Online co-creation of the tourist experience:

A consumer perspective

Exposé

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Abstract

**Title:** “Online co-creation of the tourist experience: A consumer perspective”

**Keywords:** Co-creation, Tourism, Experience, Consumer Behavior, Social media, Technology, MOA model.

**Background:** Co-creation has become an increasingly studied phenomenon over the past ten years, as consumers are given more and more opportunities to participate to the elaboration of goods/services. Indeed, the expansion of online communities, social networks and interactive websites gives to a growing number of consumers the possibility to contribute with their ideas and creativity and thus, to live a co-creation experience. Application of such phenomenon to the tourist industry is particularly worth of interest, since experiences of consumers are the core of the products/services in this sector and therefore require their participation. Recent models have been developed to point out how tourism companies can benefit from co-creation thanks to the web 2.0. Yet, a consumer perspective in this specific field is also needed.

**Purpose:** As a result, the idea of this thesis is to provide a better understanding about the reasons why tourists participate in online co-creation. Using the motivation, opportunity and ability (MOA) framework applied to different elements of co-creation, the study should analyze the factors which influence the travelers’ motivation to share their knowledge.

**Method:** A quantitative study will be conducted to gather data under the form of an online questionnaire. The respondents should be between 16 and 65 years old and the questionnaire will be spread at a European level.
# Table of content

Abstract.................................................................................................................................2  
Table of content...................................................................................................................3  
List of abbreviations ...........................................................................................................4  
List of figures.......................................................................................................................5  
1. Introduction ..................................................................................................................6  
2. Theoretical background .................................................................................................7  
3. Problem statement and research question .......................................................................7  
4. Review of literature .......................................................................................................12  
   4.1 Co-creation theory ......................................................................................................12  
      4.1.1 Theoretical foundations and models .................................................................12  
      4.1.2 Consumer behavior in online co-creation .........................................................13  
   4.2 Application to the tourism industry ............................................................................16  
      4.2.1 The influence of the web 2.0 ..............................................................................17  
      4.2.2 Co-creation of the experience: consumer and supplier insight .......................16  
5. Methodology ..................................................................................................................19  
6. First overview of chapters ............................................................................................20  
7. Work plan ......................................................................................................................21  
Bibliography .......................................................................................................................22
List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMOs</td>
<td>Destination Marketing Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>electronic Word-Of-Mouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>Motivation, Opportunity, Ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>S-DL</td>
<td>Service-Dominant Logic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGC</td>
<td>User Generated Content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of figures

Figure 1: Experience typology matrix ..........................................................11
1. Introduction

The relevance of involving the consumer into the conception and development of products and services has been progressively recognized in the business literature. Nowadays, the notion of co-creation is part of the marketing strategies of large companies operating in various sectors such as food and beverages (Coca Cola), IT (Microsoft), cars (BMW) or entertainment (Lego), offering co-creation experiences to meet customers' needs and expectations in a more accurate way.

Co-creation is defined as the process of joint creation of value resulting from the interaction between a business and its consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The concept was primarily emphasized in the service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), pointing out the evolution of marketing to a service-oriented view and stating 8 fundamental principles (FPs) among which FP6 says: “the customer is always a co-creator of value” (p.10). Although the notion is hence not brand new, recent opportunities for its application have arisen with the emergence of social media, virtual worlds, online communities and other collaborative websites where people can share their ideas, demonstrate their creativity and show their participation. These platforms engage consumers to interact with the company, and thus make the value a human experience (Ramaswamy, 2011) lived during the co-creation process itself. This phenomenon is obviously correlated to the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), placing the customer participation and the quest for memorable experience at the center of the economic value.

As a result, this paper orientates its research towards the tourism industry, as this field is one of the most significant playground for the co-creation of memorable experiences. It has indeed been demonstrated that emotional states of tourists have an important impact on their satisfaction (Brunner-Sperdin, Peters, & Strobl, 2012). Moreover, the impact of web 2.0 technologies such as social networks and UGC in tourism has been recently explored in many studies (World Tourism Organization, 2008). As a consequence, two main areas worth of further interest in this context are the assimilation of web 2.0 and the intensity of co-creation (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2014).

