

# Territoriality and Consumption Behaviour with Location-Based Media

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## Abstract

The development in location-based mobile media has led to the popularity of its use for place experiences. This study explored the concept of territoriality, which is suggested as the underlying human behaviour that influences consumers' mobility and experience stimulated by the social gaming feature of location-based media. From an exploratory investigation with a series of focus group discussions with users of location-based media, this study observed the activities of territorial tagging for the purposes of territorial claim and defence to gain and maintain the perceived territorial control over resources and rewards attached to certain places. The ability of location-based media to make the physical territory to interact with informational devices enables territorial behaviour to manifest in the consumption of local establishments, making location-based media a powerful tool for marketers and managers to transform people-place experiences. Managerial implications are provided.

**Keywords:** territoriality; mobility; location-based media; mobile technology.

## 1 Introduction

Tourism and hospitality industries are witnessing the continuous development in mobile computing and location-based services and how the use of such technology influences the ways people experience places. Recently, location-based applications on smart phones, such as *Foursquare*, *Gowalla*, and *SCVNGR*, have emerged. These applications combine location-based services, social networking, and social gaming (i.e., playing games by means of social interactions) to encourage the consumption of places. Using such applications, people are expected to experience cities and destinations in a more fun, playful way, leading to a higher degree of mobility and a pervasive social influence.

Indeed, with more than 10 million users worldwide and three million *check-ins* daily (Foursquare, 2011), *Foursquare* has proven to be an attractive mobile application for tourism marketing. The City of Chicago and the State of Pennsylvania in the US are partnering with *Foursquare* to encourage visitors to uncover the history and culture of the cities and unlock special badges associated with their lifestyle (Van Grove, 2010a; 2010b) and more destination marketing organisations (DMOs) are following their footsteps. The growing interest in using location-based media for tourism and hospitality promotion indicates the importance of understanding how the technology transforms consumer behaviour in order to strategize such approach.

The social gaming feature of location-based media brings about the consequence of social competition through mobility. Since these applications offer rewards for accomplishments of specific tasks associated with the consumption of places, users are competing with their peers to achieve a certain status while experiencing cities and destinations. Specifically, playing a social game with location-based media gives users the opportunity to lay claim to a specific place (e.g., by becoming a *Mayor*) ahead of others, indicating the basic behaviour of human territoriality. More importantly, the use of location-based media enables territoriality behaviour to be bound to consumption. Hence, it is posited in this study that the ability to use location-based media for territorial marking could be leveraged further for marketing and management strategies. While the role of social interactions in influencing individual decision making has been a topic of interest in tourism literature, the aspect of territoriality in the consumption of places is yet to be explored. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the intersection of human territoriality and technology within the context of tourism and everyday life. Particularly, the study explores the use of location-based media for territorial claim and defence behaviour in the process of territorial production. Further, this study provides managerial implications for tourism and hospitality industries.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Human Territoriality and Tourism**

Human territoriality is defined as an act of laying claim to and defending a territory (Hall, 1959; Sack, 1986) to secure a set of spaces for performances of various activities (Rivano-Fischer, 1987), and to affect, influence, or control access, actions, and interactions (Kärholm, 2007). This behaviour has been attributed to the creation of status and self-image as well as the concept of privacy and intimacy (Brown, 1987). Territoriality can be seen as the social production of space, as the creation and transformation of territory establish the framework of social life (Soja, 1989). Indeed, territorialisation establishes rules and relationships (Brown & Capdevila, 1999) and, in order for them to remain effective, territories need to be constantly produced and reproduced by way of control, socialized behaviours, etc. (Kärholm, 2007).

