CROSS–LEVEL DESTINATION MANAGEMENT AND THE TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

Due to their size, small- and medium-sized tourism organizations nowadays may not generate all the information necessary or process and interpret all of the information gathered (Pechlaner/Tschurtschentaler, 2002) and therefore lag behind developments, provide less innovative products and create distorted views of the situation (Grant/Baden–Fuller, 2000). In order to overcome such phenomena and weaknesses and ease the transfer of information and knowledge, existing forms of cooperation must be adapted or new, innovative forms of strategic knowledge networking must be found.

An exploratory study, carried out in 2003/2004 the European Academy Bolzano and the University of Innsbruck, analyzes the existing process of knowledge transfer of the Tyrolean local destination management organizations (DMO) and regional tourist organizations (RTO). Moreover, the major organizational and individual barriers in knowledge transfer between those cross levels have been detected. In this context also the efficiency of technological-driven tools, such as a tourism management support system, are examined.

Keywords: tourism organizations, knowledge networks, knowledge transfer, tourism management support system.

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Suggested track: Knowledge and Information technology

Introduction

Due to an intensified market focus and the resulting aspects of quality, customer satisfaction and perceived customer values as well as "fast changing technologies and developments, increasing costs and pressure to perform, tourism organizations nowadays are forced to expand their knowledge and basis of competence" (Bieger/ Weibel, 1998, p. 178). However, owing to their size, small- and medium–sized tourism organizations may not have the manpower or specific knowledge to generate and acquire all the information and knowledge necessary or process and interpret all of the information gathered. Cooperation and strategic networking within cross-levels of tourist organizations can help to overcome such phenomena and weaknesses. With the example of Tyrolean tourist organizations, the existing networking between those cross levels of organizations within the specific topic of knowledge creation and transfer has been analyzed.

The preliminary research carried out by the European Academy of Bolzano and the University of Innsbruck took into consideration all 92 local Tyrolean tourist organizations (DMO) cooperating with each other and with the Tirol Werbung, the regional tourism organization (RTO), as much as the Österreich Werbung, the national Austrian marketing organization (NTO). Aim of this preliminary study is to analyze the existing process of knowledge creation and transfer. Moreover, the major organizational and individual barriers in knowledge transfer between those cross levels are detected. The efficiency of technology driven tools within this context, such as a tourism management support system, are examined. The basic data derived from the preliminary research may be used for a future and more extensive study in the field of tourism organizations.

Theory

Tourism Development

Due to the extensive growth of tourism activity, tourism can be graded as one of the most notable economic and social phenomena of the past century. Besides the remarkable growth, tourism shows also continuing diversification. From year to year a growing tendency for change and developments within the sector can be notified. Today's tourism is characterized by strong overall development and by a growing tendency for tourists to visit new destinations with increasingly more opportunities

(World tourism organization, 2001). New markets and capacities are growing rapidly due to globalization, liberalization and deregulation. Moreover, newly available factors of production like new information and communication technologies are imperative for the acceleration of processes, the intensification of networks and geographical enlargements (Keller, 2000). To respond to this increasingly competitive environment, traditional strategic success positions of small- and medium-sized tourism organizations are devaluated. In fast-changing times, the major task for small destinations is to set new requirements for the management in order to promote customer satisfaction and loyalty, while establishing a competitive advantage (Nightingale, 1985). Customers nowadays are more informed, have a much higher quality awareness and individualized interests and needs. They insist on more options, more entertainment and fun, more diversified sports facilities and cultural variety in their vacation (Weiermair/Fuchs, 2000). They become critical regarding prices, quality and time efficiency. Therefore, tourism products must be based on integrated service chains able to fulfil problem-solving functions or to offer new forms of holiday experiences.

Tourism destinations and the case of Tyrol

Bieger (1998) defines destinations as the target areas of potential guests, who perceive a geographic area for themselves in terms of content (product) and location (region), necessary to satisfy their needs and demands during the stay. Destinations consist of all services and offer tourists consume during their stay and can be described as sets of products or services crucial for the guests. A destination can be seen as the tourist product that competes with other products in certain markets. These products are always significant for certain market segments. Hence, destinations must be defined according to market segments (Bieger, 1997). The size of the guest segment determines the size of the destination areas. The bigger the distance of the resident country of the guest, the bigger the destination area has to be defined; and the more specific the interests of the guest, the smaller the destination must be defined. This results in an overlapping of destination areas. "The guest's perception of the limits of (political) catchment areas decreases and he starts to demand a service bundle depending on holiday type and situation; he breaks the limits of local and regional tourism organizations" (Pechlaner/Abfalter/Raich, 2002, pp. 89 - 107). In Tyrol, tourism organizations can be classified into a two-stage structure, meaning tourist boards at a local level (DMOs) and the Tirol Werbung, the regional tourism organization (RTO).