As many researches have focused on how companies can effectively benefit from both social media and co-creation processes, additional knowledge is needed about the consumer himself.
2. Theoretical background

The MOA (motivation, opportunity, ability) model is chosen to explain and analyze the consumer behaviors in a co-creation context. This model was first proposed by MacInnis and Jaworski (1989) to assess the efficiency of an advertising and its message, and later used by East, Vanhuele and Wright (2008) to explain the phenomenon of word-of-mouth. For that latter reason, it is believed to represent a suitable framework to apply to the co-creation concept, related to WOM.

Following the model, motivation is the willingness, desire and interest of the consumers to engage in a process. Opportunity refers to situation or the context which enhances or brakes the process, for instance time available, attention paid or distractions (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989). Finally, ability is defined as the resources available to the consumer such as knowledge, skills, physical capacity, or money to reach a goal.

The application of the model and its usefulness will be explained below.

3. Problem statement and research question

As previously stated, many studies have explored how the firms can profit from the Web 2.0 in their marketing strategies, for instance by using social networks (Hvass & Munar, 2012). The impact of various technologies such as videos (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009), online travel search in social media (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) or mobile phones (Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012) has also been discussed, as well as the growing importance of virtual worlds such as “Second Life” (Kohler, Fueller, Matzler, & Stieger, 2011). As far as co-creation is concerned, several papers have shown how DMOs could exploit the knowledge shared by consumers and forge a so-called co-creation capacity (Tussyadiah & Zach, 2013). Moreover, the integration of company support and travelers’ satisfaction to the concept has been researched (Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Until last year, a more complete overview of experiences combining co-creation and the use of multiple technologies was still missing. However, Neuhofer and Buhalıs (2014), merging all those elements, designed a framework named “technology-enhanced tourism experiences” (figure 1) based on different company cases. This typology represents the most updated model in tourism research. Nevertheless, the authors stressed out the need to complement it with a consumer perspective, hence the choice of focus of this thesis. Indeed, fewer researches have focused on the consumer behavior, although some have recently looked into the motives to produce eWOM (Keul, Wagner, & Brandt-Pook, 2014), also
in other industries such as fashion (Wolny & Müller, 2013). Others also addressed a general segmentation of consumers willing and competent to co-create (Vernette & Hamdi-Kidar, 2013). A recent approach displayed the MOA model - motivation, opportunity, and ability (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989) and its positive effect on involvement into social media pages in the hospitality sector (Leung & Bai, 2013). Yet, a lack of understanding about the factors contributing to the MOA elements was acknowledged. Therefore, the following research question was designed for this paper:

“What are the main drivers influencing the motivation, opportunity and ability of travelers for online experience co-creation?”

In this context, online experience co-creation refers to a pre-travel engagement from consumers into forums, collaborative platforms, or social media to share and look for information, or also their direct participation to a co-creation project proposed by a firm. To answer this research question, the hypotheses described below have to be tested. It shall be noted that the below-mentioned “motivation/opportunity/ability of the consumer” in the hypotheses refers to co-creation and not the travel itself.

Before going more in depth with the MOA elements, it is interesting to take a closer look at the interaction defining the co-creation process. If we consider the definition provided by Thomas, Challagalla, & McFarland (1999), exploring the drivers of word-of-mouth, 3 main dimensions can be taken into account: the content (what is co-created?), the process (the settings of the co-creation project and the tools that are used) and the people (with whom the interaction takes place).

Regarding the content, consumers have different levels of involvement according to what they expect to give their contribution to (Dichter, 1966). They can be more interested in a certain service category, feel attached to a particular brand or simply be followers of innovation (Fueller, 2010). In this case, three services of the travel industry are being tested to assess in which dimension tourists prefer to contribute. Thus, the following hypotheses were created. Once again, the terms “motivation”, “ability” and “opportunity” used in the hypotheses have to be understood as the motivation/opportunity/ability to co-create, and not to travel.

\[ H1a: \text{Co-creation related to the type of accommodation positively influences the motivation of the consumer.} \]

\[ H1b: \text{Co-creation related to the destination path positively influences the motivation of the consumer.} \]
H1c: Co-creation related to the transport positively influences the motivation of the consumer.

The results should develop a better understanding of which variables the consumer prefers to play a role in. Then, the process of co-creation itself is also to consider. According to Thomas et al., (1999), the time that consumers are willing to spend is an important variable. It is important to determine the length of a project for which the consumer is ready to commit. Basic marketing research principles indeed recommend the use of short questionnaires to retain the customer’s attention, it is hence believed that the same applies to co-creation. As a consequence, the hypotheses below:

H2: The amount of time required for co-creation negatively influences the motivation of the consumer.
H2b: The amount of time required for co-creation negatively influences the opportunity of the consumer.

