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Assessing and benchmarking digital presence in destination management of local governmental organizations in Crete and in South Aegean in Greece.

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Abstract

Destination Management Organizations' websites are very important tools since they allow direct communication with the traveler worldwide and provide information at every step of the "customer journey". Complementary to websites, presence in Social Media Platforms, enhances interactive communication with tourists, enables usage of user-generated content and helps better understanding what are the travelers' perception about the destination.

We use a model to evaluate the quality and digital presence of two Greek regions, namely Crete and South Aegean. The model was properly adjusted for a single evaluator to grade local governmental destination websites. In addition, a reputable online tool was used to evaluate their pages or profiles on Social Media Platforms to formulate a complete picture of their digital presence in destination management.

In both Crete and South Aegean regions, the majority of websites dedicated to destination promotion received nearly half of the excellent grade; the empirical evidence indicated that YouTube was the best utilized platform (over 65% of channels received a B- to C- rating). Almost 35% of FB pages got B-, the highest grade for Instagram profiles was C+ (close to 55% of the profiles), and for Twitter profiles, it was C (20% of them).

***Keywords**: destination marketing, destinations' digital platforms, destination website evaluation, search engine marketing, search engine optimization*

Introduction

Ten to fifteen years ago, studies referred to the importance of the presence in World Wide Web, the rapid development of information technology and noted the radical changes of the tourism industry, because of these two factors. The effectiveness of the Internet as a marketing tool and its value for business and consumers for information dissemination, communication and online commerce were stated and accepted since the launch of commercial Internet applications in the early 1990s (Law, Qi, & Buhalis, 2010). Complementary, Web 2.0 enabled communication and interactivity between customer and supplier (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Social Media Platforms (SMPs) and innovative applications enchance and improve website utilization, becoming parts of the digital presence of any organisation (Ting, Kuo, & Li, 2012).

The intangible and uncertain nature of tourism products and services is diminished a lot nowadays, because of information available on the internet (Stienmetz, Levy, & Boo, 2013). Destination Management Organizations' (DMOs) websites attract tourists to the destination and enhance customer satisfaction when providing accurate and useful information (Li & Wang, 2011). Complementary to the website, SMPs can enable interactivity and direct contact between travelers and tourism services' providers (Sun, S., Fong, D.K.C., Law, R, & He, S, 2017). SMPs are heavily used for sharing user experiences and exchanging opinions, but also for business promoting, marketing research and interacting with the visitor (Magano & Cunha, 2020). In addition to user generated content, exploitation of virtual and augmented reality can be used by DMOs to influence the final choice of the traveler (Sotiriadis, 2021).

Information and communications technology have radically changed the digital promotion of tourism destinations. Online and interactive communication used in the preparation of the travel, is fundamental for building the motivation to visit (Buhalis & Law, 2008) and the destination's official website and SMPs are perceived as trustfull sources of

information (Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio, Campo, & Molinillo, 2020). Any DMO should assess its digital presence and perform benchmarks regularly to measure its platforms, monitor competitors and understand what visitors appreciate and what they penalize, so as to decide what improvements are needed (Douglas & Mills, 2005). Evaluations facilitate and support continuous improvements, comparison against competitors and peers (Li & Wang, 2011), (Myung, Morrison, & Taylor, 2005). This internal and frequent process has to be cost effective, so we decided to define a tool for self-assessment and benchmark, which can be used by a single evaluator. The objective of the study was to evaluate a destination website with respect to the completeness of its content, to its usability and its technical aspect, but also to observe the users' activity while browsing it. Identification of strengths and weaknesses of the evaluated website was also a necessity. Since digital presence and marketing plans have as integral part profiles or pages in SMPs, benchmarking could not be complete without including them too.

Literature Review

Identification of the important features of a website, its effectiveness as a marketing tool and methodologies to measure its effectiveness are investigated to justify, if the significant costs for setup, advertising, and maintenance spent for digital presence are paying back (Tierney, 2000).

