)	(8)	42 (18.3%)
I can get access to special offers/ discounts from the destination	28 (27.2%)	(6)	4 (5.6%)	(16)	6 (10.9%)	(12)	38 (16.5%)
I am able to access training away from work (e.g. from home)	14 (13.6%)	(10)	6 (8.3%)	(15)	16 (29.1%)	(5)	36 (15.7%)
I can get information about destination I haven't been	12 (11.7%)	(11)	16 (22.2%)	(8)	3 (5.5%)	(17)	31 (13.5%)
it's quick	24 (23.3%)	(7)	4 (5.6%)	(16)	0 (0.0%)	(19)	28 (12.2%)
it's free of charge	2 (1.9%)	(18)	10 (13.9%)	(9)	12 (21.8%)	(7)	24 (10.4%)
training content is relevant for my job, as it was created specifically for travel agents	3 (2.9%)	(17)	8 (11.1%)	(12)	8 (14.5%)	(11)	19 (8.3%)
I receive some form of explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)	11 (10.7%)	(12)	2 (2.8%)	(18)	6 (10.9%)	(12)	19 (8.3%)
it helps me to get a competitive advantage over other TAs in my company/region	5 (4.9%)	(16)	9 (12.5%)	(11)	4 (7.3%)	(15)	18 (7.8%)
it helps me to keep my skills updated	11 (10.7%)	(12)	2 (2.8%)	(18)	3 (5.5%)	(17)	16 (7.0%)
it's enjoyable	8 (7.8%)	(15)	1 (1.4%)	(20)	4 (7.3%)	(15)	13 (5.7%)
it enriches my curriculum	0 (0.0%)	(21)	10 (13.9%)	(9)	0 (0.0%)	(19)	10 (4.3%)
I can use logo for marketing	2 (1.9%)	(18)	8 (11.1%)	(12)	0 (0.0%)	(19)	10 (4.3%)
my learning is assessed	2 (1.9%)	(18)	1 (1.4%)	(20)	5 (9.1%)	(14)	8 (3.5%)
Total N (%)	**103 (100%)**		**72 (100%)**		**55 (100%)**		**230 (100%)**

Table 18. Motivations of travel agents in three countries: United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations (Total N = 230)

Based on the motivational items received during phone interviews, an online questionnaire on motivational categories among travel agents has been designed. National differences in the motivations of undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations were studied in detail with the online questionnaire, and will be discussed in the sub-chapters 4.4 and 4.5.

4.3.3. Participation in eLearning courses about tourism destinations

The next sub-chapter will present descriptive details (i.) on the rates of the participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations by travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Furthermore, the results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance (ii.) will be discussed. This analysis has evaluated if the country in which travel agents are based, their gender, age, agency type they work for, and level of education they possess, have any influence on their participation in the eLearning activity.

i.) Participation in eLearning courses

According to the results of the phone interviews, it can be concluded that the participation level of agents in such a training activity varies significantly among three studied countries (Figure 10).
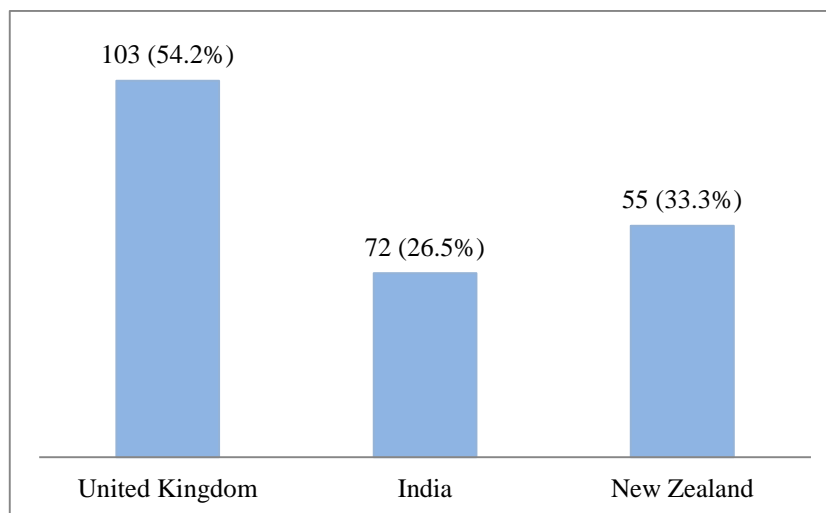
Figure 10. The rate of participation in eLearning courses about tourism destinations in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Pearson Chi-Square (p<0.001) (Total N = 627)

Among interviewed travel agents, 54.2% of those who are based in the United Kingdom have previously undertaken eLearning courses about tourism destinations, while in New Zealand the number is lower and accounts for 33.3%. The last country among the three studied markets is India, where just 26.5% of the travel agents, which were interviewed, have previously undertaken eLearning courses. According to the sampling method, it is possible to propose these values as the first valid estimation of participation in eLearning courses among travel agents in the three studied countries.

This analysis positively responds to the *Research Question 11: Is the demand in the eLearning courses different in three studied countries.* It has been confirmed by the results of the Person Chi Square test (p<0.001)

Table 19 demonstrates frequencies and participation rates in eLearning courses of tourism destinations in three studied countries, stratified by gender, age, agency type and educational level of the travel agents interviewed by phone.

		United Kingdom	India	New Zealand	Total
Total		103 (54.2%)	72 (26.5%)	55 (33.3%)	230 (36.7%)
Gender	Male	29 (40.8%)	36 (23.4%)	16 (24.6%)	81 (27.9%)
	Female	74 (62.2%)	36 (30.5%)	39 (39.0%)	149 (44.2%)
Age	<32	28 (50.0%)	23 (23.3%)	7 (16.3%)	58 (29.3%)
	32 - 47	35 (51.5%)	42 (30.0%)	21 (36.2%)	98 (36.8%)
	>47	40 (60.6%)	7 (21.2%)	27 (42.2%)	74 (45.4%)
Agency type	Independent	71 (48.0%)	37 (18.9%)	24 (25.5%)	132 (30.1%)
	Chain	32 (76.2%)	35 (46.1%)	31 (43.7%)	98 (51.9%)
Education	Secondary School	40 (57.1%)	1 (7.7%)	14 (36.8%)	55 (45.5%)
	Vocational training	45 (55.6%)	7 (8.4%)	19 (27.9%)	71 (30.6%)
	University degree	18 (46.2%)	64 (36.4%)	22 (37.3%)	104 (38.0%)

Table 19. Frequencies and participation rates in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

For instance, travel agents working for chains or franchising companies are undertaking a larger volume of eLearning courses about tourism destinations in all three countries: 48.0% of British travel agents who are working for independent enterprises have previously undertaken eLearning courses, while 76.2% of the respondents working for chains or franchising companies have done the same. Similar differences can be noted in the other two studied countries.

A significant difference can be also be seen in terms of the age of the eLearning users, for instance, 60.6% of the interviewed British travel agents that are older than 47 years have done eLearning courses. This number is much lower within the same category in New Zealand (42.2%) and in India (21.2%).

While analysing gender and the use of technologies, there are several academic studies (Bromley & Apple, 1998; Klein, 2007) that suggest a gender bias exists in the way the technology is used, where male users are more likely to use technologies. Travel agency sector has proved to be different, as the use of technologies (e.g. management of the reservation systems) is essential for the day-to-day operations. In fact, in all three countries, the behaviour of travel agents in terms of the gender is similar, as female

travel agents are proportionally participating more than 50% in the eLearning experiences than male travel agents.

While assessing the level of education, the Indian case can be the most interesting to analyse. The results of the phone interviews show that 36.4% of the travel agents who possess a university degree in India have previously done eLearning courses; while only 8.4% of those who have a vocational degree and 7.7% of those having secondary school degree have done the same.

ii.) Univariate Analysis of Variance. Participation

Univariate Analysis of Variance has been undertaken in order to evaluate if the country in which travel agents are based, their gender, age, agency type they work for, and the level of education they possess, have any influence on the participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations. The analysis has been done with the Full Factorial Model of the Univariate ANOVA, using IBM SPSS Statistics 19.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Country	**7.074**	**2**	**3.537**	**17.966**	**.000**
Gender	**1.509**	**1**	**1.509**	**7.663**	**.006**
Age	.570	2	.285	1.447	.236
Type of agency	**.816**	**1**	**.816**	**4.144**	**.042**
Education	.457	2	.228	1.160	.314
Error	104.925	533	.197		
Total	1818.000	627			

Table 20. Results of the Full Factorial Model of Univariate Analysis of Variance on the participation in eLearning courses about tourism destinations (Total N = 230)

Table 20. presents synthetic results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance, which confirms that the "country" of where travel agents are based (p=.000), their "gender" (p=.006) and the "type of the agency" they work for (p=.042) have a significant influence on the participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

While the "age" of the travel agents and their "level of education" are not significant in their decision to participate in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations (p=.236 and p=.314 accordingly).

The table with the complete results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance in the participation in eLearning courses about tourism destinations can be seen in Appendix 26. Additionally, in Appendix 27 pair wise marginal comparisons of the categories (e.g. country, gender, etc.) within single variables can be found. These comparisons are aligned with the above presented results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance, and show that the difference in-between countries is mostly due to the difference between the United Kingdom and other two studied market – India and New Zealand.

This analysis positively responded to the next parts of the *Research Question 11*:
- *If the participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the country where travel agents are based?*
- *If the participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the gender of the travel agents?*
- *If the participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the type of the agency travel agents are working for?*

This analysis negatively responded to the next parts of the *Research Question 11*:
- *If the participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the age of the travel agents?*
- *If the participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on their educational level?*

4.3.4. Awareness of the existence of eLearning courses about tourism destinations

The following sub-chapter will present descriptive details on the rates of the awareness (i.) about eLearning courses among those travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand that have not previously completed any eLearning activities.

Furthermore, the sub-chapter will show the results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance (ii.), which was undertaken in order to explore if the country in which travel agents are based, their gender, age, agency type they work for, and their level of education have any influence on travel agents awareness about the existence of the eLearning courses on tourism destinations.

Additionally, this sub-chapter will explore the reasons that travel agents that knew about the existence of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations but have never undertook them, have on not subscribing to the courses – a-motivations (iii), as well as on their interest to undertake eLearning courses in the future (iv.).

i.   **Awareness of the existence of eLearning courses**
The results show two different levels of awareness among those travel agents who have not previously done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (Figure 11).
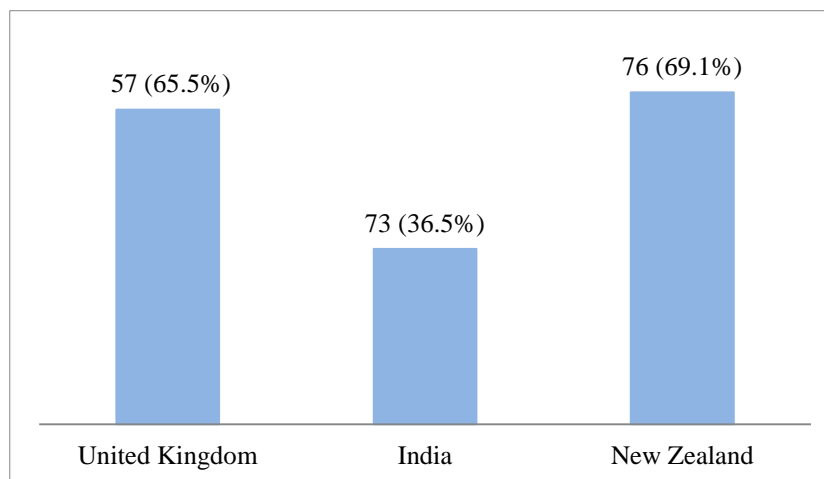
Figure 11. Rate of awareness about existence of eLearning courses on tourism destinations among travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (Total N=206)

While travel agents that are based in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand have a similar level of awareness of the existence of eLearning courses about tourism destinations, which accounts for more than 65% and 69% respectively; only 36.5% of

those Indian travel agents knew about such a training option, but haven't previously undertook eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

Q Square analysis has showed (p=.000) that the difference between three studied countries on the level of the awareness is significant, but this can be explained due to the differences between two developed countries and India (p=.000), as there is no significant statistical differences between the behaviour of the travel agents based in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom (p=.599).

These results can have an implication on the work of the trade managers at the tourism destinations, as they could promote more extensively their eLearning courses among Indian travel trade as well as in other developing and emerging countries. Additionally, as the numbers of awareness are about 2/3 of the total of those travel agents that have not previously done eLearning courses and are based in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom, their lack of motivations for not attending such a training activity should be explored further.

Table 21. reports the rates of awareness among travel agents in three studied countries who for several reasons didn't undertake such a training activity, stratified by gender, age, agency type they work for and educational level they possess.

		United Kingdom	India	New Zealand	Total
Total		57 (65.5%)	73 (36.5%)	76 (69.1%)	206 (51.9%)
Gender	Male	24 (57.1%)	42 (35.6%)	31 (63.3%)	97 (46.6%)
	Female	33 (73.3%)	31 (37.8%)	45 (73.8%)	109 (58.0%)
Age	<32	17 (60.7%)	21 (27.6%)	20 (55.6%)	58 (41.4%)
	32 - 47	23 (69.7%)	43 (43.9%)	29 (78.4%)	95 (56.5%)
	>47	17 (65.4%)	9 (34.6%)	27 (73.0%)	53 (59.6%)
Agency type	Independent	48 (62.3%)	50 (31.4%)	39 (55.7%)	137 (44.8%)
	Chain	9 (90%)	23 (56.1%)	37 (92.5%)	69 (75.8%)
Education	Secondary School	21 (70.0%)	3 (25.0%)	15 (62.5%)	39 (59.1%)
	Vocational training	25 (69.4%)	21 (27.6%)	36 (73.5%)	82 (50.9%)
	University degree	11 (52.4%)	49 (43.8%)	25 (67.6%)	85 (50.0%)

Table 21. Rates of awareness among travel agents the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on the existence of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations

Significant difference can be seen in terms of the gender of eLearning non-users, but those who were aware that eLearning courses exist. For instance, more than 70% of the female British travel agents and those based in New Zealand were aware that such a

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training activity exists, while the number is lower among female Indian travel agents and accounts for 37.8%.

Similar to the results in the participation in eLearning courses, travel agents that are working for big agencies, chains or franchising companies are more aware of the existence of eLearning courses about tourism destinations. It can be noted that more than 90% of those travel agents in the United Kingdom and New Zealand who have not previously done eLearning courses about tourism destinations knew that such a training option exist. This number is lower among Indian travel agents and accounts for 56.1%.

ii.   Univariate Analysis of Variance. Awareness

Univariate Analysis of Variance has been undertaken in order to evaluate if the country in which travel agents are based, their gender, age, agency type they work for, and the level of education they possess have any influence on the awareness of the existence of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations among those travel agents in three countries that haven't done online courses before.

The analysis has been done with the Full Factorial Model of the Univariate ANOVA, using IBM SPSS Statistics 19.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Country	**3.928**	**2**	**1.964**	**8.912**	**.000**
Gender	.726	1	.726	3.294	.071
Age	.334	2	.167	.758	.470
Type of agency	.653	1	.653	2.964	.086
Education	.104	2	.052	.236	.790
Error	68.974	313	.220		
Total	970.000	397			

Table 22. The results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance on the evaluation of awareness about eLearning courses on tourism destinations. Full Factorial Model (Total N=206)

The previous table presents synthetic results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance, which show that just the "country" where travel agents are based (p=.000) has a significant influence (alfa<0.05) on the awareness about eLearning courses among those travel agents who haven't participated in such courses previously.

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Other four variables, such as "gender" (p=.071), "age" (p=.470), "type of agency" (p=.086), and the level of "education" (p=.790) of the travel agent, are not showing significant influences on their awareness about possible eLearning experiences.

The table with the complete results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance on the awareness of travel agents about eLearning courses on tourism destinations can be seen in Appendix 28. Additionally, in Appendix 29 pair wise marginal comparisons of the categories within single variables can be found. These comparisons are partially aligned with the above presented results of the Univariate Analysis of Variance, as the marginal comparison within the agency type shows that the awareness among travel agents working for the "chains" of franchising enterprises is significantly bigger than among those working for "independent enterprises".

