Cultural Destinations' Communication and Promotion

A dissertation presented by
Alessandro Inversini

Supervised by
Prof. Paolo Paolini

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Abstract

This research focuses on the online communication in the cultural destinations' domain. Cultural destinations' online communication has been poorly studied so far, and this work intends to analyze, describe and understand the domain. Destinations websites and particularly cultural destinations' websites have their own communication strategies but they act as hubs with respect to the other destinations' stakeholders (e.g. cultural attractions but also accommodations, associations, etc). Thus the objective of the research is to study the peculiarity of this specific online communication domain. Moving from this gross grain objective, research questions and hypotheses have been created. The research uses a proven framework for online communication: the Website Communication Model (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006); this model has been used within the research framework to deeply understand the peculiarity of cultural destinations' online communication. Thanks to a comprehensive methodology based on such a framework, the objective and the research questions have been investigated. Results show that there are differences between cultural destinations' and leisure destinations' online communication, and that online information competitors (mostly unofficial websites) are spreading on the internet the same contents as destinations' websites, but they are marketing the destination in an emotional way. Besides, thanks to case studies, the online communication strategy of three UNESCO listed destinations has been studied, investigating all the four pillars and fifth element of the Website Communication Model.

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01.

Introduction

This first introductory section describes the context of the research and introduces its objectives, reference models as well as its methodological framework.

Within the framework of this research it has been possible to investigate cultural destinations' online communication (research domain), understanding their peculiar characteristics compared to other leisure tourism destinations.

Objectives and research questions have been tackled thanks to a comprehensive and harmonic methodology, both qualitative and quantitative.

1.1 Research Rationale

This research on Cultural Destinations' Communication and Promotion is grounded in the field of communication sciences and particularly in the field of communication technologies; it deals with the analysis of technology enhanced communication and promotion practices in a very specific domain such as the one of cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism, outlined also in the next paragraphs, is defined by Mc Kercher and du Cross (2002) as the interplay between tourism, the use of cultural heritage assets, the consumption of experiences and products, and the tourist; following Yale (1991) this research treats cultural tourism as a whole: cultural assets can range in a wide spectrum from historic buildings, to art works to beautiful scenery. So that, UNESCO listed attractions (divided into cultural, natural and mixed attractions-http://whc.unesco.org/en/list) have been chosen as data base of cultural destinations.

Tourism has been chosen as research domain mainly for two reasons: (i) tourism represents an interesting application domain due the intrinsic importance of the information exchange: indeed, tourism is often described as an information intensive domain, where the exchange of information is essential for the day to day operations (Poon, 1993), so that nowadays the internet is an essential communication mean within the whole tourism chain. Furthermore, (ii) online tourism communication represents a kind of unique practices in the whole internet communication: it encompass the majority of recent technologies evolutions (such as eCommerce, recommendation systems and so on) and communication practices (social media communication, websites design and quality).

In addition, it is possible to underline that the cultural issue represents an added value: (iii) culture is obviously a relevant driver for tourists to decide to visit a destination but it is also important for online communication: the communication is reach in terms of topics and messages (e.g. exposition reviews, cultural suggestions, heritage explanations) and tourists are exploiting online instruments (e.g. websites or online communities) to get up to date information about the place they are going the choose or visit. Moreover, (iv) few literature so far concentrated specifically on cultural tourism online communication and promotion: most of the scholars focused on the cultural visit/experience itself, stressing the heritage interpretation issues (e.g. Copeland and Delmaire, 2004; Sigala, 2005).

Therefore, the main objective of the research is to understand and describe the specific characteristics of the cultural destinations' online communication and promotion. This research objective has been further elaborated and deconstructed over the research into eight research questions and five research hypotheses.

The study moves from a communication perspective; starting from the communication theories(e.g. Jakobson, 1989), used to describe the broad scenario a communication

model developed for the online communication (Website Communication Model, is short WCM by Cantoni and Tardini, 2006) has been used as operationalization framework in the research. WCM describes the online communication starting from the theories of communication highlighting five different elements that can be present in this specific communication: (i) a cluster of contents and services; (ii) a collection of technical instruments that makes those contents and services accessible; (iii) a group of people, who produce, update and promote the site; (iv) a group of people who access the site; (v) the competitive context in which the website is inserted.

The WCM is here used in a tactical way: the two methodological instruments used to investigate the domain (i.e. the survey and the case studies) have been designed on the five WCM elements. On one side, starting from a macro level, an online survey has been created to study the general communication flows within the cultural destinations' online communication domain; on the other side, focusing on a micro level, thanks to a case study approach the very specific and peculiar characteristics of such a domain have been investigated.

(i) The survey: starting from the work of Arasa (2007) who applied this model to investigate the technological communication practices in the religious websites, the survey has been designed taking into account the five elements of the website communication model and the recent research in the field of ICT and tourism. Recent ICT and tourism related researches have been integrated (e.g. Gretzel et al., 2006; Inversini et al., 2009). The survey was submitted to a restricted number of destination managers from three different countries chosen in an opportunistic way (Switzerland, England and Italy).

(ii) Case Studies: three case studies have been used in the research. The case study were selected opportunistically within the destination chosen in the survey for the above mentioned reasons. Three popular cultural (UNESCO listed) destinations decided to collaborate in the research: The city of Bath (UK), the city of Ravenna (IT), and the city of Bellinzona (CH). These three case studies represent three examples on the continuum of the technologies adoption in the field of cultural tourism: Bath (UK) is strongly leveraging on the Internet as means of communication an transactions: Jasmine Simmons, head of the technology department of the DMO (Destination Management Organizations) stated that internet is one of the main communication channels for the city tourism thanks to the possibility of spreading information on tourism campaign (such as the shopping season or the Jane Austin thematic year) and thanks to the reservation system. Moreover, Baths DMS (Destination Management System) integrates all the attractions and attractions' managers can update and change the information about their activity (e.g. opening hours schedule, special offers, and so on). Ravenna (IT) is discovering the potentiality of the online communication at the time of the case study (i.e. 2008/2009) and was facing the transaction to a modern reservation system for the hospitality structures of the city. Finally, Bellinzona (CH) leveraging on the importance of the city heritage (the castles of Bellinzona) is discovering the importance of being on the web and it is starting with some educational activities for schools trips.

Therefore following the classification by Cantoni and Di Blas (2002), these websites can be seen in a continuum of internet use: (i) Bellinzona DMO has the need have an online presence (i.e. to be there), (ii) Ravenna DMO is starting to integrate B2C services (such as the reservation system) to operate on the internet, while (iii) Bath is integrating not only the hospitality reservations systems but also attractions mangers and online marketing.

Leveraging on the survey and on the case studies this research act as a ground breaking work in the field of cultural tourism online communication and promotion. Results and conclusions confirm that this field represent a "*unique*" in the online communication and tourism technologies fields (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009) due to the complexity of the information and of the variety of stakeholders involved.

Next paragraphs deeply describe the choice of the cultural tourism domain, the research objectives and questions, and the methodology.

1.2 The domain: cultural destinations' online communication

This research aims to investigate the characteristics of new media for online communication in a traditionally "information intensive" field: the tourism industry (Sheldon, 1997; Gretzel et al., 2000; Buhalis, 2003). Moreover, the research focuses on one of the various different tourism niches, namely the cultural tourism (WTO, 1999; Mc Kercher and du Cross, 2002; Yale, 1991; Garrod and Fyall,2000; Poria et al., 2001). Cultural tourism is composed by a variety of different research fields (e.g. heritage interpretation, heritage management etc.) and industries (e.g. museums, theatres, education, etc); the objects of the study are the so called cultural destinations, or in other words the tourism destinations which host relevant cultural attractions (i.e. UNESCO listed attractions).

(Figure 1 - Cultural Destinations Domain)

Mc Kercher and du Cross (2002) defined cultural heritage tourism as the interplay between tourism, the use of cultural heritage assets, the consumption of experiences and

products, and the tourist. Hence, cultural destination online communication should be considered as an *unicum*, reflecting not only the needs and the peculiarity of tourism industry communication, but, as stated by Inversini and Cantoni (2009), also representing tourism assets and cultural heritage assets harmonically online. This should impart the end user with a clear understanding of the destination and its cultural attractions.

Given this domain, the main objective of the research is to understand and describe the specific characteristics of cultural destinations' online communication. In order to tackle this objective, two different reference models have been used:

- as the logical model during the whole study a simplified communication model has been used (Bühler, 1983; Jakobson, 1989): this model considers the communication as a message (2) sent by an addresser (1) to an addressee (3)[1].

(Figure 2 - Simplified Jakobson Model)

- as an operational model, the Website Communication Model (in short WCM, Cantoni and Tardini, 2006) has been chosen. WCM will be useful during the research because it is focused on the online communication and offers a set of categories useful to investigate the peculiarity of Computer Mediated Communication (WCM is presented in chapter 2). WCM defines a website as a set of contents and services (pillar1), created by a group of people (pillar 3) and made available to a given group of end users (pillar 4) thanks to a collection of technical instruments (pillar 2). The website is finally understood within a given relevant information market (5th element).

1.3 Research Objective, Research Questions and Methodology

Starting from the main objective of the research and from the simplified model of Jakobson presented above, four areas of interests have been identified; for each area, research questions have been formulated.

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[1] The other elements presented in the model of Jakobson (1989) context, contact (channel) and code are not here presented but will be taken into consideration over the development of the research.

Research Objective: as cultural destinations' online communication represents an *unicum* for its intrinsic characteristics (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009), the main objective of the research is to understand and describe the specific characteristics of the cultural destinations' online communication.

Three different areas of interests have then been recognized (i.e. starting from the simplified communication model presented above), and for each area – message, addresser and addressee-- research questions have been formulated.

Research Questions

(Area 1) Message

- RQ$_1$: which kind of messages (in terms of contents and functionalities) are cultural destinations websites transmitting?
    - RQ$_{1.1}$: are there any differences (in terms of contents and functionalities) in the types of messages between general destination websites and cultural ones?
    - RQ$_{1.2}$: what is the overall quality of the message?

(Area 2) Addresser

- RQ$_2$: what is the addresser perception of the message?
    - RQ$_{2.1}$: are there any differences in the addresser perception of message between general tourism websites and cultural ones?

(Area 3) Addressee

- RQ$_3$: who are the addressees of online cultural destinations' websites?
    - RQ$_{3.1}$: what are the contents in which communications' addressees are mostly interested?
    - RQ$_{3.2}$: is the official destination website the sole source of information for addressees where the message is presented online?

Grounded on the above outlined research questions, a set of research hypotheses have been designed in order to better define the research area:

Cultural assets should be managed together with other tourism assets (Mc Kercher, 2002)and harmonically presented online (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009). The message should be clear in order to promote the destination as a cultural place.

Hp1: There is a difference within the online message between cultural destinations and leisure destinations [related to RQ1].

Second, cultural publics should be different form leisure publics: as underlined by Mc Kercher in 2002, the importance of cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination is basically related to the type of tourists (i.e. purposeful cultural tourist and sightseeing cultural tourist): in our case, transferring this model online, there should be differences in terms of website content design.

Hp2: There is a difference in terms of publics in online communication between cultural tourism destinations and leisure destinations [related to RQ3 and RQ2].

Destination managers and online communication managers should also care about information (and website quality). Quality can currently be seen as one major driver for tourism websites, because they are entrusted by local attractions as intermediary for marketing and visibility (Buhalis, 2003).

Hp3: Online communication quality issues are crucial for cultural destinations [related to RQ1].

Finally, as the world wide web, and particularly the relevant market (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006) around a given website is composed by different information players (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009) or information competitors (Cantoni et al., 2007) which are spreading almost the same messages as the official websites, a detailed study of the different types of message is needed to identify peculiarities of the different information sources.

Hp4: Official DMO websites are marketing and communicating the destination in a factual way [related to RQ3].

Hp5: Unofficial websites are marketing and communicating destinations in an emotional way [related to RQ3].

In order to tackle the objectives and research questions and to investigate the above presented hypotheses, a comprehensive methodology (both qualitative and quantitative) has been designed. Two different strategies have been identified to analyze and describe the communication characteristics of the domain.

- At the macro level, leisure and cultural destinations have been described (i.e. from a manager perspective) thanks to an online survey; The survey was modelled onto different theoretical models (e.g. Website Communication Model - Cantoni and Tardini, 2006). In order to distinguish leisure destinations from cultural ones, it has been decided to consider destinations which host UNESCO listed monuments (or attractions) as cultural ones. The aim of the survey was to

investigate stakeholders' (and more specifically destination managers) perceptions of new media in tourism communication.

- At the micro level, explorative case studies have been used to investigate the peculiarities of the domain thanks to (i) semi-structured interviews, (ii) usability, (iii) usages studies and (iv) content analysis on official and "long tail" results (Anderson, 2004). These three case studies represent three examples on the continuum of the technologies adoption in the field of cultural tourism: Bath (UK) is strongly leveraging on the Internet as means of communication an transactions: Jasmine Simmons, head of the technology department of the DMO stated that Internet is one of the main communication channels for the city tourism thanks to the possibility of spreading information on tourism campaign (such as the shopping or the Jane Austin initiative) and thanks to the reservation system. Moreover, Baths DMS integrates all the attractions managers that may update and change the information about the attractions (e.g., opening hours, offers and so on). Ravenna (IT) is discovering the potentiality of the online communication at the time of the case study (i.e. 2009) and was facing the transaction to a modern reservation system for the hospitality structures of the city. Finally, Bellinzona (CH) leveraging on the importance of the city heritage (the castles of Bellinzona) is discovering the importance of being on the web starting with some educational activities for schools trips.

The website communication model (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006), has been used as the operational model within the case studies and the survey. Thanks to its flexible structure, WCM perfectly maps the communication model by Jakobson (1989), allowing an easy shift between the two models for the operative analysis. This approach allowed to analyze the online message (i.e. both in terms of contents and functionalities, pillar I and pillar II [of the Website Communication Model]) and the main characters of the communication the addressers (i.e. people managing the website, pillar III [of the Website Communication Model]) and the addressee (i.e. people visiting the website, pillar IV [of the Website Communication Model]). The external world (or the relevant context, V element [of the Website Communication Model]) is also analyzed thanks to the content analysis. (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006)

The research is structured as follows: (i) chapter two outlines the relevant literature review in the fields of online communication, tourism and eTourism and cultural tourism; (ii) chapter three describes in detail the methodology and the research design used to tackle research questions and research hypotheses; (iii) chapter four is devoted to the results of the studies respectively to online survey and case studies; (iv) finally, chapter five is devoted to discussion, conclusion and future work.

02.

Literature Review

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of related works in the field of New Media in Tourism Communication.

In order to deeply understand the field in which the research is collocated, the first section (1.1) briefly outlines the role of new media in communication, while the second (1.2) describes the role of new media in tourism. The last section of the chapter (1.3.) is devoted to emerging trends in the field.

The first section (1.1) is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the relevant models and techniques used by scholars to analyze and describe online communication in different fields. The second section (1.2) deeply analyzes the impact of new media, and especially the internet, on the field of tourism. This field has been (and is being) widely revolutionized by the advent of new media; cultural tourism-related studies are also presented to give an overview of state-of-the-rt research in the field. Finally, (1.3) web2.0 as an emerging trend is presented and discussed, together with one possibility to make sense out of this vast proliferation of online contents: online reputation.