DMO's website functionalities

Mandatory functionalities in a DMO website are information provision, advertisement, persuasion and entertainment (Park & Gretzel, 2007). A special edition published by WTO includes a detailed presentation of the key features / characteristics / functionalities that the website of a DMO should have (WTO Business Council, 1999):

a) **Home page**: is very important to present the destination in an attractive and enticing way, have clear and simple layout, provide list of contents of the site and have brief textual description supported by pictures, graphics and a logo.
b) **Web pages appearance**: the presented information on each page should be accompanied with visual attractive elements (i.e. pictures, graphics, maps, tables), should be aligned at blocks of text and be in simple text so as to increase readability. Multimedia increase and maintain the visitor's interest in the website, but since they increase the loading time of the page, they have to be included carefully or use virtual tours and live cams instead (Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2004).
c) **Mandatory information to be included within the website**: how to reach the destination, local climate, geography, activities, events, customs, culture and any important information for the visitor who comes to the place for the first time (Zhou & DeSantis, 2005). Selective view of information, according to interests and the visited region of the destination, is facilitating the users and enables them to reach the desired information. The information included has to be simple and clear, well indexed, searchable (Douglas & Mills, 2005), structured in paragraphs and contain headings. Colored headings, graphics and pictures to the extent that load time of pages is acceptable even by low-speed connections, balances the included text and prevents it from been overwhelming. Users will have questions anyhow, and there has to be a mechanism on the website, for them to ask and receive an answer promptly. However, since questions may be repeated from others, or other users could reply too, that mechanism has to be visible and usable by all users of the website. Last but not least, information has to be current and up to date.
d) **Trip planners and virtual brochures**: usually supported for registered users, the website allows gathering information into the users' profile as they surf it. Saved information is accessible at any future occasion, for example during the visit, or post-travel to suggest experiences or to share them in SMPs, generating e-WOM (electronic word of mouth). All gathered information can be printed too, generating brochures on demand (Dion & Woodside, 2010).
e) **Photo gallery**: as a separate module, it helps having the webpages with as many pictures as page load time is not penalized.

Important websites' elements are: listing contact information (address, phone number, e-mail), facilitating interactive communication, providing tool to search the content of the website, providing interactive travel planner, offering download of travel guides and other promotional material and multilingual capabilities (Benckendorff & Black, 2000).

Evaluation dimensions

Technical, information, communication, transaction and relationship dimensions should be included in any website evaluation. The technical one is the most important dimension, since it affects the performance of the other four. At the same time, all dimensions interlink with each other (Li & Wang, 2010). To effectively assess a website's performance, a multidimensional evaluation approach and metrics are necessary. Nevertheless, past studies have used a plethora of labels and definitions for the dimensions they employed, making it very difficult to compare results and identify con-

sistent evaluation factors. Park and Gretzel (2007) highlighted in their study the lack of clarity on key factors to include in a website evaluation model and those evaluations typically conducted by experts or based on predetermined benchmarks, are focusing more on tangible aspects of the website and less on consumer experience (Park & Gretzel, 2007).

Key marketing principles of market segmentation, positioning and relationship building should be included in the DMO's website (Kotler et al., 1999 cited in Li & Wang, 2010). An effective website of a DMO should intergrade technology and marketing principles (Li & Wang, 2010). Key factors influencing the destination promotion are the website quality, its visual attractiveness, the information included and the pictures displayed. Site accessibility, navigation, visual attractiveness and information content contribute to the overall website quality (Perdue, 2001).

DMO's website evaluation methodologies

Law, Qi, and Buhalis (2010) identified five types of evaluation systems in their literature review addressing studies published between 1996 and 2009:

1. Counting methods, examining website performance and content by confirming a set of attributes determined by a group of experts.
2. User judgement methods, analysing satisfaction and perceptions from a set of users, including researchers and consumers.
3. Automated methods, employing software systems to evaluate website visits and browsing patterns, including content mining and data envelopment analysis (DEA).
4. Numerical calculation methods, utilizing mathematical functions to construct assessment models that include functional performance, the relative relevance of the website's features, the website's network of links, etc.
5. Combined methods, including a mix of the previous techniques.

Predominant methodologies used for evaluating destination promotional websites are Content Analysis and Modified Balanced Score Card. Apart from own search, basic source of locating past research on this subject were literature review papers published by Law, Qi, & Buhalis in 2010, Sun, Fong, Law, & He in 2017, Chan, Law, Fong, & Zhong, in 2021 and Li, Chan, & Law, in 2023. Until 2009, studies focused on website evaluation in tourism industry, addressed hospitality websites at about 46% and second came destination websites, reaching almost 24% (Law, Qi, & Buhalis, 2010). Later, research focuses mainly on the generic type of tourism website and the hospitality sector, DMOs websites are less addressed. It is worth mentioning that, after 2019, research is shifting to mobile applications and websites designed for mobile devices, following the increasing usage of smart mobiles (Li, Chan, & Law, 2023).