There are over 92 local tourist organizations with affiliated info points, the ones nearest to the guest. Therefore, the direct communication with guests and members and the "on-the-spot" support are the primary responsibilities of tourism boards at local level. The main tasks of the regional tourism organization, the Tirol Werbung, are communication- and marketing-functions for the development of tourism within the region and internationally presence. Within this context, files of responsibility are product development and innovation, development and implementation of new technologies and the strengthening of brand awareness and quality issues (Jochum/ Pechlaner, 2001). The third form of tourism organization can be seen in the national marketing organization (NTO), the Österreich Werbung, which plays an important role within the strategic management and the marketing of Austria and hence, for the singular regions. Every regional tourism organization, like the Tirol Werbung, is affiliated to the Österreich Werbung.

Such small- and medium-sized structures like the tourist boards at a lcoal level face challenges that make it necessary to cooperate with each other, with organizations at a regional level and with the national tourism organization, in order to improve the own market position. Cooperation leads to positive effects such as product attractiveness and quality of cooperating companies may only be guaranteed by a network of relation exchanges. Moreover, service attractiveness and quality strongly depends on the ability to acquire, to develop, to accumulate and to distribute knowledge assets (Bouncken, 2002). The main goal therefore is to improve the usage and transfer of knowledge among the networks and cooperation in order to establish competitive advantages over competitors (Boucken/Pyo, 2002).

Networks - an approach for cross-organizational cooperation

Cooperation networks are organizational forms of economic activities based on long-term and stable relational patterns (Miles/Snow, 1995) and are characterized by "complex, reciprocal, and rather cooperative than competitive relationships between legally independent, yet economically dependent companies" (Sydow, 1992, p.79). They focus on a more efficient management of operational cooperation with special interest to sales and marketing (Riggers, 1998). The joint goal of the network partners is to enhance the competitive position of the network (Håkansson/Sharma, 1996). Among other characteristics, networks typically are responsible for the generation of capabilities and knowledge (Miles/Snow, 1986, Hamel, 1991) and therefore improve communication between network members. Relationships between the different

members may be furthermore characterized by the following 3 aspects: (1) willingness to invest, (2) partner asymmetries and (3) confidence. Willingness to invest means the willingness of network members to invest and increase the value of the whole network in order to strengthen their own position. Apart from the agreements concluded in the network, investment also concentrates on creating joint values for a competition-oriented cooperation within the network. The more a network partner is able to create these values and, in doing so, granting stability of the network, the more intense is the position of the partner within the system. Focusing on partner asymmetries, strategic networks have a hierarchical element strengthening their competitiveness. These hierarchies are based on contributions made by each network partner. The more a network partner contributes to enhance the value of the whole network, the more important is his position within the system. The position of a partner within a relationship bundle may be put on a level with the role of the partner compared to other partners with whom he is directly or indirectly linked. Partner asymmetries make hierarchies necessary in order to manage and/or control network resources. Finally, confidence is a necessary resource in networks and allows for decreasing negotiation costs (Cambell/Wilson, 1996, p.139).

As long as network partners believe that advantages are achieved thanks to their network participation they achieve advantages, they will support the joint goals and aims of the network (Jarillo, 1993). The degree of openness and reliance of partners influences the productivity and prosperity of network creation. But independent from the driving forces for networking (access to new knowledge or creating and transferring knowledge) "connectivity to a network and competence at managing networks have become key drivers for a new business logic" (Seufert/von Krogh/Bach, 1999, p.184).

Knowledge management and knowledge networks

Knowledge is necessary for the success of tourism networks. "In an economy where the only certainty is uncertainty, the one source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge" (Nonaka/Takeuchi, 1995). There are numerous definitions, trying to explain the concept of knowledge. Knowledge indicates all know-how and skills individuals use to solve problems (Probst/Raub/Romhardt, 1999). It "is created by combining related pieces of information over a period of time" (Lathi/Beyerlein, 2000, p. 66) and it is personal and therefore always related to the individual. Knowledge "is based on the beliefs, values and commitment of the individuals involved. It can be viewed as a type of "intellectual capital" that has the ability to change how individuals and organizations