2.1 New Media in Communication

For a definition of communication

The term communication has a clear Latin origin (i.e. *communicatio*) and literally means "to make something common"; communication can be also defined as "the activity of conveying information[2]".

This brief definition does not take into account the complexity and the different aspects related to the communication experience: as stated by the philosopher Karl Bühler (1989), there are three main elements that can be identified in a communication process; these three elements are strictly related one to each other: (i) the addresser, (ii) the addressee and (iii) what is communicated (objects and facts).

Jakobson (1989) furthered Bühler's model, identifying six key elements involved in the communication process: (i) the addresser - i.e. the speaker/writer- , (ii) the addressee – i.e. the listener/reader - , (iv) the message, (iii) the context, (v) the channel, and (vi) the code (figure 3).
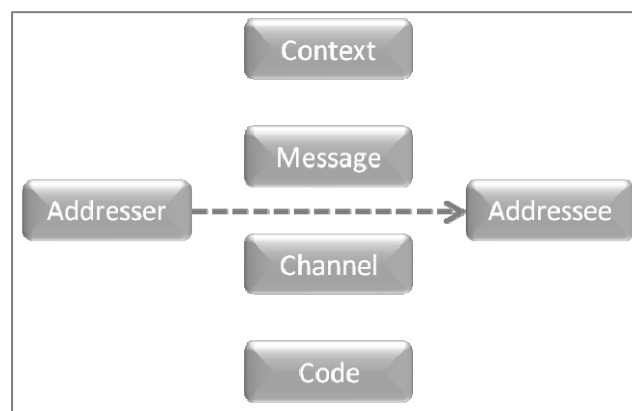
(Figure 3 - Jakobsonian Communication model)

Then, to every element in the Jakobson model, a function is associated:

- The <u>emotive function</u> (addresser) is the addresser's own attitude towards the content of the message (i.e. thoughts, feelings); this function can be associated with Bühler's expressive function.

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[2] http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=communication, accessed November 26, 2008.

- The <u>conative function</u> (addressee), is the function by which the addresser strives (from the Latin word *conor*) to produce an effect on the addressee; this function can be associated with what Bühler called appellative function.

- The <u>referential function</u> (context) describes the possibility of referring to the context; in the Bühler model, this association was called representative function.

- The <u>phatic function</u> (channel) refers to the channel of communication and to the possibility of verifying the proper channel function to establish the communication among addresser and addressee.

- The <u>metalinguistic function</u> (code) allows code description. In other words, this is the function of language to speak about language. The metalingusitic function can be used to examine the code.

- The <u>poetic function</u> (message) stresses the form of the message. In reality, messages convey more than just the content. They always contain a creative addresser's touch or style.

Shannon and Weaver (1983) proposed one other way to look at the communication model: the authors also took into account the technological perspective looking at machine-machine communication. The authors introduced two innovations with respect to the Bühler and Jakobson models: (i) the concept of information and (ii) the concept of noise.

These three studies highlight the immense complexity of the communication definition, inserting different elements and functions. But the basic model, the one used in this research to create the research question and the structure of the research itself, is the one which incorporates the three main elements of the communication: addresser (1), message (2) and addressee (3).

(Figure 4 - simplified communication model)

For the purpose of this research, the reference model of communication will be the one by Jakobson (1989), where other 3 elements (context, channel and code) are presented. They will be taken into consideration over the development of the research (and especially when dealing with the case studies presented in chapter five).

ICT in Communication: the technologies of the word

According to Ong (2002), "electronic technology has brought us into the age of secondary orality [...]. It is essentially a more deliberate and self-conscious orality based permanently on the use of writing and print" (Ong, 2002: 136). Indeed, electronic revolution dramatically changed the way we used to communicate due to the emerging of mass communication.

Moreover, according to Cantoni and Tardini (2006), within the last century new media in communication (e.g. television and cinema) restored the role of ear and sight; internet as one of the recently emerged mass technology would not remain wedded to a print ethic or sight alone (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006).

One may argue that the internet is not the first technology of the word (Ong 2002) which brings changes in social life: all previous communication technologies have had a profound impact within the society, changing the practices within the societies themselves (Cantoni and Tardini, 2010). Danesi (2006) argued that the invention of handwriting enabled for the first time the communication between two persons separated both in space and time.

Starting from the above-quoted studies, Cantoni and Tardini in 2006 defined a four layer taxonomy (in relation to the internet) to organize the "technologies of the word" taking into account their peculiarities as well as their common features.

1. The first layer considers which aspects of communication a technology is able to fix and crystallize outside the living thought and outside the evanescent act of an oral communication. Actually, thanks to technology, it is possible to represent only some of the aspects of living communication (i.e. the verbal content, still image, etc.) while omitting many others (e.g. intonation). Starting from this point electronic media can allow for a great convergence of previous media: digitized text can be combined with images (still, moving) , sound, graphics and so on.

2. The second layer considers the process needed to produce, modify, replicate and preserve a communication object belonging to a given technology of the word; considering handwriting, it is possible to imagine the daunting amount of time required to reproduce a book, while with the advent of the printing press reproducing a text has become much more efficient; but cancellation in handwriting is easier than in the printing press (printing press require the creation of a new "original" document). Electronic text is easy to be produced, modified and replicate, but has got problems in terms of preservation: it is not possible to know whether an electronic document will be preserved for centuries.

3. The third layer considers the possibility of "moving" communication in space with its physical support (layer 2). While in the period of orality, when knowledge moved along

with knowing persons, distribution of printed documents made this movement easier. Then the telephone or the telegraphs eliminated the physical support (the book, the journal) requiring only a physical connection (the wire); the wireless telegraph, the radio, the television, and the mobile phone are all technologies which do not require any physical link. Finally the internet allows for almost instant bi-directional and multi-directional communication at a global level.

4. Communication artefacts are not only used to represent thought and reality, to be produced, reproduced and preserved along time and to move along space: they need to be accessed and interpreted. Every technology of the word requires a number of conditions for its fruition: speaking requires the air, writing requires light, telegraph, radio etc. require electricity and suitable apparatus. Electronic documents require hardware and software to be accessed. Obsolescence in the electronic world is something very important considering how fast some supports available some years ago are now not longer available.

The Website Communication Model

The World Wide Web is growing quickly: thousands of players are entering the information market every day: in Europe, the numbers of firms connected to the internet is constantly increasing (eBusiness Watch 2006 Survey), and also the number of users is increasing - world Internet usage growth in the period 2000-2007 has been 265.6% (internetworldstats.com, 2008).

This is due to the fact that once a company enters the online information market as a player (i.e. creating an online presence/website), it could have three main core objectives (Cantoni and Di Blas, 2002):

- To be there: most companies today have a website, and not being listed by the search engines could mean forfeiting potential clients only because the company address or telephone numbers is not in the internet.

- To operate: companies can choose to create online services to somehow operate in a B2B or B2C form in order to sell their product or to market it with prospective clients.

- To integrate: companies can exploit the internet both operating and integrating. In this case, to integrate means allowing the website to support some business process of the companies. One example of integration could be an extranet for travelling workers.

Websites can be considered the key to any online marketing strategy (Ewell, 2008), because in each of the three cases presented above they can act as a key driver for the company marketing purposes at all levels.

The online environment is populated by different information players competing to attract users' attention (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009). For example, users can compare prices of a given product that is sold on the web by European, American and Asian vendors because their offers appear on the same page of search results of a given search engine. Recent studies (Cilibrasi and Vitany, 2007) state that to date (i.e. 2007) the total number of web pages indexed by Google is approaching the dramatic number of 10^{10}.

One of the major issues has always consisted of trying to find an appropriate definition as well as a unilateral concept for websites. In early 2000, websites started to be considered not only as a "hobby for Information System people" but as a communication vehicle (Van der Geest, 2001). Actually, what Van der Geest highlights is that the medium alone is no longer enough a message; thus, websites become responsibility of managers and communication people who started to approach the planning (or design) and the production of a website as a communication process.

During past decades, researchers tried to give a more comprehensive categorization to websites; in 1995 Hoffman and Novak proposed a classification of websites on the base of a set of six functions that can be accomplished: (i) online storefront, (ii) internet presence, (iii) content, (iv) mall, (v) incentive site, (vi) search agent; Hoger, Cappel and Myerscough (1998) stated that a website of a company is essentially a promotional tool which leverages its capacity to promote awareness, providing customer support, selling products and services, selling advertising space and offering electronic information services. O'Neill (1998) underlines that the term website has also been used to indicated "a cluster of pages" which is composed of "a unique node on the web" (O'Neill, 1998).

Focusing on tourism domain, in 2000 Pan and Fesenmaier tried to explore the communication flows that are recognizable in a tourism website: the study first identified the possibility of a website to create a two-way communication among tourists and tourism service providers through information exchange (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2000). Second, the possibility was pointed out that a web visitor could obtain large quantities of information from a website and, only after its visit would the information regarding the visitors' behaviour be stored in the server's log files.

In the model presented by Pan and Fesenmaier, the websites communication flow among companies and tourists has long been unilateral, as the following chart clearly shows (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2008).
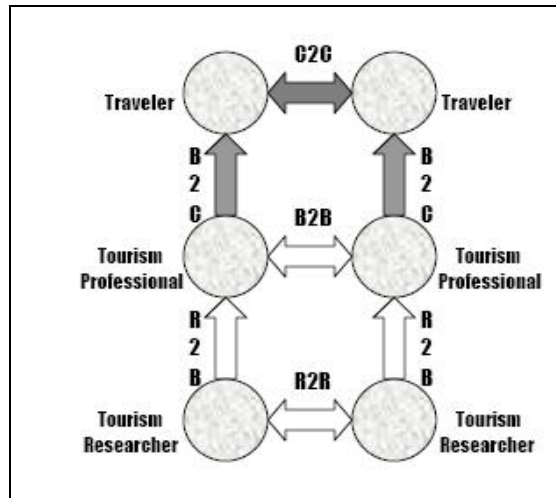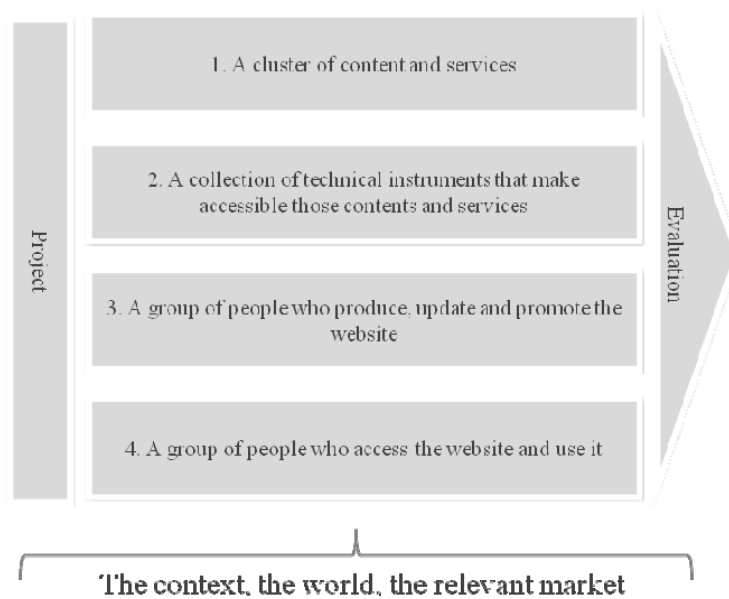
(Figure 5 – Tourism website communication, adapted from Pan and Fensenmaier, 2008)

The importance of the communication flows has also been highlighted by Cantoni and Tardini (2006): a website is not only composed of a given set of contents and functionalities (although they are very important) but a strong role in the whole website value and development chain is also played by two different groups of people: the administrators and the end users.

The Web Site Communication Model (in short WCM) (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006) is extensively presented and discussed, as it will be the basis for the study thanks to its unique characteristics of completeness and flexibility.

WCM is built essentially on four key elements, two of them deal with "things" (1 and 2) while the other two ones deal with "persons" (3 and 4): (1) contents and services, offered through a website; (2) accessibility tools, such as the interface (hardware and software); (3) publishers (the website back office); (4) End Users (the website real users). Then, aside from these four pillars of the web communication there is a fifth element: the ecological context referring to the relationships between the website and the external environment, the web as a whole (Bolchini, et al. 2008).

(Figure 6 – Website Communication Model - adapted from Cantoni and Tardini, 2006)

Here each component of the WCM is described:

- A cluster of contents and services: a website is a cluster of contents, such as messages, possible interactions or transactions. The quality of websites is closely connected to the question of quality content. In internet it is important to offer only services that are really suitable to the communication goals and to the real needs of the user (for instance ordering, customizing, buying, voting, dialoguing, etc.). Offering services without ensuring regular and professional management can frustrate visitor expectations and weaken the communication strategy.
- A collection of technical instruments that makes those contents and services accessible: a website is also the collection of technical instruments that makes the contents and services within it accessible and possible. This collection also includes the hardware and connections necessary to access the site and all the elements depending on the programming, such as graphical dimension, layout or navigation paths.
- A group of people, who produce, update and promote the site: a website is also the group of people who project, create, keep, update, manage and promote the website. They also interact with the visitors. Interactivity is fundamental in online communication. The user needs to recognize real people beyond the website, people with the intention of communicating a certain message.

- A group of people who access the site: a website is also people who access it and enjoy its contents and services. Real communication only happens when someone is interested in and affected by a message. In the virtual world it is possible to have different publics but they need to be clearly identified.
- The context: during the planning of a website the analysis of the four pillars is in sufficient. In fact, it is necessary to study the context, the market positioning, and the competitors, etc. (Cantoni et al., 2007)

A variety of different issues arise presenting this model:

- regarding the first two pillars (the pillars related to things), there is clearly a need for quality of three main elements, namely: (i) the content quality, (ii) the navigation quality and (iii) the interface quality.

- regarding the third and fourth pillars (the pillars related to people), there is likewise clear the need of guidelines and methodologies helping stakeholders to design a user-friendly website, taking into account and constantly involving the receivers of the communication (the end users, fourth pillar) and keeping information competitors in consideration.

The Websites lifecycle: Human Computer Interaction and User Experience

As discussed above, there are different definitions for the website. Following the Website Communication Model a website can be defined as follows:

A website is a set of contents and services (pillar1), created by a group of people (pillar 3) and made available to a given group of end users (pillar 4) thanks to a collection of technical instruments (pillar 2), and it is situated within a given relevant market (5 element).

Although the importance of websites as communication channel is being recognized by different authors (e.g. Website Communication Model, Cantoni and Tardini, 2006), online communication has been (and partially is) an engineering-related discipline (Van der Geest, 2001); the next few paragraphs describe the online communication domain from a technical viewpoint, highlighting the different disciplines which concur to define the domain itself.

The discipline, which studies the website communication and development is named Web Engineering (WE); among the different sub-domains which concur to create the web engineering domain, two refer directly to the communication-related characteristics

of the websites: the Human Computer Interaction discipline (HCI) and one of its sub group, the user experience (UEX).

On one side, the user perspective has always been a crucial issue for the HCI researchers (Jarke, et al., 1998; Dix et al., 1998), mostly because HCI researchers are very interested in the relationship between the users and the machines/devices (Dix et al., 1998) in different areas.

