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# Managing Destination' Website as a Marketing Communications Tool: Comparative Website Analyzing of Turkey, Spain and Dubai

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## ABSTRACT

*In the lure of attaining competitive advantage, not only companies and public institutions but also countries as tourism destinations, introduce some level of differentiation. Attaining competitive advantage particularly in tourism industry, where the competition is fierce, requires answering the following questions successfully, 'what is the most effective way of promoting the existing tourism product to the targeted market'. The aim of the study is to determine the effectiveness of internet usage especially for marketing communications through analyzing websites of three selected destinations namely Turkey, Spain and Dubai. Comparative analysis of these websites may be useful not only for destination marketing literature but also for these countries in increasing the communication effectiveness by using internet. The most important reason of including these three countries in the research is that they are located in one of the most important tourism regions of the world in Asia and Europe. The methodology of the research is based on scoring system of Gibson et al. (2001). Results revealed that Spain is utilizing its internet related resources better than Dubai and Turkey in terms of promotional effectiveness. Discussion of research findings and managerial implications are given.*

**Keywords:** Internet, Marketing Communications, Destination Management Organizations, Website Analyzing

## INTRODUCTION

In the lure of attaining competitive advantage, not only companies and public institutions but also countries as tourism destinations, introduce some level of differentiation. Countries which are in tourism industry realize that competition in world tourism market is getting hard, numbers of tourism regions and products in the market place are increasing. Thus, there is a necessity to make effort by using new technologies for protecting market share in national level (Sari and Kozak, 2005). On the other hand conscious and becoming different preference structure of tourists and their chance to compare different destinations by new technologies bring about competition in tourism to further point. Tourist can get information whatever wants to learn, wants to take more quality in services, backs out of commitment of product and service, and is more selective in products and services which are presented to (Sari and Kozak, 2005). It is very important to provide have competitive advantage because of both developing competition in world tourism and changing structure of tourists. Attaining competitive advantage particularly in tourism industry, where the competition is fierce, requires answering

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the following questions successfully, 'what is the most affective way of promoting the existing tourism product to the targeted market'. Competition between countries in tourism area causes to seek ways of differentiation. Differentiate of your country between competitors means not only delivering messages about values to target audiences but also effectiveness of communication. Effective communication is a key factor of differentiation. In other words effectiveness of communication with target audiences and promotional strategies presents a key for countries' differentiation. Thus improving of effectiveness on communication strategies provides important advantages for countries.

Effectiveness of communication strategies can be provided with strategies which prepared by noticing target audiences characteristics and designed for achieving differentiation between competitors by noticing competition environment. There are different advantages and disadvantages of media which is used to communicate with target audience. But it is very important factor to increase influence on target audience is two way communications. Two way communications is provided to recognize target audience. This recognition creates an opportunity to produce messages suitable for target audience and helps to institutions gaining ability to fast response for needs and wants like face to face communication. The most important benefit of internet is its structure which allows two-way, interactive and symmetrical communication (Jo and Jung, 2005) for companies and public institutions. These opportunities which are provided by internet make internet a unique tool for implementing marketing communication strategies (Doren et al., 2000).

Although increasing number of studies about internet usage in destination marketing literature, there is still lack on comparative analysis about websites on tourism. This is the reason that the current study is useful. The aim of the study is to determine the effectiveness of internet usage especially for marketing communications through analyzing websites of three selected destinations namely Turkey, Spain and Dubai. Comparative analysis of these websites may be useful not only for destination marketing literature but also for these countries in increasing the communication management effectiveness by using internet. The current study will provide some background information about internet, websites, internet usage and its importance related with marketing communications. Methodological information will be followed by findings, discussion, conclusion and implications.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Internet usage of which became a strategic element for countries becomes more and more important both service industries and tourism. The reason is that internet usage increases with each passing day and the internet provides its users with significant opportunities in terms of presentation. According to the data published by Internetworldstats based on the research company ACNielsen, 13,9 % of the 6 billion 420 million people living in the world (938 million 711 thousand of them) use the internet (<http://www.nexum.com.tr/upload/yayin>, June 12, 2007).