view and create the world around them" (Lathi/Beyerlein, 2000, p. 65-66). Therefore, knowledge management is focusing on the identification, generation, use, transfer and preservation of knowledge within an organization or within a network. According to Skyrme (1999) a knowledge network helps to respond quickly and more flexible to challenges and needs of the market, to develop core competences based on the combination of common knowledge and other resources and to use the core competences of other network members in a systematic manner. Concisely, knowledge management involves all the viewpoints and activities needed in an organization, to understand, accumulate, make use of and profit from capital in the form of organizational knowledge (Lathi/Beyerlein, 2000). Knowledge management is not a simple, one-dimensional static construct, but it consists of many dynamic elements integrated to four interrelated key components: knowledge generation, knowledge representation, knowledge accessibility and knowledge transfer. Knowledge generation is focusing on the identification of new and valuable information and the conversion of this information into knowledge. Knowledge representation and accessibility are dealing with the translation of knowledge so that a benefit for the whole organization can be achieved and the accessibility of organizational knowledge, thus, the availability to all members of the organization or the network. Within this paper, focus is put on the component of knowledge transfer among network members. To increase network performance, knowledge must be shared, spread and used on a network-wide basis. Knowledge transfer therefore involves the conveying and diffusing of knowledge within all network partners. The most common ways in which knowledge can be conveyed are regular meetings, personal contacts and training (Lathi/Beyerlein, 2000), meaning traditional ways of social interaction. However, tradition is slow and often unconscious, therefore new ways and media must be found for knowledge transfer (Sveiby, 1996).

Assuming the concept of knowledge management to be essential for future success, small- and medium-sized tourism organizations, from this perspective, must concentrate on managing knowledge creation and transfer within networks. This exploratory study therefore investigates on the actual situation within the cross levels of tourism organizations in Tyrol and the question to what extend technological-driven tools, such as a tourism management support system can ease the knowledge transfer.

Support by knowledge management systems

A tourism management support system like it is used in many tourism destinations can be described as a collection of computerized information, interactively accessible, about a destination (Buhalis, 1994). The overall purpose is to push organizational efficiency and productivity, support the sharing of best practices, direct to more informed decisions, and in some cases, serve as the primary channel for internal communications (Sarnoff/Wimmer, 2003) in order to make information available to members and customers and, respectively, to increase customer satisfaction. Therefore, the biggest challenge for today's organizations remains the extent to which such a system can help "creating, gathering, organizing and disseminating the members knowledge and the ability to manage effectively the knowledge detained in such information systems" (Belbaly/Passiante/Benbya, 2003, p. 338). Thus, a knowledge management function must be added to such information and communication systems, in order to support knowledge exchange. With such knowledge-sharing systems, knowledge integration and transfer can be supported within a shorter period of time because network members can take advantage of existing knowledge by reallocating it to better known applications. Moreover, the ability to access, organize and expand this knowledge can be improved, so that decision making, learning and achieving competitive advantage is eased (Belbaly/Passiante/Benbya, 2003). Besides, such systems can also ease the relationship and the building of confidence within networks. One example of a tourism management support system is the "tourismusmanager.tirol.at", addressing all members of the "Tirol Werbung". Among other things, the portal focuses on the distribution of information and knowledge regarding annual reports and programs including vision and strategies, singular projects of the Tirol Werbung, legal and organizational guidelines, relevant laws and modifications of laws, information about all regional tourist organizations and all important events and highlights for tourist experts like fairs and congresses.

Too often, such systems don't achieve their aims, because knowledge sharing is seen as an unwelcome, disconnected activity, isolated from the members "real" work (Sarnoff/Wimmer, 2003). Consequently, the usage is low. The undertaken study analyzes the amount of usage and the sense of such systems in transfering knowledge within the different cross levels of tourism organizations in Tyrol.

Methodology

A descriptive, exploratory study has been carried out during the winter season 2003/2004 on a total sample of all general managers of the 92 local Tyrolean tourist organizations. Descriptive means the description of the state of art throughout a quantitative evaluation and explorative stands for the exploration of the field of research to gain insights. Furthermore, the aim of the explorative part was to reveal the main problems and structure them in order to decide on priorities and further investigation.

The research design implemented a mail-back questionnaire focusing on the state of art of knowledge transfer within the Tyrolean local tourism organizations (DMO) and with the regional organization, Tirol Werbung (RTO), and the national organization, Österreich Werbung (NTO), and the following key aspects:

- The importance of knowledge networking seen by the singular member

- The actual usage and the underlying motivation

- The main barriers and reasons for refusing knowledge transfer

- The singular competences contributing to the network

- Future importance of knowledge transfer

- The extend to which information technologies such as the "tourismusmanager.tirol.at" ease the knowledge transfer

All general managers from the 92 local Tyrolean tourism organizations were addressed, informed about the study and asked to respond to the online-questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided by five sections. The first part focuses on general questions about the duration of the employment and the number of employees within the organization. The second part focuses on questions regarding knowledge cooperation: the character of the transferred knowledge, the actual intensity and satisfaction with existing knowledge networks in general and with knowledge networks regarding working groups, personal opinions on future perspectives and reasons for refusal of networks. The third part deals with questions about the motivation for cooperation and the fourth part concentrates on competences and efforts of the singular general manager. Finally, in the fifth part, questions about the implementation and technical support within knowledge networks and possible barriers regarding the implementation are posed.