Further, as far as the tools and complexity of multimedia are concerned, the possibilities are large, from the social network to a 3-D model (Kohler et al., 2011), but it is essential to know if consumers perceive it as a motive or a brake. The different level of technologies can be classified according to the typology from Neuhofer & Buhalis (2014) displayed on figure 1. Are the consumers teased by a complete integration of online technology or are they on the contrary discouraged? The answer should be able to add a consumer perspective to the above-mentioned typology. Therefore, the hypotheses are the following:

H3: The level of technology used for co-creation positively influences the motivation of the consumer.
H4: The level of technology proposed for co-creation negatively influences the ability of the consumer.

As already indicated, the interaction and co-creation process is above all a human experience (Ramaswamy, 2011), which means that the other people involved are a determinant factor. Previous research has shown that basic driver for word-of-mouth was the need for social interaction and for peer advice (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Moreover, studies pointed out that people were also animated by a so-called self-involvement (Ditcher, 1996), in other words the possibility to show themselves as a “cool” or clever traveler in our context. Furthermore, self-
involvement can be combined with the involvement in others. It has indeed also be
shown that people communicate online to share a positive experience, or warn other
people about a negative one (Füller, 2010). Since eWOM involves communication
through social media and other platforms, it is thus considered as a form of online co-
creation. As a result, the hypotheses were created:

H5: The interaction with other consumers positively influences the motivation of the
consumer.
H5a: Need for interaction with other consumers positively influences the
motivation for co-creation.
H5b: Self-involvement positively influences the motivation for co-creation.
H5c: Advice-seeking positively influences the motivation for co-creation.
H5d: Others involvement positively influences the motivation for co-creation.

Considering the interactions with the company itself, it has been demonstrated that a
co-creation project needs a proper company support for a better customer satisfaction
(Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Thus, the next hypotheses are:

H6a: The interaction with a service provider positively influences the motivation of the
consumer.
H6b: The interaction with a service provider positively influences the ability of the
consumer.

Additionally, it has been explored that monetary incentives were an external motivator
for consumers to collaborate with a company (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). It is
therefore a variable worth to include as well:

H7a: Monetary incentives positively influence the motivation of the consumer.
H7b: Monetary incentives positively influence the opportunity of the consumer.
H7c: Monetary incentives positively influence the ability of the consumer.

Overall, this thesis will provide the reader with a structured literature review including
the theoretical foundations of co-creation, its evolution with the new technologies and
application to the tourism industry, followed by a focus on consumer behavior. The
field research and the confirmation/refutation of the hypotheses are expected to give
additional knowledge about the factors influencing the motivation, opportunity and
ability of tourists to co-create their experience online, and thus, to help the managers setting their own projects and tools to interact with their customers.

Figure 1: Experience typology matrix

Source: Neufifer B. Buhalis D. (2014)
4. Review of literature

4.1 Co-creation theory

4.1.1 Theoretical foundations and models

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<tr>
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</table>
| Service-dominant logic        | Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing, *Journal of Marketing*        | (Vargo & Lusch, 2004)                           | Shift of marketing to a service-dominant view  
First definition of S-D L and its 8 fundamental principles (FPs)                                                                                                                                  |
Introduction of the nature of value creation as being interactive/networked/experiential                                                                                                           |
| S-D Logic and notion of value | Service co-creation and value realization, *Journal of Marketing Management* | (Hilton, College, Hughes, & Chalcraft, 2012)    | Discussion around notion of value: service is co-created, but not the value because subjective. Service co-creation includes value potential and resource integration                                              |
### Exposé: Online co-creation of the tourist experience: A consumer perspective