Increasing internet usage of consumers expands possibilities about having product information, searching different products or brands and purchasing them. Internet is preferred by consumers or travelers because it is a tool that easy to access (%82), can save time (%80), easy to use (%59) and economical (%50) (Travi Austria, 2001). On the other hand travelers use internet for learning flights, hotel rooms and rent a car prices (Ayers, 1999; Yeh et al., 2005). Therefore there is increasing number of consumers or travelers who have information about their travels by internet and use this information their travel decisions (ETC, 2006; Woolford, 2006).

There is a transformation about internet usage from using it as an information source to a media or channel that can be used for shopping. Although it is important to use internet as an information source, but it is also important to sell products and services for travel and tourism marketing area (Walle, 1996). The nature of travel and tourism industry is required efficiency in communication and message transformation (Seaton and Bennett, 1996). In this sense many destination management organizations and tourism companies try to increase communicational opportunities through internet and websites (Legoharel et al., 2000). According to Ekiz et al.'s (2005: 7) literature analyzing about internet usage there is benefits and drawbacks of internet as a marketing communication tool as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The benefits and drawbacks of internet marketing

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>
+ Accessing to greater number of customers	- Costs involved in constructing, maintaining and updating
+ Exposing the property	- Security, privacy, and confidentiality
+ Advertising and promoting	- Cultural differences
+ Communicating better	- Training, lack of knowledge, ignorance
+ Providing online reservation	- High competition
+ Identifying and targeting customers easily	- Loss of personal touch
+ Being a source of information	- Alienation of the potential customers
+ Saving costs and time	- Telecommunication infrastructure
+ Being free from borders	
+ Being inexpensive	
+ Being flexible and convenient	
+ Globalizing products and services	
+ Increasing customer interaction	
+ Allowing one-two-one marketing	
+ Being accessible 24 hours and 365 days	

**Source:** Ekiz et al. (2005: 7).

Internet has advantages of both mass communication and face to face communication because of its characteristics. These characteristics make it a hybrid (Sener, 2003) communication channel. Interactive nature of internet and web separate them from the other traditional media. Web can be used to deliver messages like traditional media but also it can be used to create database about target audience and to observe public opinion about institutional issues (Esrock and Leichty, 2000). Internet communications' multidirectional nature and being very fast in transmission of messages (Ihator, 2001) is concluded with variable opportunities for communication strategies. On the other hand internet is important for companies and destination management organizations, because internet is cost-effective tool and allows marketing products and services to reach consumers directly (Doren et al., 2000).

Tourism is an industry which is used internet more intensively and is adopted fast than the other areas. International nature of tourism is caused using internet facilities intensively by tourism companies and tourists. Numbers of tourists which get information about travel by web and direct their travel decisions by this information are increasing in the world (ETC, 2006). Internet is perfect platform (media) which can be transmitted information about destinations and products and services directly, cost and time effective for tourism industry (Burger et al., 1997: 180).

Intensity of using internet and opportunities provided by internet require forming web pages' design and content which using for promotion of destinations through specific objectives and strategies. On the other hand web pages of destinations will be play important role to differentiate between

competitors by drawing attention to target audience. But web pages can not provide expected influence without consistent and powerful promotional strategy. But it is not enough to create a web page, because it is also necessary to have coherent strategy to develop, to position and to promote electronic presentation (Palmer, 2002).

The main aims of websites can be aligned as promotion of tourism region to consumer directly and playing role on creating image and brand (Sari and Kozak, 2005: 259). But there is cost of set up a web page. Although it is not expensive to set up simple website, creating and maintaining an interactive website can be costly. As with any successful marketing strategy, the maintenance of fully interactive website involves thorough background planning. Promotional strategies which will draw attention of tourists, direct their interest to purchase and keep their interest enough to visit sites repeatedly are costly. But it's difficult to justify the costs of establishing and maintaining an effective website without strong marketing communications strategy (Doren et al., 2000). Acoording to Palmer and McCole (2000) creating interactive website provide a good opportunity for the multiple suppliers.