Within the context of tourism, traveling to a tourist destination means entering the territory of (and governed by) others. Based on the French term *terroir*, referring to a district of certain geographical quality (Gottman, 1975), the term *touristic terroir* was coined to indicate the unique combination of attributes at a tourism region that defines the regional flavour of tourism experiences (Hall & Mitchell, 2002). *Touristic terroir* is an expression of regional identity that is unique and difficult to replicate, making each tourism destination a unique geographic territory characterised by the natural and cultural landscapes that are formed and reformed by its people as a result of social processes. Consequently, tourist experiences are bound by the rules and relationships established by the 'owners' (e.g., in the form of entrance permit, access to objects, people, and information, etc.). In tourism research, tourists' spatial behaviour has been linked to itinerary models (i.e., tourists' spatio-temporal mobility) and

host–tourist relationships (i.e., socio-cultural interactions). Studies focusing on the basic territorial behaviour in tourism are rather limited.

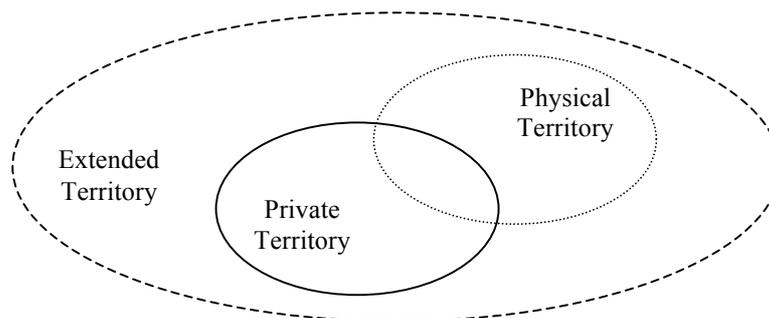
The discussion on tourists' territorial behaviour in a destination has been focusing on territorial functioning in various tourism settings. Andereck (1997) identifies territorial behaviours among tourist groups at tourism attractions. Perceiving an attraction as a public space, tourist groups hold it a territory, form an attachment to it, albeit in a short period of time, and exhibit negative responses to territorial invasion. However, Andereck (1997) also identified that the behaviour is limited in small territorial layer, such as marking and claiming a bench, rather than occupying the entire attraction, which is consistent with the characteristic of territoriality behaviour in public spaces. Here, territoriality is seen as the perceived “ownership” of a place at a particular time period, where a place is appropriated but not necessarily defended (Altman, 1975), making human territoriality different from that of aggressive-defensive zoological territoriality.

## 2.2 Technology and Territoriality

The discussion of territorial behaviour is further enriched by the development in information and communication technology (ICT), chiefly because ICT added another layer to the definition of space. As noted by Adams (1997), the vocabulary of space is broadly used to explain the virtual environment, such as *cybercafé*, *virtual office*, *chat room*, *blogosphere*, etc. ICT articulates space and place in different ways, giving rise to *hybrid ecologies* (Crabtree and Rodden 2008) that support new forms of encounter and interaction based on social and virtual proximity and presence (Licoppe & Inada, 2008). Further, these space metaphors imply spatial behaviour over time, including exploration, settlement, and virtual habitation (Adams, 1997), allowing for the basic territorial claim and defence behaviour comparable to that of the physical nature. For example, people claim their territory on the *blogosphere* by maintaining a *weblog*, where they can control other internet users' access to information and develop relationships with certain groups of desired users.

Most importantly, the development in ubiquitous computing adds a new dimension to users' territorial behaviour. Lemos (2010) argues that mobile technology enables new means of mobility, communication and sociability, creating new ways of territorialisation, based on the convergence between physical space and cyberspace. With the new locative media, particularly location-based services on mobile phones, places and material objects are able to interact with informational devices (Lemos, 2010), giving ways for users (e.g., marketers, artists, tourists, etc.) to experience and attach new meanings to space. Location-based services, for example, enable *mediated co-proximity* (Licoppe & Inada, 2009) (i.e., two users mutually recognize that they are close to each other), which can further stimulate face-to-face interaction and/or knowledge sharing and collaboration in cyberspace (e.g., by leaving online recommendations, playing social games, unlocking bonuses and deals, etc.). Hence, places, including tourism destinations, can be composed of several different territorial, physical and virtual, layers.