This analysis positively responded to the part of the *Research Question 13*:
- *If the awareness about existence of the eLearning courses on tourism destinations depends on the country where travel agents are based?*

This analysis negatively responded to the part of the *Research Question 13:*
- *If the awareness about existence of the eLearning courses on tourism destinations depends on the gender of the travel agents?*
- *If the awareness about existence of the eLearning courses on tourism destinations depends on the age of the travel agents?*
- *If the awareness about existence of the eLearning courses on tourism destinations depends on their educational level?*

This analysis couldn't give a precise response on another part of *Research Question 13*, even if the comparison of the marginal differences shows that there is an effect among the types of travel agencies.
- *If the awareness in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the type of the agency travel agents are working for?*

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iii.   A-motivations

Below main motivational blockers for travel agents who have not taken eLearning courses about tourism destinations but are aware that these training options exist for them will be discussed and presented synthetically in Table 23.

	United Kingdom	India	New Zealand	
Have no time	20 (35.1%)	21 (28.8%)	13 (17.1%)	54 (26.2%)
Already follow trainings from tour operators	6 (10.5%)	23 (31.5%)	8 (10.5%)	37 (18%)
Follow company internal training	6 (10.5%)	10 (13.7%)	12 (15.8%)	28 (13.6%)
Haven't seen online training courses about destinations that I sell	5 (8.8%)	5 (6.8%)	6 (7.9%)	16 (7.8%)
Prefer travelling to the destinations	4 (7.0%)	2 (2.7%)	9 (11.8%)	15 (7.3%)
Too old or to experienced to do trainings	7 (12.3%)	4 (5.5%)	2 (2.6%)	13 (6.3%)
Not useful	5 (8.8%)	7 (9.6%)	0 (0%)	12 (5.8%)
Don't like technologies, and prefer in-presence training sessions	1 (1.8%)	1 (1.4%)	8 (10.5%)	10 (4.9%)
Have previously travelled to the destinations, so no need of additional knowledge	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (9.2%)	7 (3.4%)
Other (e.g. not encouraged by the company)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (9.2%)	7 (3.4%)
Prefer doing other online training courses (e.g. on sales, marketing, etc.)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (5.3%)	4 (1.9%)
Not interested	3 (5.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (1.5%)
Total	57 (100%)	73 (100%)	76 (100%)	206 (100%)

Table 23. Motivations on not attending eLearning courses among travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

Three most popular reasons on not taking eLearning training courses about tourism destinations among travel agents in three studied countries were the next ones:
- "have no time" (26.2%);
- "already follow trainings from tour operators on the destinations I sell" (18%);
- "follow company internal training" (13.6%).

The absence of time has been nominated as the primary blocker to completing online training in the United Kingdom (35.1%) and in New Zealand (17.1%), while Indian travel agents are not primarily doing eLearning courses about tourism destinations as they are already "following training courses from tour operators" about the destinations they sell. This reason has been shared by 31.5% of Indian travel agents and by 10.5% of the respondents both in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand.

Other important reasons for not taking eLearning courses about tourism destinations are as follows:
- "haven't seen online training courses about destinations that I sell", which has been mentioned by 7.8% of the respondents, with a minimum differences of rates among three countries;
- "prefer travelling to the destinations", which has been shared by 7.3% of the studied sample (United Kingdom: 7.0%; India: 2.7%; and New Zealand: 11.8%);
- "too old or too experienced to do trainings", which was mentioned by 6.3% of the travel agents in all three countries (United Kingdom: 12.3%; India: 5.5%; and New Zealand: 2.6%).

Other differences in the motivational blockers can be seen among travel agents based in New Zealand, who have indicated almost exclusively the following:
- "don't like technologies, and prefer in-presence training sessions" (10.5%);
- "have previously travelled to the destinations, so there is no need to upgrade the knowledge" about tourism destination (9.2%);
- "other", e.g. travel agents feel not to be encouraged by the company to undertake any training activities, including eLearning courses (9.2%).

8.8% of the travel agents based in the United Kingdom and 9.6% of those based in India think that doing eLearning courses about tourism destinations is "not useful", while at the same time none of the travel agents based in New Zealand think that it's "not useful" for their businesses.

Other mentioned reasons were: "not interested in such a training option", which was shared by 5.3% of British travel agents and have never been mentioned by the travel agents in other two studied countries; "prefer doing other eLearning courses, e.g. on

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sales, marketing, etc., which was nominated by 5.3% of the travel agents based in New Zealand, and again never mentioned by the travel agents in other two studied countries.

Understanding the lack of motivation can be very important for the developers of the eLearning courses as well as for the marketers of the training activities. An interesting finding from this research is that 7.6% of the travel agents in all three of the countries, were looking for eLearning training options about tourism destinations that they sell but were not able to find them. Several cases were mentioned during phone interviews: more specialized trainings are currently missing, for instance, online training courses about honeymoon destinations, safari travel, destinations for senior people, etc. Implementation of eLearning courses with those topics can create more training, marketing and sales industry partnerships as well as further advancements of the eLearning courses development, and as a result – satisfaction of training needs for travel trade partners globally.

This sub-paragraph answers *Research Question 14*:
- *What are the barriers of possible participation in the DMO eLearning courses by travel agents in three countries?*

The main reasons given were:
- "have no time"
- "already follow trainings from tour operators on the destinations I sell"
- "follow company internal trainings"
- "haven't seen online training courses about destinations that I sell"
- "prefer travelling to the destinations".

iv. Possibility to undertake eLearning courses about tourism destinations

While looking at the possibility that travel agents who knew that eLearning courses exist, but did not previously done them (N=206), would dedicate some time in the future to such a training offer, the obtained results were rather positive (Table 24.).

	Yes	Not	Total
United Kingdom	10 (17.5%)	47 (82.5%)	57 (100%)
India	16 (21.9%)	57 (78.1%)	73 (100%)
New Zealand	19 (25.0%)	57 (75.0%)	76 (100%)
Total	45 (21.8%)	161 (78.2%)	206 (100%)

Pearson Chi-Square (p=0.665)

Table 24. Possibility on attending eLearning courses among travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (Total N = 206)

17.5% of the travel agents based in the United Kingdom have indicated that it is likely that they will initiate such a training strategy in the future, while 21.9% of the agents in India have stated the same. 25% of the agents in New Zealand confirmed that they might start eLearning courses about tourism destinations in the future.

Pearson Chi-Square (p=0.665) additionally showed that there is no difference between the three countries in the possible behaviour of the travel agents who previously haven't done online training in terms of the future possibility of attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Furthermore, the stratification by the agency type did not show any additional differences in the behaviour among the three countries.

4.4.   Online questionnaire on motivational factors of the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand

This sub-chapter will present the research objectives and research questions (4.4.1), which were designed for the online questionnaire on motivation factors that travel agents in the three studied countries have on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Furthermore, research design and limitations of the chosen research method will be discussed in the sub-chapter 4.4.2.

4.4.1.   Research objectives and research questions

The purpose of this research is to understand what drives travel agents based in the three studied countries – United Kingdom, India and New Zealand, nations with different access to technologies, service and training culture, and the saturation of the tourism market, to subscribe and actively study with the help of eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Besides browsing B2C websites about tourism destinations or attending in-presence training workshops, organised by tour operators, destinations themselves, or undertaking any other form of knowledge upgrade.

Current research was designed in order to respond to the next research objectives:
- understand what are the main motivations that make travel agents subscribe to eLearning courses about tourism destinations besides undertaking of other methods of knowledge acquisition about tourism destinations;
- compare if the motivation of travel agents from diverse markets differ;
- evaluate the relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness motivations;
- test designed within this research conceptual construct – motivations of the travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

In order to reach above stated research objectives, the next research questions were defined:

> *Research Question 15: What motivates travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?*

> *Research Question 16: Do travel agents undertake eLearning courses about tourism destinations because they perceive this activity as being "ease of use" or "useful"?*

4.4.2. Research design and limitations

In order to reach the above-mentioned objectives and answer the research questions, an online questionnaire was submitted at a non-probabilistic accidental sample of travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Only those travel agents, who have previously undertaken online training courses about tourism destinations, were asked to answer. The survey was open for answers from mid-March until the end of May 2013.

Travel agents, who have answered phone interviews and confirmed that they have previously undertaken eLearning courses about tourism destinations were invited to give their email addresses for a possible follow up with an in-depth online questionnaire on their motivations. Moreover, other travel agents were contacted through professional social networks (e.g. LinkedIn groups) and personalised emails with an invitation to participate in the research.

While being based in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand, the research project was assisted from tourism research institutes in ensuring higher distribution of it and hence maximum redemption of the online survey link among travel agents in the respective countries. Additionally, this research step has been supported by the Travel Agent Association of India (TAAI), the Travel Agent Association of New Zealand (TAANZ) and the World Association of Travel Agents (WATA).

The research instrument was written in English, an official language in all three studied countries. It was developed with close-ended, single- and multiple-choice questions and statements. The online survey consisted of four main parts:

- biographical data;
- questions on the training and the knowledge upgrade;
- motivations on starting eLearning courses about tourism destination;
- questions on satisfaction and the willingness to take further courses.

The online survey accounted for sixteen questions in total with a further possibility to leave additional comments. The questions on motivations of the travel agents were designed in a form of Likert-scale responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". In order to minimise the response bias, item statements were mixed in order to make sure that the respondents read every item carefully. The structure of the online questionnaire can be seen in Appendices 22. and 23.

The online survey was pre-tested with nine travel agents based in three respective countries in order to assess the wording and content validity. The pre-testing activity has

been undertaken in all three countries in order to increase the precision and simplicity of the used questions and therefore expanding the probability of gaining the required information. Timing for the travel agents to fill in the questionnaire varied from seven to twenty five minutes.

Even if the online questionnaire will be able to give crucial insights on the travel agents motivations in initiating online training experience, due to the auto selection of the respondents, the results should be cautiously generalised to the entire populations of travel agents in the three concerned countries. In fact, usually individuals participate in such research projects, as they have personal views or opinions on the studied matter. As a result, answers from the most motivated and interested in the research topic will be received and this might partially distort the reality.

Neglecting the disadvantages of the auto-selected online survey, this method was the only one possible in order to evaluate motivations within a specific group of people – those travel agents who have done previously eLearning courses about tourism destinations – while asking them elaborated questions formed in an evaluation format of Likert-scale answers. Generally, it can be stated that the online survey method confirmed itself to be a successful one to be used in order to answer the above stated research questions, and to test motivations of the travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

Data analysis within this research step was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 19. General descriptive statistics procedures were first applied. Additionally, the investigations to analyse the correlation among variables were done using Pearson Chi-Square test, Univariate Analysis of Variance, pair wise marginal comparisons, and One-way ANOVA to compare the means.

4.5. Online questionnaire. Research results

The next sub-chapter will present the results of the online questionnaire along the next organization: first, the sample structure and demographics of the survey respondents will be presented (4.5.1); followed by the strategies of the knowledge upgrade that travel agents have together with the eLearning participation context (4.5.2). Furthermore, within this sub-chapter, the source of decision on undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations will be presented, along with the level of satisfaction on previous eLearning experience of the travel agents in the three studied countries and their further willingness to undertake more eLearning courses about tourism destinations. The chapter will proceed (4.5.3) with the discussion of the process, which has been undertaken in order to define motivations that travel agents have on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. It will conclude with the results (4.5.4) of the analysis of the new framework for the investigation of the motivational factors on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

4.5.1. Sample structure and demographics

For this research step, just those travel agents who have previously followed eLearning courses about tourism destinations were of interest. Within this study, 249 usable online surveys were collected for the analysis of the motivations which travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand have on attending destinational eLearning courses. Collected responses provided a valid sample size for the consequent statistical analysis to be carried out. The next numbers of respondents were collected in the three studied countries:

- *United Kingdom – 70 profiles;*
- *India – 112 profiles;*
- *New Zealand – 67 profiles.*

Table 25. presents characteristics of sample divided by country of the respondents and stratified by gender, age, type of the agency travel agents work for, and their educational level. From the gender perspective, it can be noted that female respondents prevailed among British (55.7%) and New Zealand travel agents (68.7%), while more male respondents (65.2%) have answered the survey on the Indian market.

		United Kingdom	India	New Zealand	Total
	Total	*70 (100%)*	*112 (100%)*	*67 (100%)*	*249 (100%)*
Gender	Male	31 (44.3%)	73 (65.2%)	21 (31.3%)	125 (50.2%)
	Female	39 (55.7%)	39 (34.8%)	46 (68.7%)	124 (49.8%)
Age	<32	26 (37.1%)	49 (43.8%)	5 (7.5%)	80 (32.1%)
	32 - 47	27 (38.6%)	47 (42.0%)	25 (37.3%)	99 (39.8%)
	>47	17 (24.3%)	16 (14.3%)	37 (55.2%)	70 (28.1%)

Agency type	Independent	44 (62.9%)	77 (68.8%)	42 (62.7%)	163 (65.5%)
	Chain	26 (37.1%)	35 (31.3%)	25 (37.3%)	86 (34.5%)
Education	Secondary School	7 (10%)	5 (4.5%)	21 (31.3%)	33 (13.3%)
	Vocational training	26 (37.1%)	4 (3.6%)	26 (38.8%)	56 (22.5%)
	University degree	37 (52.9%)	103 (92.0%)	20 (29.9%)	160 (64.3%)
Number of completed courses	1 - 3	24 (34.3%)	50 (44.6%)	29 (43.3%)	103 (41.4%)
	4 - 10	28 (40.0%)	34 (30.4%)	24 (35.8%)	86 (34.5%)
	>11	18 (25.7%)	28 (25%)	14 (20.9%)	60 (24.1%)

Table 25. Demographic characteristics of the online questionnaire respondents

As for the age of the respondents, homogeneous distribution has been seen among British participants; while Indian respondents were younger (43.8% were less than 32) and more senior agents working in New Zealand market (55.2% were older than 47).

The majority of the respondents in all three countries were working for independent enterprises in quite a similar proportion and accounted for 62.9% in the United Kingdom, 68.8% in India, and 62.7% in New Zealand.

The majority of the British and the vast majority of Indian respondents (52.9% and 92.0% accordingly) declared to have completed a university degree. The level of education among travel agents that are based in New Zealand was equally distributed, and accounted for 31.3% of the agents having secondary school degree; 38.8% of them possessing a vocational school diploma, and 29.9% having a university degree.

Lastly, the majority of the respondents in India and New Zealand have previously completed "from 1 to 3" destinational eLearning courses, while the biggest frequency in the United Kingdom is "from 4 to 10", and accounts for 40%.

4.5.2. Knowledge upgrade strategies and eLearning participation context

The next sub-chapter will present knowledge upgrade strategies among travel agents in the three studied countries (i). It will discuss the eLearning participation context, which included the evaluation of based on whose decision travel agents are undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations (ii); if they are satisfied with their previous eLearning experience (iii), and if they are planning to undertake more online training courses about tourism destinations (iv).

i.   Knowledge upgrade strategies

The next table presents the percentages of the respondents who have nominated a specific strategy for their knowledge upgrade in terms of learning about the tourism destinations that they sell. The respondents could give up to three answers to this question. Global percentages are divided and presented in total as well as on a country-by-country basis.

	United Kingdom	India	New Zealand	Total
Travelling to the destinations	54.3%	54.5%	58.2%	55.4%
On-the-job	55.7%	41.1%	43.3%	45.8%
Attend road-shows	35.7%	45.5%	53.7%	45.0%
Online search	35.7%	40.2%	37.3%	38.2%
Attend seminars/conferences	30.0%	42.0%	34.3%	36.5%
Read books/magazines	34.3%	20.5%	25.4%	25.7%
Follow specialized websites/blogs/mailing lists	12.9%	26.8%	9.0%	18.1%
Peer-to-peer training	27.1%	3.6%	13.4%	12.9%
Follow relevant groups on social networks	1.4%	4.5%	7.5%	4.4%
Other	4.3%	0.0%	6.0%	2.8%

Table 26. Knowledge upgrade strategies of travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand
(Total N = 249)

The main strategies for the knowledge upgrade were the following: "travelling to tourism destinations" (55.4%); "on-the-job" training activities (45.8%); "attending road-shows" (45.0%); "online search" (38.2%); as well as "attending seminars and conferences" (36.5%).