Methodology

Law, Qi and Buhalis (2010) noticed that there was no established method for the evaluation of tourism websites. The same conclusion is still valid as conducted by the previous section of literature review for DMOs websites. We could state that, depending on the scope of the website and the synthesis of the team involved in the study, a different approach is followed and therefore no methodology managed to prevail or become established in the evaluation of any type of website.

In our case, considering the need of frequent assessment of the performance of the website and the necessity to monitor competitors' website performance, we tried to formulate a tool that could be used by a single evaluator, without permitting subjectivity to exert influence on the outcome. A study conducted for quality evaluation of tourism destination websites belonging to organizations promoting Peloponnese Region of Greece, had adapted a general-purpose evaluation checklist developed in 1999, to be used for evaluating destination websites. That study proposed as future improvement to use evaluation software complementary to the observation of website's functionalities covering content and usability characteristics (Anna, Christina, Nikos, & Theodoula, 2020). Any software tool assures that, no matter who performs the evaluation, the result will be the same if the same input dataset is used.

It was decided to use content analysis for marking the existence or absence of functionalities included in the site and WAS for qualitative evaluation and measurement of features. WAS track, measure and report data gathered by users visiting the website, or perform metrics and evaluate website's performance. Some of them are used with programming code included in all the pages of a site like Google Analytics and other ones monitor or evaluate the website without adding anything to its source programming code. The second type of WAS were used in our case, for obvious reason.

Table 1 presents SEB-DW's dimensions, parameters and score scaling. The initial two dimensions (Content and Usability) were kept but two additional ones (Technical and Traffic) were added. 83 characteristics were employed (27 in Content, 34 in Usability, 12 in Technical and 10 in Traffic). Two parameters (Information and Scope / Selection) included in the evaluation of Peloponnese (Anna, Christina, Nikos, & Theodoula, 2020), were removed from the content dimension

because all destination websites include information related to destination's promotion, which is available publicly without any restriction.

Table 1 SEB-DW's dimensions, parameters and score scaling

Dimension	Parameter	Description / Indicative Characteristics	No of items	Min Score	Max Score	Source / Expansion
Content						
	Authority	Favicon. contact information	**2**	**-2**	**2**	**Anderson et al. (1999)**
	Currency	Posting date – recent revision	**2**	**-1**	**1**	
	Audience	Traffic share per country. top 3	**6**	**0**	**0**	
	Value	Safe external URLs	**2**	**-1**	**1**	
	Accuracy	Promotion of POI, tourism services corporations, events calendar, searching tool	**5**	**-5**	**5**	
	Advertising	Source of traffic, Tourism logo, Authorization by NTO, Marketing material available in digital for downloading	**10**	**-3**	**10**	
		Content Score	**27**	**-12**	**19**	
Usability						
	Navigation	Accessibility	**3**	**-5**	**5**	**Anderson et al. (1999)**
	Speed	Speed evaluation	**10**	**-20**	**20**	
	Access	Inactive links, number of languages, WAI tool, visual stability and implementation of best practices (PSI tool)	**15**	**-15**	**15**	
	Interactivity	Features enabling interactivity, PSI response time to use actions	**6**	**-8**	**8**	
		Usability Score	**34**	**-48**	**48**	
Technical						
	SEO Implementation	Robots and sitemap file, registered in Google-search database, evaluation by PSI (mobile/desktop)	**5**	**-9**	**9**	**Expansion**
	SEO Ranking	Domain Authority, Page Authority, Moz Rank and other tools for SEO implementation ranking	**6**	**0**	**0**	
	Google Analytics	Google Analytics installed	**1**	**-1**	**1**	
		Technical Score	**12**	**-10**	**10**	
Traffic						
	Visits	Recorded total visits, estimated search traffic	**2**	**0**	**0**	**Expansion**
	Traffic Ranking	Global, country and industry ranking	**3**	**0**	**0**	
	Device	Type of used device (desktop/mobile)	**2**	**0**	**0**	
	User behavior	Visit Duration (>53 sec.), Pages/Visit (> 1.7), Bounce Rate (<=55%)	**3**	**-3**	**3**	
		Traffic total	**10**	**-3**	**3**	
		Total evaluation scale	**83**	**-73**	**80**	