It's said that internet will be important contribution to achieve destination marketing objectives but there is necessity to require functionality that set up attentively and well-thought design for websites by World Tourism Organization Business Council (WTOBC). In this sense, it should be pay attention following issues for destination management organizations' websites (WTOBC, 1999: 118):

- To increase business for your destination and your suppliers, by
  - Raising awareness of your destination and the type of emotional experiences it offers
  - Providing information about things to do and places to stay
  - Enabling customers to easily and securely book both accommodation and other relevant tourism products that are required fort he trip
  - Offering last minute deals and special offers, targeted to customers with a high propensity to buy
- To generate revenue for your destination management organization, by
  - Taking commission on sales and charging fees to tourism service providers
  - Selling products and services online, such as travel insurance, local produce etc.
  - Selling advertising and generating third party sponsorship
- To improve communications and relationships
  - With customers, through feedback forms, chat rooms and newsgroups
  - With tourism product suppliers, through online services like market intelligence, forums for news and debate, updating of availability information
- To reduce costs by
  - Directing enquiries to the web site rather than by sending a printed brochure
  - Allowing suppliers to maintain their own data online
  - Targeting potential customers more efficiently through relationship marketing and analysis of data on the use of the site
- To create good PR by providing
  - Links to other useful sites and organizations
  - Corporate information on the site
  - Up-to-date news and press releases online

Sari and Kozak (2005) align following major factors which should be in regional website in their article (260-261): URL that is include exactly brand name, name and logo of region, major issues

(region's major tourist attraction centers, historical places etc.), public institutions (especially about tourism and security), tourist attraction centers, festivals, regional organization which are responsible for designing and maintaining of site professionally and its activities, helping information (exchange rates, weather, emergency applications etc.), reservation and ticketing, interactive map of the region, joining, other information (news and events about region, food and beverage, transportation, rent a car etc.), forum and chat, communication and e-mail. Although these factors are suggested for including regional websites, they are important for providing a general look to major issues what should be include in countries' websites.

Websites provide new and incredible opportunities to destination management organizations. Therefore it's possible to create visual reality by providing to reach personal facilities and forming coherent image about destination experience for potential tourists by website. On the other hand, it is possible to form positive position in market, to increase market share by being close relationships with customers and to enhance customer satisfaction by websites (Palmer, 2002).

## **TURKEY, SPAIN AND DUBAI**

Turkey is located in a geography where Asia and Europe meet and the eastern and the western cultures intersect. Turkey which has various natural opportunities in terms of tourism and intensified its efforts to use these opportunities wants to have a larger share in the world tourism. For this purpose, it intensified its investments in tourism activities and its regulations in this field especially after 90s. Turkey which wants to develop the tourism sector whose share in the economy of the country is increasing also intensified communication activities in this field. In order to determine the importance given to the internet in the context of intensified presentation activities and communication activities, Turkey is also included in the study with

Spain, which is a member of the European Union, is one of the countries which are successful in the world tourism. Spain, which acquired a large share in the world tourism by coordinating its tourism opportunities, is culturally located in Europe where the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean meets and it has borders with both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Spain, which has a Christian population, is different from Dubai and Turkey culturally. In the context of the research, Spain was selected due to the successful tourism and presentation activities it conducts for a long time and its share in the world tourism.

Dubai made significant planned investments in the field of tourism in the last fifteen years. Although Dubai does not have suitable natural opportunities for tourism, it increased its tourism potential significantly with its planned investments and made a leap in this field. On the other hand, Dubai, which is a Muslim Emirate located in Asia on the Arab Peninsula, has a different culture. Dubai was selected in order to determine the importance it gave to communication activities and the internet in the context of the success it achieved through its investments.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Scientific analysis of websites which emerged in parallel with the information communication technologies, which developed rapidly in the last twenty five years, and gradually began being used in more fields and by more people has a very short history. The countries which use the internet and

therefore websites as a communication channel and a media that improve tourism activities in reaching the target audiences in international arenas have been observed to be able to establish an interactive, fast and effective communication process with international target audiences, travel agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, local government units and private enterprises in this context.

