

# Chapter 16

## Evaluating Destination Marketing Organizations' Websites: Conceptual and Empirical Review

**Drosopoulou Charoula**

*University of Macedonia, Greece*

**Malama Eleonora-Ioulia**

*University of Macedonia, Greece*

**Patsioura Fotini**

*University of Macedonia, Greece*

**Vlachopoulou Maro**

*University of Macedonia, Greece*

### ABSTRACT

*Developing their e-marketing strategy, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) invest in the establishment of their Websites to provide extended accessibility, real-time information/services, and personalization capabilities. This chapter aims to review prior tourism studies that refer to Website evaluation by taking DMOs' Websites as the focus of the investigation. A comprehensive literature review on theories, models, and surveys on evaluating tourism Websites is presented and analyzed. The major benefit of this study is the digest of multiple approaches regarding DMOs' Website evaluation within the tourism sector. The chapter gives an integrated overview of the historical development of Website evaluation studies in the tourism field in order to draw conclusions about the dimensions and key factors that drive Website success. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the DMOs' Websites of five Mediterranean countries are assessed through content analysis in terms of information, communication, transaction, relationship, and technical merit dimensions based on a modified approach of the ICTRT model (Li & Wang, 2010). The research findings should be of interest to DMOs as the findings shed light on the effectiveness of their Websites over a period of time facilitating continuous improvements and comparisons between competitive tourism destinations/countries.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-6543-9.ch016

## **INTRODUCTION**

Web-based marketing strategies have become more widely adopted by the tourism industry, since more and more travelers use the Internet in order to select a destination or organize their overall travelling experience. The Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have increased the efficiency of tourism industry and enhanced competitiveness of tourism organizations and destinations (Buhalis, 2003). The interaction between the two fields started from 1970s with the establishment of Computer Reservation Systems and due to the development of the internet and the services that it provides to consumers - travellers, they no longer are not only able to obtain information and make reservation at lower time and monetary costs, but also share their travelling experience, change opinions and make a relationship with people from different destinations (Buhalis and Law, 2008). The interactive ability of the internet has made it an important marketing tool to communicate with travellers (Wang, 2008a).

Since today's consumers become highly educated, tourism organizations face the marketing challenge of how to impact consumers through effective messages (Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2006). Website evaluation can help organizations track the performance of their websites over a period of time, and thereby facilitate continuous improvements through comparison of site performance against competitors and industry peers (Morrison et al., 2004).

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs') are defined as organizations that have been established to promote a specific destination to potential travelers. In terms of geography, DMOs can be categorized into three main categories included:

1. National tourism authorities/organizations;
2. Regional, provisional or state; and
3. Local, based on a smaller geographic area or city/town (Li & Wang, 2010).

Destination marketing organizations invest considerable amounts of money in the development of Web sites as part of their overall marketing strategy (Park & Gretzel, 2007). Web based destination marketing constitute a great opportunity and a great challenge for DMOs'. Within this terms web evaluation has become a critical process in DMOs' performance measurement efforts. However, it is fair to say that DMOs' websites evaluation is still in its early stages of development. As yet there are no standardized models, dimensions, and items for evaluating tourism websites.

The study attempts to provide an updated and comprehensive overview of prior research on DMOs' website evaluation. Relevant theories and methods along to empirical studies would provide a significant trustworthy resource to researchers and scholars in the tourism academic discipline. The findings are expected to offer researchers insights into research gap which indicate future research on tourism website evaluation and practitioners an index in judging the performance of their websites against competitors, so that they have useful information to facilitate continuous improvement.

A comprehensive literature review on theories, models and surveys on evaluating tourism destination portals is presented and analyzed. Furthermore, the chapter utilized a modified approach of the ICTRT model (Li & Wang, 2010) which is described below with the scope to measure the importance, complexity and the overall effectiveness of five Mediterranean countries. The chapter concludes with a discussion of empirical implications and future research.

## **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

The importance of website evaluation has been addressed by many scholars (e.g. Law et al. 2010, Morrison et al., 2004). Therefore, several models have been developed for the evaluation of tourism websites and measurement of their overall effec-

11 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/evaluating-destination-marketing-organizations-websites/119219](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/evaluating-destination-marketing-organizations-websites/119219)

## Related Content

---

### Customer Satisfaction Evaluation for Greek Online Travel Agencies

Dimitrios Drosos and Nikolaos Tsotsolas (2015). *Hospitality, Travel, and Tourism: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 860-879).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/customer-satisfaction-evaluation-for-greek-online-travel-agencies/119255](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/customer-satisfaction-evaluation-for-greek-online-travel-agencies/119255)

### Studying the Impact of Egyptian Hotels' Websites Marketing on Customers' E-Satisfaction

Nancy Awad and Sherif Saad Soliman (2017). *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management in the Digital Age* (pp. 53-63).

[www.irma-international.org/article/studying-the-impact-of-egyptian-hotels-websites-marketing-on-customers-e-satisfaction/189745](http://www.irma-international.org/article/studying-the-impact-of-egyptian-hotels-websites-marketing-on-customers-e-satisfaction/189745)

### Unveiling the Symbolic Meaning of Terracotta Plaques From Pilak Monastery, Tripura, India

Ruma Karmakar (2020). *Global Entrepreneurial Trends in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry* (pp. 61-83).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/unveiling-the-symbolic-meaning-of-terracotta-plaques-from-pilak-monastery-tripura-india/258388](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/unveiling-the-symbolic-meaning-of-terracotta-plaques-from-pilak-monastery-tripura-india/258388)

### A Business Model for Accessible Tourism

Maria Antonella Ferri (2015). *Hospitality, Travel, and Tourism: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 72-87).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-business-model-for-accessible-tourism/119207](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-business-model-for-accessible-tourism/119207)

### Studying the Impact of Egyptian Hotels' Websites Marketing on Customers' E-Satisfaction

Nancy Awad and Sherif Saad Soliman (2017). *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management in the Digital Age* (pp. 53-63).

[www.irma-international.org/article/studying-the-impact-of-egyptian-hotels-websites-marketing-on-customers-e-satisfaction/189745](http://www.irma-international.org/article/studying-the-impact-of-egyptian-hotels-websites-marketing-on-customers-e-satisfaction/189745)