On the other side, according to Garrett (2003), user experience is not about how a product works on the inside (although that sometimes has significant influence), but it is about how it works on the outside, where persons come into contact with it and have to work with it. The same author underlines the fact that a web site is a "self service" product, and so there is no instructional manual to read beforehand, no training seminar and so on. There is only the user facing the site alone with only her/his experience to guide her/him.

Referring to the previous presented model, the WCM (Cantoni and Tardini 2006), therefore identifies the centrality of the user (i.e. not only the end user to which the online communication is addressed, but also the administrators) in the whole design, production, delivery and usage process.

The next paragraph outlines the state-of-the-art research in the user experience field: the importance of bearing in mind the users, their objectives and their possible actions is one of the most important issues in the whole software (and web application) lifecycle (Dix et al., 1998; Brink et al., 2002). It follows that, user experience should be taken into account during all the development phases of the application (Brinck et al., 2002).

In 2003, Kuniavsky defined three main key factors that may help grow the quality of the user experience:

1. Functionality: web applications should be well-designed in order to do what they are supposed to do. In other words, they should be useful for the end user.
2. Efficiency: web applications should be well-designed in order to let users perform tasks easily and in a reasonable amount of time.
3. Desirability: web applications should be well designed in order to create delight and satisfaction (Kuniavsky, 2003).

One of the most useful techniques used within the different stages of a website lifecycle is the scenario: according to Carroll a scenario is a "story about use" (Carroll, 2000) of the application and it could be expressed in narrative form and may focus on different aspects of the user experience (Jarke, 1998). Carroll also underlines five key properties of scenarios motivating their use (Carroll, 2000):

1. Scenarios focus on use. Descriptions of use stimulate designers to reflect upon concrete circumstances of interaction.
2. Scenarios enable concrete progress but suspend commitment. On one hand, they allow specifying and exploring design alternatives; on the other hand, they are rough, incomplete, and easy to change.
3. Scenarios are task-oriented and can be used for many purposes. The focus on tasks lends itself to be effectively employed during analysis, design specification, usability evaluation, and for documenting design rationale.
4. Scenarios capture knowledge as a mid-level abstraction. They are more concrete than formal models but more reusable and flexible than the recording of a user experience.
5. Finally, scenarios are easy to understand by all stakeholders. Designers, users, analysts, project managers and customers can all "speak" the language of scenarios ,because narratives are privileged cognitive structures.

User scenarios are known and widely used in Human Computer Interaction as well as in User Experience as a description of one episode (or "success story") (Bolchini and Yu, 2004). Moreover, within a website lifecycle, scenarios may be used for requirement analysis, conceptual design (Garrett, 2002; Cato, 2001) and evaluation (Brink et al., 2002).

The website lifecycle and the user experience

In a simple application lifecycle framework (Figure 7), proposed by Brink, Gergle and Wood in 2002 (Brinck et. al., 2002) in order to explain the concept of Pervasive Usability Process (i.e. usability issue will be discussed in following paragraphs), it is possible to highlight three main phases in which user studies and user involvement are crucial (i.e. requirements, conceptual design and evaluation).
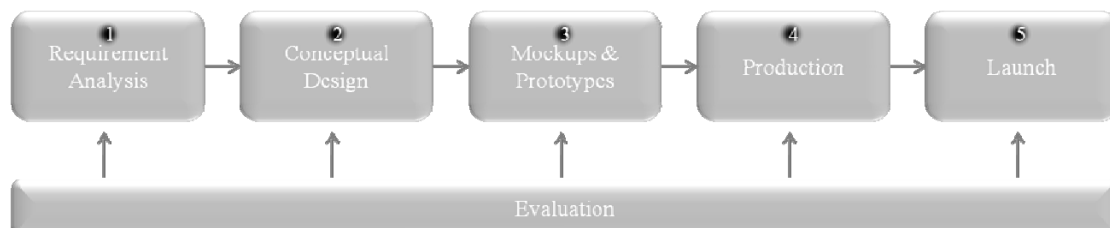
(Figure 7 – Website Lifecycle - Adapted from Brink, Gergle and Wood, 2002)

The simplified website lifecycle (Figure 7) mentioned above was created by the authors to explain the concept of pervasive usability: in each phase, a usability study (i.e. evaluation) is needed. What is indeed here stated is that in each phase of the lifecycle it

is important to bearing in mind the potential end users of the application designing ad hoc solution for potential end users.

Back to a Communications Perspective: Requirements, Design, Quality

Involving users, be them end users or other stakeholders, means involving the addressers and the potential addressees of the online communication (please refer to section 1.1). Three phases are critical for the website creation: (i) requirements analysis, (ii) conceptual design and (iii) quality assessment or evaluation.

The requirement phase

According to the Requirement Engineering (RE) terminology, a requirement is a single piece of information describing how a product should be designed: requirements identify the characteristics and the attributes for a system to have value for the user (Young, 2001). In the web applications lifecycle, as in software engineering, requirements are used as inputs for the design phase.

In recent years, advanced requirements methodologies applied to online applications have mainly considered the transactional and operational aspects of the websites (Bolchini and Paolini, 2004) without considering the importance of stakeholders' need to address communication goals (Van Der Geest, 2001; Cantoni and Paolini, 2001).

In fact, requirements analysts should make informed decisions about the design of the user experience by considering potential users, who have goals with respect to the web site and who expect to find a usable information architecture helping them to learn, engage and retrieve information (Bolchini and Paolini, 2004).

Furthermore, Paolini, Mainetti and Bolchini (2006) stressed the importance of including users' motivations in the requirements analysis phase, considering them as an important element to evaluate users' characteristics and their attitudes, in order to improve the communication quality of web applications. They also underline two other main issues: (i) it is the application purpose and its mission which defines the possible group of motivations to be supported, and (ii) motivation should be consistent with the characteristics of the users' profiles (Cato 2001; Carroll 2000; Garrett 2003; Paolini et al., 2006). Users can be profiled according to different criteria such as demographics (e.g. age, gender), social background (e.g. civil status, employment), disabilities (e.g. visual impairment), cultural background (e.g. school level), technical skills, etc. Thanks to this modelling technique and to the goals and motivation elicitation, it is possible to create scenarios (Carroll, 2000).

Scenarios should not be directly translated *as they are* into website requirements (Guell, et al., 2000) because scenarios are incomplete or partial descriptions of the use of the

application (Bolchini and Yu, 2004); they should be carefully used to suggest possible site usages and as a source to define high level users' goals. Besides, complex websites today support a very high number of tasks and goals: it would be not feasible to have all these tasks and goals expressed in scenarios.

The design phase

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica the word "design" derives from the Latin word *disegnare* and "is the process of developing plans or schemes of action; more particularly, a design can be a development, plan or scheme, whether kept in mind or set as forth as a drawing or model" (Encyclopaedia Britannica-http://www.britannica.com).

According to Paolini, Mainetti and Bolchini (2006), the design should have a series of characteristics to be effective:

- The design phase is crucial for the overall quality of the application; in practice, it would be exceedingly difficult to remedy a bad design with an exceptional implementation. It follows that a wrong initial design, or an inadequate way of building the artefact itself, may lead to an unusable, unhelpful and perhaps useless artefact.
- The design should be constantly communicated and discussed to relevant stakeholders in order to make important decisions or to face relevant issues: it should be easy to understand and communicate.
- The design should be feasible: designers should be aware that the artefact they are creating is viable, and the design document should convince the other relevant stakeholders within the project team, as well.
- The design should be malleable, easy to be changed, and adapted to face all the issues arising within the project.

The design phase is crucial for the development of communicative artefacts, and, moreover, web complex applications. In recent years, a new way of conceiving web design and application design has been introduced by Cato (2001): the user-centered design, in which the end user becomes the protagonist of the design phase. From that point on, different methodologies started to be used both in academia and in the industry: some of them were most closely related to the Entity relationship models (e.g. Garzotto and Paolini, 1993; Isakowitz et al., 1995), some others were related to the object oriented (i.e. Java Language) methodologies (e.g. Lange, 1996).In recent years, starting from the "web as dialogue" approach, where the communication between the machine (i.e. the website) and the end user is seen as a dialogue (this concept was also introduced by Human Computer Interaction researcher - Dix et al., 2002), new methodologies have been created such as the Interactive Dialogue Model (Bolchini and Paolini, 2006).

The evaluation phase

According to Garrett's quotation above, a "web site is a self service product" (Garret, 2003). The quality of the web site and the ease of use should be guaranteed for the users. The evaluation phases aim to assess "the effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction with which specified users can achieve specified goals in particular environments" [ISO 9241-11].

The various aspects of this definition are also supported by Cantoni and Tardini (2006), who define usability according to the Website Communication Model (in short "WCM") as "the adequacy of contents/functionalities (pillar I [of the Website Communication Model - WCM]) and accessibility tools (pillar II), between themselves and with respect to the users (pillar IV) and the relevant context (world). However, this adequacy has to be measured taking into consideration the goals of people who commission, project, develop, promote and run the website (pillar III)" (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006: 129-130).

According to Brink (Brink et al., 2002), the usability evaluation is a constant activity that should be present at every phase of the development process of a web application, from the requirements analysis, to the launch phase, and through all the intermediate phases. There are different methodologies to evaluate the usability of web applications. Basically, they fall within two main categories: (a) usability inspection methods, and (b) empirical testing.

1. Usability inspections methods, also called expert review methods, include a set of methods based on having expert evaluators (instead of final users) inspect or examine usability-related aspects of a user interface (Cato, 2001). The main systematic inspection techniques are Heuristic Evaluation (Nielsen, 1994; Cato, 2001) and Cognitive Walkthrough (Brink et al., 2002).

2. Empirical testing methods, also called user-based methods, investigate usability through direct observation of a sample of users interacting with the application (Whiteside et al., 1988). The most used techniques are Thinking Aloud and Contextual Inquiry (Brink et al., 2002).

Other communication-based activities: usage studies and online promotion

Two other activities can be considered as crucial in a communication perspective: the usages studies and the promotion activities. The first activity studies the performance of the website in terms of users' views, starting from the traces recorded by the web server; the second activity is strictly related to the potential publics of the web applications, and to the actual promotion of the website within these potential publics.

Usages studies

Usage analysis (or log files analysis) is one of the most interesting studies to be performed on a website (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009); it is also crucial if there is no possibility of involving users during the usability evaluation (Atterer et al., 2006).

In general terms, log files are the traces left by the user while visiting the web site; this specific group of files are server-side files that record users' activities while they are visiting the website. The study of the log files is not an engineering activity as such: log files analysis can give interesting information at a communicative level (Cantoni and Ceriani, 2007) such as the study of the users' paths along the website (Pitkow, 1997) by which it is possible to optimize the communication flow within the website.

Online Promotion

From a communication perspective, it is also crucial to promote the website on the relevant market (i.e. fifth element of the Website Communication Model).

As the Internet becomes the primary source of information (Fox, 2002), the issue of locating relevant information is crucial. Nielsen Media stated that over 80% of searchers use web search engines to locate online information (Nielsen Media, 1997). Search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo!, MSN Live) have become very popular, with Google.com dominating the global search (Comescore, 2008). However, the rapid growth of information on the Internet creates new opportunities, challenges and even problems to end users to find the right information (Santosa et al., 2005).

Search engines become the primary gate to reach information online, creating technological proximity (i.e. as opposed to psychological proximity); technological (or navigational) proximity occurs when an item is linked to another or when both are linked to a third one; distance can thus measured by the number of click(s) necessary to move from one item to one other (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006). Different techniques have been developed to foster technological proximity: Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is about connecting searchers seeking information related to a specific brand with which they seek. Also, from the marketer point of view, SEM involves making a website visible within the search engines to attract new visitors to the site (Chaffey, 2008). Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the practice aimed at achieving the highest position practically possible in the organic listings on the search engine results pages for the keywords and the key phrases most relevant to what the company does (Kaushik, 2007).

On the opposite side of technological proximity, there is the psychological proximity; psychological proximity occurs when two items belong in the user perception to the same (or similar) paradigm (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006). Psychological proximity could be considered the domain of marketing and public relations (online and offline); it refers

to the fact that a given brand could be associated to specific user's need and guide the actions of the user (e.g. user need: "I need to find an hotel in Berlin", user action: "I go to expedia.com").

Technological and Psychological proximity should be harmonically used in website online promotion in order to gain substantive results from marketing campaigns.

2.2 New Media in Tourism Communication

The following paragraphs are devoted to the role of new media in tourism communication. Currently, tourism, for its intrinsic characteristics, is a relevant domain in which to study online communication dynamics. The next section will be devoted to outline the tourism industry and the online tourism phenomenon.

Tourism as an industry

Tourism is a very difficult domain to define. According to Gilbert (1990), there are two main reasons making it difficult to define: (i) the very broad nature of the concept and (ii) the sectors and industries involved in the whole tourism chain. Medlik and Middleton (1973) argue that tourism products can be understood as bundles of activities, services and benefits that constitute the entire tourism experience. In order to shape and gain a better understanding of the domain in 1979 and later in 1990 – Leiper (Leiper, 1979; Leiper 1990) created a framework in which the tourism market is composed by three main elements: (i) tourists, (ii) geographical elements and (iii) the tourism sector. The author places tourism in a dynamic context, highlighting the importance of external environment factors such as society, politics and economies.

According to Cooper (1998), there are two main ways to define tourism:

1. Demand Side Definitions: are all the definitions attempting to encapsulate tourism activities from the demand perspective. They take into consideration factors such as: (i) the minimum/maximum stay in a place, (ii) themain purpose of the trip (iii) the distance from customers' habitual home.

2. Supply Side Definitions: are all the definitions that define tourism sector (conceptually, descriptively and from a technical point of view) by describing the firms and industries involved. These definitions take into account factors such as: (i) economic impact (domestic markets, investments, tax revenues, etc) of the tourism industry (ii) tourism employment and its characteristics, (iii) comparison among tourism and other economic sectors.

Demand side and supply side have also been widely investigated by other authors: one of the supply side definitions has been given by Smith (Smith, 1988), who argued that tourism as an industry can be generally considered as the agglomeration of all business

(or commodities) that directly provide goods or services to facilitate business, pleasure, and leisure activities away from the home environment. An example of demand side definition can be the one from the Tourism Society of England in 1976. According to their definition, tourism is "the temporary, short-term movement of people to destination[s] outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during the stay at each destination. It includes movements for all purposes".

As a matter of fact, tourism has always been considered a profitable industry, but today it is considered as one of the biggest growing industries and as a phenomenon constantly pushing its frontiers forward, expanding its importance and involving even more people globally (Buhalis and Costa, 2006). Actually, tourism importance has been recently been recognized also by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the leading international body monitoring international macroeconomic data: travel is the world's largest Service Sector Industry according to the World Trade Organization (WTO, 2007), and within this market, Europe is the largest tourism destination and its importance is growing quickly.

The impact of tourism on the economy in the whole European region ranges from about 4% (tourism industry in a strict sense) to about 11% (tourist economy) and correspondently, the number of employed in the tourism sector varies between 7.3 million and 20.6 million. The arrivals of international tourists in Europe grew from 25.3 million in 1950, to 414.4 million in 2002 and it is foreseen to growth until 1561.1 million by 2020 (Leidner 2004).

The role of Technology in the tourism domain

According to Leidner (Leidner 2004), one of the main factors affecting the growth of the tourism market in Europe in the late 90's is related to the high penetration of ICTs in the industry. Moreover, according to Buhalis (2006) Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have changed the way that governments, organizations and citizens interact and operate. These developments have altered the competitiveness of enterprises and regions around the world (Buhalis, 2006).