Strategies divided on a country-by-country basis show similar behaviour, e.g. within the next options – "travelling to the destinations" and "online search". At the same time, different behaviour has been noted among the next activities "follow specialised websites, blogs and mailing lists", which has been nominated by 26.8% of Indian travel agents, but only by 9.0% of the travel agents based in India. While "peer-to-peer" training has been mentioned as a strategy to learn about tourism destinations by 27.1% of British travel agents, by just 13.4% of the agents based in New Zealand, and by a mere 3.6% of Indian travel agents. At the same time, it can be noted that "following relevant groups on social media" is more popular among travel agents based in New Zealand (7.5%) than among agents in the other two studied countries – India (4.5%) and United Kingdom (1.4%).

ii.   Decision to undertake eLearning courses about tourism destinations

While looking at the source of decision based on which travel agents in the three studied countries are doing eLearning courses about tourism destinations, the next results were obtained and presented in Table 27.

	personal decision	manager	internal promotion
United Kingdom	70.0%	12.9%	17.1%
India	81.3%	4.5%	14.3%
New Zealand	79.1%	9.0%	11.9%
Total	77.5%	8.0%	14.5%

Table 27. Decision source on attending eLearning courses among travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand (Total N = 249)

In all three countries the main decision comes from the travel agents themselves, and accounts for 70.0% in the United Kingdom, 81.3% in India, and 79.1% in New Zealand. The next most popular decision is due to the fact that the travel agents were encouraged to do eLearning courses through internal evaluation activities within the company they work for. 17.1% of British, 14.3% of Indian, and 11.9% of New Zealand travel agents has shared this source. Finally, travel agents are undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destination as the management of the company they work for explicitly asked them: 12.9% in the United Kingdom, 4.5% in India, and 9.0% in New Zealand.

iii.   Satisfaction on previous eLearning experience

The level of satisfaction about previous experience on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations has been tested and is shown in Table 28. Generally, most of the travel agents had positive previous experience and evaluate their level of satisfaction to be quite high: 96.5% of Indian, 92.9% of British travel agents and 88.0% of New Zealanders were satisfied with their previous eLearning experiences.

	Not at all satisfied	Slightly satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Total
United Kingdom	2 (2.9%)	3 (4.3%)	38 (54.3%)	27 (38.6%)	70 (100.0%)
India	2 (1.8%)	2 (1.8%)	34 (30.4%)	74 (66.1%)	112 (100.0%)
New Zealand	0 (0.0%)	8 (12.0%)	35 (52.2%)	24 (35.8%)	67 (100.0%)
Total	4 (1.6%)	13 (5.2%)	107 (43.0%)	125 (50.2%)	249 (249.0%)

Table 28. Satisfaction of the travel agents on their previous eLearning experience (Total N = 249)

The measurements of "Not at all satisfied"; "Slightly satisfied"; "Somewhat satisfied" and "Very satisfied" has been used within the online survey, in order to ensure that in three studied countries the scales will be read and interpreted in the same way by the travel agents. To simplify analysis and to make possible calculation of means and variances, the scale has been re-codified into the decimal scale, while giving the according values: "1"; "2"; "3" and "4".

The difference between the means in the satisfaction level among three countries has been tested with the one-way ANOVA test, which showed that there are significant differences in between three studied countries (p=.000).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
United Kingdom	70	3.29	.684	.082	3.12	3.45	1	4
India	112	3.61	.620	.059	3.49	3.72	1	4
New Zealand	67	3.24	.653	.080	3.08	3.40	2	4
Total	249	3.42	.668	.042	3.33	3.50	1	4

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.383	2	3.692	8.801	.000
Within Groups	103.179	246	.419		
Total	110.562	248			

Table 29. Results of one-way ANOVA test on the satisfaction of travel agents on their previous eLearning experience (Total N = 249)

Additionally, further analysis with the help of one-way ANOVA test has been undertaken, comparing first-hand the possible differences among New Zealand and United Kingdom, which showed no significant differences (p=.682). While a further comparison emerging between the two developed countries (United Kingdom and New Zealand) and a developing one (India) has been undertaken and showed a significant difference in the satisfaction level (p=.000). This shows that travel agents in India are significantly more satisfied with their previous experience in comparison to the other two studied countries that present similar behaviour.

iv.   Willingness to undertake further eLearning courses
Neglecting the fact that the level of satisfaction about previous eLearning experience among travel agents in the three studied countries varied, most of the respondents, accounting for 95.7% in the United Kingdom, 95.5% in India, and 94.0% in New

Zealand have stated that they are willing to undertake further eLearning courses about tourism destinations (Table 30.).

	Yes	No	Total
United Kingdom	67 (95.7%)	3 (4.3%)	70 (100.0%)
India	107 (95.5%)	5 (4.5%)	112 (100.0%)
New Zealand	63 (94.0%)	4 (6.0%)	67 (100.0%)
Total	237 (95.2%)	12 (4.8%)	249 (249.0%)

Pearson Chi-Square (p=0.875)

Table 30. Willingness of the travel agents on attending further eLearning courses about tourism destinations (Total N = 249)

4.5.3. Defining motivation factors for travel agents eLearning practices

The next process has been undertaken in order to define motivations, which travel agents have on subscribing to the eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Content analysis within the preliminary benchmark study has suggested the list of hypothetical motivations travel agents might have on attending eLearning courses. The list was extracted from the websites of the DMOs that were promoting online training activities for travel trade partners (i.). These ten items were tested through the exploratory online questionnaire with travel agents globally, who have then ranked the items. Additionally, travel agents in the open-ended comments within the exploratory online questionnaire have suggested additional items (ii.). Then during phone interviews process (iii.), travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand were asked to specify motivations they have on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Thanks to it, 21 items were received including the new emerged ones. Additionally, academic literature on the motivational theories, technology acceptance and eLearning related topics was revised, and helped to define the final list of 32 variables (iv.), that were further tested with the online survey of the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Motivational items received in every research step are presented and discussed further.

i.) Motivational items obtained from benchmarking study

The next motivational items were received during the benchmarking study of existing national eLearning portals about tourism destinations (sub-chapter 3.1). They were mapped from the official descriptions on the NTO eLearning websites and are presented in Table 31. According to NTOs, travel agents attend eLearning courses about tourism destinations in order to:

- access to special offers and discounts from the destination
- acquire new knowledge about the destination
- be registered on the official travel agent list of the destination
- better serve clients
- enrich curriculum
- get incentives and prizes from the destination (e.g. pens, maps, T-shirts)
- receive an official certificate
- respond to manager's requests
- sell more and earn more
- win an educational and familiarization trip

Table 31. Motivational items received from the benchmarking study

ii.) Motivational items obtained from exploratory online questionnaire

Ten motivational items that were received from the benchmarking study were exposed to the travel agents globally within exploratory online questionnaire (sub-chapter 4.1) with the request to select three main reasons they have on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. The results of this step were presented in the sub-chapter 4.1.3.

Additionally to that, the category "other" was proposed to the travel agents, with an opportunity to suggest their reasoning on learning about tourism destinations they sell with the help of online training courses. Received responses are presented below in Table 32.

- because my colleagues do
- because my manager does it
- personal satisfaction and enrichment
- I am able to access training away from work (e.g. from home)
- I am able to learn on my own without assistance
- I can study in the office (e.g. when there are no clients)
- I feel more confident in serving clients
- it helps me to get a competitive advantage over other travel agents in my company/region
- it's free of charge
- it's enjoyable
- it's easy to learn and familiarize myself with the help of online training
- to keep myself updated

Table 32. Motivational items received from the exploratory online questionnaire

iii.) Motivational items obtained from phone interviews

From the phone interviews (sub-chapter 4.3) with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand, the next twenty one items (Table 33.) were received. Travel agents possess the next motivations on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations besides using other available sources of knowledge upgrade:

- I am able to access training away from work (e.g. from home)
- I can acquire new knowledge about the destination
- I can be registered on the official travel agent list of the destination
- I can get access to special offers/ discounts from the destination
- I can get information about destination I haven't been
- I can sell more and earn more
- I can study in the office (e.g. when there are no clients)
- I can use logo for marketing
- I can win an educational and familiarization trip
- I feel more confident in serving clients
- I receive an official certificate
- I receive some form of explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)
- it helps me to get a competitive advantage over other travel agents in my company/region
- it helps to better serve clients
- it helps me to keep my skills updated
- it enriches my curriculum
- it's enjoyable
- it's free of charge
- it's quick
- my learning is assessed
- training content is relevant for my job, as it was created specifically for travel agents

Table 33. Motivational items received from phone interviews

iv.) Framework on the travel agents' motivations on attending destinational eLearning courses

The items that were received during preliminary studies, were then aligned with the next theoretical frameworks: Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Roca & Gagne, 2008); Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Amabile *et al*., 1976); Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986); work-related motivations (Slotte & Herbert, 2006); Organization and management support (Tracey *et al*., 1995, 2001); eLearning setting related motivations (Keller & Suzuki, 2004; Maldonado et al., 2011; Wlodkowski, 2011). These items have created a new framework that will be used to analyze motivations travel agents have on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. The framework is presented below in Table 34.

Motivational items	Theoretical frameworks
- it's easy to learn and familiarize myself with the help of online training	*TAM – Perceived ease of use* (Davis, 1989; Roca & Gagne, 2008; Lee & Lee , 2008)
- I can acquire new knowledge about the destination - I feel more confident in serving clients - it improves the quality of my learning - it is a useful tool - it helps me to better serve clients - it helps me to keep my skills updated	*TAM – Perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989);* *work related motivations (*Slotte & Herbert, 2006);
- it's enjoyable - it's interesting - it gives me personal satisfaction and enrichment	*SDT - Intrinsic motivation –* enjoyment, interest and satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000)
- I am interested in eLearning from a technical point of view (to see how it works)	*SDT - Intrinsic motivations. Perceived competence or technical interest* (Deci & Ryan, 1987); *Self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1986)
- because my colleagues do it - because my manager does it	*Intrinsic motivations. Perceived relatedness (Ryan, 1993)*
- I am able to learn on my own without assistance	*Intrinsic motivations. Perceived autonomy* (Ryan & Connell, 1989)

- it helps me to get a competitive advantage over other travel agents in my company/region	*Extrinsic motivations. Introjected motivations (self-control; internal rewards)*
- I can keep myself updated	*Extrinsic motivations. Integrated (synthesis with self)*
- it enriches my curriculum (CV)	*Extrinsic motivations. Identified (personal importance)*
- I can be registered on the official travel agent list of the destination - I can get access to special offers/ discounts from the destination - I can sell more and earn more - I can win an educational/familiarization trip - I can win incentives and prizes from the destination (e.g. pens, maps, T-shirts) - I receive an official certificate - I receive some form of explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)	- *Extrinsic motivations: External regulations (rewards, punishment)* Rewards (Deci *et al.*, 1999), deadlines (Amabile *et al.*, 1976), evaluation (Amabile, 1979) and threats (Deci & Casacio, 1972) - *Organization and management support.* Tracey *et al.,* (1995, 2001)
- I am able to access training away from work (e.g. from home) - I can study at my own pace - I can study in the office (e.g. when there are no clients) - it's quick - information is structured to suit the needs of a travel agent - it's free of charge - my learning is assessed - training content is relevant for my job, as it was created specifically for travel agents	- *eLearning setting related motivations* (Keller &Suzuki, 2004; Maldonado et al., 2011; Wlodkowski, 2011)

Table 34. Framework on the travel agents' motivations on attending destinational eLearning courses

4.5.4. Tested items on the motivations of travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations

The results of the analysis of the new framework for the investigation of the motivational factors on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations among travel agents are presented further. Firstly, motivational means are featured (i.), which are followed by the results of the analysis of motivations using Technology Acceptance Model (ii.).

i.) Motivational means

The scale of "strongly agree"; "agree"; "neutral"; "disagree" and "strongly disagree" has been used within the online questionnaire, in order to ensure that in the three studied countries the scales will be read and interpreted in the same way by the travel agents. To simplify the analysis as well as to make a possible calculation of means and variances, the scale has been later re-codified into the decimal scale, while giving the according values: "10"; "8"; "6"; "4'''; and "2". The next table presents the results of the comparison of means for every tested item of possible motivations of the travel agents on attending eLearning courses on tourism destinations. The results are presented as a total and on a country-by-country basis. The last column – "ANOVA mean comparison (p)" – shows the level of significance of the One-way ANOVA in the comparisons of the means in the three studied countries: United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Full results of this analysis can be seen in Appendix 30 and Appendix 31.

Motivation	United Kingdom	India	New Zealand	Total	ANOVA mean comparison (p)
acquire new knowledge	9.06	9.34	8.69	9.08	0.000
useful	8.66	9.41	8.72	9.01	0.000
better serve clients	8.57	9.29	8.66	8.92	0.001
keep myself updated	8.46	9.30	8.63	8.88	0.000
helps me to keep my skills updated	8.43	9.25	8.57	8.84	0.000
can study at my own pace	8.57	9.14	8.60	8.84	0.002
more confident in serving clients	8.40	9.30	8.51	8.84	0.000
improves the quality of my learning	8.23	9.23	8.06	8.63	0.000
training content was created specifically for travel agents	8.41	8.91	8.39	8.63	0.017
interested in from the technical point of view	5.91	7.58	5.71	6.63	0.000
can study on my own without assistance	8.37	9.02	8.15	8.60	0.000
interesting	8.26	9.07	7.97	8.55	0.000
easy to learn and familiarize	8.14	9.04	8.03	8.51	0.000
can study in office	8.58	8.58	8.24	8.49	0.409
information is structured to suit the needs of travel agents	7.91	8.84	8.39	8.46	0.000
free of charge	8.40	8.59	8.24	8.45	0.362
be registered on official travel agent list	7.97	8.76	8.21	8.39	0.005
gives me competitive advantage	8.12	8.79	7.79	8.33	0.000
personal satisfaction and enrichment	7.94	8.86	7.58	8.26	0.000
sell more and earn more	7.94	8.70	7.79	8.24	0.000
educational and familiarization trips	7.94	8.70	7.79	8.24	0.077
can study from home	7.77	8.70	7.46	8.10	0.000
enjoyable	7.40	8.48	7.25	7.85	0.000
my learning is assessed	6.78	8.56	7.22	7.71	0.000
official certificate	6.70	8.68	6.85	7.64	0.000

access to special offers	7.43	7.82	7.00	7.49	0.012
quick	6.89	8.13	6.72	7.40	0.000
enriches my CV	6.76	7.87	6.88	7.29	0.000
incentives and prizes	7.36	7.35	6.52	7.12	0.013
get explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)	6.13	6.38	6.03	6.21	0.624
my manager does it	4.70	5.21	5.75	5.21	0.023
my colleagues do it	4.52	5.17	5.62	5.11	0.016

Table 35. Results of the ANOVA test on the comparisons of means among motivations nominated by travel agents (Total N = 249)

It can be noted from Table 35, that the highest mean in all three studied countries suggest that travel agents are undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations as they are:

- "helpful to acquire new knowledge" (9.08);
- "useful" (9.01);
- "helpful to better serve clients" (8.92);
- "keep myself updated" (8.88);
- "helpful to be more confident in serving clients" (8.84);
- "helpful to keep my skills updated" (8.84);
- "give the possibility to study at my own pace" (8.84);
- "helpful to improve the quality of my learning" (8.63);
- "training content was created specifically for travel agents" (8.63);
- "can study on my own without assistance" (8.60).

While the lowest means have the next motivations:

- "interested in eLearning from the technical point of view" (6.63);
- "get explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)" (6.21);
- "my manager does it" (5.21);
- "my colleagues do it" (5.11).

A preliminary analysis (full results of this ANOVA test can be seen in Appendix 32.), the comparison between motivation among travel agents based in two developed countries United Kingdom and New Zealand has been carried out. It became evident that the motivations of the travel agents in those two countries are similar, with the exception on the next ones: I do eLearning courses about tourism destinations because "my manager does it" (p=.002); "my colleagues do it" (p=.001); "I can win educational and familiarization trips to the destination" (p=.013); and "I can win incentives and prizes" (p=.009). This implies, as presented in Appendix 33., that the differences described in Table 35. are due to the Indian travel agents.

ii.) Analysis of motivations using TAM model

For further elaborated statistical analysis, and in order to answer *Research Question 16*, the tested items of the motivations travel agents have on undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations were divided into "ease of use" and "usefulness" and represent two possible motivational categories within TAM model. The items are presented further in Table 36. A single item: "I am interested in eLearning from a technical point of view (to see how it works)" was not identified as mapped by TAM model (n/a), and as a consequence was not taken into consideration within this research step.