There are two approaches used in the web analysis: qualitative and quantitative approaches. At this juncture, the main question is that although it differs in accordance with the discipline that conducts the study, the aim of the site and its design should stand in the forefront. In the context of this study, usage of the internet by countries in the communication process for presentation is examined specifically at the level of ministries of tourism. Although the analysis made up until now in communicational level regarding the websites of countries in order to enable rational coordination of presentation activities are successful in giving an idea and guiding, they are limited in terms of scientific basis and the ability to measure several features regarding the communication process and obtaining data.

In the context of this study based on the thesis "the effects of development and income levels, cultural differences of countries on the communication activities in the field of tourism", usage of the internet medium by countries as a communication tool, as a communication medium that develops tourism activities in accessing target audiences in international arenas is discussed. In this context, three countries which are located in the Mediterranean geography, which is one of the important tourism regions in the world in terms of its climate and natural conditions, and have different development and income levels and cultures were selected for the research. In order to determine internet usage by countries in presentation activities, the websites of Turkey's Ministry of Tourism, Spain's Ministry of Tourism and Commerce and Dubai's Ministry of Tourism from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were evaluated for the research. Website analysis was conducted in June 2006. The analyzed websites are following:

Turkey: <http://www.kultur.gov.tr>

Spain: <http://www.spain.info>

Dubai: <http://www.dubaitourism.co.ae>

The most important reason of including these three countries in the research is that they are located in one of the most important tourism regions of the world in Asia and Europe. The methodology of the research is based on scoring system of Gibson et al. (2001). According to the scoring system there is two main parts of website analyzing. Functions and delivery. It is possible to find original and modified version of the scoring system in Appendix 1 and 2 relatively.

Websites of all countries included in the research are graded in accordance with their capacity to ensure the function feature which includes information provision, resource generation, networking and participation indexes and the presentation feature which includes glitz factor, access, navigability, freshness, and visibility indexes. Moreover, from above, from below, horizontal and interactive information communication flow features are investigated.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

For all of the countries whose websites were investigated in the context of the research, on the basis of the function and presentation features of the website, it was found out to what extent the

content of their websites were well found, to what extent their content overlaps with communication studies conducted for presentation and tourism purposes and how effectively they can present these contents; and in this context, what their aims are in using the internet in communication processes with presentation purposes and to what extent they can achieve these goals.

### **Functional Properties of the Websites**

As a result of the analysis, it is seen that Spain’s Ministry of Tourism has a more intense information provision in proportion to Turkey and Dubai. Among the websites which are assessed within 0-18 grade range, Spain’s Ministry of Tourism gets 17 points in providing information provision. It is seen that Spain’s Ministry of Tourism uses information important for tourism activities more intensively in its official website “<http://www.spain.info>”. Places that can be seen, activities that can be made, how to plan tourism travels are indicated in the site with guiding buttons and supported with visual elements. Moreover it is seen that there is a search engine in the website of Spain’s Ministry of Tourism under “what are you looking for?” heading that enables users to access the information in the website easily. While the same search engine is seen in the website of Dubai’s Ministry of Tourism, this search engine is not visually seen in the homepage of the website of Turkey’s Ministry of Tourism, it is seen that a link that directs users to another page in the website is used to access the search engine.

**Table 2.** Functional properties of websites

	Information Provision	Resource Generation	Networking		Participation
			Internal	External	
Turkey	15	0	10	22	2
Spain	17	0	8	21	4
Dubai	14	1	5	12	3
Average	15.3	0.3	7.6	18.3	3
Space	0-18	0-1	0-10	0-30	0-5

In the context of resource generation function, it is found out that Dubai’s Ministry of Tourism uses “Press Releases” button in its homepage while such an informative function is not seen in the homepage of the websites of the other two countries. The frequently asked questions heading is seen in the website of Turkey’s Ministry of Tourism however a similar heading is not seen in the other two countries. On the other hand, Dubai’s and Spain’s Ministries of Tourism have online hotel, airway and travel reservation opportunities in their websites while Turkey’s Ministry of Tourism does not. Besides, Dubai’s and Spain’s Ministries of Tourism has informative functions for visitors about the weather conditions of tourism regions in the homepage of their websites but Turkey’s Ministry of Tourism does not have such information in the homepage.