#### 4.1.2 Consumer behavior in online co-creation

<table>
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<th>TOPIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background of experience economy</td>
<td>Welcome to the experience economy, <em>Harvard Business Review</em></td>
<td>(Pine &amp; Gilmore, 1998)</td>
<td>Fundamental theory: Staging experience as the new economic value. The offer has to be memorable, consumer looks for sensation. Notion of customer participation (active/passive) in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience and human interactions</td>
<td>It's about human experiences... and beyond, to co-creation, <em>Industrial Marketing Management</em></td>
<td>(Ramaswamy, 2011)</td>
<td>Value defined as a human experience, through platforms engaging consumers to interact with the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of value, overview of models</td>
<td>Measuring and managing value co-creation process: overview of existing theoretical models, <em>Social Technologies</em></td>
<td>(Skaržauskaitė, 2013)</td>
<td>Synthesis of established theories and models about co-creation, and the measurement of consumer input</td>
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<tr>
<td>Framework for the supplier to manage the co-creation of value</td>
<td>Managing the co-creation of value, <em>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</em></td>
<td>(Payne, Storbacka, &amp; Frow, 2007)</td>
<td>Conceptual framework including &quot;customer value-creating process&quot;, &quot;supplier value-creating process&quot; and &quot;encounter process&quot;. Model applied to a travel experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segmentation of consumers</td>
<td>Co-creation with consumers: who has the competence and wants to cooperate, <em>International Journal of Market Research</em> (Vernette &amp; Hamdi-Kidar, 2013)</td>
<td>Definitions of upstream and downstream co-creation. Study of the “lead users” and “emergent nature consumers” and evaluation of their engagement and capacity to co-create.</td>
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<td>Motivations and variables for consumer satisfaction in co-creation</td>
<td>Developing a better understanding of co-creation: Consumers’ motivations to create and the underlying processes, <em>Advances in Consumer Research</em> (Moreau &amp; Herd, 2008)</td>
<td>Experiment in which participants are given the opportunity to customize a backpack and then the chance to win it in a lottery. Test of a “creativity prime” and other interactions between participants.</td>
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<td><strong>Exposé: Online co-creation of the tourist experience: A consumer perspective</strong></td>
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<td>communication through social media platforms, <em>Journal of Marketing Management</em></td>
<td>The article demonstrates that “brand commitment” and “fashion involvement” are positively correlated to engagement in eWOM. Notion of “need for social interaction” also integrated.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consumer behavior in online co-creation</strong></td>
<td>Refining virtual co-creation from a consumer perspective, <em>California Management Review</em></td>
<td>(Füller, 2010)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why consumers participate to co-creation projects launched by producers. Different motives researched: expectation of rewards, show ideas, gain knowledge, need for interaction (what? How? With whom?), personal characteristics (curiosity, need, intrinsic, reward), 4 types defined: “need-driven, reward-oriented, curiosity-driven, intrinsically interested.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consumer experience in virtual worlds such as Second Life</strong></td>
<td>Co-creation in virtual worlds: the design of the user experience, <em>MIS Quaterly</em></td>
<td>(Kohler et al., 2011)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Exploration about the design of a consumer experience in virtual world. Action research in “Second Life” with the creation of avatars. Analysis of the “four experience dimensions” (Nambisan &amp; Nambisan, 2008): pragmatic, sociability, usability and hedonic.</td>
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4.2 Application to the tourism industry

4.2.2 Co-creation of the experience: consumer and supplier insight

**CONSUMER VIEW**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>TITLE &amp; SOURCE</th>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOA theory (McInnis &amp; Jaworski, 1989) applied to social media in tourism</td>
<td>How motivation, opportunity, and ability impact travelers' social media involvement and revisit intention, <em>Journal of Travel &amp; Tourism Marketing</em></td>
<td>(Leung &amp; Bai, 2013)</td>
<td>Relationship between motivation, opportunity and ability (MOA theory) of consumers and their involvement on Facebook and Twitter profiles of Hotels, and their intention to revisit the pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the tourist deals with experiences through the exploration of a diary</td>
<td>Coping and co-creating in tourist experiences, <em>International Journal of Tourism Research</em></td>
<td>(Prebensen, Foss, &amp; Wiley, 2011)</td>
<td>Introspection on lived experience to explore the participation of the consumers in the creation. How they cope and respond to unfamiliar situations in social (other people) and physical encounters (different services).</td>
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**SUPPLIER VIEW**

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Exposé: Online co-creation of the tourist experience: A consumer perspective

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<th>CONTENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect of company support on co-creation</td>
<td>Customer co-creation of travel services: The role of company support and customer satisfaction with the co-creation performance, <em>Tourism Management</em></td>
<td>(Grissemann &amp; Stokburger-Sauer, 2012)</td>
<td>Company support improves co-creation from consumers, which then increases their satisfaction with the service, as well as their loyalty and the money they spend while travelling.</td>
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4.2.1 The influence of the web 2.0