Tested item	TAM	
	Ease of use	**Usefulness**
it's easy to learn and familiarize myself with the help of online training	X	
it is a useful tool		X
it improves the quality of my learning		X
it helps me to keep my skills updated		X
it helps me to better serve clients		X
I feel more confident in serving clients		X
I can acquire new knowledge about the destination		X
it's enjoyable	X	
it's interesting		X
I am interested in eLearning from a technical point of view (to see how it works)	n/a	n/a
because my manager does it		X
because my colleagues do it		X
I am able to learn on my own without assistance	X	
I can keep myself updated		X
it gives me personal satisfaction and enrichment		X
I receive some form of explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)		X
it helps me to get a competitive advantage over other travel agents in my company/region		X
it enriches my CV		X
I receive an official certificate		X
I can win an educational/ familiarization trips		X
I can win incentives and prizes from the destination (e.g. pens, maps, T-shirts)		X
I can get access to special offers/ discounts from the destination		X
I can be registered on the official travel agent list of the destination		X
I can sell more and earn more		X
I can study at my own pace	X	
I can study in the office (e.g. when there are no clients)	X	
I am able to access training away from work (e.g. from home)	X	
my learning is assessed		X
it's quick	X	
it's free of charge	X	
information is structured to suit the needs of a travel agent	X	
training content is relevant for my job, as it was created specifically for TAs		X

Table 36. Distribution of motivational items on undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations within TAM model

Cluster analysis has been undertaken to group motivational items into homogenous categories, in order to compare them without distortion and confounding effects (Table 37). While the items belonging at the "Ease of use" were sufficiently homogenous to stay in one group, the items that belong to the "Usefulness" were divided into three sub-categories, with the next indicative titles: "Useful 1. Work related and knowledge acquisition", "Useful 2. Relatedness", and "Useful 3. Monetary".

Tested item	Ease of use	Useful		
		Work related and knowledge acquisition	Relatedness	Monetary
it's easy to learn and familiarize myself with the help of online training	X			
it is a useful tool		X		
it improves the quality of my learning		X		
it helps me to keep my skills updated		X		
it helps me to better serve clients		X		
I feel more confident in serving clients		X		
I can acquire new knowledge about the destination		X		
it's enjoyable	X			
it's interesting		X		
I am interested in eLearning from a technical point of view (to see how it works)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
because my manager does it			X	
because my colleagues do it			X	
I am able to learn on my own without assistance	X			
I can keep myself updated		X		
it gives me personal satisfaction and enrichment		X		
I receive some form of explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)				X
it helps me to get a competitive advantage over other travel agents in my company/region		X		
it enriches my CV		X		
I receive an official certificate		X		
I can win an educational/ familiarization trips				X
I can win incentives and prizes from the destination (e.g. pens, maps, T-shirts)				X
I can get access to special offers/ discounts from the destination				X
I can be registered on the official travel agent list of the destination		X		
I can sell more and earn more		X		
I can study at my own pace	X			
I can study in the office (e.g. when there are no clients)	X			
I am able to access training away from work (e.g. from home)	X			

my learning is assessed		X		
it's quick	X			
it's free of charge	X			
information is structured to suit the needs of a travel agent	X			
training content is relevant for my job, as it was created specifically for travel agents		X		

Table 37. Distribution of motivational items on undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations within TAM model using cluster analysis

The next table presents the results of the comparison of means that were identified for every TAM sub-category:

Country	Ease of use	Useful 1: Work related and knowledge acquisition	Useful 2: Relatedness	Useful 3: Monetary
United Kingdom	8.00	8.05	4.59	7.30
India	8.72	8.96	5.17	7.36
New Zealand	7.89	8.03	5.63	6.79
Total	8.29	8.45	5.13	7.19

Table 38. Means of destinational eLearning motivations within TAM sub-categories

As it can be seen from the analysis of means, the sub-category "Useful 1. Work related and knowledge acquisition" is the most representative in all three studied countries, followed by the "Ease of use", "Useful 3. Monetary", and "Useful 2. Relatedness".

Travel agents do eLearning courses about tourism destinations mostly because they see the value in them. This is due to the "work-related motivations" as well as thanks to the opportunity to update required knowledge. In all three studied countries, the values of the means of this category of motivation are the highest, though with a very high score among Indian travel agents. The "Ease of use" remains a significant motivation to decide to undertake eLearning activities, with a high score, which is a bit lower than the "Work related and knowledge acquisition" category. While the "Useful 3. Monetary motivations", where travel agents receive something thanks to undertaking eLearning activities, are less important among surveyed travel agents in all three studied countries. The travel agents in the three studied countries do not support "relatedness" so they are not doing eLearning courses about tourism destinations in order to feel related to their managers or colleagues. From above mentioned results, it can be observed that surveyed travel agents of United Kingdom, India and New Zealand have a similar behaviour in their motivations on undertaking eLearning activities about tourism destinations. In fact, even if they have different values of means, the rank of the means within the categories is the same for all three studied countries.

4.6. Conclusions

The following paragraph presents conclusions out of the research steps, which describe the "demand side" of the destinational eLearning options. Firstly there is the conclusion of the exploratory online questionnaire presented in the sub-chapter 4.6.1. with the travel agents globally, featuring the answers to *Research Questions 6-9*.

Then the conclusions from the phone interviews with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand were undertaken in order to get the rates of current usages and awareness of eLearning courses in the three studied countries are presented in the sub-chapter 4.6.2. This research step answers *Research Questions 10-14*.

Finally, the conclusions from the online questionnaire done with travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand in order to evaluate their motivations on undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations are featured in the sub-chapter 4.6.3. It answers *Research Questions 15* and *16*.

4.6.1. Exploratory online questionnaire

This study has provides the first critical insights on the current state of the art within eLearning usages in tourism education, while looking in particular how travel agents are perceiving eLearning courses about tourism destinations globally. Furthermore, this research step presents the results of the first empirical data collection on the topic. This research answers the next research questions:

> *Research Question 6: Is there a demand among travel agents globally on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?*

Thanks to the online questionnaire, indicative numbers on the actual use of eLearning courses about tourism destinations were received. Among the respondents to the questionnaire, 466 travel agents (46%) have confirmed that they have previously undertaken eLearning courses, which were provided by Destination Management Organizations globally. This number cannot be generalized, but has provided the researchers with a base for further analysis and an indicative evaluation of the demand of online training on offer for the travel trade.

> *Research Question 7: What is the reaction on the DMO eLearning courses from the travel agents globally?*

The results of the preliminary online questionnaire showed that travel agents worldwide positively receive eLearning courses. Additionally, more than 80% of the respondents have recommended this training option to a colleague, confirming their satisfaction. Travel agents believe that eLearning courses add value to their overall knowledge about tourism destinations, help them to sell a destination and give them more confidence in serving their clients – potential tourists.

Research Question 8: Is there awareness among travel agents globally on the existence of DMO eLearning courses?

Among those respondents who haven't previously done any eLearning courses, 66% knew that such a training offer exists, but for several reasons, such as the lack of time, absence of interests or belief that online training will not be useful for their business, made them decide not to attend such a training.

Research Question 9: What motivates travel agents globally on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?

Thanks to the exploratory online questionnaire, a list of indicative motivations has been received and has been further used as a basis for the online survey for travel agents' motivations in three countries: in the United Kingdom, India, and New Zealand. Travel agents globally have suggested that they are undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations, as they are helpful in knowledge acquisition, increase the service for clients, give the possibility to sell more and earn more, as well as give an opportunity to win educational or familiarization trips.

4.6.2. Phone interviews

Phone interviews with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand were undertaken in order to get the rates of current usages and awareness of eLearning courses in the three studied countries and to investigate what motivates and discourages travel agents to participate in online training activities about tourism destinations. This part of the research project has answered the following research questions.

Research Question 10: Is there a demand among travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?

The study confirmed that there is the demand among travel agents in three studied countries on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations, though the demand varies from country to country. The highest demand is among travel agents based in the United Kingdom, where nearly 55% of the travel agents have previously undertaken eLearning courses. Among travel agents based in New Zealand the number is lower and accounts for 33.3%. The last country among three studied markets is India, where just 26.5% of the working outbound travel agents have previously undertaken eLearning courses about tourism destinations.

Research Question 11: Does the demand depend on the country where travel agents are based, their gender, age, education level and type of agency they work for?

The study revealed that participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the country where travel agents are based, their gender and type of the agency they work for, while the age of the travel agents and their educational level did not show any significant influence on the participation level.

Research Question 12: Is there awareness among travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on the existence of DMO eLearning courses?

In addition, the level of awareness varies among travel agents from the three studied countries. Travel agents who are based in the two developed countries: United Kingdom and New Zealand have similar level of awareness of the existence of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations. It accounts for more than 65% and 69% accordingly. Among those Indian travel agents who have not attended eLearning courses 36.5% actually knew that such a training offer exists.

Research Question 13: Does the awareness depend on the country where travel agents are based, their gender, age, educational level and type of the agency they work for?

The results of the analysis showed that the awareness about existence of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the county where travel agents are based, and does not depend on their age, gender, type of the agency they work for, or their educational level.

Research Question 14: What are the barriers of possible participation in the DMO eLearning courses?

The three most popular reasons on not taking eLearning training courses about tourism destinations among travel agents in the three studied countries were: absence of time and attendance of other modes of knowledge upgrade, such as training from tour operators or internal training within their company.

4.6.3. Online questionnaire

Finally, the online questionnaire has provided extensive insights on the motivations on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations among travel agents based in the three studied countries, and answered the following research questions:

Research Question 15: What motivates travel agents on attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations?

The research revealed that travel agents are undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations as they are:
- "helpful to acquire new knowledge about tourism destinations";
- "useful";
- "helpful to better serve clients";
- "keep travel agents updated";
- "helpful to be more confident in serving clients";
- "helpful to keep their skills updated";
- "give the possibility to study at his/her own pace";
- "helpful to improve the quality of his/her learning";
- "training content was created specifically for travel agents".

While the least important reasons were the next ones:
- "interested in eLearning from the technical point of view";
- "get explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)";
- "my manager does it";
- "my colleagues do it".

Research Question 16: Do travel agents undertake eLearning courses about tourism destinations because they perceive this activity as being "ease of use" or "useful"?

The results of the online questionnaire with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand show that travel agents in these three countries do eLearning courses about tourism destinations mostly because they see the value in them due to the work-related motivations – "Useful 1. Work related", such as "keeps my skills updated" or "helps me to better serve clients", as well as thanks to the opportunity to update needed knowledge. However, the "Ease of use" remains a significant motivation to decide on undertaking eLearning, followed by "Useful 3. Monetary motivations", where travel agents receive something thanks to attending eLearning courses. Also it jas been revealed during this research, that "Useful 2. Relatedness" motivations are not supported by travel agents within the three studied countries. Travel agents are not doing eLearning courses about tourism destinations as they feel to be related to their managers or colleagues.

Chapter 5. Discussions

Overview

This chapter draws on the main findings from current studies; it highlights the contribution of this research, its implications in the field of academic knowledge and industry applications, as well as looks for possible directions for future research.

This research project explored existing eLearning offers at the national level provided by the ministries of tourism worldwide to their travel trade partners. Additionally it has investigated the reaction and motivations of the users – travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on those training activities.

In order to address an identified research gap, a mixed method approach has been adopted within this thesis and was based on the content analysis of the existing courses, used for the exploration of specific area of the study. 75 existing eLearning courses provided by the ministries of tourism were analysed, looking at the teaching methods, contents and incentives strategies used to develop eLearning practises.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the representatives of two ministries of tourism: Tourism New Zealand and Swiss National Tourism Office, which were done in order to provide an in-depth corporate view on the subject matter: Kiwi Specialist Program and Switzerland Travel Academy.

Furthermore an online exploratory questionnaire with the travel agents globally has been undertaken to evaluate participation in and awareness about eLearning courses on tourism destinations globally and the reaction of the travel agents within them.

Phone interviews with the travel agents based in the United Kingdom (#190), India (#272) and New Zealand (#165) were undertaken in order to get the rates of current usages and awareness of eLearning courses in three studied countries and to investigate what motivates and discourages travel agents to participate in online training activities about tourism destinations.

The final online questionnaire (#249) has tested a new theoretical model on the motivational factors for attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations. The model was based on the series of elements derived from the exploratory studies as well as has incorporated the elements from the *theoretical frameworks on the eLearning specific motivations* as well as motivation theories: *Self-Determination theory, Technology Acceptance Model*.

The research revealed that due to the strong competitive eTourism environment travel agencies globally are looking for survival strategies. ICTs in general and the internet in

particular has changed the way in which tourism businesses perform nowadays, as well as giving the possibilities to the end-clients to find reliable information about a tourism destinations and to do simple transactions on their own. Most tourism companies nowadays are enhancing their customer service management, personal attitude and involvement of constant training activities, which prepare travel agents and consultants with the correct skills and knowledge set in order to meet the growing and more sophisticated demand of modern consumers. Tourism professionals in this fast developing and changing tourism field are looking for recognition, respect, and credibility, and may see certification as providing them with a competitive advantage. At the same time, travel consultants do understand the value of lifelong learning and are constantly looking for new ways in order to enhance their personal, professional skills and knowledge consultancy. eLearning courses have started to play a key role as a travel trade training medium in order to enhance knowledge about tourism destinations.

The study revealed the effectiveness in the provision of eLearning courses by the ministries of tourism globally, while pointing out that existing courses might be more interactive in the future, involving more social media and internal communication and collaborative tools within online training activities.

Considering the high level of satisfaction as well as the need for eLearning courses about tourism destinations, DMOs globally might consider expansion and increased promotion as well as might look for new ways to enhance the online learning experience of their users in order to keep being effective. At the same time, the ministries might provide more specific courses dedicated to different segments of potential travellers, for instance senior travellers or tourists with specific interests, as the demand on those types of training activities is growing constantly.

This study showed positive benefits of eLearning as a new form of training for travel agents specifically. eLearning courses are believed to be a convenient mode of training, which gives a greater access to education for travel agents globally, also to those based in geographically isolated locations.

From the perspective of two destinations that are running successful eLearning courses for their travel trade partners, online training platforms are helpful in creating awareness about the destinations, their main tourist products and variety of services. eLearning platforms for travel agents add value to the innovative concept of the marketing and communication of a tourist destination, as well as being able to strengthen destinational image among business partners and potential tourists.

Representatives of the ministries of tourism suggested that eLearning practices is a cost and time effective method of training that is delivered globally and can reach any

potentially interested trade agent. Furthermore, they can generate additional sales prospects for travel trade partners, as well as can help them to generate knowledge and confidence about selling one tourism destination or another.

From the perspective of travel agents, eLearning courses about tourism destinations give them a possibility to receive flexible training in a convenient location, for instance, from home, while being in a quiet and relaxed environment or from the office, when they have no clients and have the possibility to discuss training materials with colleagues or a manager. Travel agents believe that eLearning courses bring significant benefits to their personal development, such as knowledge acquisition and confidence, as well as to the overall performance of the company and business generation, for instance, increased sales. Additionally eLearning courses are helpful as travel trade partners are able to be more effective and efficient while serving potential clients.

The study revealed that participation in the eLearning courses depends on the country where travel agents are based, their gender and the type of the agency they work for, while the age of travel agents and their educational level did not show any significant influences on the participation level. At the same time, awareness about the existence of the eLearning courses about tourism destinations depends on the county where travel agents are based, and doesn't depend on their age, gender, type of agency they work for or their educational level.

While analysing the motivations of the travel agents in all three studied countries, few national differences have been noted in the motivations that travel agents have to undertake eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Travel agents undertake eLearning activities as they think eLearning courses are helpful in their work related activities as well as being beneficial on updating needed knowledge. Additionally travel agents appreciate an opportunity to study online easily, while being able to update their knowledge on their own and in a flexible environment. The research revealed that travel agents in the three studied countries are not doing eLearning courses about tourism destinations due to the feeling of being related to their managers or colleagues. As a general conclusion, it can be said that eLearning is a valuable lifelong learning tool used to enhance product knowledge among trade partners and assist them within their sales activities.

5.1. Research contribution

Travel agents training and certification processes have been largely excluded from previous academic research. No published peer-reviewed academic research has been found on the use of technologies for training within the travel agency sector. The output of current research is addressing this research gap with the aim on understanding eLearning offers in the tourism field. The research had looked specifically at eLearning courses offered by tourism ministries for the education and certification of the travel agents globally.