While it is determined that Turkey’s Ministry of Tourism weightily places legal regulations and official announcements of the ministry in the “announcements” section of its website in the context of “information provision”, Spain’ and Dubai’s Ministries of Tourism weightily place tourism activities and developments under this heading. Moreover, within the web analysis, it is ascertained that compared to Dubai’s and Spain’s Ministries of Tourism, the website of Turkey’s Ministry of Tourism is designed with a content which includes more legal elements and for informing weightily domestic target audience about tourism while Dubai’s and Spain’s Ministries of Tourism enable international target audiences to access the information they need.

In the websites of all of the three countries there is history of the country, general information about the country, vision, mission, site maps, statistical and research documents, activity calendars, various resources supporting tourism activities and geographical maps.

In the context of resource generation index, it is seen that Dubai's Ministry of Tourism can get support in collecting resources through websites as sponsors for tourism activities. No information was seen regarding collecting resources in the websites of Turkey's and Spain's Ministries of Tourism.

It is seen that Turkey's and Spain's Ministries of Tourism fulfill close numbers of functions in terms of fulfilling the communication function through websites. It is determined that Dubai's Ministry of Tourism is behind Spain and Turkey in the context of communication function. While the communication of all of the three countries with the state institutions in the context of the investigated internal communication indexes are determined to be high, it is ascertained that Turkey's Ministry of Tourism has the highest proportion in the communications with the local governments and related ministries in the same context and Dubai's Ministry of Tourism has the lowest proportion after Spain. Turkey gets full grade in the internal communication indexes in the context of communication functions. When the indexes in the context of external communication functions are evaluated, Turkey's and Spain's Ministries of Tourism are close to each other. Dubai's Ministry of Tourism has a lower proportion in external communication indexes compared to Spain and Turkey. Within the internal and external communication indexes, all of the three countries are observed to be directing users to educational institutions, media, state institutions, non-governmental organizations and tourism enterprises. Among these three countries, it is ascertained that only Spain's Ministry of Tourism directs users to international travel and tourism organizations in its website.

In the context of chat, e-mail, forum, membership and site search indexes and the participation function index evaluated within the 0-5 grade range, Spain's Ministry of Tourism seems to be more successful than the others. Spain's Ministry of Tourism, which gets full grade in 4 indexes, could not get any grade in chat index like the other countries. While the websites of all three countries have in-site search engines, it is seen that only Spain's Ministry of Tourism has forum opportunity in its website. All of the three countries which are subjected to investigation provide the users of the related websites with participation opportunity through e-mail. Among the websites of three countries which open a link under the connects us through e-mail heading, while Dubai and Spain direct users to only one e-mail address, Turkey can direct users to several mail addresses related to the connection centers according to the centers they want to access.

When the websites of Spain's, Turkey's and Dubai's Ministries of Tourism are evaluated in functional terms, it is seen that Spain's Ministry of Tourism is generally more successful compared to the other two countries. It is seen that the website of Spain's Ministry of Tourism fulfills especially the functions required in international tourism and needed by users more effectively. Turkey's Ministry of Tourism fulfills important functions for legal processes in the field of tourism, which is different from Spain and Dubai and it is less suitable for in-site surf compared to the other two countries.

### **Presentational Properties of the Websites**

When the websites of Spain's, Dubai's and Turkey's Ministries of Tourism are investigated in terms of presentation, it is seen that the website of Spain's Ministry of Tourism is more attractive and the texts and visual elements in its website are designed more attractively. Moreover it is seen

that the site's presentation effectiveness is supported with animations in Spain's site, through the "where are you go" button. Spain's map which is accessed using the same button enables emphasizing the places to be seen.

**Table 3:** Presentational properties of websites

	<b>Glitz Factor</b>	<b>Access</b>	<b>Navigability</b>	<b>Freshness</b>	<b>Visibility</b>
<b>Turkey</b>	3	3	2	4	10700
<b>Spain</b>	5	4	4	6	2820
<b>Dubai</b>	6	3	2	6	225
<b>Average</b>	4.6	3.3	2.6	5.3	4581.6
<b>Space</b>	0-6	0-6	0-n	0-6	0-n

While the website of Turkey's Ministry of Tourism is edited intensively with frames and texts, the visual elements and the presentation of these elements are inadequate to enrich the content of the site. On the other hand, it is seen in the website of Turkey's Ministry of Tourism that the textual exposition is supported with animations.