The concept of privacy and personal space explains the different territorial layers of places. According to Proxemics Theory suggested by Hall (1966), personal space can be divided into several distance zones: intimate, personal, social, and public zones. Each of these zones relates to one's preferred social, interpersonal distance. Additionally, in an attempt to conceptualize territorial privacy within the context of ubiquitous computing, Könings and Schaub (2011) define three categories of human territory: physical territory, extended territory, and private territory (See Fig. 1). Physical territory refers to the environment characterized by material objects and physical boundaries. Extended territory encompasses the physical territory as well as the remote entities connected via ICT. This suggests the cyberspace as metaterritorial domain whose online characteristics entangled with the physical properties. Lastly, private territory is a subset of extended territory, but not necessarily a superset of physical territory (Könings & Schaub, 2011). The concept of private territory is central to this study as it relates to the claim and defence of personal and shared environment in one's social life. Although Hall's (1966) Proxemics Theory was initially conceptualized for physical space, it can be suggested that private territory is similar to or having the characteristics of intimate and personal zones.



**Fig. 1.** Human Territory (Könings & Schaub, 2011)

### **2.3 Territorial Production**

Although territoriality can be considered universal as human behaviour, the forms that it takes can be varied enormously (Delaney, 2005). "Territories are produced everywhere, in different ways, in different contexts, and by different means, and encompass a wide range of phenomena" (Kärholm, 2007: 441). Bringing together the research on Actor–Network Theory and human territoriality, Kärholm (2007) suggests four different forms of territorial production: territorial strategies, tactics, association, and appropriation (See Table 1). Territorial strategies and tactics are intentional attempts to claim a territory. Territorial tactics are personal; they are directed explicitly toward the ordering of a certain area. On the other hand, territorial strategies are impersonal, planned and mediated control. Territorial association and appropriation represent territorial productions that are not planned but are consequences of regular practices. Territorial appropriation is typically based on a

repetitive and consistent use of an area by certain individuals and/or groups, while territorial association characterizes a place with a certain usage and specific conventions and regularities that underpin this usage (Kärholm, 2007).

**Table 1.** Forms of Territorial Production (Kärholm, 2007)

	<b>Impersonal Control</b>	<b>Personal Control</b>
<b>Intended Production</b>	Territorial Strategy	Territorial Tactics
<b>Production through Use</b>	Territorial Association	Territorial Appropriation

In a tourism setting, partitioning attractions in conjunction with sequences of a tour program to allow for a group of tourists to occupy certain areas for themselves within a period of time can be considered a territorial strategy. A tourist marking a bench by the hotel swimming pool with a towel is a form of territorial tactic. In a tourism destination, a certain park can be appropriated for tourists' use during the day and associated with homeless people after dark. Kärholm (2007) further argues that the "different forms of territorial production often operate at the same place, mobilizing different sorts of artefacts, rules, and so forth" (p. 441).

The convergence of material and informational space made possible by location-based media sets forth new possibilities of territorial production, which include ways of territorial production (i.e., how to mark and defend territories), combinations of different territorial layers to mark and defend, etc. A straightforward example of territorial marking in cyberspace is to purchase land and/or islands in a virtual reality environment (e.g., *SecondLife*). Furthermore, Garner, Rashid, Coulton and Edwards (2006) presents how people use mobile devices and RFID technology as *digital spraycan*, making the technology a means to mark their environment by creating digital graffiti. This implies the form of *territorial tagging* (i.e., in the form of *geo-tagging*, a process of adding geographic information to metadata) as the new way of territorial marking. In fact, territorial tagging is a common practice in mobile social networking today as tourists are leaving their digital footprints everywhere by publishing retrievable *geo-tagged* information.

More recently, location-based services on mobile phones let users to *check-in* from places, allowing them to claim certain venues and access their benefits. To be able to *check-in* using location-based technology, people need to be physically at the venue, which most of the time also means consuming the venue (e.g., patronage to restaurants or attractions). In other words, consumption behaviour becomes a form of territorial production. Therefore, territorial behaviour using such technology has a significant impact for marketers and planners to influence and turn the technology users into consumers.