Results and Discussion

Upon the first contact, 19 questionnaires of 92 have been returned, 12 per e-mail and 9 per fax. 2 of them were not completed; therefore they could not be taken into consideration. After a written reminder, other 10 questionnaires have been returned, again 2 of them were not valid. Overall, 29 respondents were collected; the data base finally consisted of 25 valid questionnaires (27%). Data was processed using the SPSS statistical package.
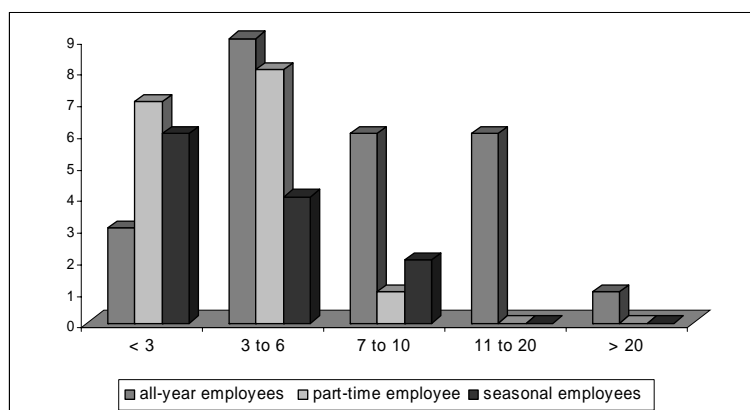

Fig. 1. Organizational size

The addressed organizations can be defined as small- or medium sized organizations. Figure 1 shows the size of the respondent's organization dividing by all-year employees, part-time employees and temporary employees. Most of the organizations (9) consist of 3 to 6 all-year employees and some part-time and seasonal employees. Very small organizations with less than 3 employees work most of all with part-time and seasonal employees. In medium-sized organizations with more than 11 employees, there are mainly all-year employees. Only one of the responding organizations consists of more than 20 employees.

To analyze the experience of respondents, they were asked about the length of their contract within the organization. 36% of the responding managers have more than 5 years of working experience. They are very much familiar with the sector and the organization, could gather a lot of information and knowledge during their working experience and are highly important for knowledge networks with other tourism organizations. Table 2 shows the experience of the respondents within this sector.
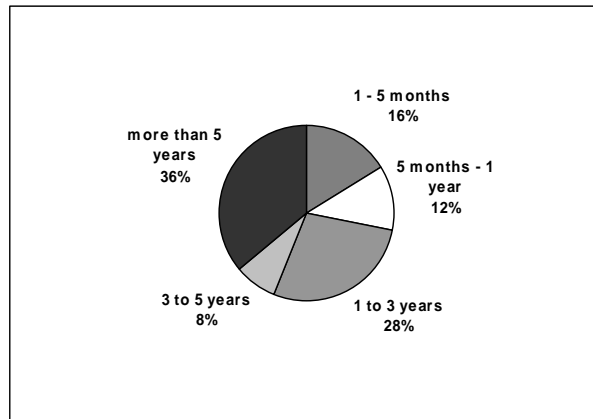
Fig. 2. Work experience

Respondents were asked to describe the intensity of existing knowledge transfer within the networks with the help of a 5-point Likert scale (1= not at all intensive; 2= not intensive; 3= neither/nor; 4=intensive; 5= very intensive). Furthermore, the satisfaction of the actual situation was analysed. To point out the state of satisfaction another Likert scale (1= not at all satisfied; 2= not satisfied; 3= neither/nor; 4=satisfied; 5= very satisfied) was used: respondents were asked to rate 3 possible networks of knowledge transfer were asked: knowledge transfer among destination management organizations (DMO), transfer of knowledge between destination management organizations and regional tourism organizations (RTO) and knowledge transfer between destination management and national tourism organizations (NTO). Table 1 shows the results pointing out mean values.

Table 1. Intensity and satisfaction of existing knowledge transfer

Transfer of knowledge - means		
	Intensity	**satisfaction**
DMO - DMO	3,28	3,17
DMO - RTO	2,58	2,68
DMO - NTO	2,00	2,41

The most intense cooperation takes part between the different DMOs, thus on a horizontal line and not between the DMOs and the RTO or NTO. The satisfaction rises in coherence with the amount of knowledge transfer. The more intense the knowledge transfer, the higher the satisfaction within the network.

Discussing the characteristics between all cross levels of organizations both, new and existing knowledge, is being transferred. The knowledge transferred between DMOs can easily be documented and brought into a written form, but it can not be used for various problems. Thus, it is rather specific. In the knowledge transfer with the other organizations, RTO's and the NTO, no specific characteristics can be distinguished.