The digital revolution introduced by the internet, intranets and extranets provides unprecedented and unforeseen opportunities for productivity improvements, interactive management and dynamic marketing (Buhalis, 2003). As a result, organisations and governments are now, for example, able to:

- accelerate knowledge and information distribution;
- apply knowledge management at the widest possible coverage;
- increase their efficiency and productivity;
- improve and shorten the decision making process;
- enhance their communication and co-ordination efficiency;

- reduce their transportation, postage and communication costs; and
- support their interactivity with all stakeholders.
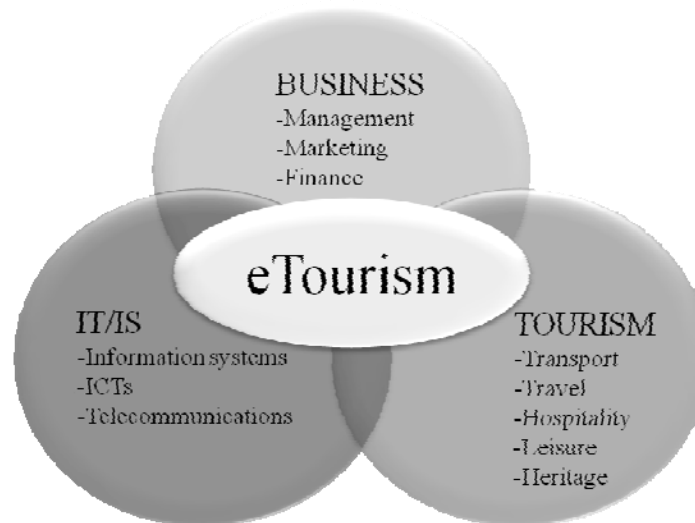
(Figure 8 - eTourism Domain, adapted from Buhalis, 2003)

ICTs, and especially the web, are increasing their importance in the field of tourism. Tourism is a very information-intensive activity (Gretzel et al., 2000). As a matter of fact, "In few other areas of activity are the generation, gathering, processing application and communication of the information as important for day-to-day operations as they are for travel and tourism industry" (Poon, 1993). Furthermore, as stated by Buhalis in 2003, the continuous development of ICTs during the last decade has had profound implications for the whole tourism industry; as a noteworthy example, during the last few years both the way of purchasing tourism goods and the way by which tourists gather information and comment on the travel experienc, have been changing. In general terms, it is possible to argue that on one side, the importance of new technologies in the tourism industry is due to the purchase process (Werthner and Klein, 1999). One example on this side are flight companies (Buhalis 2004) and hotels (O'Connor and Frew, 2004); on the other side, a number of studies regarding communication and promotion of tourism goods are appearing; thus, as stated in 1997 by Sheldon, communications and information transmission tools are indispensable to global marketing of the tourism industry (Sheldon 1997).

Destination Management Organizations and Destination Management Systems

The Internet has dramatically changed the interaction between tourists and tourism destinations. It has become the primary way used by DMOs to communicate with prospective tourists. During the last few years both the ways of purchasing tourism goods (Werthner and Klein, 1999) and the ways by which tourists gather information

(Buhalis, 2003) and comment on their travel experience (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008), have been dramatically (Sheldon 1997). As a matter of fact, the recent ICT developments have enormous implications for the operation, structure and strategy of tourism organization (Buhalis, 2004).

According to Choi, Letho and O'Leary, official destinations websites provide information for tourists promoting and marketing the country (state/province/region) image (Choi et al., 2007). Destination Management Organizations (in short DMOs) are vigorously working on their online communication, aggregating different kinds of functionalities to support visitors in their pre-decision stage, offering accommodation information, flights, weather forecasts, maps and attractions information; after the decision has been made, visitors do refer to more specific web sites (Choi et al., 2007).

Destination Management Organizations usually operate on the internet with a management system called Destination Management System (in short DMS). There are few conceptualization of the systems used by destination in order to manage their online presence and marketing (Chen and Sheldon, 1997; Buhalis and Spada, 2000; Buhalis, 2003; Daniele and Frew, 2008). Some of the keywords adopted for defining a DMS are: information system, distribution channel, strategic management system or an inter-organizational information system (Bedar et al., 2008).

Destination Management Systems operate as hubs connecting internal resources of the destinations with external ones (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009), stressing the marketing role of the destination toward the tourists. Destination Management Systems arose in early 1990's (Archdale et al., 1992). They are defined as complex systems that facilitate the management of a wide range of requests from different users and stakeholders of a DMO (Buhalis, 2003); thus, ICTs enrich the accessibility of a vast amount of information (in terms of quantity and quality) presenting options, costs and experiences to tourists (Sheldon 1993).

What is clear is that DMO are using the ICTs, and especially the internet, to facilitate the tourists experience before, during and after the visit (Gretzel et. al. 2006) as well as coordinate all the partners and industries involved in the production and delivery of tourism goods. This is due to the fact that internet has become a preferred channel for destinations to market themselves and their products on a global level: particularly, Destination Management Systems are very important for the small and medium size tourism enterprises (SMTEs) lacking the capital and expertise to undertake a comprehensive marketing strategy, which relies upon destination authorities and intermediaries for the promotion and coordination of their products (Frew and O'Connor, 1999; WTO, 2001; Marcussen, 2008)

DMS's have been widely investigated during the last decade: Kaplanidou and Vogt in 2006 identified three major characteristics shaping the usefulness of DMS: (i) content, (ii) navigation and (iii) accessibility. (Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2006). While in the 2007

Park and Gretzel screening more than 150 published papers (January 1997 – September 2006) identified nine success factors for a DMS: (i) information quality, (ii) ease of use, (iii) responsiveness, (iv) security/privacy, (v) visual appearance, (vi) trust, (vii) interactivity, (viii) personalization and (ix) fulfilment (Park and Gretzel, 2007). Rita (2000) argues that from a managerial perspective, DMS should assist DMO within three major functions: information provision, marketing and promotion activities, and market research (Rita, 2000).

Recently, Wang (2008) stressed the importance of DMS's for DMO's marketing strategies. In his review of the relevant works in the field he stressed 4 key areas that should be taken into account while marketing the destination through the internet:

- The website should serve the needs and interest of major target groups (Angehrn,1997; Sigala, 2003b).
- The development of the website should be coupled with a strategic promotional plan targeted at the site's audience to gather and attract large amount of visitors (Hanson, 2000; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004).
- Website performance and quality should be assessed by DMO's in order to understand to what extent the website is working (Sweeney, 2000; Inversini and Cantoni, 2009).
- Online marketing should have a positive impact, such as cost reduction through savings on printed materials and on the use of call centres (Sigala et al., 2004; Chathoth, 2007).

Thus, from this analysis, Wang (2008) argues that the successful development and management of a DMS require the following critical factors: (i) website function design; (ii) website promotion; (iii) website performance measurement; (iv) Web marketing impact assessment; and (v) organization technology environment (Wang, 2008).

The conceptualization of the online tourism domain

Destinations' online communication is placed in an online competitive environment (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006); this online environment has been recently defined by Xiang, Wober and Fesenmaier (2008) as the online tourism domain.

In 1977, Schmoll presented a model for describing tourism behaviours based on Howard and Sheth (1969) and Nicosia (1966). According to Schmoll, the decision to travel is the result of a distinct process involving: (i) travel stimuli, (ii) personal determinants, (iii) external variables and (iv) destination characteristics. In the model there are some activities underpinning tourist behaviour: (i) travel desires, (ii) information search, (iii) assessment/comparison of travel alternatives and (iv) decision (Cooper et al. 1998). Successively, Pan and Fesenmaier (Pan and Fesenmaier, 2007) argued that the tourist

planning process and information search on the Internet can be viewed as an interaction among (1) the tourist, (2) the interface and (3) the online space (figure 1).
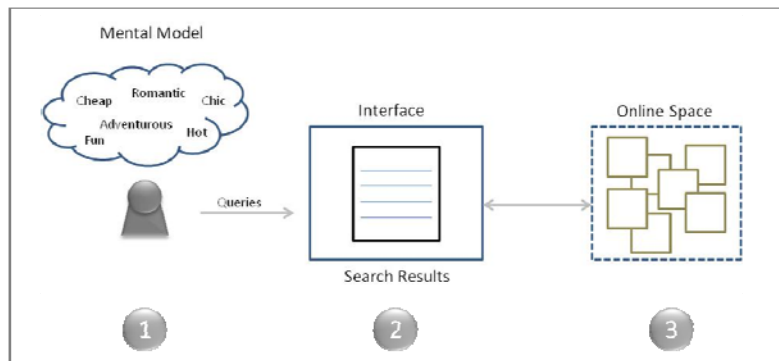
(Figure 9 - Tourism Online domain, adapted from Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006; Xiang et al., 2008)

In recent years, several studies extended and refined this model, adding interesting concepts such as the mental models (Figure 9). A mental model is the travellers' perception and representation of the information s/he is looking for (i.e. destination). Recently, Kim and Fesenmaier (2007) integrated the mental model (as the first step of search activity) in a global four-stage model to describe tourists' use of the internet for trip planning.

Grounded on the importance of the search engines (element 2 figure 9) as instruments to access the information and namely the tourism information, and also on the importance of users and their mental models (element 1 in figure 9) which defines keyword used for querying search engines, the aspect that has to be thoroughly investigated is the third element of the above figure: the online space (element 3, figure 9).

A recent study from Xiang, Wober and Fesenmaier (2008), tried to define the "online tourism domain" accessible via search engines: based on previous works from Pan and Fesenmaier (2006) and Xiang (2007), a recent study from the authors conceptualized and defined the so-called online tourism domain as it could be accessed from the users' preferred gate to the internet, namely, search engines.
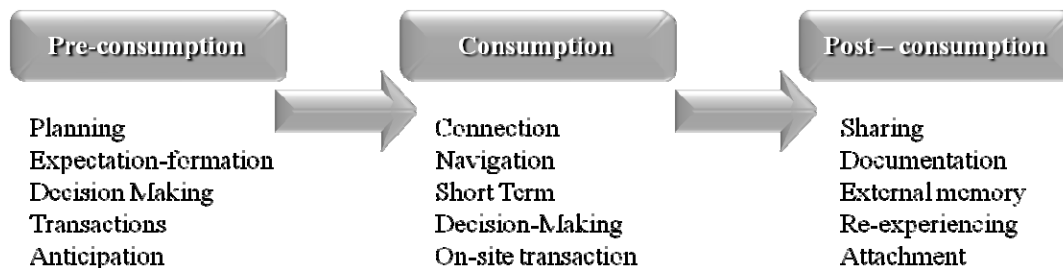
The online tourism domain conceptualization is based upon four different perspectives:

1. the tourism industry perspective;
2. the tourism symbolic representation perspective;
3. the travel behaviour perspective;
4. the travel information search perspective.

Xiang et al. (2008) underlined that only a tiny part of pages indexed by the popular (and commercial) search engine Google are indeed accessible for users; among these pages some websites (domain duplicates) are dominating the results.

Users' Behaviours in Tourism

The role of the user is very important for the tourism domain. Due to the "information intensive" nature of the tourism field (Sheldon, 1997), tourists seem to be a special category of users who continuously need information. If we assume that there are three main periods during the tourism goods consumption, according to Gretzel, Fesenmaier and O'Leary (2006), we can summarize the needs of communication technologies for a tourist (figure 10).

Pre-consumption	Consumption	Post – consumption
Planning	Connection	Sharing
Expectation-formation	Navigation	Documentation
Decision Making	Short Term	External memory
Transactions	Decision-Making	Re-experiencing
Anticipation	On-site transaction	Attachment

(Figure 10 – Technological information needs during the tourism goods consumption, adapted from Gretzel et al., 2006)

What is interesting in this model is the fact that the study maps all the possible users' technological needs within the three stages of consumption. Travellers increasingle use Information and Communication Technologies throughout all phases of their trip, starting with information search and booking before the trip; next, mobile technologies, hand –held devices used in museums, interactive kiosks and internet access provided by Internet cafés or accommodation establishments enable technology use while *en route*. Personal websites, virtual communities, email newsletter, blogs etc. create opportunities to remember and re-experience trips after their completion (Gretzel et al., 2006).

Although not all the information search corresponds to a visit or an intention to visit the destination (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998), a constantly growing body of literature (Choi, et al, 2007) focuses on tourists' behaviour while searching for online information and planning tourism experience. (Gursoy and McCleary, 2004; Pan and Fesenmaier, 2006; Pan and Fesenmaier, 2000; Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Messmer and Johnson,1993; Woodside, 1990). The travel information search is one of the most important activities in tourism and the Internet is becoming one the most important sources for tourism information acquisition (Pan and Fesenemaier, 2006). Tourists are often overwhelmed by the huge amount of information available on the web and cannot locate what they are looking for (Pan and Fesenemaier, 2000).

In 2004, Jang underlined that despite the abundance of literature on search and decision-making, insufficient research attention has been paid to online consumer search behaviour in the travel and tourism field (Jang, 2004).

2.3 Cultural Tourism and Technology

Towards a definition of Cultural Tourism

If it is quite complicated to define the concept of "tourism", finding a proper definition for the construct of "cultural tourism" is even harder. To conceptualize cultural tourism, a new layer of complexity should be added to the tourism chain: the heritage and cultural attractions and their management. Starting form this point, two main positions on the study of cultural tourism have arisen in the past years.

Some authors, such as McKercher (2002), underline the importance of dealing with cultural tourism in terms of a different kind of products category (as it has been recognized since 1970's) (McKercher, 2002).

Some other authors (Yale, 1991; Garrod and Fyall, 2000; Poria et al., 2001) consider heritage tourism as a subgroup of tourism industries. Cultural tourism can be considered as a tourism activity centered upon what has been inherited, which could mean anything from historic buildings to art works to beautiful scenery (Yale, 1991; Garrod and Fyall, 2000). Further, Poria et al. in 2001, stated that heritage tourism is a phenomenon based on tourists' motivation and perceptions rather than on specific site attributes. These authors classified heritage tourism as a sub group of tourism, in which the main motivation for visiting a site is based on the place's heritage characteristics according to the tourists' perceptions of their own heritage (Poria et al., 2001).

Besides, Mc Kercher and du Cross (2002) defined cultural heritage tourism as the interplay between tourism, the use of cultural heritage assets, the consumption of experiences and products, and the tourist (Mc Kercher and du Cross, 2002); in 2004, the same authors specifically highlighted the importance of the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage management (Mc Kercher and Du Cross, 2004). As underlined by Andries Van der Ark and Richards in 2005, cultural tourism is constantly evolving, and its importance is constantly growing; culture has thus become a major driving force of the urban tourism system.

This study will use the definition by Mc Kerkner and du Cross, borrowing a little from the one given by Yale, such that we define cultural tourism as the interplay between tourism, the use of cultural heritage assets, the consumption of experiences and products, and the tourist (Mc Kercher and du Cross, 2002), where cultural assets could encompass anything from historic buildings, to art works to beautiful scenery (Yale, 1991).

To complete this definition, one can consider the classification of heritage tourism experiences put forth by Timothy (Timothy, 1997 – Figure 11), who underlines that there are four levels of heritage experiences, namely the local heritage, the personal heritage, the national heritage and the world heritage (Swarbrooke, 1994).