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing strategy in social media: example of airlines</td>
<td>The takeoff of social media in tourism, <em>Journal of Vacation Marketing</em></td>
<td>(Hvass &amp; Munar, 2012)</td>
<td>Lack of strategy and uniformity in the airlines’ utilization of Facebook and Twitter. Exploration of the online messages through 4 dimensions: Tone (formal/non formal), Anonymity (name signing the posts or not), Recipient (internal/external), Authority (command, control…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typology of tourist experiences according to the level of co-creation</td>
<td>A typology of technology-enhanced tourism experiences, <em>International</em></td>
<td>(Neuhofer, Buhalis, &amp; Ladkin, 2014)</td>
<td>Exploration of company cases from different sectors (hospitality, destination, web 2.0) to define 9 categories of technology-enhanced experiences that are</td>
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**and the intensity of the technology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer co-creation capacity through social media: explorative/transformative/exploitative capacity of DMOs</th>
<th>Social media strategy and capacity for consumer co-creation among destination marketing organizations, <em>Centre for Tourism, Innovation and Culture</em></th>
<th>How can DMOs turn the knowledge of consumers shared in social media and effectively use it. Co-creation capacity includes explorative, transformative and exploitative capacity. Social media has a positive effect on co-creation capacity, which has then a positive effect on the DMOs performance.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journal of Tourism Research</strong></td>
<td>compared to traditional experiences.</td>
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</table>

18
5. Methodology

The field research will be conducted with the use of an online questionnaire to be spread between mid-December 2014 and early January 2015. The software Sphinx will be used to design, host the questionnaire and later on to collect and analyze the data.

The sample will be composed of travelers from 16 to 65 years old, assuming that the people outside this age category have a lower interest in the technological tools for co-creation discussed in the topic. A broad sense of “travelers” has to be understood, meaning that we refer to the people having travelled at least once in the last 5 years. The questionnaire will be spread at a European level, geographically speaking.

Due to the interactive dimension of the topic, the questionnaire should employ various types of question to remain attractive to the respondent. We would use Likert scale questions, open and closed questions, as well as mixed qual/quant elements such as a wall of picture (or other type) to figure out the perception of the respondent. The results are expected to provide us with the behaviors, opinions, expectations of the participants and should allow us to build a profile of the sample.

Besides, the sample size can be estimated with the online application Raosoft. Given the European population composed of more than 500 million, with a margin of error of 5%, a level of confidence of 95% and a response distribution of 50%, we need to reach approximately 385 people.
6. First overview of chapters

Abstract
Table of content
List of abbreviations
List of figures

1. Introduction
   1.1. Background
   1.2. Focus and purpose of the study
   1.3. Research question and hypotheses
   1.4. Structure of the study
2. Theoretical framework
   2.1. Co-creation
      2.1.1. Service-dominant logic and value co-creation
      2.1.2. Tourism industry
         2.1.2.1. Web 2.0 and opportunities of co-creation
         2.1.2.2. Typology of Neuhofer & Buhalis
   2.2. Consumer behavior
      2.2.1. The experience economy: human interactions
      2.2.2. Behavior towards co-creation and web 2.0
         2.2.2.1. Notion of eWOM
         2.2.2.2. Presentation of MOA model
3. Methodology
   3.1. Description of settings: questionnaire and sample
   3.2. Analysis
4. Results
   4.1. Summary of results
   4.2. Limitation of results
5. Managerial/theoretical implications
6. Conclusions, limitations and further research
7. Bibliography
8. Appendix
7. Work plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01.09.2014 – 13.10.2014</td>
<td>Basic research</td>
<td>Definition of the topic and research question, handing of the exposé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.12.2014 – 08.01.2015</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Redaction of methodology, design and launch of the questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.12.2014 – 27.01.2015</td>
<td>Report and presentation</td>
<td>Writing the intermediate report and presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.01.2015 – 27.01.2015</td>
<td>Field research</td>
<td>Final questionnaire online and collection of data (intermediate analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.02.2015 – 28.02.2015</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Evaluation of the results and conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.03.2015 – 15.05.2015</td>
<td>Finalization</td>
<td>Finalization of the whole thesis, review of consistency, adjustments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.05.2015 – deadline</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Preparation of the final presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