Figure 3 illustrates the motivations for knowledge transfer within the different levels of organizations according to a 5-point Likert scale (from 1= not decisive at all to 5= very decisive). To discuss the most important motivations, the mode is shown. For the knowledge transfer between DMOs, the interchange of generic and selective information as well as marketing aspects (e.g. better market performance and presence and product development) seem to be rather important. Other vital features are the diffusion of existing knowledge and the cost reduction due to cooperation. The most important motivations for knowledge transfer between DMOs and RTO's consist of aspects like market research and information about target groups, access to different resources in addition to market presence and performance. Talking about the knowledge transfer between the DMOs and the NTO, the most important driving forces are information on new markets and target groups as well as market research.
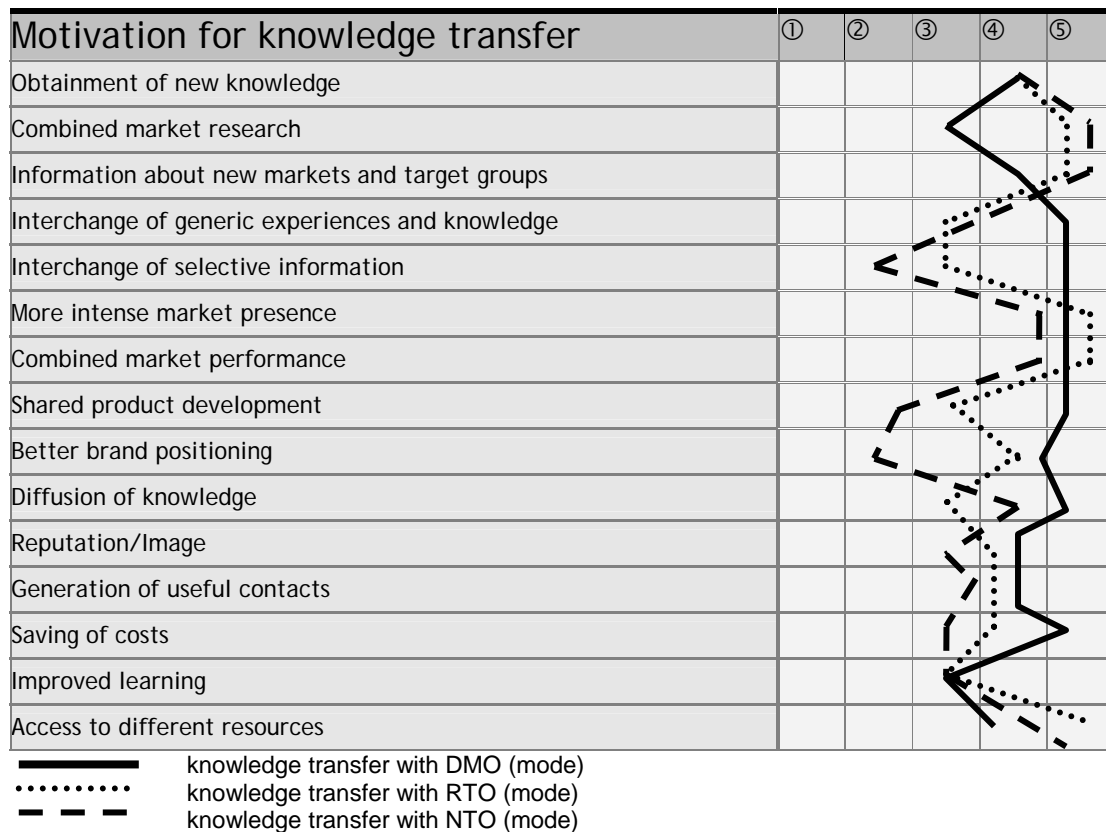

Motivation for knowledge transfer	①	②	③	④	⑤
Obtainment of new knowledge					
Combined market research					
Information about new markets and target groups					
Interchange of generic experiences and knowledge					
Interchange of selective information					
More intense market presence					
Combined market performance					
Shared product development					
Better brand positioning					
Diffusion of knowledge					
Reputation/Image					
Generation of useful contacts					
Saving of costs					
Improved learning					
Access to different resources					

— knowledge transfer with DMO (mode)
········ knowledge transfer with RTO (mode)
– – – knowledge transfer with NTO (mode)