Dubai' Ministry of Tourism supports the intense written text usage with visual elements more successfully than Turkey. Video images that present the tourism aspect of the Emirate can be downloaded from the website and watched. Dubai's Ministry of Tourism has an announcements section in the homepage of its official website which announces the recent tourism activities and informs the users of the website who plan to visit the country through this section.

The investigation showed that all of the three countries use graphs in their websites in terms of the vision of their websites. While frame presentation is used by Dubai and Turkey, it is not used by Spain. Spain which does not have frame presentation activates its expression with link buttons which are successfully edited in visual sense. While Dubai gets full grade in all of the indexes in the glitz factor index which is assessed within 0-6 grade range, Spain gets 5 since it does not have frame feature and Turkey gets 3.

In the context of accessibility indexes, websites of all three countries are ascertained to have significant problems in terms of usage. If it is taken into consideration that internet usage is not limited to computers anymore and mobile technologies also provide opportunities for internet usage, technologies such as "WAP" and "PDA" become important in terms of internet accessibility. At this juncture, none of the three countries has the access from WAP/PDA. Moreover, none of the three sites has special software for people with defects of eyesight. While the website of Turkey's Ministry of Tourism weightily have opportunities for downloading documents related to legal regulations in the field of tourism, in the websites of Dubai and Spain there are documents that include information that users may need regarding their tourism activities. All of the websites three countries are offered in various languages. Turkey's Ministry of Tourism can offer its website in 11 different languages and therefore it is the website which is offered in most languages among the examined websites. While Spain offers its website in 8 languages, Dubai's Ministry of Tourism offers its website in 6 different languages. The website of Spain's Ministry of Tourism has the largest data volume with 280 KB. Turkey and Dubai follow Spain with 246 KB and 167 KB respectively. A website with high data volume may mean that it includes more elements such as graphs, animations, audio and visual elements that enable effective expression compared to the others. On the other hand, in the countries or centers where the internet connection is slow, high data volume may cause some problems such as viewing the sites slowly or not being able to view some elements that affect the users negatively.

In terms of navigability feature, it was found out that all of the three countries have site maps and search engines in their websites however the homepage buttons and constant menu toolbars which take place in the sub-sections of websites could not be seen in the websites of Turkey's and Dubai's Ministries of Tourism. Moreover, while the date of the last update were not seen in the investigated websites, in the investigation of documents it was observed that Dubai' and Spain's Ministries of Tourism updated theirs websites everyday while the website of Turkey's Ministry of Tourism is updated once in 3-7 days.

In the context of visibility index, as a result of the search in Google which is one of the most liked search engine by the internet users in the world, it was ascertained that 10.700 links are directed to Turkey's Ministry of Tourism, 2820 links to Spain's Ministry of Tourism and 225 links to Dubai's Ministry of Tourism.

## **CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The world in which we live changes more rapidly than the past and the developments in the fields of computer and internet lies in the base of this change in the world. These technologies which enables production, storage, effective regulation and processing of information, transfer of information to anywhere in the world, offering the information to service and its usage, begin being used in more fields related to human in each passing day. Therefore, it causes revolutionary changes in the lives of individuals and the society. Information-communication technologies and therefore the internet are now strategic elements that affect the fate of countries and determine whether the countries are first or third class countries.

The nature of tourism is required to establish effective and common communication channels between destinations and their target audiences, to transmit messages accurately, fast, confidentially and cost effectively by adequate communication channels. In other words it requires managing communication activities effectively. Advantages of internet as a communication tool makes it very important and effective channel for service industries, especially for tourism. However the most important issue is to manage internet based communication activities effectively. Destination management organizations have some advantages to differentiate between the other competitor destinations by managing internet facilities effective ways.

When websites of these three countries are evaluated, there are differences in the extents to which they are successful in achieving their primary goals which are guiding users, contributing to the image of the country and increasing the tourism potential of the country. Although the website of Turkey's Ministry of Tourism has live colors, it is ascertained that it is not designed in a way that can draw the attention of users and enable them to surf easily. Turkey, which mostly includes textual elements, edited visual elements differently from textual elements. Dubai's Ministry of Tourism has a simple website which is designed on a white background and it supports textual elements with visual elements. Spain's Ministry of Tourism supports written texts which draw the attention of users and responds to the possible demands of the users related to tourism with visual elements which are more compatible compared to the other two countries and can address the user.