It was decided to keep the 0-80 grading and the originally defined scale: 0-25 poor, 26-50 weak, 51-60 average, 61-70 good and 71-80 excellent (Anderson, Allee, Grove, & Hill, 1999). When examining the absence or presence of a feature grading was -1/1 in most of the cases but several features were graded taking into consideration both the type of results of the used WAS and the importance of each feature per se. Negative grading was used in case of absence for any feature mandatory or very important for a DMO website. The three most important characteristics, "Registration in Google search database", "Languages" and "Percentage of dead links" were given three points as absolute value (-3/3) to reflect their importance. The Google's PageSpeed Insight (PSI) tool that was included in the software toolset we used, gives chromatic results (red, orange and green) which were assigned to -1, 1 and 2 respectively, but when that tool was unable

to perform the evaluation because of too little data, the grade was zero. Three parameters calculated by WAS, were given a -1, "Visit Duration", if the reported value was less or equal to 53 sec, (Renouard, 2023), "Pages/Visit", if it was less or equal to 1.7 (Sakas, Reklitis, Terzi, & Glaveli, 2023) and "Bounce Rate", if it was more than 55% (Databox, 2023). 29 characteristics were used as quality items and did not contribute in the grading, but were used for justification and explanation of the ranking of the website. This benchmark tool for destination websites to be used by a single evaluator, was called **Single Evaluator Benchmarking for Destination Websites** or **SEB-DW**.

SocialBlade is a reputable free web-based tool used for benchmarking presence in a quite big list of SMPs and its usage in scientific studies is quite high. In November 2023, Google Scholar reported more than two thousand results and its database contained 61.6M YouTube channels, 1.9M Facebook pages, 10.1M Instagram accounts and 10.9M X users. Facebook profiles and non-professional Instagram accounts are not evaluated. Grading is done per SMP, relative to the total entries included in SocialBlade database, performing thus a global benchmarking.

Sampling

Because of academic and professional interest, the Region of Crete was included in the study's sample. The second region was decided to be South Aegean, because both Regions are islands offering almost the same tourist product and attract similar type of visitors. S. Aegean is a direct competitor of Crete, it is reported as the leader in arrivals followed by Crete. The arrivals' difference between the two Regions in 2022, was 554,021 visitors or 2.22% of the total arrivals in the country (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2023). According to the "Border Survey", the estimated travel expenditure of non-residents during their stay in Greece (Travel Receipts) was increased by 3.11% for S. Aegean and by 30% for Crete from 2019 to 2023. In addition, the estimated expenditure per visit for 2023 was close to 767 euros for S. Aegean and 941 euros for Crete, increased by 2.16% for S. Aegean and 27.64% for Crete since 2019 (Bank of Greece, 2024). Therefore, this study performed a benchmark between the two leading Regions in the Greek tourism sector.

The tourism website (TW) and tourism SMPs were collected for all Municipal and Regional Authorities in Crete and S. Aegean. Some of the municipalities have their tourism information included into their civil-website, making it of mixed content. Some municipalities, started with a mixed website (MW) and created a TW later, without removing tourism content from the MW. In case a municipality had both MW and TW, only the TW was included into the sample of this study. Mixed YouTube channels were included but other SMP (Facebook, Instagram and X) containing civil / political content, were excluded from the sample. Lastly, mobile applications designed to be used by tourists were also examined.

184 digital platforms participated in the study, 72 of them referring to Crete and 112 to S. Aegean. Almost 18% of the digital marketing platforms were YouTube channels and of equal percentage were TW (33 in total for each type), followed by Instagram profiles that reached 17% of the sample (31 Instagram profiles). The least used tool was mobile applications, 14 in total, amounting only 8% of the sample (Table 2). On a percentage basis, Crete excels in mobile applications (+10.32%), TWs (+7.04%) and presence on Facebook (+2.88%) and falls behind S. Aegean in MWs (-9.13%), YouTube channels (-4.37%), X (-4.17%) and Instagram (-2.58%) (Table 2 & Figure 1).

Table 2 Sample statistics information

	Crete	%Crete	S. Aegean	%S. Aegean	Total	
Organizations	20		35		55	
YouTube	11	15.28%	22	19.64%	33	17.93%
Tourism websites	16	22.22%	17	15.18%	33	17.93%
Instagram	11	15.28%	20	17.86%	31	16.85%
Facebook	13	18.06%	17	15.18%	30	16.30%
Mixed websites	5	6.94%	18	16.07%	23	12.50%
X	6	8.33%	14	12.50%	20	10.87%
Mobile Applications	10	13.89%	4	3.57%	14	7.61%
Total	72	1	112	1	184	1