Fig. 3. Motivation for knowledge transfer

In addition to the most important motivations, also the primary organizational and personal barriers for knowledge transfer have been analyzed. Figure 4 shows the weight of the singular barriers, using means. (5-point Likert scale: 1= low barrier to 5= high barrier).
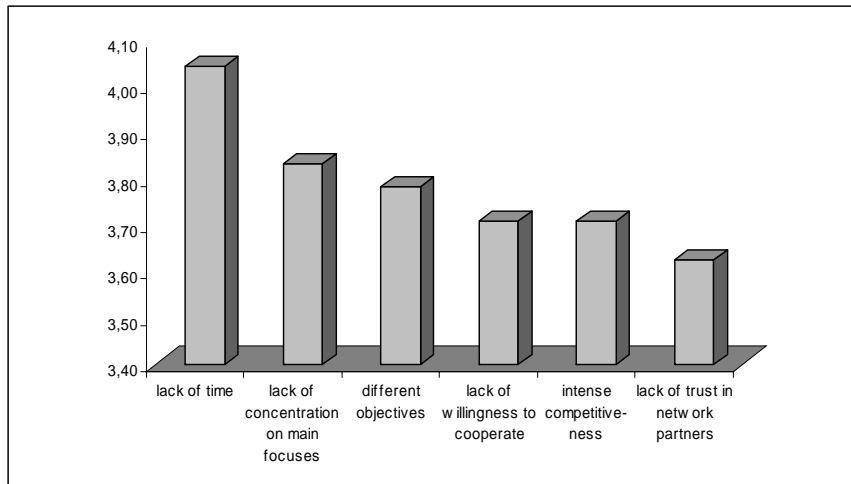
Fig. 4. Barriers for knowledge transfer

As illustrated in the chart, the most significant barrier for knowledge transfer results in a lack of time (4,04) followed by an absence of key focuses (3,83).

To discover the reasons for refusing actively knowledge transfer within the cross levels of organizations, a second question was added. General managers revealed that between DMOs the main reason for refusing knowledge transfer is competitiveness (9 responses) and lack in confidence (6 responses). Between DMOs and RTO's there exists no reason, whereas between DMOS and the NTO the main cause results from bad experiences in the past and a lack of interest. Table 2 shows the most frequent reasons.

Table 2. Reasons for refusing knowledge transfer

Reasons for refusing knowledge transfer	
DMO - DMO	competitiveness (9); lack in confidence (6); bad experiences in the past (4); we create knowledge insight the organization (4)
DMO - RTO	we create knowledge insight the organization (3); there are no adequate partners (3); transfer is too complex (3)
DMO - NTO	it is not of interest for us (5); bad experiences in the past (5); transfer is too complex (3);

The willingness to cooperate is not enough to ensure effective knowledge transfer. Respondents were asked what factors ease or ensure knowledge transfer. 18 general managers believe in a highly intangible factor like grown relationships between the cooperating members. Moreover, a coordinating person or organization supports the process.

Table 3. Ensuring factors for knowledge transfer

What factors can assure knowledge transfer?	N
grown relationships between members	18
a coordinating person	13
a coordinating organization	12
consolidated routines or processes	6
an alternating, impulsive coordination	6
there exist no mechanisms	2

Focusing on different means of communication, the singular relevance and the grade of utilization have been asked. Personal contributions in one-to-one interviews still are considered to be the most important and most often used means of communications. Support of telecommunication channels in terms of phone calls and e-mails are not believed as relevant as meetings and workshops, also if they are used more frequently. Hence, time plays an important role. While personal interaction is relatively time intensive, e-mailing and phone calls can be made at any time and at any place.
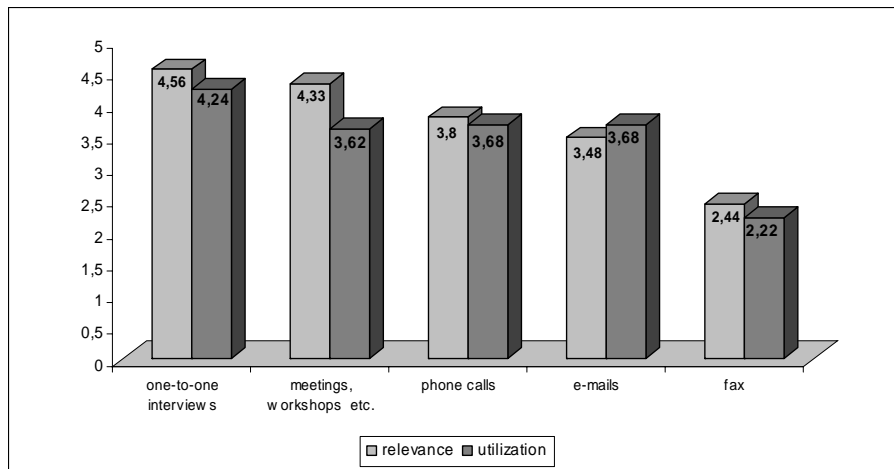

Fig. 5. Importance of means of communication (mean is shown)