### 3 Exploratory Investigation

The ways location-based media allow territorial behaviour to manifest in consumption makes technology-assisted territorial production important to explore, especially for tourism and hospitality businesses. Not only that these forms of territorial production important in terms of deepening our understanding on the convergence of mobility in material space and the cyberspace, it is also important to derive implications of these behaviours for planning and marketing purposes. Therefore, the chief goal of this study is to explore the use of location-based technology applications for various forms of territorial production to explain territorial behaviour in the intersections of physical space and cyberspace. Specifically, the focus of this study was the use of *Foursquare* applications on smart phones, which integrates the aspects of location literacy, social network, and competition (through social gaming), to establish experiential territories at home and at tourism destinations.

An exploratory qualitative study was undertaken to examine territorial behaviour using location-based media. Specifically, focus group discussions with location-based social network application users were conducted to gain valuable insights into the following inquiries: (1) how users define and establish personal and experiential territories through the consumption of tourism and hospitality venues while using location-based technology, and (2) the common forms of personal territorial production with location-based media. Five moderated focus group discussions, averaging in six participants, were conducted from October 2010 to February 2011. A metropolitan area in the Eastern coast of US was chosen for the focus group discussions considering the fact that these applications were targeted for use in urban areas. Invitations to join the focus group discussions were posted on a *Facebook* group page that was left open to all viewers. Interested participants were screened and they identified themselves as avid users of *Foursquare*. Applications such as *Foursquare* and *Facebook Places* allow different types of businesses to register their venues, ranging from restaurants and bars to beauty salons and medical centres. For the purposes of this study, tourism and hospitality venues (e.g., restaurants, attractions, shops, movie theatres, etc.) were highly emphasized in the discussions. The scope of the discussion includes users' patronage to local venues at home and those visited at tourism destinations while traveling.

Several researchers suggest focus group discussions to be composed of homogeneous respondents (Bellenger, Berhardt, and Goldstucker, 1976) for a shared perspective to emerge. However, Calder (1977) also suggests that heterogeneous respondents may yield rich information for exploratory research. Therefore, considering the exploratory nature of this investigation, the first discussion was composed of heterogeneous respondents to obtain rich information from diverse user experiences. To further gain new ideas and confirm the collected information, homogenous respondents were allocated for the remaining discussions. Based on the characteristics of the respondents, two discussions were composed of only students and the other two of only working professionals, each in similar age groups (student groups were in their 20s and professional groups were in their 30s). The discussions were recorded into

sound files (i.e., roughly five hour long) and later transcribed into textual data. All respondents received a \$25 dining certificate upon completion of the discussion.

## 4 Result and Discussion

Territoriality behaviour was observed from the use of location-based applications. It was identified that these applications presented the opportunities for social competition among users. Driven by the motivation to compete with others, people strategize their mobility by patronizing different places to collect rewards offered by the application (e.g., points, badges, status) and by merchants (e.g., discounts, bonuses), as well as to gain recognition from other users. Indeed, it was identified that even though all participants did not perceive the use of such application as “playing games” *per se*, they agreed that using it makes their daily and touristic experiences more playful and fun.

### 4.1 Territorial Tagging through *Check-Ins*

*Check-in* is the activity whereby users announce their physical location to the location-based mobile system and allow the system to make it visible to select friends/contacts. In return, the system will allow users to identify other people nearby for further interactions and to retrieve recommendations. In other words, location-based media allow physical proximity to be transformed into mediated co-proximity (Licoppe & Inada, 2009). This shows how the physical space and cyberspace converge with the assistance of location-based media, illustrating what Lemos (2010) suggests as the new mobility and sociability.

From the focus group discussions, it was identified that all participants *checked-in* from places for different purposes, ranging from social connection (e.g., to share their experience with friends, to screen the social environment at places, etc.) to social competition (see Excerpts a and b). The differences in purposes of check-ins, however, did not correspond to their age or occupation. One of the main purposes of *check-in* identified from the discussion was to achieve the rewards offered by the venues and the gaming feature in the system (see Excerpt c). The reward-seeking behaviour manifested in *check-in* activities, which also enforced social competition, requires users to apply different strategies of personal control, making territorial tagging a mechanism for territorial production.