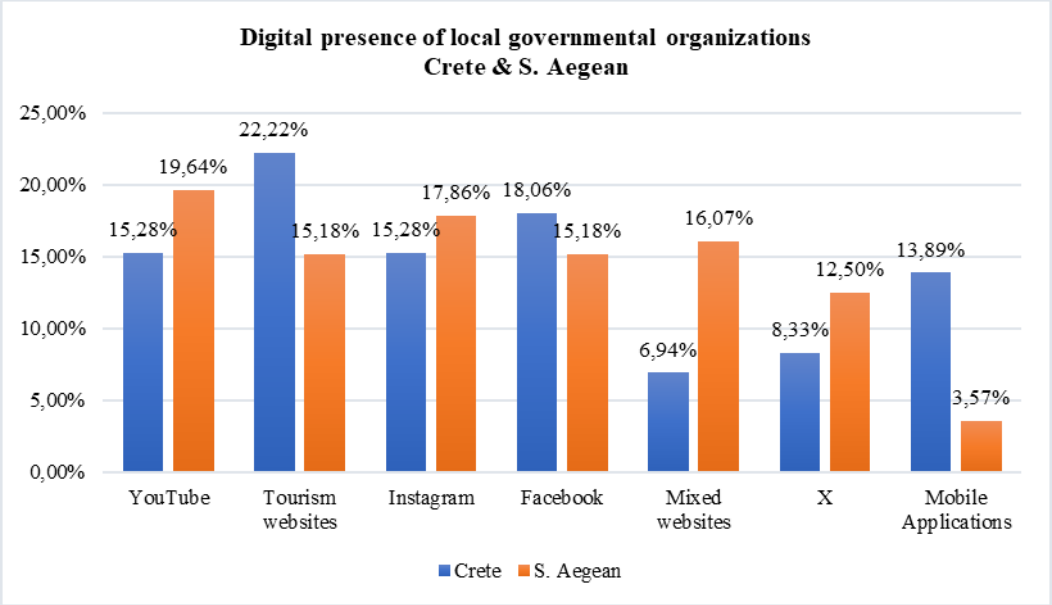

Figure 1 Digital presence of local governmental organizations in Crete and S. Aegean

Results

DMOs' websites should be living, dynamic entities, which could change quickly depending on the circumstances. Any evaluation reflects the status of the referenced websites during the period that the data were collected (Fernández-Cavia, Rovira, Díaz-Luque, & Cavaller, 2014), which is valid for the results of this study. Our research was conducted once, mid-December 2023 and lasted a week. Content analysis was performed and metrics were gathered by WAS, while the benchmark with SocialBlade tool was completed within 24 hours.

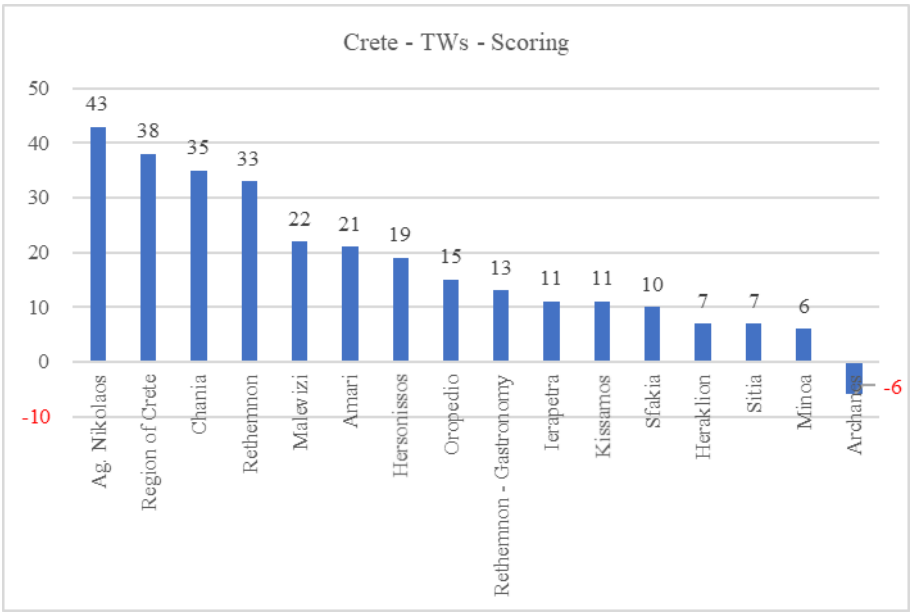

Figure 2 Crete - TWs ranking

SEB-DW Model Results

Tourism Websites (TWs)

The performance of the Cretan TWs was either weak (n=4) or poor (n=12), the highest score was 43 for Ag. Nikolaos' TW and the lowest one was -6 for Archanes' TW (Figure 2). Looking at the dimensions level, content (M=4 / High=19), usability (M=6 / High=48), technical (M=6 / High=10) and traffic (M=-1 / High=3), only the technical one reached 60% of the scoring scale. Currency and value reached the high score, followed by SEO implementation that achieved 78% of

the high score. The weak factors of the Cretan TWs, at the parameter level, were Google Analytics (M=-1 / High=1), user behaviour (M=-1 / High=3), Accuracy (M=-1 / High=5) and Speed (M=-1 / High=20).