Respondents were also asked to describe the competences they contribute to enhance the competitiveness of the network, focusing on one of the main aspects characterizing the relationship: the willingness to invest. Soft skills like abilities in interpersonal communication and the experience within the field are very important in the cooperation among DMOs and with the NTO. In networks with RTOs there are no specific skills needed, it rather seems to be a combination between an organizing ability and other soft skills like interpersonal communication and experience.
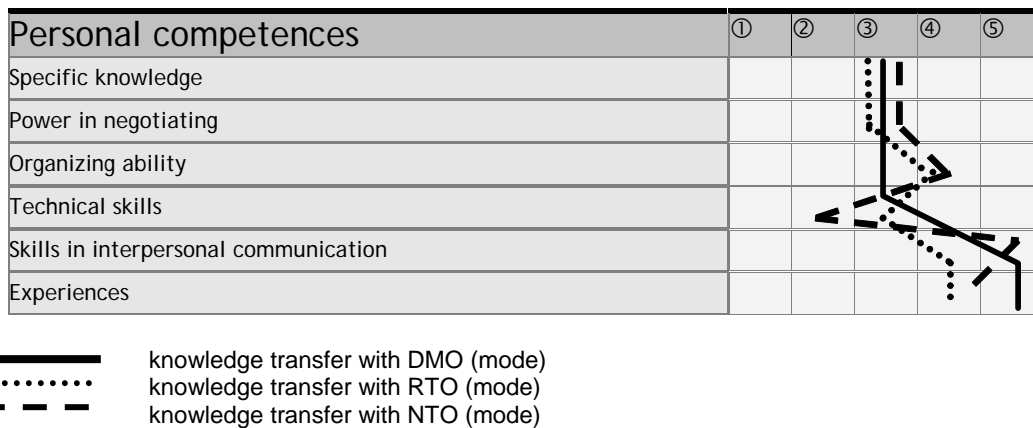
Personal competences	①	②	③	④	⑤
Specific knowledge					
Power in negotiating					
Organizing ability					
Technical skills					
Skills in interpersonal communication					
Experiences					

—————— knowledge transfer with DMO (mode)
··············· knowledge transfer with RTO (mode)
— — — knowledge transfer with NTO (mode)

Fig. 6. Personal skills and competences

Operating in small- and medium-sized organizations with few employees, the handling of transfer from individual knowledge into a shared organization-wide knowledge is another vital point of interest, in order to increase the competitiveness of the organization. 24 respondents believe that knowledge transfer within the organizations is done mostly by verbal communication and exchange of experiences. (Multiple answers were possible; see Fig. 7)
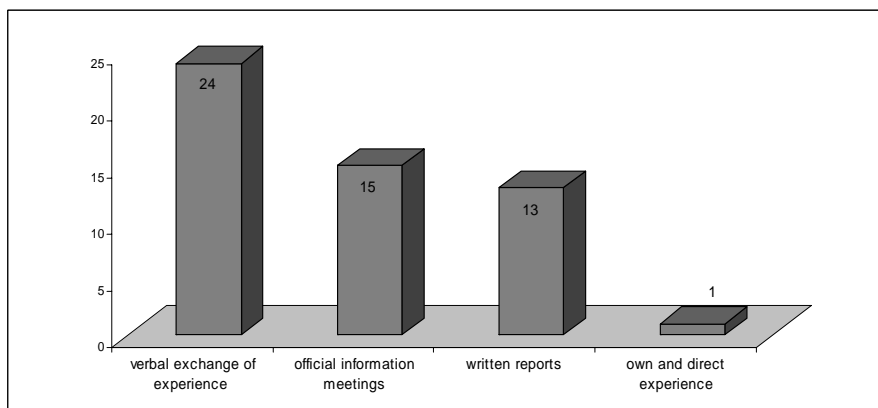

Fig. 7. Transfer of individual knowledge into organizational knowledge (number of responses)

Furthermore, general managers were asked about their opinion on knowledge networks within the cross levels in 5 years from now and the main sectors of cooperation. Again a Likert scale (1= not at all intensive to 5= very intensive) was used. As shown in table 4, respondents believe in an increasing intensity of knowledge transfer within the networks (in comparison to table 1). While knowledge transfer among DMOs will even grow on importance, the transfer will increase mostly between DMOs and NTOs, where today only rare cooperation exists. A differentiation in the type of knowledge can be emphasized: while in all cross levels of organization knowledge

concerning marketing will be transferred, the knowledge transfer among DMOs will focus on operational aspects like e.g. customer relationship management (CRM) and events, knowledge transfer between DMOs and RTOs will concentrate on strategy and management aspects, whereas knowledge transfer between DMOs and NTOs will concern research and developments aspects.