As for the research contribution, this study contributed to tourism eLearning literature, within a given professional family, that of travel agents. This thesis provides the first empirical results in the field of the use of technologies for Human Resource Management of the travel trade, and it is the first extensive study on the eLearning usages within on-the-job training in the hospitality and tourism industry. The research gave the first insights into the awareness of the travel agents on eLearning courses created for them, as well as into the rates of participation in the eLearning courses about tourism destination by the travel agents based in the three studied countries – United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Furthermore, this research has discovered and discussed factors that influence participation in and awareness about destinational eLearning courses.

This research has provided a sound empirically based theoretical framework which can be used further to evaluate motivational drivers that make travel agents subscribe to the eLearning activities. This motivational framework can be applied in the industries with similar structures, such as health, insurance or property managements, where the intermediaries are receiving product training with the help of eLearning courses.

Thanks to this research, several additional conclusions can be made on the evaluation and performance of the travel agents sector, as well as on a changing role that the travel agency sector is experiencing, while looking in particular how it is structured at the present stage in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. As the academic research on the evaluation of travel agents sector is rather scarce, the results of this thesis might be of interest for future research agendas. Furthermore, this research is one of the first studies to give a complex understanding of the human resource management within travel agency sector in a developing/emerging country – India.

As little empirical academic research has been done previously on the level of education, training or certification needed to enter to the travel agents positions worldwide, current thesis provides some conclusions on that concern as well.

5.2. Industry contribution

It should be acknowledged, that this study has been successfully concluded thanks to the tight collaboration and support on the side of the industry representatives. It has already had an industry contribution, through constantly disseminated results, in the form of white papers, reports, presentations at industry events and workshops. Moreover, a dedicated website to this research has been designed and implemented: www.elearning4tourism.com. The website features all available eLearning courses about tourism destinations, along with the links to academic papers and industry presentations in the studied field.

This thesis provides industry partners with the first understanding of the eLearning offers through an explicit benchmarking study (content and functionalities analysis) of all existing national eLearning courses about tourism destinations as well as through two extensive case studies, which looked and presented the managerial perspective on the studied issue.

Marketing, trade partnership and training managers within ministries of tourism, regional and local tourism boards were presented with the first research on travel agents' evaluation of eLearning training platforms.

Additionally, industry representatives have got results from the evaluation of the demand side – through the analysis of current practices, perceptions, motivations of the travel agents. The results of the first generalizable rates for awareness and participation in the eLearning courses among travel agents based in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand were presented along with the evaluated motivations of the travel agents on undertaking destinational eLearning courses in the three studied countries.

This research can help representatives of the DMOs to understand better the role of online training for travel agents, and therefore develop more efficient and effective strategies and actions in their trade and training partnerships globally.

5.3. Limitations

As the limitations were discussed explicitly at the end of every chapter, a summary will be presented further.

The key methodological weaknesses of the supply side analysis can be summarized as follows. The benchmarking study has analysed available eLearning courses about tourism destinations in English, while the presence of the courses in other languages has been just mentioned and tracked. Additionally, the courses studied represent national tourism destinations, while regional tourism offices might have different strategies on training content creation and delivery. This research was based on a period of primary investigation and provided a "snapshot" of a particular period, thus it is limited to a temporal context. As a result, the number, structure of the courses, methods and contents could have been modified or changed after the benchmarking study.

As for the presented case studies, the interviews were done with the destinations that actually do possess successful online trainings, while future research agenda might be dedicated to the interviews with the NTOs that are not undertaking such a training offer or those that were doing but suspended eLearning courses.

While assessing the research design and the methods chosen for the analysis of the demand side, the next limitations should be considered. Within the preliminary online survey, auto selection of the respondents together with a rather law response rate might limit the generalizability of the study.

Another issue was introduced with the use of the phone interviews method. Few questions with a simplified structure were asked both due to the nature of the phone interviews and that travel agents were disturbed during their busy working hours while the interviews were happening. Additionally, supervisors or colleagues that were present during interviews in the offices might have influenced the responses.

Even if the final online questionnaire was able to give crucial insights on the travel agents motivations in attending eLearning courses about tourism destinations, due to the auto-selection of the respondents the results should be cautiously generalised to the entire populations of the travel agents in three concerned countries – United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

5.4. Future research agenda

Given the infancy of the studied field along with the results obtained within this study, future research is encouraged in the direction to investigate the phenomenon – the use of ICTs for Human Resource Management within tourism field in general and for travel agents in particular. The following research directions might be explored.

Further research might focus on another longitudinal benchmarking study of the existing eLearning courses about tourism destinations, in order to evaluate how they will be developing, while possibly enhancing training strategies, interactions and multimedia. eLearning courses about regional tourism destinations might be examined, as they can be different in terms of the structure of the training modules, lengths, as well as methods and strategies used. An interesting output on the future research agenda might be the creation of a set of guidelines for the destination managers on successful eLearning course creation for their travel trade.

It would be interesting to replicate the case studies to other Ministries of Tourism that are managing successful eLearning practices or to those Ministries of Tourism that were managing eLearning course but suspended it. Indeed, the future possibility to extend research methodology to more case studies may enhance the understanding of the training practices of tourism destinations globally.

The next area concerning the demand side of the destinational eLearning offer are worthy of further exploration. Travel agents based in other countries might be used for the analysis of the motivation factors that influence their participation in eLearning courses. New motivational framework might be tested with the travel agents across different cultures. For instance, the behaviour of the travel agents based in China might be analysed, as the certification obtained via online courses about tourism destinations has a legal value in this country, which might influence motivational parameters. The evaluation of the relationship between the complimentary formal and informal learning of the destinational eLearning offer in the perceptions of the travel agents might become a new research line in the future.

Further investigations should strengthen the dissemination of knowledge, which will be helpful in the understanding and diffusing of eLearning practices within the tourism industry. The results of future studies might provide researchers, policy makers as well as industry representatives with advanced knowledge on the perspectives of such training on offer.

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Appendices

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Appendix 3. Switzerland Travel Academy graphic design

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Appendix 2. Switzerland Specialist logo

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Appendix 5. Specialist logo of the pilot version of 100% Pure New Zealand Training program

Appendix 6. Kiwi Specialist Certificate valid in 2012

This certificate is awarded to

INSERT NAME

for successfully completing
Tourism New Zealand's
core online training modules.

5 October 2011

NEW ZEALAND
100% PURE

traveltrade.newzealand.com
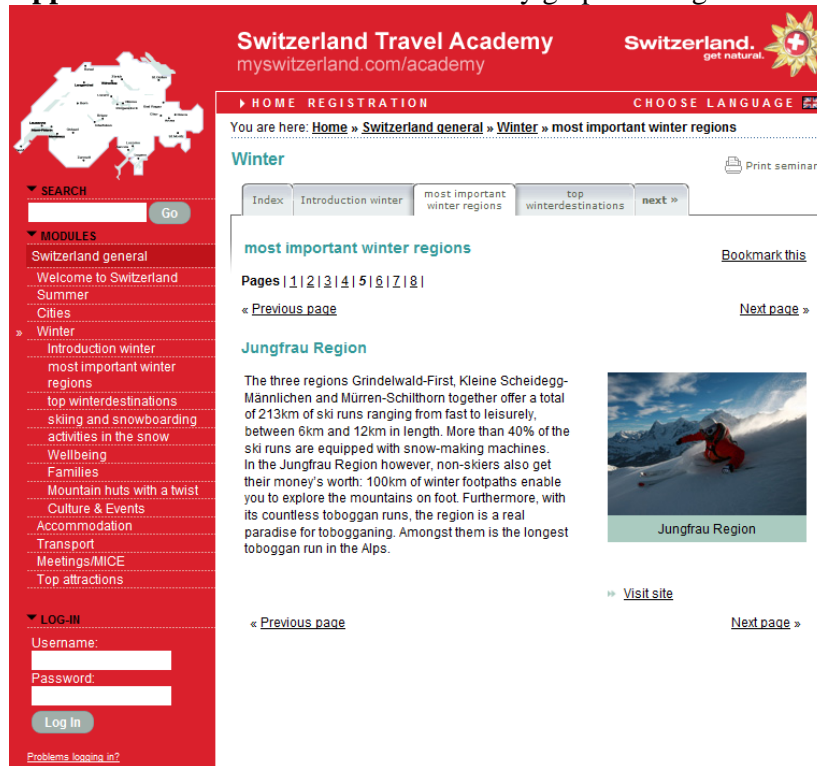
Appendix 7. Home page of 100% Pure New Zealand Training program

‹ Back to the Trade Homepage

You are logged in as Patsara Rungkasemsuk | Logout

Tourism New Zealand's Trade website
Resources for travel sellers who sell New Zealand

You are here: **Home** › **Find Programs** › **Programmes** › (THAI)100% Pure New Zealand Specialist

(THAI)100% Pure New Zealand Specialist

Welcome to the 100% Pure New Zealand Specialist Programme!

As you are a travel seller, you have been automatically enrolled into the programme. Once you have met all the required criteria, you will be certified as an expert in selling New Zealand.

To find out more about the programme click here

(THAI)100% Pure New Zealand Specialist Status - In progress

Module Status - You have completed 9 of the 10 required modules ✖

My Trip - Incomplete ✖

My Training - Completed ✔

Module Status

Select the modules you wish to take below. It is recommended you start with 'Welcome to New Zealand' and 'Practical Travel Knowledge for New Zealand'. Completing any 10 of these modules is required for certification.

	Status
📁 Auckland and Northland	⊘ ━
📁 Canterbury and West Coast	⊘ ━
📁 Coastal Otago, Dunedin and Southland	⊘ ━
📁 Pacific Coast Highway	⊘ ━
📁 Southern Lakes and Central Otago	⊘ ▬
📁 Thermal Explorer Highway	⊘ ━
📁 Western North Island	⊘ ━
📁 Nelson Tasman and Marlborough	⊘ ━
📁 Welcome to New Zealand	⊘ ▬
📁 Practical Travel Knowledge for New Zealand	⊘ ━
📁 Wellington and Wairarapa	⊘ ━
📁 How to Sell Ski New Zealand	⊘ ▬

Appendix 8. Spanish version of the training platform "Expert in Dominican Republic"

Appendix 9. Example of a testing activity from "Mexico Travel Specialist"
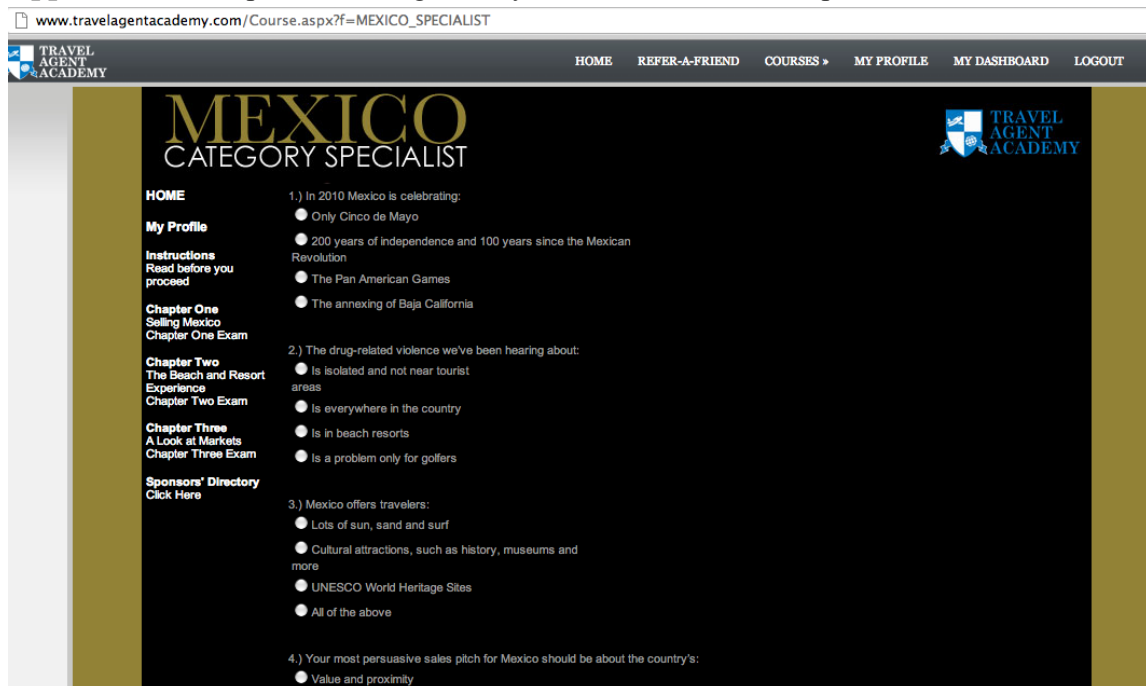
Appendix 10. Familiarization trip of German certified travel agents to Dubai

Mega Famtrip for Best 100 German Travel Agents

Editor | Aug 27, 2012 | Comments 0

It is the first time for the website of the '**Dubai Expert Online Programme**' to see this big number of registrations and visitors. Hundreds of expert companies in marketing Dubai overseas have participated in the e-learning course.

Following the iftar 'fast-breaking' party at the Bab Al Shams Desert Resort, the delegation was briefed on Dubai customs and traditions during the holy month of Ramadan. A presentation was then given on Dubai, and the floor was opened for questions.

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Appendix 16. Example of a printed version of a final test from "Panama Expert"

Specialist Exam

Welcome to the **Panama Tourism Authority's** *Panama Specialist Program* education examination. With the successful completion of this exam, you'll become Panama Destination Specialist with all the tools and support necessary to promote and sell the destination of Panama and qualify to earn credit from The Travel Institute and Canadian Institute of Travel Counsellors.

All of the questions are based on material within this specialist program.

1. On what date did the U.S. transfer control of the Panama Canal to Panama?
   - **A.** Dec. 13, 1998
   - **B.** Dec. 31, 1999
   - **C.** Dec. 13, 1999
   - **D.** Dec. 31, 1998

2. In what century did Panama cut its ties with Spain and join the Americas?
   - **A.** 17th century
   - **B.** 18th century
   - **C.** 20th century
   - **D.** 19th century

3. How many years did it take the U.S. to build the Panama Canal?
   - **A.** 20 years
   - **B.** 15 years
   - **C.** 10 years
   - **D.** 100 years

4. To date, which ship has paid the highest toll at the Panama Canal?
   - **A.** Norwegian Pearl
   - **B.** Coral Princess
   - **C.** Oasis
   - **D.** Disney Fantasy

5. Which indigenous group inhabit the San Blas Islands?
   - **A.** Wounaan
   - **B.** Guna
   - **C.** Teribe
   - **D.** Bugle

6. Which region is the most culturally rich?
   - **A.** Azuero
   - **B.** Darien
   - **C.** Colon
   - **D.** None of the above

7. Which park is located right in Panama City?
   - **A.** Altos del Campana Park
   - **B.** Omar Torrijos National Park
   - **C.** Parque Natural Metropolitano
   - **D.** Portobelo National Park

8. Which museum is scheduled to open in 2013-14?
   - **A.** National Museum
   - **B.** Bridge of Life Biodiversity Museum
   - **C.** Panama Viejo Museum
   - **D.** Museo del Canal Interoceanico

9. What is known as the oldest part of the Casco Antiguo in Panama City?
   - **A.** San Felipe District
   - **B.** Amador Plaza
   - **C.** Cinta Costera
   - **D.** Old Panama

10. In which year will the widening and deepening of the Panama Canal be completed?
    - **A.** It's already completed
    - **B.** End of the decade
    - **C.** 2014
    - **D.** 2013

Appendix 17. Exploratory study introduction

Dear ….,

We are kindly asking you to participate in research, which aims to study travel agents/travel consultants' evaluation of the eLearning courses provided by tourism boards globally.

The survey is conducted by webatelier.net – eTourism research and development lab of the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI – Lugano, Switzerland).

In order to complete the survey, you will need from 15 to 20 minutes.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw from the survey at any point.

Your collaboration is greatly appreciated and will contribute to better understanding of the current role of tourism destinations as educators of travel agents.