TWs of S. Aegean ranked either weak (n=2) or poor (n=15) too, the best was found to be Kos (its grade was 37) (Figure 3) and dimensions' descriptive statistics indicate that content was at the same scoring level as that of the TWs of Crete, usability a little bellow (M=5), technical at the same level and traffic a bit better (M=1). Authority, currency and value reached the highest score, followed by SEO Implementation reaching 78% of the parameter's high score and navigation up to 60%. The weak parameters of the TWs in S. Aegean, were Google Analytics (M=-1 / High=1), accuracy (M=-1 / High=5), Interactivity (M=-1 / High=8) and speed (M=-1 / High=20).

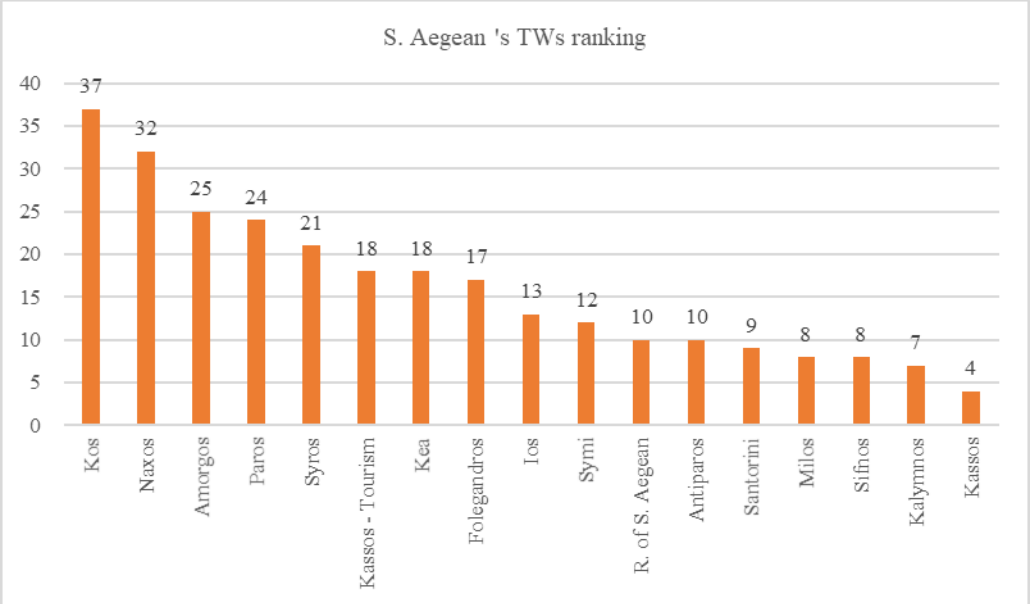

Figure 3 S. Aegean - TWs ranking

Mixed Websites

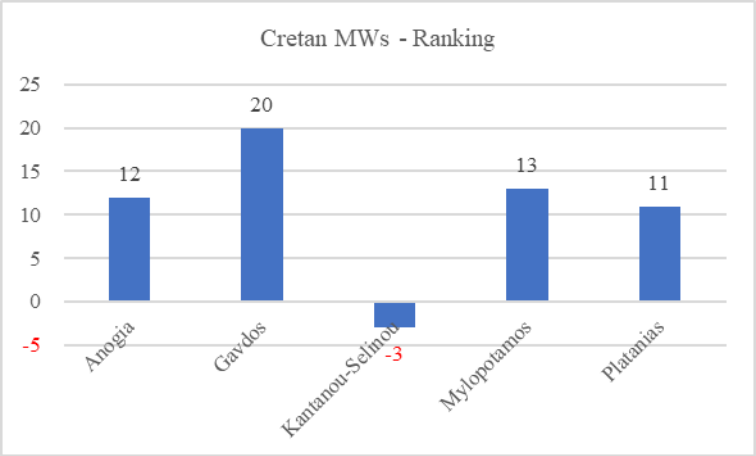

Figure 4 Crete - MWs ranking

MWs have content that interests civilians along with tourism information and are updated more frequently, sometimes on a daily basis or at least a couple of times per week, depending on civil or political events taking place in the district. Generically speaking, if a MW belongs to any municipality with a large population, data collected about its usage could be influenced mainly by citizens rather than tourists. In our case, none of the included MWs in both regions belong to a highly inhabited municipality.