### 4.2 *Mayorship*: Territorial Claim and Defence Behaviour

*Foursquare Mayorships* are awarded to users with the most *check-ins* (i.e., more days than anyone else) at a specific venue over the last 60 days. Besides gaining recognition through the mobile clients, users crowned as *Mayors* are typically eligible for special rewards provided by the venue, such as free merchandises, discounts, or special arrangements for social recognition (e.g., bars displaying their *Mayors* on a digital jukebox monitor for all patrons to see). Hence, from the point of view of consumers, a *Mayorship* title is seen as an outcome of territorial production, in that

becoming a *Mayor* brings in some forms of territorial control through appropriation. This leads to the social competition through territorial claim and defence behaviours.

### Excerpts: Location-based Technology and Territory

Narratives	Respondents
a. <i>"I am not from around here, my family and close friends are somewhere else. I have to show them all the exciting things that I do here (by checking-in)..."</i>	Male, Student
b. <i>"...it's a way of being interactive with the world. To show all my friends that I am building a history... that I am a cool person, you know... and it becomes a competition too because it's rewarding."</i>	Female, Professional
c. <i>"For me [using the application] is a way to pass the time. It's not necessarily a game... it's just something I do when I walk down the streets... but then you get some stuff back. Because I checked-in, it shows me there's a special over here... or if I checked-in ten times I can unlock a coupon somewhere..."</i>	Male, Professional
d. <i>"I'm into competition... Once your friends are following, you got to compete... who got more points and who got more Mayorships."</i>	Female, Professional
e. <i>"...it became more about competitions. That's when the Mayor thing starts coming into play. If I keep on checking-in, in five days I can become a Mayor, so I want to check-in five days in a row... especially in places like [Bar Name] where they show the Mayor on the jukebox."</i>	Male, Professional
f. <i>"...I would go to regular places more often to become a Mayor."</i>	Female, Student
g. <i>"[When traveling] It's used to be very easy to become a Mayor in [pause] remote areas, where not so many people use Foursquare... So, I would make sure to drive further from the city to check-in at random places and try to become a Mayor."</i>	Female, Professional
h. <i>"I'm the Mayor of a couple of places around where I work, mostly coffee places, lunch places... if I'm the Mayor and I haven't been there for a while I definitely want to go there just because I don't want to lose my Mayorship. So I make sure to go there to check-in and maintain my Mayorship."</i>	Male, Professional
i. <i>"If I'm ousted as a Mayor... I would be very angry! [Laugh]. The challenge is not over... I would try to get the Mayorship back. I would check-in like three times a day!"</i>	Female, Professional
j. <i>"[Using the application] makes me think about different things to do in the city... where to go... what yet to be discovered. It forces me to check out other places I've never been to... check out things larger than your own places."</i>	Female, Professional

From the social competition context, it was identified from the discussions that users were competing with others not only to get the *Mayorship* title at a specific venue, but also to get the most *Mayorships* (i.e., expansion of territories claimed). Hence, territorial tagging through *check-ins* can be seen as a territorial tactic (i.e., intended production) that people employ within a social network. From the discussions, most participants indicated that they visited places more often since they used *Foursquare* to become a *Mayor* and enjoy the rewards (see Excerpts e and f). Some participants would travel to places in remote areas where there were not many *Foursquare* users so they could get the *Mayorship* title easily (see Excerpt g), which indicates an expansion of territory.

The system requirement for *Mayorship* also dictates the possibility of users being ousted as a *Mayor* due to an absence of *check-ins*; other users who frequent the venues might take over the title. In other words, *Mayors* are prone to territorial invasion. This indicates the consequence of territorial defence by continuing the consumption of venues after the achievement of a *Mayorship* title. From the discussions, territorial defence behaviour was identified from participants' perceived necessity to maintain their status and the perceived threat from invasion by others (see Excerpts h and i). Therefore, the territorial production identified from the discussions mostly encapsulates what Kärholm (2007) suggests as territorial tactics through appropriation, in that most participants, especially those emphasized the importance of social competition, visited venues with the intent to become the *Mayor*. The use of these location-based mobile media encourages territoriality behaviours where places are consumed and appropriated for various social benefits.