Final page of the online survey:
Thank you for your collaboration!
If you want to know more about the research and its results, please, visit www.elearning4tourism.com

Appendix 18. Exploratory study questions

1. Please, indicate If you are
    *   Male
    *   Female

2. Please, indicate your age
    *   Under 30
    *   30 – 39
    *   40 – 49
    *   50 – 59
    *   Over 60

3. What is your nationality?

4. In which country are you based?

5. Where do you currently work for?
    *   Travel Agency (Multiple Agency)
    *   Travel Agency (Independent Agency)
    *   Travel Agency (Call centre/Internet based)
    *   Travel Agency (Homeworker)
    *   Corporate Buyer
    *   Other

6. For how many years have you been working in the tourism industry?
    *   1 - 5
    *   6 - 10
    *   11 - 15
    *   16 – 20
    *   more than 20

7. What's your level of education?
    *   High school degree
    *   Bachelor degree
    *   Master degree
    *   Other

8. How do you currently upgrade your knowledge? (multiple choice)
    *   Attend seminars/conferences
    *   Attend roadshows

- Read books/magazines
- Take tourism e-Learning courses
- Follow specialized websites/blogs/mailing lists
- Follow relevant groups on social networks
- Other

9. Have you ever taken any tourism e-Learning course?
   - Yes
   - No

>> If No to question N° 9, respond questions N° 10-11
>> If Yes to question N° 9, respond questions N° 12-14

10. Why have you never taken an online course in order to upgrade your knowledge?
    - Didn't know about the possibility
    - Not interested
    - Not useful for my business
    - No or little time to do it
    - Other

11. Do you think you may devote some time within next 12 months to online training?
    - Yes
    - No

12. Which types of online training courses have you taken? (multiple choice)
    - Online Academic courses (provided by universities, colleges or training schools)
    - Online Corporate/Product courses (provided by cruise companies, hotel chains, car rentals, etc.)
    - Online Destination courses (provided by tourism destinations /ministries of tourism/ tourism boards)
    - Other

13. On average, how much time do you spend during the week for online training?
    - Less than one hour
    - 1-2 hours
    - more than 2 hours

14. Have you ever taken an online training course about a tourism destination?
- Yes
- No

>>*If No to question N°14, respond questions N°15-19*
>>*If Yes to question N°14, respond from question N°20 until the end*

15. Why have you never done an online destination training? (multiple choice)
- Didn't know about the possibility
- Not interested
- Not useful for my business
- No or little time to do it
- Other

16. What would you like to learn about a destination in an online training? (multiple choice)
- Geographic background
- Information about transportation (how to get to destination, how to move around, etc.)
- General information (high-low seasons, currency, language etc.)
- Main activities at destination (sports, museums, must see attractions)
- Special offers at destination (hotel deals, packages, special excursions, etc.)
- Information about special events at destination
- Top Selling tips
- To learn about which tour operators feature this destination
- Other

17. Do you think that online course may add value to your knowledge about any tourism destination?
- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat
- Significantly

18. Do you think that destination online course may improve your business ability/sales?
- Not at all
- Slightly
- Somewhat

- Significantly

19. Do you think you may devote some time within next 12 months to destination online training?
     - Yes
     - No

20. How many online destination courses have you completed from Jan 2010 up to now?

21. Can you, please, name up to 3 destination online courses that you liked most?

22. Did the above listed online courses change your beliefs/ opinions about the studied destination?
     - Not at all
     - Slightly
     - Somewhat
     - Significantly

23. Did the above listed online courses increase your knowledge about the studied destination?
     - Not at all
     - Slightly
     - Somewhat
     - Significantly

24. Do you feel more confident on selling a specific destination after having completed an online course about it?
     - Not at all
     - Slightly
     - Somewhat
     - Significantly

25. Have you ever sold or recommended a destination to customer because of taking an online course?
     - Yes
     - No

26. Approximately how much time on average do you spend on a single destination e-learning course?
   - Not more than one hour
   - Between 1-2 hours
   - Between 2-3 hours
   - More than 3 hours

27. What is the most interesting and valuable information you did find while taking a destination online course? (multiple choice)
   - Geographic background
   - Information about transportation (how to get to destination, how to move around, etc.)
   - General information (high-low seasons, currency, language etc.)
   - Main activities at destination (sports, museums, must see attractions)
   - Special offers at destination (hotel deals, packages, special excursions, etc.)
   - Information about special events at destination
   - Top Selling tips
   - Tour operators list that feature this destination
   - Other

28. Is there any reason why you might not complete an online destination training course (multiple choice)
   - No – I always complete all the courses in full
   - Yes – some are too long
   - Yes – some are too boring
   - Yes – some have too many testing activities
   - Yes – some have too much of textual information
   - Yes – some presented information that was not useful for me
   - Yes, because I knew already everything about the destination
   - Yes, because I needed more assistance from a DMO side
   - Other

29. What is your level of satisfaction about the destination online trainings you have done in the past?
   - Not at all satisfied
   - Slightly satisfied
   - Somewhat satisfied
   - Significantly satisfied

30. Please, select three main reasons for you on taking destination online training?
    - To sell more and earn more
    - To enrich my curriculum
    - To respond my client's needs/ requests
    - To respond my manager's requests
    - To expose official certification in my office
    - To win a competition
    - To participate in educational/familiarization trips
    - To access to special offers
    - To be registered on the destination official travel agents' list
    - Other

31. Are you willing to take other online courses about destinations in the next 12 months?
    - Yes
    - No

32. Would you recommend such an online course about destinations to a colleague of you?
    - Yes
    - No

33. Why do you believe it is valuable to attend an online course about a destination besides of browsing destinations websites, attending in-presence training workshops, etc.?

34. Please, leave any other comments.

Appendix 19. Interview protocol and topics

Time of interview:
Date:
Company:
Company location:
Name:
Job title:
Job description:

1. Motivation of a head office of a DMO and respected market to have an eLearning course for travel trade partners
2. Main goals of the platform
3. Management structure of the platform (departments and employees involved) within a DMO
4. History of the eLearning course
5. Design process
6. Content and testing activities development
7. Technical development
8. Content and multimedia adoption to market needs
9. User registration process management
10. Evaluation activities (e.g. usability studies; surveys on platform performance, etc.)
11. Relationships with the travel agents after certification (e.g. familiarization trips, incentives, gadgets, etc.)
12. Statistical information (accesses, number of agents registered and certified, etc.)
13. Budget
14. Competitors

Appendix 20. Phone interview protocol

Time of interview:
Date:
Phone number:
Company name:
Company location (country/region):

Introductory words
Thank you for participating in this phone interview concerning travel agents' perceptions of taking eLearning courses created by Destination Management Organizations about tourism destinations.

This research is a part of an extensive research project on eLearning in hospitality and tourism field being held by the University of Lugano (Switzerland) in collaboration with the Business school of the Strathclyde University (Glasgow, UK) and New Zealand Tourism Research Institute of the Auckland University of Technology (Auckland, New Zealand) and it evaluates the participation in eLearning courses of travel agents based in three countries: United Kingdom, India and New Zealand.

Your name and the name of the company will remain anonymous, as well as any remarks that you make during the interview will remain confidential.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw from the phone interview at any point.

The interview will take approximately from six to eight minutes.

Concluding remarks:
Thank you for your time for this interview. I would like to remind you again that your responses would remain confidential. If you want to know more about the research itself and its results, please, visit www.elearning4tourism.com

Appendix 21. Phone interview questions

1.   Please, indicate if you are:
     - Male
     - Female

2.   Please, indicate your age:

3.   In which type of the agency do you work:
     - Independent business (consultants, self-employed, homework)
     - Chain (e.g. STA travel, Flight Center, Thomas Cook)

4.   For how many years have you been working in the tourism industry?

5.   What's your level of education?
     - Secondary school
     - Vocational training (further education)
     - University degree

6.   Can you, please, name your main strategies to learn/update your knowledge about tourism destinations (up to 3)?

7.   Have you ever taken any eLearning courses about a tourism destination?
     - Yes
     - No

>> If Yes to question N°7, respond from question N°9 on
>> If No to question N°7, respond question N°8

8.   Are you aware that those types of training exist?
     - Yes
     - No

>> If Yes to question N°8, respond questions N°8a and N°8b
>> If No to question N° – end of the interview

8.a. Why have you never taken online destination training?

8. b. Do you think you may devote some time within the next 12 months to online trainings?

- Yes
- No

9. Usually you are attending eLearning training courses about tourism destinations because its:

- your personal decision
- manager or company decision (it's mandatory)

10. From which source of information have you heard about those training?

- Destination communication
- Manager
- Company internal information
- Colleagues
- Internet
- Promotional brochures
- Other

11. How many online destination courses have you completed in the last two years?

12. Can you, please, name up to three destination online courses that you liked most?

13. Can you, please, name the most important reasons why are you taking destination eLearning course? (up to 5)

14. Are you willing to take other online courses about tourism destinations in the next twelve months?

- Yes
- No

Appendix 22. Online questionnaire introduction

Dear….
We are kindly asking you to participate in research, which aims to study travel agents/travel consultants' motivations for taking eLearning courses provided by tourism boards.

This survey is a part of an extensive research project on eLearning in the hospitality and tourism field being held by the University of Lugano (Switzerland) in collaboration with the Business School of Strathclyde University (Glasgow, UK) and New Zealand Tourism Research Institute of the Auckland University of Technology (Auckland, New Zealand).

This survey will help to identify how eLearning providers and destinations can better meet the needs of travel agents with regards to content development and instructional design.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the survey at any point.

This survey has 17 items and is divided into three pages. It will take you from 7 to 10 minutes to complete.

Your collaboration is greatly appreciated and will contribute to the advancement of the academic research in the field.

Final page of the online survey:
Thank you for your collaboration.
If you want to know more about the research itself and its results, please, visit www.elearning4tourism.com

Appendix 23. Online Questionnaire

1. Please, indicate in which country you are based
   - India
   - New Zealand
   - United Kingdom

2. Please, indicate if you are:
   - Male
   - Female

3. Please, indicate your age:

4. In which type of the agency do you work?
   - Independent business (consultants, self-employed, homework)
   - Chain or franchise

5. For how many years have you been working in the tourism industry?

6. What's your level of education?
   - Secondary school
   - Further education/Vocational training
   - University degree

7. Can you, please, name your main strategies to learn/update your knowledge about tourism destinations? (3 max)
   - On-the-job training
   - Peer - to - peer training
   - Attend seminars/conferences
   - Attend road-shows
   - Read books/magazines
   - Follow specialized websites/blogs/mailing lists
   - Follow relevant groups on social networks
   - Online search
   - Travelling to the destinations
   - Other

8. How many online courses about tourism destinations have you completed?

9. Please, name up to three online courses about tourism destinations that you found the most beneficial?

10. You are attending online courses about tourism destinations because its:
   - your personal decision
   - manager or company decision (it's mandatory)
   - a part of the internal evaluation/promotion procedure in you company (you are encouraged to do so)

Please, select one response from the following statements with regards to your motivational aspects of attending online training courses about tourism destinations.

11. I participate in online courses provided by tourism destinations because …

it's enjoyable	strongly agree /agree /neutral/disagree /strongly disagree /not applicable
it's interesting	
it's quick	
it's free of charge	
it's useful	
it's easy to learn and familiarize myself with the help of online training	
I am interested in eLearning from a technical point of view (to see how it works)	
I am able to learn on my own without an instructor	
I can study on my pace	
I can study in the office (e.g. when there are no clients)	
I am able to access training away from work (e.g. from home)	
my learning is assessed	
information is structured to suit the needs of a travel agent	
training content is relevant for my job, as it was created specifically for travel agents	

12. I participate in online courses provided by tourism destinations because …

I can get personal satisfaction and enrichment	strongly agree /agree /neutral/disagree /strongly disagree /not applicable
I can keep myself updated	
it improves the quality of my learning	
it helps me to keep my skills updated	
because my manager does it	
because my colleagues do it	

13. I participate in online courses provided by tourism destinations because …

it enriches my CV it helps me to better serve clients I feel more confident in serving clients I can acquire new knowledge about the destination I can sell more and earn more it helps me to get a competitive advantage over other travel agents in my company/region	strongly agree /agree /neutral/disagree /strongly disagree /not applicable

14. I participate in online courses provided by tourism destinations because …

I receive an official certificate I can win an educational/ familiarization trips I can get incentives and gadgets from the destination (e.g. pens, maps, T-shirts) I can get access to special offers/ discounts from the destination I can be registered on the official travel agent list of the destination I receive some form of explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)	strongly agree /agree /neutral/disagree /strongly disagree /not applicable

15. On average, were you satisfied with your previous eLearning experience?
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

16. Are you willing to take other online courses about tourism destinations in the next twelve months?
- Yes
- No

16. Would you like to add some comments?

Appendix 24. Benchmarking grid for content and functionalities analysis of the national eLearning courses about tourism destinations

i.) General information												
Country	**Website**	**Title**	**Name of the organization**	**Official logo**	**Language**	**Intended markets**	**Cost to follow**	**Timing**	**Declared benefits for TA**	**Updated info**	**Date of last access**
Antigua and Barbuda	http://azantiguabarbuda.com	A-Z Antigua and Barbuda	Antigua and Barbuda Tourist Office	1	English	UK	Free	4 h	TA list, discounts	yes	2 sept 2012
Australia	http://www.aussiespecialist.com/	The Aussie Specialist program	Tourism Australia	1	10 languages	Worldwide	Free	6 -7 h	Specialist certificate, sales boost	yes	6 sept 2012
Austria	http://www.acts-academy.com/home	Austrian Certified Travel Specialist	Austrian National Tourist Office	1	English	India + Arabic countries	Free	8 h.	Certificate, special offers	not	7 sept 2012
Bahamas	http://staging.travelagentacademy.com/BAHAMAS	Bahamas Specialist Program	Bahamas Tourist Office	1	English	USA	Free	6-7 h.	Certificate, invitation to trade events	yes	9 sept 2012

ii.) People involved											
Publisher											**Users**
EDU	**Traveluni**	**Travelagentacademy**	**Online Travel Training**	**Destination ventures**	**DMO itself**	**Equator Learning**	**The Travel Institute**	**Onile Travel Edu**	**TAU**		**Only travel agents**
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0		0
0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0		0
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		1

iii.)	Methods and strategies															
Study alone	Study with others	Tutor/ assistance	Certificate	N of modules	N of test activ.	Need to pass test to proceed	Video	Text	Maps	Glossary	Timing	Possibility to print	Forum/ chat	Video conference with tutor	Email	Suggested websites
1	0	0	1	4	20 quest-s* module	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
1	0	0	1	4	30 quest-s*+exam	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
1	0	0	1	5	12 quest-s* module	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
1	0	0	1	6	10 quest-s* module	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1

iv.)	Contents									
Destination	Itinerary planning	Selling tips	Geography	History, culture and traditions	Demographics	Formalities	Accommodation	Transport.	Languages	Suggested websites
1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1

Appendix 25. Knowledge upgrade strategies among travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Total N= 627. A respondent could give up to three answers
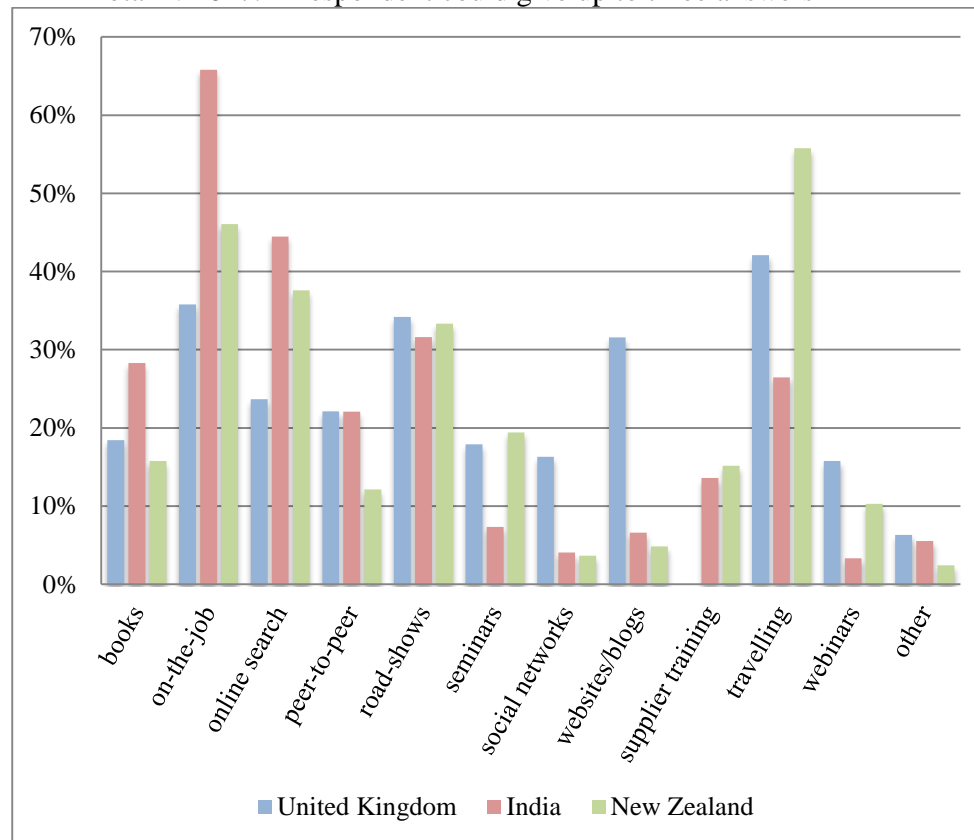
	books	on-the-job	online search	peer-to-peer	road-shows	seminars	social networks	websites	supplier training	travelling	webinars	other	Total
UK	35 (18.4%)	68 (35.8%)	45 (23.7%)	42 (22.1%)	65 (34.2%)	34 (17.9%)	31 (16.3%)	60 (31.6%)	0 (0.0%)	80 (42.1%)	30 (15.8%)	12 (6.3%)	190 (100%)
India	77 (28.3%)	179 (65.8%)	121 (44.5%)	60 (22.1%)	86 (31.6%)	20 (7.4%)	11 (4.0%)	18 (6.6%)	37 (13.6%)	72 (26.5%)	9 (3.3%)	15 (5.5%)	272 (100%)
NZd	26 (15.8%)	76 (46.1%)	62 (37.6%)	20 (12.1%)	55 (33.3%)	32 (19.4%)	6 (3.6%)	8 (4.8%)	25 (15.2%)	92 (55.8%)	17 (10.3%)	4 (2.4%)	165 (100%)
Total	138 (22.0%)	323 (51.5%)	228 (36.4%)	122 (19.5%)	206 (32.9%)	86 (13.7%)	48 (7.7%)	86 (13.7%)	62 (9.9%)	244 (38.9%)	56 (8.9%)	31(4.9%)	627 (100%)

Appendix 26. Participation in eLearning courses by travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Univariate Analysis of Variance (Full Factorial Model). Tests of Between-Subjects Effects.