(Figure 11 - Levels of Heritage Tourism Attractions. Adapted from Timothy 1997)

- The national heritage is the heritage that "symbolized a society [of] shared recollections" (Lowenthal, 1975). This kind of attraction may generate strong feelings of patriotism.
- The world heritage refers to the world scale heritage attractions that draw a large mass of tourism from many countries. Timothy (Timothy, 2003) also underlines that for most of the foreign tourists, this kind of heritage is likely to be a part of a more extensive itinerary.
- The local heritage is the heritage of the local communities. Is the kind of heritage (churches, houses, local museums etc.) that would never be qualified for preservations grants, but it is very important for the community to be in touch with their collective past in a rapidly changing society (Lowenthal, 1975).
- The Personal heritage, among the above different kinds of heritage quoted above, has been less investigated and understood. Personal heritage refers to the personal feelings of people who possess emotional connections to a particular place. One example given by Timothy (Timothy, 1997; Timothy, 2003) regards genealogical libraries: more and more often people are claiming their personal roots to support personal identities.

Users' perspective in cultural tourism

Some interesting studies have been conducted on the cultural attractions (and its management) and on cultural tourists as a different typology of tourists. In the following paragraphs, some approaches describing these subjects are presented.

According to McKercher 2002, it is possible to create a classification (figure 12) of cultural tourists based basically on two main parameters: (i) centrality of the cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination and (ii) depth of the experience.

(i)   Centrality of the cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination basically deals with the desire of engaging in cultural tourism activities.

(ii)   Depth of the experience deals with the ability and the desire of the tourist to engage in the cultural attractions. It can be seen as the level of engagement with the cultural attraction.
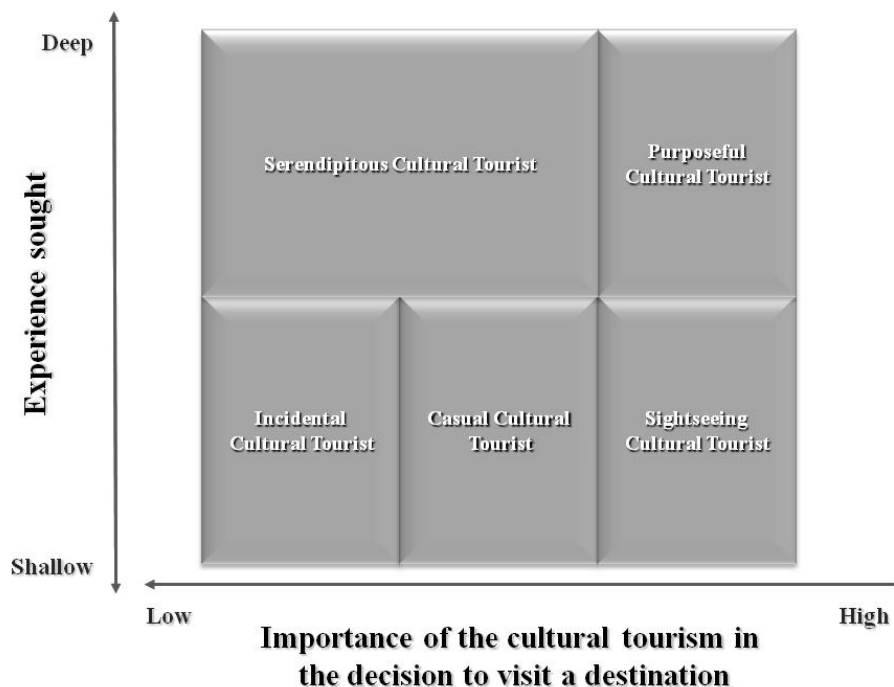
(Figure 12 – type of cultural tourism visitors, adapted from McKercher 2002)

This model by McKercher characterizes five different kinds of cultural tourists according to the two given parameters. This model can be applied also to online environments, and it can be useful to segment users of cultural tourism applications.

New Media in Cultural Tourism Communication

The relationship between information and communication technologies and cultural tourism has been always investigated into two different ways. On one side, cultural tourism has been considered just as an element within the online tourism communication

field. This is highlighted by Choi, Lehto and O'Leary (2007), who consider culture only as one of the many information content types in DMO web site.

On the other side, several studies devoted only to cultural tourism and technologies must be highlighted. In 2003, Sigala recognized the importance of the ICT and internet evolution also in cultural tourism; in her work, Sigala underlines the fact that the ICTs and internet evolution have been instrumental in transforming the production, interpretation, exchange, marketing and consumption of cultural services, as well as in managing visitors' experience and behaviour (Sigala, 2003).

Recently, Goulding (Goulding, 2000) proposed a holistic framework indicating that the following factors influence the visitors' behaviour: (i) social factors (e.g. cultural identification, social interaction), (ii) cognitive factors (e.g. creation of mindful activities, involvement and engagement, perceived authenticity) and (iii) environmental aspects (e.g. scene setting, routing and mapping etc.). As observed by Sigala and Laslie in 2005, the recent evolution of the internet can effectively foster the factors highlighted by Goulding by enhancing the social (e.g. community), cognitive (e.g. eLearning, authentic experience making) and environmental space of heritage-cultural visitors (Sigala and Laslie, 2005).

ICTs and Heritage interpretation

These innovation features of ICTs concur to create the visitors' experience and enable the interaction of all four elements (Figure 13); thus, the heritage experience is defined by the experience of a specific visitor at a specific point in time and in space in the context of a specific event (Sigala and Laslie, 2005).
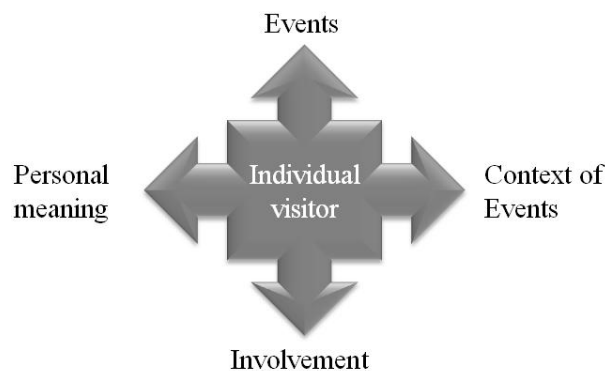
(Figure 13 - Visitors' experience, adapted from Sigala and Laslie, 2005)

As underlined by Stam and Solina, ICTs affect all functions of cultural organizations including conservation, exhibition, marketing and administration (Stam, 1992; Solima, 1998). Further, cultural heritage must be provided with a meaning in order to acquire and exchange value (Mitsche et al. 2008). This meaning is not merely related to the

information about the physical attributes of the exhibited artefact, but also to the associated historical and cultural aspects, requires some kind of knowledge transfer (e.g. teaching, learning) to enable visitors to deeply appreciate the site or the work of art (Harvey, 2001). This kind of knowledge transfer is called "heritage interpretation" (Copeland and Delmaire, 2004; Sigala, 2005).

ICTs and the web are enabling this kind of knowledge transfer, allowing the transfer of information from remote locations, which then helps heritage operators take control of the information their visitors obtain before, during and after their visits (Mitsche et al. 2008; Reino et al., 2007).

2.4 Recent trends in online communication

Recent trends in tourism online communication: web2.0

As mentioned above, the World Wide Web is growing fast: thousand of players are entering the information market every day. Recent studies demonstrate that in Europe the numbers of firms connected to the internet is constantly increasing (eBusiness Watch 2006), as is the number of users: as stated by internetworldstats.com, the world internet usage growth in the period 2000-2007 has reached 265.6%. Every conceivable kind of information, resources etc. is just a click away from the users' computer screens; this means that the geographical and cultural boundaries are no longer an obstacle for the global communication and for global commerce. Recent studies (Cilibrasi and Vitany, 2007) stated that to date (2007), the total number of web pages indexed by Google is approaching the dramatic number of 10^{10}. This vast amount of web documents come both from official sources and non official sources (Anderson, 2004). Despite this fact, websites (official and non-official) are competing to reach the end user, trying to satisfy her/his specific information needs.

World Wide Web is now facing its first (r)evolution: Web2.0. This term has been introduced by Tim O'Reilly in 2005 (O'Reilly, 2005) and indicates a "second generation of web-based communities and hosted services […] which aim to facilitate collaboration and sharing between users". In this "read/write web" the end user has become not only the information consumer, [but] indeed, the information player (Nicholas et al., 2007) and provider; information does not go in only one direction, from the web site to the user, but also from the user to the website, and made available for all other users.

In 2004, Chris Anderson introduced the concept of Long Tail (Anderson, C. 2004, and 2006): institutional websites, and official websites of organizations comprised 20% of the public web sites on the Internet; blogs, social networks and small web sites represent 80%. First, in the article (2004) and then in the book (2006), Anderson underlines some basic concepts that contribute to understanding the shape of the actual World Wide Web; for example the author highlights that the Long Tail includes virtually everything

imaginable: the information is present but spread in a galaxy of small websites, blogs, and communities. The main related issue is how to find the needed information.

Besides the official and institutional websites, it is possible nowadays to find on the World Wide Web mainly two type of websites: the web1.0 websites – web pages of services, business etc. presenting their business, maybe selling a product or integrating business process (Cantoni and Di Blas, 2002) - and web2.0 website. Web2.0 websites are defined as social web sites because, in contrast to web1.0, its contents can be more easily generated and published by users (Boulos and Wheelert, 2007).

One interesting definition of web2.0 has been recently given by Cantoni and Tardini (2009): they claim that the term web2.0 suggests a new version of the web (advanced and stable – from the field of software development), but in reality web2.0 does not provide any new protocol or completely new technologies (although a range of related technologies has been developed around it, like Ajax). It represents mainly a different use of the web itself, characterized by different expectations, goals and practices (Kolbitsch and Maurer, 2006). Three core elements may be listed here:

1. A further enlargement of the number of people publishing online (UGC – User Generated Content); the web has lowered the publication threshold, making it possible for everybody with a little technical competence to publish online. Indeed, new applications and services are making this even more simple, not requiring any programming skill, nor – in some cases – the mediation of a computer (a telephone can be sufficient).

2. The web is interpreted and approached more like a town square than a library, transforming into a public place where people go to meet, to share and discuss knowledge.

3. Closely related to the previous elements, Web 2.0 is fulfilling the multimedia promises of the web; in fact, the web can be considered as a huge hypertext/ medium, but – in reality – it has been for years more like a low-quality book: lots of texts and some images. The availability of large bandwidth connections makes possible a wider use of multimedia, leading to good quality (Cantoni and Tardini, 2009).

One example of these web2.0 applications are web-logs (blogs). Originally born as writing tools to help users keep track of their own records, blogs quickly turned into a key part of online culture (Hsu and Lin, 2008). According to David Sirfy (2007), the blogosphere – the vast, dynamic complex network of blogs (Xiaolin et al., 2007) is now composed of more than seventy million blogs; 120.000 new blogs are created every day; additionally, 1.5 million posts are published per day (Thevenot, 2007). Blogs have become a new and significant source of information (Hsu and Lin, 2008), but they are only one of the examples of the huge amount of actual information sources on the internet.

Rapidly rising in prominence is the concept of information overload (Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, 1975, Jones et al., 2004) by which an individual cannot process all the communication inputs, leading to breakdown. Moreover, the concept of information entropy (Hiltz and Turoff, 1985) underlines the need for incoming messages to be organized in order to be recognized as significant. It follows that, from one side, Internet users are overloaded by information (official or non official) and the main challenge both for the users themselves, and for the internet devices that allow the access to these information – namely the search engines - is to manage the information.

Xiang et al. (2008) underlined that only a tiny part of pages indexed by the popular (and commercial) search engine Google are indeed accessible for users; among these pages a number of websites (domain duplicates) are dominating the results. Recently a study by Xiang and Gretzel (2009) described the presence of User Generated Contents (in short UGC) within the online tourism domain. The study describes the results of ten different searches performed with the popular search engine Google in nine US cities. The relevant results for each query were the ones contained in the first ten pages (10,383 results). The findings demonstrated that there is a great amount of User Generated Content populating the organic results of the popular search engine Google: 11% of the search results are social media, distributed in the following categories: virtual communities 40%, review sites 27%, blogs 15%, networking site 9%, media sharing 7%, others 2%. One other interesting finding regards the fact that different keywords generate different social media (e.g. nightlife is very social media friendly) (Xiang and Gretzel, 2009).

This study also demonstrated that social media are gaining substantial popularity within the online tourism domain (Gretzel, 2006; Pan et al., 2007). These studies do not analyze the messages conveyed by these websites, but simply assess their presence in the online travel domain. However, since social media were created and used for the purpose of sharing personal experiences, thoughts and feelings, they represent a mixture of fact and opinion, impression and sentiment, founded and unfounded tidbits, experiences, and even rumor (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2006).

Marketing managers and researchers are exploiting new ways to adopt social media in the marketing and promotion arena: the term often used is "electronic word-of-mouth", describing the impact of such media content (Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan, 2008). Schmallegger & Carson (2008) suggested that the strategy of using blogs as an information channel encompasses communication, promotion, product distribution, management, and research. Recently, in the tourism field, some hotel chains and destination management organization websites are incorporating UGC as part of their site contents (e.g. Sheraton.com and visitlondon.com).

In summary, the Internet arena is populated by a variety of information competitors (Cantoni et al., 2007; Inversini and Buhalis, 2009), which present information with different forms and strategies; they compete with official websites to attract the end-user's attention (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009).

Other authors propose viewing UGC websites as an aggregation of online feedback mechanisms, which use Internet bidirectional communication to share opinions about a wide range of topics such as products, services and events (Dellarocas, 2003), creating a network of digitized word-of-mouth (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). The aggregation of the entire range of online representations creates the web reputation of organizations (Dellarocas, 2003 and 2005; Bolton et al., 2004). Managing the increasingly diverse range of sites and contents that build the web reputation requires a cross-disciplinary approach, incorporatings ideas from marketing, social psychology, economics and decision-making science (Malaga, 2001).

03.

Research Design & Methodology

<u>Chapter Summary</u>

This chapter outlines the overall research design.

First the research objective, research questions and the research hypotheses are presented, then a comprehensive methodology used to tackle these issues is discussed. Moreover, the chapter also offers a wide overview on each method used within the research in order to get a clear understanding of the overall study.

Methods are presented here with references to other works of the author and to works of other scholars in the field, representing a comprehensive methodology-- both quantitative and qualitative-- to analyze and describe online communication issues.

3.1 Research Objectives and Research Questions

The main research objective is to understand and describe the specific characteristics of cultural destinations' online communication.

As described in the introduction and in the literature review, cultural destination online communication should be considered as an *unicum* because it reflects not only the needs and the peculiarity of tourism industry communication but, as stated by Inversini and Cantoni (2009), tourism assets and cultural heritage assets. These should be harmonically represented online, giving the end user a clear understanding of the destination and its cultural attractions.

Mangers of destination management organizations should take into account the specific communication needs of cultural destinations, dealing with cultural assets as a key value for the destination, and using it also as marketing strength online. Thus, the interplay described by Mc Kercher and Du Cross (2002) between tourism, the use of cultural heritage assets, the consumption of experience and products, and the tourists, should be realized also in online communication.

Starting from the main objective of the research and from the simplified model of Jakobson presented in the previous chapters, four areas of interests have been found, and for each area, research questions have been formulated.

Three different areas of interests have then been recognized, and for each area – message, addresser and addressee, research questions have been formulated.