The group of Cretan MWs (n=5) was graded at the poor range of the model, with the leading MW of the municipality of Gavdos scoring 20 points (Figure 4). Technical dimension was the strongest one of the group (M=6 / High=10), achieving 60% of the best score and at the parameters level, value did not lose any points and second best was SEO implementation (M=7 / High=9). The weakest dimensions were Google Analytics (M=-1 / High=1) and interactivity (M=-2 / High=8).

The MWs in S. Aegean ranked either weak (n=4) or poor (n=14), their technical dimension was the strongest one (M=6 / High=10), and at the parameters level, their SEO Implementation reached 78% of the high score (M=7, High=9) and the weakest ones were Google Analytics (M=-1 / High=1) and interactivity (M=-1 / High=8). The leader of this group was Andros' MW which got 42 points, just a bit more the 50% of the high score (Figure 5).

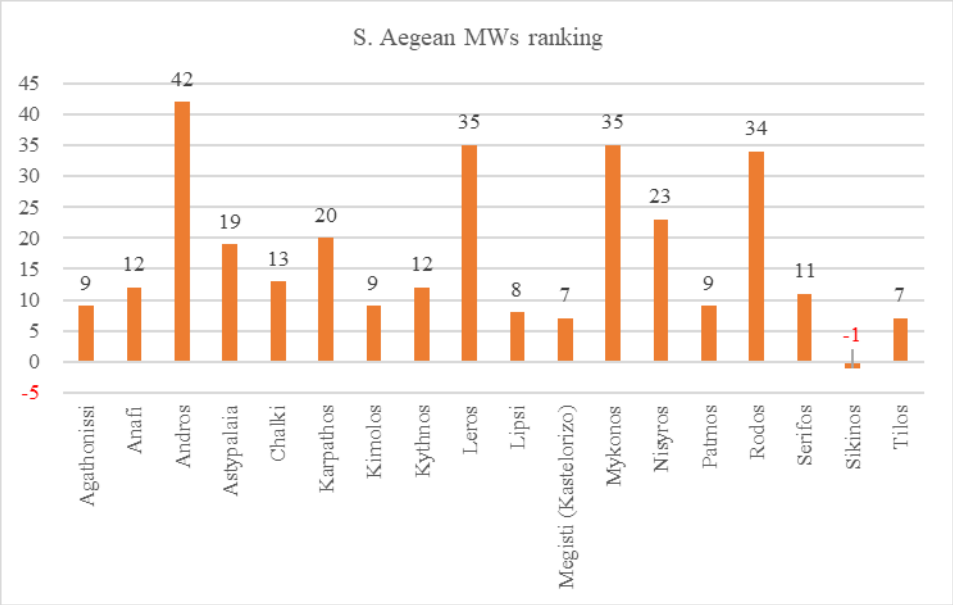

Figure 5 S. Aegean - MWs ranking

Comparative assessment

For our assessment of the websites (TWs and MWs) of the Regional Authority and the Municipalities of the two Greek regions, Crete and S. Aegean, we used SEB-DW model. The majority of websites for destination promotion in both regions, scored grades to the "poor" scale for both regions. At the dimensions level, content and technical were equivalent, usability was better for Cretan TWs and traffic was better for those in S. Aegean. The Cretan TWs reached high score at currency and value parameters, SEO implementation reached 78% of excellence but were weak at speed, accuracy, user behavior and Google Analytics. In all cases the score had a big distance from excellence, except for navigation, interactivity and SEO implementation that high score was reached.

Social Media Platforms

To benchmark SMPs used for destination marketing and promotion, a reputable internet tool, SocialBlade, was used as already explained. The majority of the organizations included in the study used YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and X. Presence in other platforms does exist, but just for a few of the organizations in the sample. SocialBlade performs a global benchmarking and its grades fall into the range A to E. Each rank has a + and a – sub ranking an A++ is the highest grade. B grade and higher is considered to be a good one, because it represents that the channel / page / account has a steady and positive growth, attracting and maintaining interest of users (Social Blade, n.d.).