In conclusion, Spain, which is in the category of developed countries, whose income level is higher compared to Dubai and Turkey and whose culture is different from the other two countries, uses its website more effectively in terms of its goals and activities. Website of Spain's Ministry of Tourism

seems to be more successful than the other two countries in terms of its presentation and entire functions. Dubai is a special tourism center which made significant leaps in last years in the field of tourism and whose income level is rapidly increasing. Dubai, which made significant investments in the field of tourism, could not passed on the improvement in investments to the usage of the internet and web to the same extent; although it is close to Spain in the presentation function indexes in the website analysis, it is behind Spain in the entire functions. Turkey's Ministry of Tourism, which is successful in terms of information provision and internal-external communication in its website, cannot be successful in the presentation of its website and it is behind Spain and Dubai in the presentation indexes such as glitz factor and freshness. As a result of this analysis, it is seen that Turkey's Ministry of Tourism should revise its website in terms of presentation. In this sense there should be lessons to be learnt from Spain as a successful destination management in using and managing internet facilities effectively.

Internet based communication activities effect synergy that is formed by personality, presentation and performance about product, service or brand. The impact arises deeply in service industries in terms of tourism. Therefore using internet facilities to reach target audiences can be seen as an effective way to create that synergy adequately. In this sense destination management organizations should manage these facilities for creating differentiation and competitive advantage.

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## Appendix 1: Original version of the scoring system

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### FUNCTIONS

**Information Provision:** Additive index - 1 point assigned for each item present (0 – 15)

Organizational history

Structure

Values/ideology

Policies

Manifesto

Media releases

Speeches

People/Who's Who

Leader focus

Candidate profiles

Electoral information 1 (statistics, information on past performance)

Electoral information 2 (postal voting info/voting registration)

Event calendar (prospective or retrospective)

Frequently asked questions

Article archive or library

**Resource Generation:** Cumulative index (0-12) Three ordinal indices: (i) Donation index 0 – 4, (ii) Merchandise index 0 – 4, (iii) Membership index. 0 – 4. For each index (1) reference made and postal address listed (2) download and post form (3) Mixed email enquiry and/or download form (4) fully online transaction

### Networking

#### Internal

Candidates

Local parties

Other internal groups

#### External

Partisan links (associated orgs e.g. TUs sister parties etc.)

Reference links are those to neutral or news/educational sites such as news, broadcasters, newspapers, Parliamentary/government sites, national libraries etc.

Commercial links are those promoting business services such as book sellers etc.

Opponents

**Participation:** Additive index (0-10)

*Openness (0 - 4)*

E-mail leader

E-mail other politicians/candidates

E-mail hq general

E-mail named officials/staff

*Feedback (0-3)*

General feedback on the website etc.

Feedback issues/policy general

Solicited email feedback on specific issue

*Interactive debate/comment (0-4)*

Discussion form

Campaign diary/blog without comment facility

Blog with comments

Online Q&A

*Interaction with site (0-2)*

Opinion polls

Games

**Campaigning:** Additive index - 1 point assigned for each item present (0 – 8)

Negative campaigning (banner, pop-up ad etc. on home page)

Targeting ex-pat voters

Targeting marginal constituency/swing voter (explicit effort)

Join an email update list

Become online campaigner

Send a link/e-postcard

Download literature

Download screensavers/ banners

**DELIVERY**

**Multimedia/Glitz Factor:** Additive index 1 point for each item present (0-5)

Sound

Video

Live streaming

Flash

SMS

**Access:** Additive index 1 point for each item present (0-4)

Text only option (entire site)

Text only documents to download and print

Foreign language translation

Blind/visually impaired software

**Navigability:** Additive index - 1 point for each item present (0 – 4)

Navigation tips

Search engines

Fixed menu bar on lower level pages

Site map/index

**Freshness:** Ordinal index (0-6)

Updated daily (6); 1-2 days (5); 3-7 days (4); every two weeks (3); monthly (2); 1-6 months (1); + 6 months (0)