(Area 1) Message

- RQ$_1$: which kind of messages (in terms of contents and functionalities) are cultural destinations websites transmitting?
    - ○ RQ$_{1.1}$: are there any differences (in terms of contents and functionalities) in the type of messages between general destination websites and cultural ones?
    - ○ RQ$_{1.2}$: what is the overall quality of the message?

(Area 2) Addresser

- RQ$_2$: what is the addresser perception of the message?
    - ○ RQ$_{2.1}$: are there any differences in the addresser perception of message between general tourism websites and cultural ones?

- RQ$_3$: who are the addressees of online cultural destinations' websites?
  - o RQ$_{3.1}$: what are the contents in which communications' addressees are mostly interested?
  - o RQ$_{3.2}$: is the official destination website the only source of information for addressees where the message is presented online?

3.2 Research Hypotheses

Grounded on the above outlined research questions, a set of research hypotheses have been designed in order to better define the research area:

Cultural assets should be managed together with other tourism assets (Mc Kercher, 2002), and harmonically presented online (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009). The message should be clear in order to promote the destination as a cultural place.

- *Hp1: There is a difference within the online message between cultural destinations and leisure destinations* [related to RQ1].

Second, cultural publics should be different from leisure publics: as underlined by Mc Kercher in 2002, the importance of cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination is basically related to the type of tourists (i.e. purposeful cultural tourist and sightseeing cultural tourist): in our case, transferring this model online, there should be differences in terms of website content design.

- *Hp2: There is a difference in terms of publics in online communication between cultural tourism destinations and leisure destinations [related to RQ3 and RQ2].*

Destination managers and online communication managers should also care about information (and website quality) Quality can indeed be seen as one major driver for tourism websites, because they are entrusted by local attractions as intermediaries for marketing and visibility (Buhalis, 2003).

- *Hp3: Online communication quality issues are crucial for cultural destinations* [related to RQ1].

Finally, as the world wide web, and particularly the relevant market (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006) around a given website is composed by different information players (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009) or information competitors (Cantoni et al., 2007) which are spreading almost the same messages as the official websites, a detailed study of the different types of message is needed to identify peculiarities of the different information sources.

- *Hp4: Official DMO websites are marketing and communicating the destination in a factual way* [related to RQ3].

- *Hp5: Unofficial websites are marketing and communicating destinations in an emotional way* [related to RQ3].

3.3 Research Design

In order to tackle the objectives and research questions and to investigate the hypotheses presented above, a comprehensive methodology has been designed.

Two different strategies have been identified to analyze and describe on one side the general communication flows within the cultural destinations' online communication domain, and, on the other side, the very specific and peculiar characteristics of such a domain.

- At the macro level, leisure and cultural destinations have been described (i.e. from a manager perspective) thanks to an online survey; In order to distinguish leisure destinations from cultural ones, it has been decided to consider destinations which host UNESCO listed monuments (or attractions) as cultural ones. The aim of the survey is to investigate stakeholders' (and more specifically destination managers) perceptions of new media in tourism communication. The survey was sent to a given number of destination managers in three countries (namely Italy, Switzerland and England) in order to assess their perception of the online communication; questions were based upon the four pillar of the Website Communication Model (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006). starting from the work of Arasa (2007) who applied this model to investigate the technological communication practices in the catholic diocesan websites, the survey has been designed taking into account the five elements of the website communication model and the recent research in the field of ICT and tourism. The main purpose of the survey is to investigate possible divergences among cultural and leisure destinations in terms of online communication. Particularly the WCM offers a defined framework in which cluster the survey questions: (i) content and functionalities, (ii) interface and design, (iii) end users, (iv) website managers and (v) context; plus recent ICT and tourism related researches have been integrated (e.g. Gretzel et al., 2006; Inversini et al., 2009). The survey was submitted to a restricted number of destination managers from three different countries chosen in an opportunistic way (Switzerland, England and Italy).

- At the micro level, explorative case studies have been conducted to investigate the peculiarities of the domain thanks to (i) semi structured interviews, (ii) usability, (iii) usages studies and (iv) content analysis on official and "long tail" results (Anderson, 2004). Case studies moved from the online survey and cultural Destination Management Organization were occasionally defined within the three European target regions: (i) Bath, England; (ii) Bellinzona, Switzerland; and (iii) Ravenna,

Italy. These three case studies represent three examples on the continuum of the technologies adoption in the field of cultural tourism: Bath (UK) is strongly leveraging on the Internet as means of communication an transactions: Jasmine Simmons, head of the technology department of the DMO stated that Internet is one of the main communication channels for the city tourism thanks to the possibility of spreading information on tourism campaign (such as the shopping season or the Jane Austin thematic year) and thanks to the reservation system. Moreover, Baths DMS integrates all the attractions managers that may update and change the information about the attractions (e.g. opening hours schedule, special offers, and so on). Ravenna (IT) is discovering the potentiality of the online communication at the time of the case study (i.e. 2008/2009) and was facing the transaction to a modern reservation system for the hospitality structures of the city. Finally, Bellinzona (CH) leveraging on the importance of the city heritage (the castles of Bellinzona) is discovering the importance of being on the web and it is starting with some educational activities for schools trips. Therefore following the classification of Cantoni and Di Blas (2002 – ibidem, Chapter 2), these websites can be seen in a continuum of internet use: (i) Bellinzona DMO has the need have an online presence (i.e. to be there), (ii) Ravenna DMO is trying to integrate B2C services (such as the reservation system) to operate on the internet, while (iii) Bath is integrating not only the hospitality reservations systems but also attractions mangers and online marketing.

Figure 14 presents the analysis process in a nutshell. The first part of the study concentrate on the macro analysis of the cultural destinations' online communication thanks to the survey. The results of the survey have then been used as input for the next phase (case studies) to detect peculiarity within the specific communication strategies.
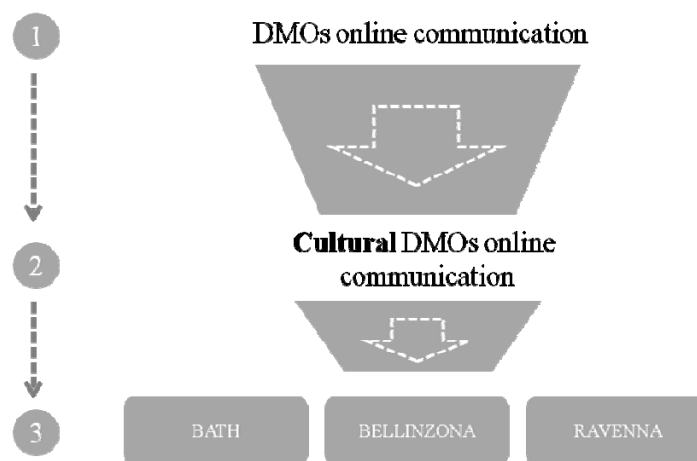
(Figure 14 - Cultural Destinations' Online Communication Analysis in a nutshell)

The website communication model (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006), has been used as the operational model within the case studies and for creating the survey. Thanks to its

flexible structure, WCM perfectly maps the communication model by Jakobson (1989), allowing shifting easily between the two models for the operative analysis.

3.3 Methods

The next paragraphs present the methods used during the whole research. Methods are here presented and discussed in detail in order to describe the complexity of the domain and the possibility to replicate the research. Evidences from previous experiences have also been included within the description of the methods.

Tourism website as communication means: the survey

Description: the survey has been sent to a given number of Destination Management Organizations across three different countries (i.e. Switzerland, England and Italy): respondents have been selected according to the following criteria:

- City promoted by the national DMO (i.e. Enit.it, MySwitzerland.com, VisitEngland.com)
- Biggest cities (region/cantons capitals)
- Cities which hosts UNESCO monuments

The survey was sent to 135 possible respondents. This was due mainly to two facts: (i) not all the cities had a dedicated website for tourism promotion, (ii) not all the websites had an active contact email.

The guiding model for the survey design has been the Website Communication Model (Cantoni & Tardini, 2006). Following the research of Arasa (2007) who applied the Website Communication Model to study the Churces Communication trought diocesan websites, the survey has been divided into 5 different blocks for a total of 20 quetsions (Arasa, 2007): blocks of the survey were: (i) demographic data; (ii) content and functionalities; (iii) interface; (iv) website users; (v) website managers (please refer to annex I).

Different theories and studies have been integrated within the survey:

- Users' behaviours and information needs (Gretzel et al., 2006)
- Precedents survey findings (e.g. Wang, 2008)
- Web Reputation and web2.0 perception (Inversini & Buhalis, 2009; Inversini et al., 2009; Inversini and Cantoni, forthcoming)

Goals: the goals of the survey were to (i) get a descriptive overview of new media in tourism communication within the above mentioned three countries as perceived by tourism managers; (ii) investigate the four WCM pillars trying to find practices and communication trends; (iii) describe the differences within leisure destinations and cultural destinations with respect to online communication.

The case studies: Website Communication Model in action

The website communication model has been widely presented in previous chapters. In order to explain how cases studies have been structured the Website Communication Model has been here deconstructed, and methods have been assigned to each pillar and to the fifth element. Figure 15 presents the four pillars (divided into things and people) and the context (fifth element) with the associated methods.
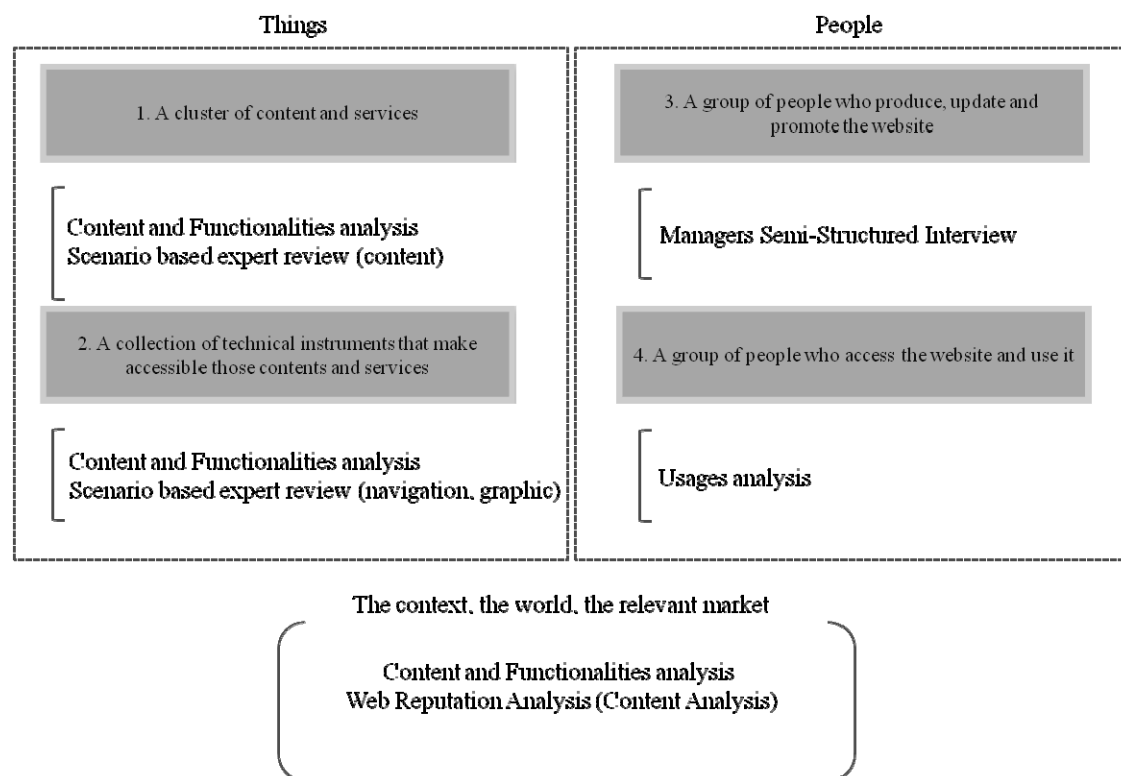

(Figure 15 – WCM in action: methods associated with WCM elements)

Contents and Functionalities analysis

Description: Content and Functionality analysis (in short CanF) has been extensively used by the researchers of Webatelier.net (www.webatelier.net – a laboratory of Università della Svizzera italiana) within their communication projects (e.g. Cantoni et

al., 2007). This method helps, through a narration technique (based both on the domain experience and on the literature), to map the majority of the content and functionalities of the website in a given domain.

One example of the narration (figure 16) for Destination Management Organization used also during teaching activities in Politecnico di Milano (Como) and Università della Svizzera italiana is: (i) there is a place, (ii) where you can go and stay, (iii) and enjoy doing something, (iv) in a given period of time. (v) That's me (the destination management organization) who is suggesting you to come. (vi) Here are the general services I offer to you (please refer to annex 2 for a comprehensive list of contents and functionalities).
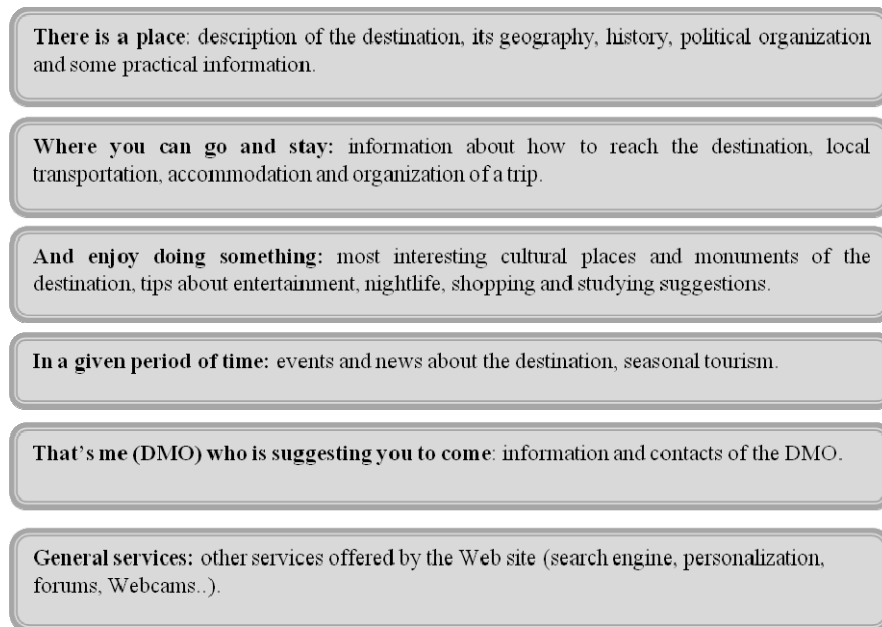
(Figure 16 - Content and Functionalities analysis, tourism website narrative)

The content and functionalities grid was developed during class activities with master students both in Como and Lugano (please refer to annex II). Students were requested to visit a certain number of websites (20+ per each student), collecting on different post-its all the types of contents and functionalities that they may encounter during the activity (figure 17). All the post-its were finally collected and divided by categories according to a narration (scenario). Thanks to this preliminary activity and to literature review on the specific domain characteristics, a grid of indicators was designed. One indicator is a single piece of content or functionality (e.g. for a museum web site: the timetable for the visits) given by a website; a piece of content or functionality to be chosen as indicator must be relevant both for the domain (e.g the museums online communication) and for the end users (Cantoni et al., 2007). Normally, indicators can have many instances in the same website (e.g. events).