1. YouTube

The sample of the YouTube channels consisted by pure tourism channels (68%, n=23), cultural ones (9%, n=3) and of mixed content (23%, n=8). The early created channels are dated during 2011 but quite a few (38%) were created in 2020 and afterwards (10 tourism, 2 cultural, 1 mixed). From the channel rating distribution, we observed that the 5.88% of the highest rated channels came from Crete and that most of the channels ranked at C grade in both regions.

2. Facebook

We identified 30 pages / profiles in Facebook from both regions, but we noticed that some were inactive during 2023, overall, 86.67% of the sample was active (had at least one post during 2023). Only Facebook pages (n=29) were included into the benchmark since SocialBlade grades only that type. In this category, S. Aegean' s pages (76,47%) ranked higher, at B- and C+, while 66.67% of the Cretan pages ranked at C+.

3. Instagram

31 profiles were spotted in instagram platform, but three from Crete and four from S. Aegean were identified as non-professional ones by SocialBlade and were excluded from the benchmark. The benchmark outcome ranked 68.75% of profiles from S. Aegean at C+ and 50% of those from Crete at C-.

4. X (Twitter)

In X platform, we identified 20 profiles dedicated to destination marketing and promotion of the two regions we studied. The benchmark results indicate that S. Aegean is stronger, 28.57% of the profiles of that region took C and another 50% took C-. In Crete, C- and D grades amounted 33.33% respectively.

Mobile Applications

In both regions, we observed 14 mobile applications, 71.43% of them owned by organizations in Crete. It is remarkable that minimal downloads were recorded even for those available longer, since 2015-16. Another observation was that, most of them were not updated recently.

Constrains, problems and future research

SEB-DW was designed to be used by a single evaluator and we had to find the means to remove subjectivity from its results. Content Analysis, marking the presence or the absence of a characteristic, removes the subjectivity from any evaluation. Qualitative and quantitative characteristics, such as aesthetic and responsiveness of the website could not be included in Content Analysis, but they were measured by WAS. Ten different WASs were used to collect the data required by the SEB-DW model.

To complete the list of the TWs and the SMPs used for destination marketing and promotion by municipalities and regional authorities, we located the official civil websites of the organizations, considering we would gather all tourism websites and SMPs from the official civil website. Unfortunately, this was not the case and it became quite difficult to complete the list. Several websites and SMPs' profiles / pages looked like the belonged to the official organizations, but further investigation proved that they did not.

The introduced SEB-DW tool is expandable since it is based on a checklist developed to include available information related to the structure and the usage of a website. It is customized to be used for destination websites and could be used on a country basis for national results. Used on competitive destinations benchmarking, it can help in improvement suggestions for TW of cities, of destinations offering similar tourism product, etc. This study conducted the benchmark on at a given point of time. Repeating it periodically, including all seasonal periods, would help deriving to stronger and broader conclusions.

Conclusion

To date, any study related to website evaluation refers to the fact that there is no established methodology for this task. Trying to identify a methodology suitable for frequent evaluation to be used for benchmarking by a single evaluator, we came across a study, conducted recently, that used an evaluation checklist developed in 1999, and proposed as future improvement to involve software tools, complementary to content analysis (Anna, Christina, Nikos, & Theodoula, 2020). That study addressed quality evaluation of tourism destination websites and evaluated content and usability. An expansion of another two dimensions, technical and traffic, was done but the type of scoring and the grading scale of the initial checklist was maintained (Anderson, Allee, Grove, & Hill, 1999). The created SEB-DW model, is based on content analysis and measurements performed by WAs and includes both evaluation and qualitative data, addressing quality dimensions (content and usability), technical aspects of the website and recorded user engagement metrics, so as to include user experience.

The investment in setting up and maintaining digital presence demands continuous monitoring of the owned website and profiles or pages in SMPs. The proposed SEB-DW model and SocialBlade benchmarking platform can be used by destination marketing managers to assess owned their digital marketing and promotion tools, monitor the competitors' digital presence and perform a benchmark frequently. Based on the presented study, we believe that this work has practical benefits on monitoring DMO's digital marketing plans for identifying mandatory corrective actions or verifying their successful implementation. The high cost of creating and maintaining digital presence and the quite big amount spent for digital advertising have to achieve their goal, attracting travelers to the destination. Marketing managers need a low cost tool, easy to understand that can be applied frequently and SEB-DW satisfy that requirement.

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