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	40.7045864385268 (a)	93	.438	2.223	.000	.280
Intercept	428.139	1	428.139	2174.859	.000	.803
country	7.074	2	3.537	17.966	.000	.063
gender	1.509	1	1.509	7.663	.006	.014
age	.570	2	.285	1.447	.236	.005
type_of_agency	.816	1	.816	4.144	.042	.008
education	.457	2	.228	1.160	.314	.004
country * gender	.023	2	.012	.058	.943	.000
country * age	1.636	4	.409	2.078	.082	.015
country * type_of_agency	.457	2	.229	1.162	.314	.004
country * education	.654	4	.163	.830	.506	.006
gender * age	.957	2	.479	2.432	.089	.009
gender * type_of_agency	.015	1	.015	.075	.785	.000
gender * education	.007	2	.004	.019	.981	.000
age* type_of_agency	.160	2	.080	.406	.666	.002
age* education	.981	4	.245	1.245	.291	.009
type_of_agency * education	.231	2	.116	.588	.556	.002

country * gender * age	1.732	4	.433	2.199	.068	.016
country * gender * type_of_agency	.398	2	.199	1.011	.365	.004
country * gender * education	.599	4	.150	.761	.551	.006
country * gender * type_of_agency	.773	4	.193	.981	.417	.007
country * age * education	1.730	8	.216	1.098	.363	.016
country * type_of_agency * education	.274	4	.068	.347	.846	.003
gender * age * type_of_agency	.360	2	.180	.914	.402	.003
gender * age * education	1.823	4	.456	2.315	.056	.017
gender * type_of_agency * education	.065	2	.032	.164	.849	.001
age * type_of_agency * education	.925	4	.231	1.175	.321	.009
country * gender * age * type_of_agency	.300	3	.100	.508	.677	.003
country *gender * age * education	1.259	7	.180	.913	.496	.012
country * gender * type_of_agency * education	.244	3	.081	.414	.743	.002
country * age * type_of_agency * education	.540	5	.108	.548	.740	.005
gender * age * type_of_agency * education	.040	3	.013	.067	.977	.000

country * gender * age * type_of_agency * education	.000	0	.	.	.	.000
Error	104.925	533	.197			
Total	1818.000	627				
Corrected Total	145.630	626				

(a) R Squared=.280

Appendix 27. Participation in eLearning courses by travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Univariate Analysis of Variance (Full Factorial Model). Estimated Marginal Means Effects

COUNTRY Estimates

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

country	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	**Upper Bound**
UK	1.377	.042	1.294	1.460
India	1.831	.050	1.733	1.930
NZ	1.711	.043	1.625	1.796

Pairwise Comparisons

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) country	(J) country	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	**Upper Bound**
UK	India	-.455	.066	.000	-.584	-.325
	NZ	-.334	.061	.000	-.453	-.215
India	UK	.455	.066	.000	.325	.584
	NZ	.121	.066	.070	-.010	.251
NZ	UK	.334	.061	.000	.215	.453
	India	-.121	.066	.070	-.251	.010

Univariate Tests

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	10.799	2	5.399	27.428	.000	.093
Error	104.925	533	.197			

GENDER Estimates

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	1.714	.041	1.633	1.795
Female	1.565	.033	1.501	1.630

Pairwise Comparisons

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) gender	(J) gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	Female	.149	.053	.005	.045	.252
Female	Male	-.149	.053	.005	-.252	-.045

Univariate Tests

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	1.567	1	1.567	7.961	.005	.015
Error	104.925	533	.197			

AGE Estimates

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

			95% Confidence Interval	
age	Mean	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
less than 32	1.695	.046	1.604	1.786
from 33 to 47	1.635	.040	1.557	1.713
more than 48	1.576	.049	1.481	1.671

Pairwise Comparisons

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	er Bound
	from 33 to 47	.060	.061	.326	-.060	.180
less than 32	more than 48	.119	.067	.077	-.013	.251
	less than 32	-.060	.061	.326	-.180	.060
from 33 to 47	more than 48	.059	.063	.347	-.064	.182
	less than 32	-.119	.067	.077	-.251	.013
more than 48	from 33 to 47	-.059	.063	.347	-.182	.064

Univariate Tests

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	.618	2	.309	1.570	.209	.006
Error	104.925	533	.197			

TYPE OF AGENCY Estimates

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

| type_of_agency | Mean | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval | |
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Independent	1.712	.029	1.654	1.770
Chain	1.539	.046	1.448	1.630

Pairwise Comparisons

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

| (I) type_of_agency | (J) type_of_agency | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig.c | 95% Confidence Interval for Differencec | |
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Independent	Chain	.173	.055	.002	.065	.281
Chain	Independent	-.173	.055	.002	-.281	-.065

Univariate Tests

DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	1.959	1	1.959	9.951	.002	.018
Error	104.925	533	.197			

EDUCATION
Estimates
DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

education	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Secondary School	1.657	.057	1.546	1.768
Vocational training	1.668	.039	1.592	1.745
University degree	1.584	.041	1.503	1.666

Pairwise Comparisons
DV: Done eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) education	(J) education	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Secondary School	Vocational training	-.011	.069	.873	-.146	.124
	University degree	.073	.070	.298	-.065	.211
Vocational training	Secondary School	.011	.069	.873	-.124	.146
	University degree	.084	.057	.141	-.028	.196
University degree	Secondary School	-.073	.070	.298	-.211	.065
	Vocational training	-.084	.057	.141	-.196	.028

Univariate Tests

DV: Done eLearning courses about turism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	.469	2	.235	1.191	.305	.004
Error	104.925	533	.197			

Appendix 28. Awareness about eLearning courses by travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Univariate Analysis of Variance (Full Factorial Model). Tests of Between-Subjects Effects.

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	30.1346536483223 (a)	83	.363	1.648	.001	.304
Intercept	188.999	1	188.999	857.670	.000	.733
country	3.928	2	1.964	8.912	.000	.054
type_of_agency	.653	1	.653	2.964	.086	.009
gender	.726	1	.726	3.294	.071	.010
age	.334	2	.167	.758	.470	.005
education	.104	2	.052	.236	.790	.002
country * type_of_agency	.564	2	.282	1.279	.280	.008
country * gender	.112	2	.056	.254	.776	.002
country * age	.663	4	.166	.752	.557	.010
country * education	1.125	4	.281	1.277	.279	.016
type_of_agency * gender	.136	1	.136	.619	.432	.002
type_of_agency * age	.088	2	.044	.200	.819	.001
type_of_agency * education	.239	2	.119	.541	.582	.003
gender * age	.661	2	.330	1.499	.225	.009

gender * education	.124	2	.062	.282	.754	.002
age* education	2.066	4	.517	2.344	.055	.029
country * type_of_agency * gender	.110	1	.110	.498	.481	.002
country * type_of_agency * age	.122	4	.030	.138	.968	.002
country * type_of_agency * education	.608	4	.152	.690	.600	.009
country * gender * age	.258	4	.064	.292	.883	.004
country * gender * education	1.271	4	.318	1.442	.220	.018
country * age * education	1.432	8	.179	.812	.592	.020
type_of_agency * gender * age	.042	2	.021	.094	.910	.001
type_of_agency *gender * education	.181	2	.090	.410	.664	.003
type_of_agency * age * education	.333	4	.083	.378	.825	.005
gender * age * education	.149	4	.037	.169	.954	.002
country * type_of_agency * gender * age	.219	1	.219	.993	.320	.003
country * type_of_agency * gender * education	.389	1	.389	1.764	.185	.006
country * type_of_agency * age * education	.788	2	.394	1.787	.169	.011
country * gender * age * education	1.306	4	.326	1.482	.208	.019

type_of_agency * gender * age * education	.412	2	.206	.935	.394	.006
country * type_of_agency * gender * age * education	.000	0	.	.	.	.000
Error	68.974	313	.220			
Total	970.000	397				
Corrected Total	99.108	396				

(a). R-Squared =.304

Appendix 29. Awareness about eLearning courses by travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand. Univariate Analysis of Variance (Full Factorial Model). Estimated Marginal Means Effects

COUNTRY
Estimates
DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

country	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
UK	1.328	.065	1.199	1.457
India	1.628	.055	1.519	1.737
NZ	1.280	.055	1.171	1.389

Pairwise Comparisons
DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) country	(J) country	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	India	-.300	.086	.001	-.468	-.131
UK	NZ	.048	.086	.574	-.121	.217
	UK	.300	.086	.001	.131	.468
India	NZ	.348	.078	.000	.194	.502
	UK	-.048	.086	.574	-.217	.121
NZ	India	-.348	.078	.000	-.502	-.194

Univariate Tests

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	4.934	2	2.467	11.194	.000	.067
Error	68.974	313	.220			

GENDER Estimates

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	1.463	.049	1.366	1.560
Female	1.356	.046	1.265	1.448

Pairwise Comparisons

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) gender	(J) gender	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	Female	.107	.068	.116	-.026	.239
Female	Male	-.107	.068	.116	-.239	.026

Univariate Tests

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	.547	1	.547	2.484	.116	.008
Error	68.974	313	.220			

AGE Estimates

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

age	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
less than 32	1.505	.056	1.395	1.614
from 33 to 47	1.345	.054	1.239	1.451
more than 48	1.372	.066	1.241	1.503

Pairwise Comparisons

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
less than 32	from 33 to 47	.159	.078	.040	.007	.312
	more than 48	.133	.087	.127	-.038	.303
from 33 to 47	less than 32	-.159	.078	.040	-.312	-.007
	more than 48	-.027	.086	.755	-.195	.142
more than 48	less than 32	-.133	.087	.127	-.303	.038
	from 33 to 47	.027	.086	.755	-.142	.195

Univariate Tests

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	1.028	2	.514	2.332	.099	.015
Error	68.974	313	.220			

TYPE OF AGENCY Estimates

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

type_of_agency	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Independent	1.503	.036	1.432	1.575
Chain	1.269	.064	1.143	1.395

Pairwise Comparisons

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) type_of_agency	(J) type_of_agency	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Independent	Chain	.235	.074	.002	.090	.380
Chain	Independent	-.235	.074	.002	-.380	-.090

Univariate Tests

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	2.232	1	2.232	10.128	.002	.031
Error	68.974	313	.220			

EDUCATION Estimates

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

education	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Secondary School	1.414	.072	1.273	1.555
Vocational training	1.393	.052	1.291	1.495
University degree	1.421	.054	1.315	1.526

Pairwise Comparisons

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

(I) education	(J) education	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.c	95% Confidence Interval for Differencec	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Secondary School	Vocational training	.020	.088	.818	-.153	.194
	University degree	-.007	.089	.939	-.183	.169
Vocational training	Secondary School	-.020	.088	.818	-.194	.153
	University degree	-.027	.075	.715	-.174	.120
University degree	Secondary School	.007	.089	.939	-.169	.183
	Vocational training	.027	.075	.715	-.120	.174

Univariate Tests

DV: Aware about eLearning courses about tourism destinations (yes=1; not=2)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Contrast	.031	2	.016	.071	.932	.000
Error	68.974	313	.220			

Appendix 30. Motivations of travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations

Total N of respondents = 249. A respondent could give up to five answers.
DV: Motivations on undertaking eLearning courses (2=strongly disagree; 4=disagree; 6=neutral; 8=agree; 10=strongly agree)

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
enjoyable	UK	70	7.40	1.680	.201	7.00	7.80	4	10
	India	112	8.48	1.401	.132	8.22	8.74	4	10
	NZ	67	7.25	1.551	.189	6.88	7.63	2	10
	Total	249	7.85	1.624	.103	7.64	8.05	2	10
interesting	UK	70	8.26	1.520	.182	7.89	8.62	4	10
	India	112	9.07	1.228	.116	8.84	9.30	6	10
	NZ	67	7.97	1.497	.183	7.60	8.34	2	10
	Total	249	8.55	1.467	.093	8.36	8.73	2	10
quick	UK	70	6.89	2.423	.290	6.31	7.46	2	10
	India	111	8.13	1.733	.164	7.80	8.45	4	10
	NZ	67	6.72	2.021	.247	6.22	7.21	2	10
	Total	248	7.40	2.123	.135	7.13	7.66	2	10
free of charge	UK	70	8.40	1.545	.185	8.03	8.77	6	10
	India	111	8.59	1.675	.159	8.28	8.91	2	10