(Figure 17 – the creation of the narrative on a white board)

Goal: content and functionalities will be used in this study mainly for two different purposes: (i) as a benchmark tool (WCM first pillar), (ii) as a context awareness tool (WCM fifth element).

Benchmarking tool: this method allows researchers to analyze and confront different websites coming from the same domain in terms of contents and functionalities. The assumption here is that the website which has more indicators is not the best website in the sample, but in terms of benchmarking it may represent one of the more interesting cases to be studied.

Context awareness tool: the context is a crucial issue when planning and designing a web site; it is also a crucial issue related to the "product" positioning within the marketplace. So, investigating the context in which a website is immersed may be interesting in order to find out the different approaches used by various Destination Management Organizations. Moreover, as in the web, everything is just a click away; therefore, having a clear understanding of where a given website is positioned, with respect to the other websites in the same domain, would also augment the stakeholders' awareness and commitment with the website.

Usability and Quality

Description: the main goal of usability evaluation is to detect the majority of the problems, obstacles and breakdowns for the user when interacting with a web application, the usability being "the effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction with which specified users can achieve specified goals in particular environments" (ISO 9241-11).

The method used within this study is MiLE+. MiLE+ evolved from a previous method called MiLE (Milano-Lugano Evaluation) (Bolchini and Garzotto, 2008; Triacca et al., 2005) and is the fruit of joint research performed by University of Lugano and

Politecnico of Milan. MiLE+ is not the sum of the already existing methods (i.e. usability inspection methods and empirical testing – presented in the literature, chapter 2); instead it is an experience-based usability evaluation framework for web applications that strikes a healthy balance between heuristic evaluation and task-driven techniques. MiLE+ introduces a new conceptual approach and several new tools (Triacca et al., 2005). It has been adopted in different domains such as cultural heritage (e.g. Speroni et. al., 2006), banking, ecommerce, and mostly in the eLearning field (Triacca et. al., 2004; Inversini et. al., 2006, Botturi et al., 2007). MiLE+ philosophy comes directly from the previously quoted ISO 9241 definition, where the context of use played a crucial role in the ways in which users achieve their goals and tasks ("effectively, with efficiency and satisfaction").

Before performing the usability evaluation with MiLE+, a crucial preliminary part is the usability kit creation. The usability kit (in short Ukit – please refer to annex 3) is a set of tools that enables the usability inspector to carry out the evaluation. Ukit consists of scenarios (user profiles, goals and tasks) and evaluation metrics (heuristics, user experience indicators) (Triacca et.al., 2005).

The components of the usability kit may vary from case to case: Ukits are application-independent (so that they can be adopted to analyze different websites) but domain-dependent (the focus on a certain domain such that the inspector could analyze different websites belonging to the same domain with the same usability kit). Different combinations of Ukit elements can lead to different usability inspections, which might be chosen by the inspector according to time and money constraints. Some examples are: (i) scenario-based user-experience evaluation, (ii) scenario-based heuristic evaluation, (iii) scenario-based user-testing.

The usability kit is always created thanks to the expert knowledge of the specific domain and, where possible, thanks to user focus groups and/or stakeholder interviews. In this study, the usability kit has been created thanks to a preliminary semi-structured interview with the website managers of each destination, and it has been validated and enhanced with a usages studies (please refer to annex 3).

Goals: the main goal of the usability and quality assessment was to verify the quality of the message in terms of (i) contents, (ii) navigation, (iii) graphic.

Usages analysis

Description: a usages analysis is one of the most interesting studies which could be performed on a website and can be performed even if there is no possibility of involving users during the usability analysis (Atterer et al., 2006). In general terms, log files are the traces left by the user while visiting the web site; this specific group of files are server side files that record users' activities while they are visiting the website.

A freeware program (namely Funnel Web Analyzer -http://www.quest.com) has been used for the analysis. Agents and visitors filters have been applied in order to exclude on one hand spiders and robots and on the other developers and internal visitors IP addresses.

Studying log files might seem to be engineering activity, but log files analysis could also give interesting information at a communicative level (Cantoni and Ceriani, 2007). One of the things for which log files are useful is the study of the users' paths along the website (Pitkow, 1997). In other words, log files track all users' activities and all clicks on the website. The aggregation of this information can help website managers understand the breakdown within the website design (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009).

From a communicative perspective, it could be argued that if usability analysis measures threats (or potentiality), usages analysis assesses the risk of these threats (or the objectivity). Let us consider this example: if usability analysis finds a breakdown as poor visualization of search results (threats), the usages analysis can tell the evaluator the exact number of users accessing website information through the internal search engine. As a result, the evaluator can understand whether the risk is low (e.g. 0.0001% users use the internal search engine) or high (e.g. 20% of the users use the internal search engine). This measurement could guide the intervention on the website redesign (or in this case the search results' optimization). In addition, log files helped in shaping the usability kit due to a detailed analysis of the real users' objectives and paths along the web site but also thanks to the real characteristics of actual users (e.g. OS, bandwidth, place of access, etc.). This concept has been recently investigated and assessed by the UsERA Model (User Experience Risk Assessment Model – Inversini et al., 2010); the model presents different constructs to measure the relationship among threats, resilience and vulnerability measuring them starting form usability and usages analysis results in order to let website managers to take informed decisions.

Goal: to study the actual visit to the destination website

Content analysis

Description: content analysis is the method used to investigate the information competitors of the destination (especially long tail websites). In order to analyze the content of the information competitors, a codebook and a code sheet have been created for this purpose (please refer to annex IV).

Actually, the content analysis focused on unofficial websites populating the so-called Online Tourism Domain (Xiang et al., 2008). In principle it was decided to follow the classification given by Inversini and Buhalis (2009) – which was mainly based on the study of Anderson (2004) - in order to define official and unofficial website within the online tourism domain:

- Official websites: refers to all official websites that appear in the search results. This category comprises the official destination website as well as other official websites such as the Universities, City Councils website, but also official hotel websites, official industry websites, etc.

- Unofficial websites: refers to all websites that are not official. They do not have an institutional mission related to the city or to the tourism organization. They are part of the so-called long tail and they do not have political or editorial rules to follow. Examples of these websites are: Wikipedia.org, Wikitravel.org, IgoUgo.com, Tripadvisor.com as well as simple personal websites.

During the development of the case studies, a further elaboration of this classification was needed: websites for analysis were found thanks to a given set of web searches (i.e. 9 web search activities per destination), with specific destination related keywords (from log files analysis). Given the complexity of the domain and the different results retrieved, it has been decided to follow one other classification (Inversini et al., Forthcoming).

Once unique results (i.e. single website occurrences) were isolated from all the results obtained from search engines, the problem of distinguishing between "official" and "unofficial" websites was evident (Anderson, 2006; Inversini and Buhalis 2009). Although the DMO's website could be clearly identified, the other players were indistinguishable making classifying them in the two categories quite subjective. The results were distinguished into two categories, which could map Anderson's proposal (2006):

- BMOW – *"Brick and mortar" organizations' websites*, including all players that are doing business also in the offline world. Most of these organizations were doing business long before the internet was developed.

- MOOWAI – *Mere online organizations' websites and individual websites*, including all individual websites – mainly blogs – and those organizations doing business (almost) exclusively online. These providers wouldn't be even conceivable without the info-structure provided by the internet.

BMOW were considered as being "official" websites in Anderson's proposal (2006). Examples of those include official and institutional websites (e.g. official destination websites), traditional tourism related business (e.g. car rental, hotels), traditional travel agents (e.g. Thomas Cook). In contrast, MOOWAI were considered as being the "unofficial" websites which host User Generated Contents (such as Wikipedia.org, Wikitravel.org, Facebook, IgoUgo.com, Tripadvisor.com) or personal websites (e.g. blogs).

The last created category was:

- Not Relevant (NR) / Not Working (NW) websites: these websites are not relevant for the tourism domain or landing pages are not working. Figure 18 shows the classification flow of the websites.

Figure 18 shows the process of classification of the websites using to a flow diagram.
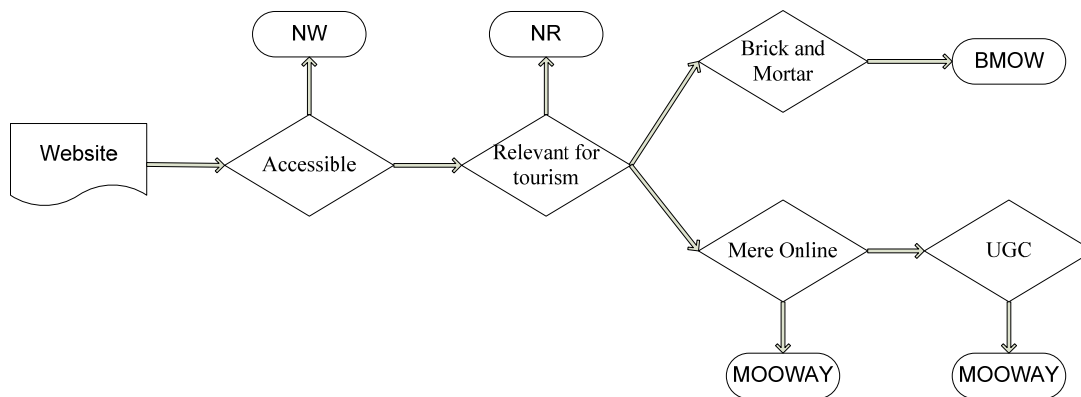
(Figure 18 – BMOW and MOOWAI websites classification flow)

Within each case study, log files (variable timeframe - 6-12 months) of the selected Destination Management Organizations website were analyzed in order to extract nine relevant keywords. This allowed the creation of a hypothetical environment with which web searchers are confronted while looking for relevant information about the given city (i.e. Bath, Bellinzona and Ravenna).

In each case study the nine most popular keywords used by real users to reach the destination website have been used to perform nine search activities on two of the most popular search engines, namely google.com and yahoo.com (Comescore, 2008). The first 3 results pages were considered useful for the study. Studies in this field sometimes concentrate on more than three pages of results (e.g. Xiang et al., 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, Forthcoming), but researchers decided to focus only on the first 30 results for each web search (normal search engine setting is 10 results per page) as they are considered relevant for end-users both from academia and from the industry (iProspect, 2006).

A codebook for reputation analysis was then created (please refer to annex IV). The codebook has been used as instrument for content analysis (Riffe et al., 1998), trying to describe the reputation of the destination based on the MOOWAI web sites. Unofficial websites (i.e. MOOWAY) have been chosen as targets for the analysis mainly for two reasons: (i) they are part of the so-called long tail (Anderson, 2006) and they host a

variety of information about different aspects of the destination, and (ii) they have no political or editorial rules to follow.

The topics, writing style and arguments of the MOOWAI websites have been compared to the retrieved results of official destination websites.

The codebook created for analysis was basically composed of two sections: (i) the first section concerns item (information unit) descriptions such as the medium, the type of website hosting which the item belongs to (Xiang and Gretzel, 2009), the item type, and its size and topic; (ii) the second section concerns the arguments used in the item as well as the value judgments and feelings expressed.

The information unit used for analysis is the item; the content analysis study does not consider all statements that appear in the websites but the overall content of the item or landing page (See Figure 19).

(Figure 19 - Content analysis example - Wikipedia.org – the information unit: item)

A second information unit was defined: sub-items are just a click away from the result page (item). Considering the example of a blog, the blog post would be the item for content analysis, while the comments of the post would be the sub-items.

Goals: the general goal of this method is to analyze the information competition in the tourism domain around a given destination; moreover this approach tries to make sense out of the vast amount of contents created in the so called web2.0, trying to shape and describe the web reputation.

The inter-coder reliability (Riffe et al., 1998) was checked after an extensive training with the coders (4 hours coaching), using the Fleiss Kappa method (Fleiss, 1971; Sim

and Wright, 2005) and the reliability result was 0.92. The training was important for two reasons: (i) the different background of the coders and (ii) the emotions-based codebook that gave significant freedom of interpretation to the coders.

04. Results

Results

<u>Chapter Introduction</u>

This chapter is devoted to the results of the research. First, the results of a online survey are used as introduction. Results cannot be generalized due to the high dropout rate, but it has been decided to use it to support the hypotheses and as input to case studies.

Then three cases studies from three different countries are proposed: (i) Bath (England), Ravenna (Italy) and Bellinzona (Switzerland). For each case study presented here, the following elements are included: a manager semi-structured interview as introduction, a content and functionalities study, a usability analysis (content, navigation and interface), a usage analysis and, finally, a destination and information competitors content analysis.

4.1 The online survey

To investigate destinations managers' perception of the online communication, a survey was sent to destination managers' in three different countries: Switzerland, Italy and England. The results provided a descriptive overview of the point of view of managers about online communication. Moreover, some differences among cultural destination websites and leisure destination website have been highlighted. This study labels as cultural destination the ones which host and promote UNESCO listed sites/attractions.

The survey measures destination managers' perceptions about the Website Communication Model; particularly (i) pillar one contents and services, (ii) pillar two interface and technical instruments, (iii) pillar three groups of people who produce, update, and promote the website, (iv) pillar four groups of people who use the website and access it. Finally (v) the fifth element is also analyzed: the context and the relevant market.

Due to the small population and to the low response rate (only 20% of the sample responded to the survey) no statistical inferences/generalizations can be drawn out of the data. Nevertheless, the survey still provides relevant insight to further the understanding of the subject matter.

4.1.1 Population and Sample

The population under investigation is composed of destination managers operating in three different countries (Switzerland, England, and Italy). Particular criteria for selecting the population are:

- Switzerland: City Breaks (MySwitzerland), Cantons' capitals, UNESCO cities, Regions.

- England: City Breaks (VisitEngland), Regions' capitals, UNESCO cities, Regions.

- Italy: City Breaks, (Enit.it), Regions' capitals, UNESCO Cities, Regions.

The population size can be estimated to be around 205. 70 of these tourism managers use no websites or other modalities of online communication. The population is therefore restricted to the remaining portion of professionals (N=135).

Reasons for the high dropout rate are different. At the general level it is possible to argue that managers could be poorly motivated to answer an online survey without any reward; nevertheless, some of the email addresses given on the website were not working, and

some websites were not updated, demonstrating a lack of accuracy. Attempts to maximize the response rate were accomplished via 3 reminders.

4.1.2 Results

Results were divided in two different sections. First, preliminary analysis on socio-demographic data are presented and discussed. Second, the most relevant results concerning content and functionalities, interface, website users and websites managers (see par. 3.3 in the methodology section) are outlined, alongside their relevance with respect to the research questions.

4.1.2.1 Demographic results

Respondents were classified into 4 macro categories:

- General Managers and Coordinators (n=5)

- Marketing and eMarketing (n=9)

- Web content managers (n=7)

- Web masters (n=6)

Average of working years within the institution: 3.67 years.

Respondents countries:

- England (n=4)

- Italy (n=10)

- Switzerland (n=13)

4.1.2.1 Website Communication Model

WCM - Pillar I: a cluster of contents and services.

Indicators of pillar I include: questions about content and service in particular type of the content (and its relevance) both from the point of view of managers and users.

Respondents were asked (Question 6) to judge the relevance of the contents proposed in their website. A Likert scale (1= not relevant to 5 = very relevant) was proposed to

measure the relevance of the contents within the website (table 1). Furthermore, respondents were asked to identify and list the downloads accessible from the website, (e.g. city maps, pictures and so on).