Table 4. Future knowledge transfer

future knowledge transfer - means		
	future cooperation	sector of transfer
DMO - DMO	4,04	marketing (8); destination management (4); events (3); CRM (1); innovation (1)
DMO - RTO	3,80	marketing (6); destination management (2)
DMO - NTO	3,22	marketing (5); market research (1);

The main focus of the study was put on the question, to what extent technological-driven tools can support this increasing knowledge transfer between the cross levels of organizations. The last part of the questionnaire therefore concentrates on this aspect. General managers were asked, how an informational system like the "tourismusmanager.tirol.at" can support their attempts. A 5-point Likert scale (1= not at all supportive to 5= highly supportive) was used. Table 5 shows the results, analyzing the means.

Table 5. Technological tools – support of information systems

Support of information system - means	
placement of general knowledge	3,92
obtaining new knowledge	3,92
placement of specific knowledge from important projects	3,78
collection/storage of knowledge	3,76
increment of efficiency	3,40
development of new competences	3,36
increment of communication	3,24
enhancement of trust in the cooperation	3,24
increment of creativity	3,20

With such systems the distribution of general (3,92) and specific knowledge (3,78) can be supported. Respondents believe in an incremented diffusion of knowledge. Moreover, new knowledge can be obtained (3,92), in order to increase professionalism within the organization. On the other hand, knowledge can furthermore be collected and saved (3,76) and therefore easily used by all members of the network. On the other hand, a technological driven tool seems not to be efficient enough to increase communication and trust within the network.

To support the previous answers, a direct question on the impact of "tourismusmanager.tirol.at" as a tool to storage and transfer knowledge was posed. 44% of the respondents believe in a very strong support and for 48% such a system is supporting the transfer. Therefore, the trust in a technological-driven tool seems to be very high. Figure 8 shows the results graphically.
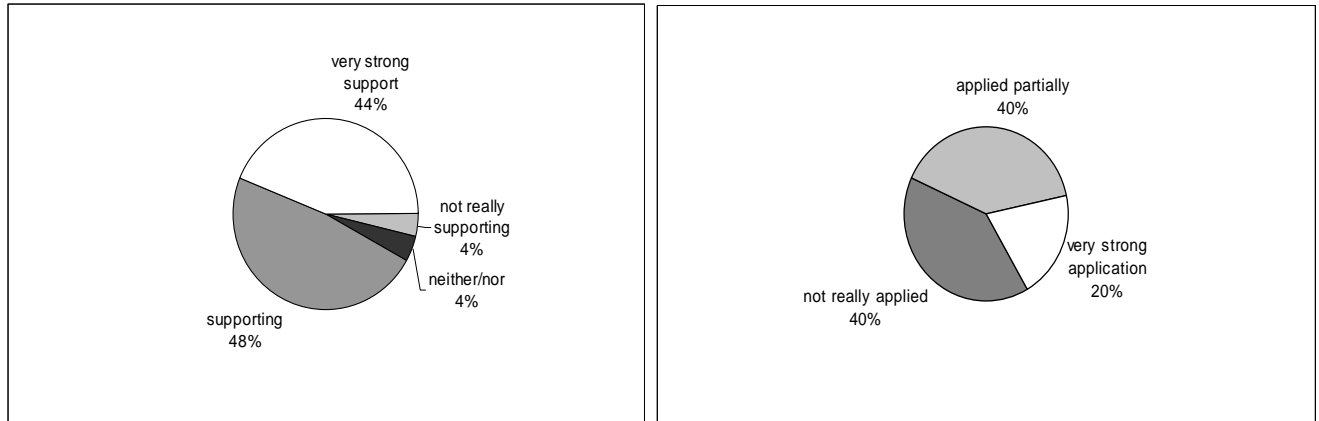

Fig. 8 and 9. Potential of support of knowledge transfer and application of "tourismusmanager.tirol.at"

Although the confidence with such a system is very high, only 20% of the respondents stated a very strong application (Figure 9). Most of the respondents use "tourismusmanager.tirol.at" only partially (40%) or even less (40%). Most of all very small organizations with less than 3 employees use the tool as a support in daily activities. On the other side, the bigger organizations with 10–20 employees tend to use the system for performing in a more professional way.

Conclusion

In this exploratory study the knowledge transfer among cross levels of tourism organizations and the support of technology-driven tools have been discussed. The underlying concepts of knowledge management and knowledge management systems have been introduced. A preliminary study focusing on the local Tyrolean tourism organizations has been undertaken to gather relevant data. Therefore, the basis for further discussion is provided to focus on efficient means of knowledge transfer. The willingness to cooperate and to share knowledge within the cross levels could be confirmed. The main barriers for refusing cooperation like e.g. lack of time and confidence and bad experiences in the past could be detected. Now, knowledge

management is challenged to search for new methods and means to overcome these obstacles. Although not used efficiently by now, technology-driven tools such as tourism management support systems are fundamental for future cooperation. Members of knowledge networks already recognize their importance; the great challenge for practitioners is to find a way to increase trust and confidence in the system and to establish a framework, which is favourable to knowledge transfer.

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