	NZ	66	8.24	1.589	.196	7.85	8.63	2	10
	Total	247	8.45	1.617	.103	8.24	8.65	2	10
useful	UK	70	8.66	1.473	.176	8.31	9.01	4	10
	India	112	9.41	1.027	.097	9.22	9.60	6	10
	NZ	67	8.72	1.139	.139	8.44	8.99	6	10
	Total	249	9.01	1.246	.079	8.86	9.17	4	10
easy to learn and familiarize	UK	70	8.14	1.780	.213	7.72	8.57	4	10
	India	112	9.04	1.230	.116	8.81	9.27	6	10
	NZ	67	8.03	1.687	.206	7.62	8.44	2	10
	Total	249	8.51	1.594	.101	8.32	8.71	2	10
interested in from the technical point of view	UK	68	5.91	2.573	.312	5.29	6.53	2	10
	India	110	7.58	2.332	.222	7.14	8.02	2	10
	NZ	62	5.71	2.198	.279	5.15	6.27	2	10
	Total	240	6.63	2.520	.163	6.30	6.95	2	10
can study on my own without assistance	UK	70	8.37	1.241	.148	8.08	8.67	4	10
	India	112	9.02	1.315	.124	8.77	9.26	4	10
	NZ	67	8.15	1.569	.192	7.77	8.53	2	10
	Total	249	8.60	1.417	.090	8.43	8.78	2	10
can study at my own pace	UK	70	8.57	1.137	.136	8.30	8.84	6	10
	India	112	9.14	1.222	.115	8.91	9.37	6	10
	NZ	67	8.60	1.303	.159	8.28	8.91	6	10
	Total	249	8.84	1.248	.079	8.68	8.99	6	10

can study in the office	UK	69	8.58	1.459	.176	8.23	8.93	2	10
	India	111	8.58	1.856	.176	8.23	8.93	2	10
	NZ	66	8.24	1.806	.222	7.80	8.69	2	10
	Total	246	8.49	1.740	.111	8.27	8.71	2	10
can study from home	UK	70	7.77	1.972	.236	7.30	8.24	2	10
	India	112	8.70	1.582	.149	8.40	8.99	2	10
	NZ	67	7.46	1.861	.227	7.01	7.92	2	10
	Total	249	8.10	1.851	.117	7.87	8.34	2	10
my learning is assessed	UK	67	6.78	2.173	.265	6.25	7.31	2	10
	India	111	8.56	1.576	.150	8.26	8.86	4	10
	NZ	67	7.22	1.968	.240	6.74	7.70	2	10
	Total	245	7.71	2.019	.129	7.45	7.96	2	10
information is structured to suit the needs of a travel agent	UK	70	7.91	1.847	.221	7.47	8.35	2	10
	India	112	8.84	1.359	.128	8.58	9.09	6	10
	NZ	67	8.39	1.218	.149	8.09	8.69	6	10
	Total	249	8.46	1.524	.097	8.27	8.65	2	10
training content was created specifically for travel agents	UK	68	8.41	1.567	.190	8.03	8.79	4	10
	India	112	8.91	1.312	.124	8.67	9.16	4	10
	NZ	67	8.39	1.314	.160	8.07	8.71	4	10
	Total	247	8.63	1.405	.089	8.46	8.81	4	10
personal satisfaction	UK	69	7.94	1.608	.194	7.56	8.33	4	10

and enrichment	India	112	8.86	1.251	.118	8.62	9.09	6	10
	NZ	67	7.58	1.578	.193	7.20	7.97	2	10
	Total	248	8.26	1.547	.098	8.06	8.45	2	10
	UK	70	8.46	1.411	.169	8.12	8.79	4	10
keep myself updated	India	112	9.30	1.030	.097	9.11	9.50	6	10
	NZ	67	8.63	1.112	.136	8.36	8.90	6	10
	Total	249	8.88	1.227	.078	8.73	9.04	4	10
	UK	70	8.23	1.253	.150	7.93	8.53	4	10
improves the quality of my learning	India	112	9.23	1.082	.102	9.03	9.43	6	10
	NZ	67	8.06	1.516	.185	7.69	8.43	4	10
	Total	249	8.63	1.367	.087	8.46	8.81	4	10
	UK	70	8.43	1.440	.172	8.09	8.77	4	10
helps me to keep my skills updated	India	112	9.25	1.009	.095	9.06	9.44	6	10
	NZ	67	8.57	1.340	.164	8.24	8.89	4	10
	Total	249	8.84	1.286	.082	8.67	9.00	4	10
	UK	57	4.70	1.752	.232	4.24	5.17	2	10
my manager does it	India	89	5.21	2.228	.236	4.74	5.68	2	10
	NZ	55	5.75	1.808	.244	5.26	6.23	2	10
	Total	201	5.21	2.020	.142	4.93	5.49	2	10
	UK	61	4.52	1.894	.242	4.04	5.01	2	10
my colleagues do it	India	89	5.17	2.370	.251	4.67	5.67	2	10
	NZ	58	5.62	1.735	.228	5.16	6.08	2	10
	Total	208	5.11	2.106	.146	4.82	5.39	2	10

enriches my CV	UK	68	6.76	2.240	.272	6.22	7.31	2	10
	India	106	7.87	1.937	.188	7.49	8.24	2	10
	NZ	64	6.88	1.704	.213	6.45	7.30	4	10
	Total	238	7.29	2.032	.132	7.03	7.55	2	10
better serve clients	UK	70	8.57	1.741	.208	8.16	8.99	2	10
	India	112	9.29	1.134	.107	9.07	9.50	6	10
	NZ	67	8.66	1.175	.144	8.37	8.94	6	10
	Total	249	8.92	1.378	.087	8.74	9.09	2	10
more confident in serving clients	UK	70	8.40	1.944	.232	7.94	8.86	2	10
	India	112	9.30	1.130	.107	9.09	9.52	6	10
	NZ	67	8.51	1.223	.149	8.21	8.81	6	10
	Total	249	8.84	1.484	.094	8.65	9.02	2	10
acquire new knowledge	UK	70	9.06	1.115	.133	8.79	9.32	6	10
	India	112	9.34	.945	.089	9.16	9.52	8	10
	NZ	67	8.69	1.183	.145	8.40	8.98	6	10
	Total	249	9.08	1.091	.069	8.95	9.22	6	10
sell more and earn more	UK	70	7.94	1.801	.215	7.51	8.37	2	10
	India	112	8.70	1.488	.141	8.42	8.97	4	10
	NZ	67	7.79	1.601	.196	7.40	8.18	4	10
	Total	249	8.24	1.658	.105	8.03	8.45	2	10
gives me competitive	UK	69	8.12	1.778	.214	7.69	8.54	2	10

advantage	India	111	8.79	1.508	.143	8.51	9.08	4	10
	NZ	66	7.79	1.494	.184	7.42	8.16	4	10
	Total	246	8.33	1.637	.104	8.13	8.54	2	10
	UK	69	6.70	2.322	.280	6.14	7.25	2	10
official certificate	India	112	8.68	1.508	.142	8.40	8.96	4	10
	NZ	66	6.85	1.858	.229	6.39	7.31	2	10
	Total	247	7.64	2.083	.133	7.37	7.90	2	10
	UK	70	8.17	1.659	.198	7.78	8.57	4	10
educational/ familiarization trips	India	110	7.91	2.070	.197	7.52	8.30	2	10
	NZ	66	7.45	1.666	.205	7.05	7.86	4	10
	Total	246	7.86	1.868	.119	7.63	8.10	2	10
	UK	69	7.36	1.955	.235	6.89	7.83	2	10
incentives and prizes	India	107	7.35	2.088	.202	6.95	7.75	2	10
	NZ	66	6.52	1.730	.213	6.09	6.94	2	10
	Total	242	7.12	1.986	.128	6.87	7.38	2	10
	UK	70	7.43	1.638	.196	7.04	7.82	4	10
access to special offers	India	109	7.82	1.837	.176	7.47	8.17	4	10
	NZ	66	7.00	1.728	.213	6.58	7.42	2	10
	Total	245	7.49	1.778	.114	7.26	7.71	2	10
be registered on official travel agent list	UK	69	7.97	2.072	.249	7.47	8.47	2	10
	India	111	8.76	1.403	.133	8.49	9.02	4	10

	NZ	67	8.21	1.562	.191	7.83	8.59	2	10
	Total	247	8.39	1.685	.107	8.18	8.60	2	10
get explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)	UK	63	6.13	2.685	.338	5.45	6.80	2	10
	India	96	6.38	2.254	.230	5.92	6.83	2	10
	NZ	59	6.03	1.761	.229	5.57	6.49	2	10
	Total	218	6.21	2.266	.153	5.91	6.51	2	10

Appendix 31. Motivations of travel agents in the United Kingdom, India and New Zealand on undertaking eLearning courses about tourism destinations. Univariate Analysis of Variance. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects
DV: Motivations on undertaking eLearning courses (2=strongly disagree; 4=disagree; 6=neutral; 8=agree; 10=strongly agree)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
enjoyable	Between Groups	82.750	2	41.375	17.811	.000
	Within Groups	571.451	246	2.323		
	Total	654.201	248			
interesting	Between Groups	58.979	2	29.489	15.281	.000
	Within Groups	474.740	246	1.930		
	Total	533.719	248			
quick	Between Groups	108.342	2	54.171	13.207	.000
	Within Groups	1004.932	245	4.102		
	Total	1113.274	247			
free of charge	Between Groups	5.334	2	2.667	1.021	.362
	Within	637.678	244	2.613		

	Groups					
	Total	643.012	246			
useful	Between Groups	32.473	2	16.237	11.331	.000
	Within Groups	352.491	246	1.433		
	Total	384.964	248			
easy to learn and familiarize	Between Groups	55.832	2	27.916	11.956	.000
	Within Groups	574.369	246	2.335		
	Total	630.201	248			
interested in from the technical point of view	Between Groups	187.242	2	93.621	16.670	.000
	Within Groups	1331.008	237	5.616		
	Total	1518.250	239			
can study on my own without assistance	Between Groups	36.824	2	18.412	9.829	.000
	Within Groups	460.815	246	1.873		
	Total	497.639	248			
can study at my own pace	Between Groups	19.272	2	9.636	6.460	.002
	Within	366.977	246	1.492		

	Groups					
	Total	386.249	248			
can study in the office	Between Groups	5.432	2	2.716	.897	.409
	Within Groups	736.032	243	3.029		
	Total	741.463	245			
can study from home	Between Groups	74.607	2	37.303	11.846	.000
	Within Groups	774.678	246	3.149		
	Total	849.285	248			
my learning is assessed	Between Groups	154.188	2	77.094	22.193	.000
	Within Groups	840.653	242	3.474		
	Total	994.841	244			
information is structured to suit the needs of a travel agent	Between Groups	37.304	2	18.652	8.521	.000
	Within Groups	538.503	246	2.189		
	Total	575.807	248			
training content was created specifically for travel agents	Between Groups	15.986	2	7.993	4.154	.017
	Within	469.488	244	1.924		

	Groups					
	Total	485.474	246			
personal satisfaction and enrichment	Between Groups	77.703	2	38.851	18.527	.000
	Within Groups	513.781	245	2.097		
	Total	591.484	247			
keep myself updated	Between Groups	36.901	2	18.450	13.479	.000
	Within Groups	336.722	246	1.369		
	Total	373.622	248			
improves the quality of my learning	Between Groups	73.675	2	36.837	23.232	.000
	Within Groups	390.068	246	1.586		
	Total	463.743	248			
helps me to keep my skills updated	Between Groups	35.658	2	17.829	11.709	.000
	Within Groups	374.591	246	1.523		
	Total	410.249	248			
my manager does it	Between Groups	30.491	2	15.245	3.844	.023
	Within	785.310	198	3.966		

	Groups					
	Total	815.801	200			
my colleagues do it	Between Groups	36.333	2	18.166	4.226	.016
	Within Groups	881.340	205	4.299		
	Total	917.673	207			
enriches my CV	Between Groups	65.185	2	32.593	8.386	.000
	Within Groups	913.386	235	3.887		
	Total	978.571	237			
better serve clients	Between Groups	28.124	2	14.062	7.807	.001
	Within Groups	443.104	246	1.801		
	Total	471.229	248			
more confident in serving clients	Between Groups	45.024	2	22.512	11.049	.000
	Within Groups	501.225	246	2.037		
	Total	546.249	248			
acquire new knowledge	Between Groups	17.932	2	8.966	7.954	.000
	Within	277.296	246	1.127		

	Groups					
	Total	295.229	248			
sell more and earn more	Between Groups	43.018	2	21.509	8.287	.000
	Within Groups	638.525	246	2.596		
	Total	681.542	248			
gives me competitive advantage	Between Groups	46.330	2	23.165	9.223	.000
	Within Groups	610.337	243	2.512		
	Total	656.667	245			
official certificate	Between Groups	223.684	2	111.842	32.352	.000
	Within Groups	843.522	244	3.457		
	Total	1067.206	246			
educational/ familiarization trips	Between Groups	17.903	2	8.952	2.598	.077
	Within Groups	837.397	243	3.446		
	Total	855.301	245			
incentives and prizes	Between Groups	33.649	2	16.824	4.387	.013
	Within	916.632	239	3.835		

	Groups					
	Total	950.281	241			
access to special offers	Between Groups	27.727	2	13.863	4.513	.012
	Within Groups	743.473	242	3.072		
	Total	771.200	244			
be registered on official travel agent list	Between Groups	29.239	2	14.620	5.329	.005
	Within Groups	669.449	244	2.744		
	Total	698.688	246			
get explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)	Between Groups	4.877	2	2.439	.473	.624
	Within Groups	1109.416	215	5.160		
	Total	1114.294	217			

Appendix 32. ANOVA comparison between motivational items among travel agents in the developed countries – United Kingdom and New Zealand

DV: Motivations on undertaking eLearning courses

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
enjoyable	Between Groups	.732	1	.732	.280	.598
	Within Groups	353.487	135	2.618		
	Total	354.219	136			
interesting	Between Groups	2.820	1	2.820	1.239	.268
	Within Groups	307.312	135	2.276		
	Total	310.131	136			
quick	Between Groups	.981	1	.981	.196	.658
	Within Groups	674.698	135	4.998		
	Total	675.679	136			
free of charge	Between Groups	.843	1	.843	.344	.559
	Within Groups	328.921	134	2.455		
	Total	329.765	135			
useful	Between Groups	.120	1	.120	.069	.793
	Within Groups	235.383	135	1.744		

	Total	235.504	136			
easy to learn and familiarize	Between Groups	.437	1	.437	.145	.704
	Within Groups	406.512	135	3.011		
	Total	406.949	136			
interested in from the technical point of view	Between Groups	1.324	1	1.324	.230	.633
	Within Groups	738.245	128	5.768		
	Total	739.569	129			
can study on my own without assistance	Between Groups	1.690	1	1.690	.849	.359
	Within Groups	268.850	135	1.991		
	Total	270.540	136			
can study at my own pace	Between Groups	.022	1	.022	.015	.903
	Within Groups	201.262	135	1.491		
	Total	201.285	136			
can study from the office	Between Groups	3.838	1	3.838	1.430	.234
	Within Groups	356.933	133	2.684		
	Total	360.770	134			
can study from home	Between Groups	3.263	1	3.263	.886	.348
	Within Groups	497.000	135	3.681		

	Total	500.263	136			
my learning is assessed	Between Groups	6.716	1	6.716	1.563	.213
	Within Groups	567.284	132	4.298		
	Total	574.000	133			
information is structured to suit the needs of a travel agent	Between Groups	7.684	1	7.684	3.111	.080
	Within Groups	333.396	135	2.470		
	Total	341.080	136			
training content was created specifically for travel agents	Between Groups	.019	1	.019	.009	.924
	Within Groups	278.381	133	2.093		
	Total	278.400	134			
personal satisfaction and enrichment	Between Groups	4.404	1	4.404	1.735	.190
	Within Groups	340.067	134	2.538		
	Total	344.471	135			
keep myself updated	Between Groups	.986	1	.986	.608	.437
	Within Groups	219.043	135	1.623		
	Total	220.029	136			
improves the quality of my learning	Between Groups	.976	1	.976	.507	.478
	Within Groups	260.104	135	1.927		

	Total	261.080	136			
helps me to keep my skills updated	Between Groups	.658	1	.658	.339	.561
	Within Groups	261.591	135	1.938		
	Total	262.248	136			
my manager does it	Between Groups	30.491	1	30.491	9.628	.002
	Within Groups	348.366	110	3.167		
	Total	378.857	111			
my colleagues do it	Between Groups	35.720	1	35.720	10.803	.001
	Within Groups	386.868	117	3.307		
	Total	422.588	118			
enriches my CV	Between Groups	.401	1	.401	.100	.752
	Within Groups	519.235	130	3.994		
	Total	519.636	131			
better serve clients	Between Groups	.249	1	.249	.112	.738
	Within Groups	300.247	135	2.224		
	Total	300.496	136			
more confident in serving clients	Between Groups	.395	1	.395	.148	.701
	Within Groups	359.546	135	2.663		

	Total	359.942	136			
acquire new knowledge	Between Groups	4.701	1	4.701	3.562	.061
	Within Groups	178.189	135	1.320		
	Total	182.891	136			
sell more and earn more	Between Groups	.789	1	.789	.271	.603
	Within Groups	392.846	135	2.910		
	Total	393.635	136			
competitive advantage	Between Groups	3.631	1	3.631	1.341	.249
	Within Groups	360.103	133	2.708		
	Total	363.733	134			
official certificate	Between Groups	.788	1	.788	.177	.674
	Within Groups	591.094	133	4.444		
	Total	591.881	134			
educational/ familiarization trips	Between Groups	17.458	1	17.458	6.317	.013
	Within Groups	370.306	134	2.763		
	Total	387.765	135			
incentives and prizes	Between Groups	24.210	1	24.210	7.086	.009
	Within Groups	454.427	133	3.417		

	Total	478.637	134			
access to special offers	Between Groups	6.239	1	6.239	2.205	.140
	Within Groups	379.143	134	2.829		
	Total	385.382	135			
official travel agent list	Between Groups	1.925	1	1.925	.569	.452
	Within Groups	453.017	134	3.381		
	Total	454.941	135			
explicit compensation (e.g. salary, promotion)	Between Groups	.264	1	.264	.051	.823
	Within Groups	626.916	120	5.224		
	Total	627.180	121			