**Visibility**

Number of links in (calculated with search engine, e.g. Google link:www.conservatives.com )

**Appendix 2: Modified version of the scoring system and analysis of the websites**

<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>TR</b>	<b>SP</b>	<b>DU</b>
<b>A. Information Provision:</b> All items are 1 Point. Total index (0-18)			
1. History of country	1	1	1
2. General information about country (about tourism)	1	1	1
3. Organizational structure	1	1	0
4. Who is who?	0	1	0
5. Values/mission/vision	1	1	1
6. Documents (statistics, research papers etc.)	1	1	1
7. Newsletter	1	1	1
8. Pressroom	0	1	1
9. Events calendar (festivals congress etc.)	1	1	1
10. Frequently asked questions	1	0	0
11. Archive	0	1	0
12. Publications (travel and promotion books, guide books, etc.)	1	1	1
13. Audio-visual materials	1	1	1
14. Assistant Information (weather, foreign exchange, etc.)	1	1	1
15. Interactive country map	1	1	1
16. Legal issues	1	1	1
17. Information for investors	1	1	1
18. E-services (online booking)	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>B. Resource Generation:</b> (1 = Yes, 0 = No)	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>C. Networking:</b>			
<i>Internal</i>			
Depends on links numbers (0-5 Point) 0=No links; 1=1-10; 2=11-20; 3=21-50; 4=51-100; 5= +100			
1. Links to ministries, municipalities, governorships etc.	5	3	1
2. Links to state institutions	5	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>

	TR	SP	DU
<i>External</i>			
Depends on links numbers (0-5 Point) 0=No Links; 1=1-10; 2=11-20; 3=21-50; 4=51-100; 5=+100			
1. Links to international travel and tourism associations	0	1	0
2. Links to tourism companies (airlines comp., travel agencies, hotels, etc.)	3	5	5
3. Links to destinations (web sites)	5	5	1
4. Links to non-governmental organizations	5	4	4
5. Links to media	5	5	1
6. Links to educations institutions	4	1	1
<i>Total</i>	22	21	12
<i>Internal – External Total</i>	<b>32</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>D. Participation: (0-5)</b>			
1. Chat	0	0	0
2. E-Mail	1	1	1
3. Forum	0	1	0
4. Membership	0	1	1
5. Site search	1	1	1
<i>Total:</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DELIVERY</b>			
<b>A. Glitz Factor: 0-6</b>			
<i>Design Index</i> All items are 1 point (0-3)			
1. Graphics:	1	1	1
2. Frames:	1	0	1
3. Moving/images	0	1	1
<i>Total</i>	2	2	3
<i>Multimedia Index</i> All items are 1 point (0-3)			
1. Sound	0	1	1
2. Video	1	1	1
3. Live streaming	0	1	1
<i>Total</i>	1	3	3
<i>Design-Multimedia Total</i>			
	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>B. Access</b>			
<i>Principles Index:</i> All items are 1 point (0-3)			
1. No frames option	0	1	0
2. Text only option (entire site)	1	1	1
3. Text only documents to download and print	1	1	1
4. WAP / PDA “wireless” enabled	0	0	0
5. Foreign language translation	1 (11)	1 (8)	1 (6)
6. Blind/visually impaired software	0	0	0
In practice: Size of home page in KB	246KB	280KB	167KB
<i>Total</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>C. Navigability:</b> All items are 1 point (0-4)			
1. Search engines	1	1	1
2. Home page icon on lower level pages	0	1	0
3. Fixed menu bar on lower level pages	0	1	0
4. Site map/index	1	1	1
<i>Total</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>D. Freshness:</b> Ordinal index (0-6)			
Updated:			
Everyday (6); 1-2 days (5); 3-7 days (4); every two weeks (3); monthly (2); 1-6 months (1); +6 months (0)	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>E. Visibility:</b>			
Link numbers (Google search engine)	<b>10.700</b>	<b>2820</b>	<b>225</b>

**Note:** TR: Turkey, SP: Spain, DU: Dubai