### **4.3 Mobility and Experience Territory**

The important consequence of territorial behaviours mediated by location-based mobile applications is the creation of mobility patterns and the establishment of private experience territories. The social competition challenges users to strategize their mobility within the city or in tourism destinations. Being a *Mayor* at a specific venue requires territorial appropriation, and users have to be physically at the venue to do so. In other words, territorial tactics through appropriation necessitate mobility. As a result, territorial behaviour causes users' patterns of mobility to develop. Some users visit regular places such as restaurants and cafés in the city more frequently (see Excerpts f. and h.), others travel to different places (see Excerpts g. and j.) to mark, appropriate, and communicate their territory. Either way, territorial behaviour (and mobility) manifests in the consumption of local establishments, making location-based media a powerful tools for marketers and managers alike to transform people-place experiences, particularly in tourism and hospitality industries.

Further, the mobility and consumption of places while using location-based media enable users to set the boundaries of their experience territory, both for everyday experience and touristic experience. For example, by *checking-in* to cafés and lunch places surrounding their workplace, people mark a network of venues as their everyday experience territory. While traveling, a tourist *checks-in* from different attractions and venues in a tourism destination to convey their obtained privilege of

“claiming” another *terroir* for a period of time. This implies a process of privatization of experiential territory by personalizing and appropriating the ‘public’ space (Goffman, 1963; Licoppe & Inada, 2008). From the discussions, the fact that others would be aware of their locations and patterns of consumptions (e.g., where they have lunch, where they went to on vacation, etc.) did not deter most participants to share their *check-ins* through the pervasive, location-based mobile media. For them, the establishment of personal experience territories is seen as a way of conveying their self-image to the world. Consequently, assisted by mobile media, a city (and a tourism destination) is comprised of networks of places of which many people perceive as their own experience territories and for which many people compete to gain territorial control.

## 5 Conclusion and Implication

This study observed consumer behaviour as it is influenced by the basic human territoriality behaviour mediated by the social gaming feature of location-based technology. Location-based media allow people to express their territorial behaviour through the consumption of places with an intention of gaining control over the resources offered by these places, albeit being different from claiming ownership to the places. In the world of location-based social gaming, the media assist users with digital territorial tagging (e.g., *check-ins*), which can be employed to claim a territory and defend it from territorial invasion by way of consumption. Since territorial tagging activity requires users’ exact geographic locations to be reported to the system, these applications have the potential to influence and change people’s mobility within cities and tourism destinations. Consequently, perusing such applications for tourism marketing, by integrating the persuasive power of perceived territorial control, rewards, and social recognition, is considered beneficial.

For marketers, conveying the notion of territorial control with the achievement of a status after completing certain tasks will result in consumers’ motivation to compete with each other to gain the perceived control. Marketers targeting consumers’ variety behaviour (i.e., making consumers explore and visit more places in the area) should pay more attention to facilitate the activities of territorial claim. On the other hand, marketers targeting loyalty behaviour (i.e., increasing the frequency of visits) should emphasize the importance of territorial defence. For example, destination marketers wanting their visitors to explore their area should create a mechanism of rewarding some forms of territorial control (e.g., privilege to certain information, discounts, etc.) after the achievement of certain number of *check-ins* within a period of time. This requires collaborations and partnerships among different venues sharing similar goals and themes within the tourism destination. Meanwhile, hospitality business owners targeting loyal customers should pay more attention on rewarding their *Mayor* to keep the social competition alive for both territorial claim and defence behaviour.

This exploratory study offers a deeper understanding of human territoriality behaviour manifested in the consumption of places with the use of location-based media. The results illustrate the convergence of physical and cyberspace and how people set the

territorial boundaries of their experience territory by appropriating and personalizing areas within cities and tourism destinations. Further, this study contributes to tourism practitioners by providing the implications to capitalize the use of location-based media for marketing and promotion. Further research can be extended to assess the role of territoriality behaviour in the success of location-based marketing by developing and testing a measurement model, which can be generalized for different consumption situations.

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