	Mean	Std. Dev
Place to Stay	4.4	1.1
Events	4.3	0.9
Attractions and Things To Do	4.11	1.2
News/What's on	3.63	1.36
Maps	3.63	1.21
City/Area Guide and Brochures	3.56	1.98
Destination Overview	3.52	1.28
Eating and Drinking	3.33	1.24
History and Culture	3.22	0.97
Photo Galleries, Videos, Reach Media	2.96	1.28
Internal Transportation	2.74	0.94
Suggested and Organized Tours	2.59	1.15
Online Shop	1.48	1.01
Online Tourists Experience	1.41	0.97

(Table 1 – WCM pillar I: relevant website contents)

Place to stay (i.e. accommodation) was rated as the most relevant together with events and attractions. These three types of contents refer to external (and sometimes not controllable) resources that the Destination Management Organization promotes online through the website.

For what concerns the possibility of downloading materials from the website, all respondents stated that the website presents this possibility, the most downloadable contents were: city/attraction guides   88.9%,   maps 74%,   pictures   70.4%   and Podcasts/Videos 63%.

WCM- Pillar II: Interface and Technical Instruments. A collection of technical instruments that makes accessible contents and services elicited in pillar I.

Respondents were asked to indicate who has designed the website and who is maintaining it (both technically and in terms of content update). Two possibilities were given (i.e. external agency and internal people).

Concerning the technical and graphical issues, destinations' managers are outsourcing the creation and technical administration of the website. External agencies are in charge for the development (both graphical and technical) while content editing and update is handled internally (Figure 20).
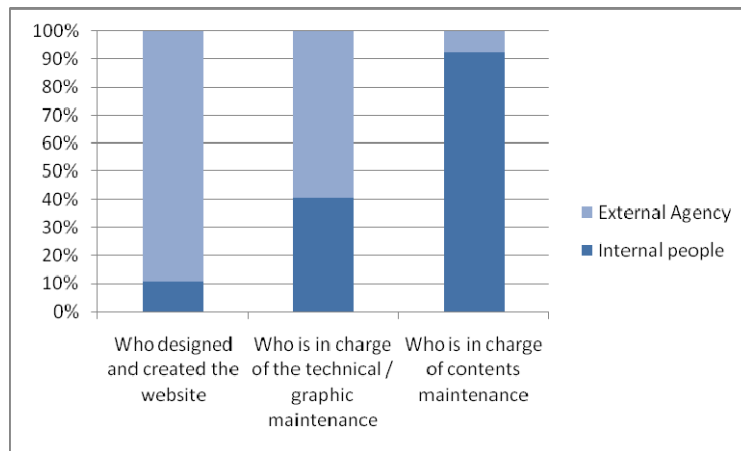
(Figure 20 – WCM Pillar II: interface and technical instrument development)

Destinations' managers are marketing the destination online. Most of the relevant contents refer to external resources (e.g. where to stay, events and attractions – refer to table 1); in such a scenario, not only the graphic design of the website but also the quality of the information become crucial: the DMO website is acting as a hub or a third party website (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009) creating a common and shared platform for stakeholders to market themselves and the destinations.

Content creation and upload as well as content and communication quality is then a internal issue. Furthermore, within this environment, online communication quality is then crucial. Question 9 was devoted to this issue: more than a half of respondents (55.6%) recognize the importance of quality tests and stated to have performed a quality test at least once.
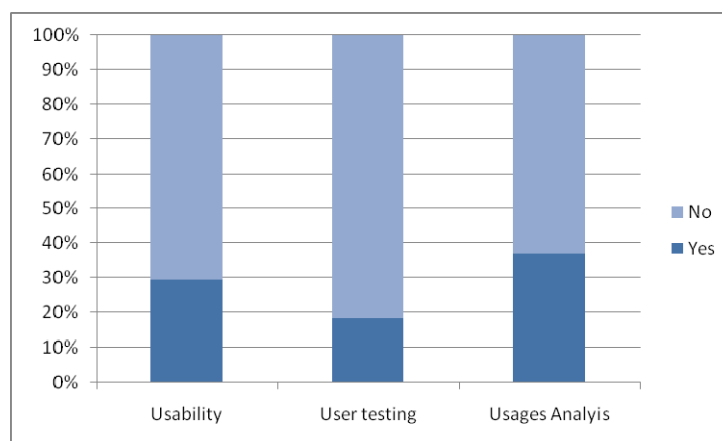
(Figure 21 – Quality tests performed on the website)

The most important quality assessment tool is usage analysis: 37% of the respondents declared to use/have used this technique for assessing quality of the website (figure 21).

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Indeed undergoing the analysis of usages offers important and interesting insights on the overall website performance. However, it returns only high level results, helpful to understand things such as main browsing paths, document download, main system errors, etc (Cantoni and Ceriani, 2007). Thus usages analysis should be coupled with other techniques (such as usability test and/or users testing) to assess real risks for the application (Inversini et al., 2010).

WCM - Pillar III and Pillar IV: a group of people who produce, update and promote the website (pillar III) and a group of people who uses the website and access it (pillar IV).

Administration (or back end – pillar III) was assessed by two questions: (Q15) how many people work on the website and (Q16) how you define the structural management of your website. Finally (Q17) assessed who is authorized to make decision about the web communication

Question Q15 concerned the number of people working on the back-end of the website: 81.5% of respondents declared that 2-5 people are involved in this activity. Question Q16 captured the nature of the decision making process: 74% of respondents stated to have a collective decision process. This kind of practice is usually performed by small groups (2-5 people). The other decision process (centralized) is used by only 26% of destination managers.

This is due to the fact that in most of the cases internal people do work on the website only for updating contents and for minor changes. Decisions on what to publish (Q17), and in some sense on the communication strategy, are made, for the most part , by a small group of people (figure 22) rather than by the destination manager (or everyone).
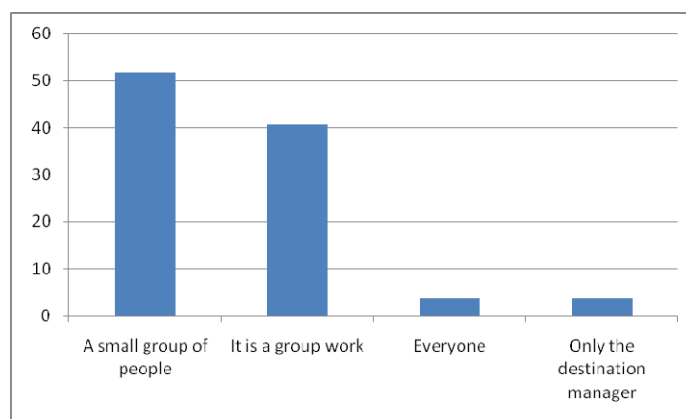
(Figure 22 – WCM pillar III - who makes decision about what to publish on the website)

As regards the website visitors, there is not a clear understanding of the kind of end users (pillar IV) of the destination website. This indicator was addressed by asking what kind of public the website is targeting (question Q11).

The most reported categories are represented by families and single tourists (Table 2). Young people, elderly and business tourist are less prioritized as preferred audience. Teachers and schools were surprisingly not a primary target public for the respondents' destinations.

	Mean	Std. Dev
Families	4.19	1.07
Single Tourists	4.11	1.12
Young People (18/30 years)	3.33	1.21
Elderly, retired people	3.33	1.36
Business Tourists	3.3	1.23
Teachers/ Schools	2.93	1.14

(Table 2 – WCM pillar IV - perception of tourism type)

WCM Element V: the context, the relevant market.

This issue was investigated focusing on web2.0 as a competitive market for the destinations (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009). Unofficial websites are spreading the same content as official players online; they somehow represent the information competitors in the online market for destinations. In order to focus on the specific aspects of web2.0, respondents were asked to rate the level of agreement (i.e. 1= do not agree at all to 5 = completely agree) to the following sentences (table 3).

	Mean	Std. Dev
Web2.0 is an increasingly important communication medium for tourism	4.11	0.97
I am planning to integrate some web2.0 features in my website	3.52	1.48
Many users of my website acquire information through other web2.0 websites	2.81	1.24
I am planning to let my website point to some external web2.0	2.74	1.35
Web2.0 is a *Nice to Have* communication medium	2.41	1.37
I have integrated some web2.0 features in my website	2.33	1.52
My website points to some external web2.0 sites	2.04	1.31
I do not care about web2.0	1.63	1.15

(Table 3 –WCM V element: web2.0 managers' perception I)

The importance of web2.0 is clearly demonstrated in the responses. Respondents acknowledge that "web2.0 is an important communication medium for tourism" (mean 4.11) and that they are thinking to integrate some web2.0 feature on their website" (mean 3.52).

Further, respondents assessed that what people are saying in the so called social web about their destination is interesting (mean 4.15), and they are also interested in what is said online about accommodations and services (mean 4.15).

	Mean	Std. Dev
Yes, what people are saying online is interesting	4.15	0.87
Yes, what people are saying online is interesting, we also care about our accommodations and services	4.15	0.82
I know it could be important but we do not pay attention to it	2.63	1.36
No, it is not important because our marketing is mostly offline	1.7	1.1

(Table 4 – WCM V element: web2.0 managers' perception II)

Eventually online reputation can be seen as an interpretation metric for web2.0 (Inversini et al., 2009). To assess this, respondents were asked to assess whether the concept of a "destinations' online reputation" was sound to them: 92.6% believe that it a reasonable concept.

4.1.2.1 Comparison between cultural destinations and leisure destinations

At the beginning of this chapter, it was emphasized that the survey's low response rate might lead to problems related to statistical power. However, some interesting inferences can shed light on the differences between two relevant indicators related to research questions. Especially two hypotheses have been tested (see Chapter 3):

Hp1: There is a difference within the online message between cultural destinations and leisure destinations.

Hp2: There is a difference in terms of publics in online communication between cultural tourism destinations and leisure destinations.

The next tables explore differences among the means in the Question 6 and Question 11 to explore (Q6) if there are possible differences in term of online messages between leisure and cultural destinations and (Q11) if there are possible differences in terms of publics of the two destinations.

A T-test for the equality of the means has been run (equal variance not assumed) to explore the significance values: due to the small population and to the numbers of respondents (n=27) only qualitative conclusions can be drawn. Interesting and commented values are labelled with (* – 95% significant) and (** – 90% significant).

Comparison between cultural and leisure destinations in terms of content relevance.

In the sample, UNESCO managers websites are stressing more the (i) destination overview, (ii) news and what's on, (iii) history and culture, (iv) suggested organized tours and (v) city and area guides and brochures. Leisure managers stress more (i) events, (ii) place to stay and (iii) attractions and things to do.

	UNESCO		Leisure		
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Sig
Destination Overview	4.4	0.94	3.32	1.29	0.05(*)
Place to Stay	4.6	0.55	4.36	1.17	0.51
Attractions and Things To Do	4.4	0.54	4.05	1.36	0.36
News/What's on	4.4	0.89	3.45	1.4	0.09(**)
Events	4.4	0.548	4.27	1.24	0.70
Eating and Drinking	3.6	1.34	3.27	1.24	0.63
History and Culture	4	1	3.05	0.89	0.10(**)
Suggested and Organized Tours	3.4	0.54	2.41	1.18	0.01(*)
Internal Transportation	2.8	1.09	2.73	0.93	0.89
Maps	3.8	1.3	3.59	1.22	0.75
Photo Galleries, Videos, Reach Media	3	0.7	2.95	1.39	0.91
City/Area Guide and Brochures	4.2	0.84	3.41	1.22	0.11
Online Tourists Experience	1.4	0.89	1.41	1	0.98
Online Shop	1	0	1.59	1	0.02(*)

(Table 5- Contents means differences between UNESCO websites and other websites)

The test on the equality of the means shows that within the sample, cultural and leisure distinction matters for: suggested and organized tours (*), destination overview (*) and online shop (*); also News (**) and History and Culture (**) show interesting results. Among the above quoted results, online shop seems not to be interesting for both destination types (mean 1 and 1.59).

The above mentioned results are not surprising considering the intrinsic nature and scope of the two categories of websites; leveraging on history and culture, cultural destination might enhance their online communication on the destination overview and on the connected topics such as organized tours, and news. Two other interesting topics such as attractions and things to do and events do not reach the same significance level.

Comparison between cultural and leisure destination in terms of target publics.

In the sample, UNESCO managers websites are stressing more (i) families, (ii) single tourists, (ii) young people and (ii) teachers and schools. Leisure managers' websites are stressing more (i) families, and (ii) elderly retired people, and (iii) business tourists.

	UNESCO		Leisure		
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Sig
Families	4.8	0.44	4.05	1.13	0.02(*)
Teachers/ Schools	4	1	2.68	1.04	0.03(*)
Young People (18/30 years)	4.2	0.84	3.14	1.2	0.04(*)
Single Tourists	4.6	0.55	4	1.2	0.11
Business Tourists	3.2	0.45	3.32	1.36	0.74
Elderly, retired people	3	1.41	3.41	1.37	0.57

(Table 6- Publics means differences between UNESCO websites and other websites)

The test on the equality of the mean shows that the two types of destinations target their communication to different publics. There is a significant difference for Families, teachers and schools and young people in how these groups are treated by DMO. Again, these results are not surprising considering the intrinsic nature and scope of the two categories of websites.

4.2 Case studies

The following paragraphs are devoted to three case studies of three cultural destinations, namely Bath (England), Ravenna (Italy) and Bellinzona (Switzerland).

These three case studies represent three examples on the continuum of the technologies adoption in the field of cultural tourism: Bath (UK) is strongly leveraging on the Internet as means of communication an transactions: Jasmine Simmons, head of the technology department of the DMO stated that Internet is one of the main communication channels for the city tourism thanks to the possibility of spreading information on tourism campaign (such as the shopping season or the Jane Austin thematic year) and thanks to the reservation system. Moreover, Baths DMS integrates all the attractions managers that may update and change the information about the attractions (e.g. opening hours schedule, special offers, and so on). Ravenna (IT) is discovering the potentiality of the online communication at the time of the case study (i.e. 2008/2009) and was facing the transaction to a modern reservation system for the hospitality structures of the city. Finally, Bellinzona (CH) leveraging on the importance of the city heritage (the castles of Bellinzona) is discovering the importance of being on the web and it is starting with some educational activities for schools trips. Therefore following the classification of Cantoni and Di Blas (2002 – ibidem, Chapter 2), these websites can be seen in a continuum of internet use: (i) Bellinzona DMO has the need have an online presence (i.e. to be there), (ii) Ravenna DMO is trying to integrate B2C services (such as the reservation system) to operate on the internet, while (iii) Bath is integrating not only the hospitality reservations systems but also attractions mangers and online marketing.

For each case study an (i) introduction is provided (interview with the manager of online communication), then (ii) a content and functionalities analysis to study the positioning of the website with respect of the other national competitors (in terms of presence or absence of a given content or functionality), (iii) a study on the quality of the information (usability and usages analysis) and (iv) a content analysis of the information competitors. These techniques map all the four pillars and the fifth element of the Website Communication Model, trying to deeply investigate the hints given by the survey presented above (please refer to figure 15, Chapter 3).

4.2.1 Visit Bath online manager's interview

Interview with Jasmine Simmons, Head of Online Strategies at Bath Tourism Plus.

Introduction to the website: the website visitabath.co.uk is managed by Bath Tourism Plus, which is an official part of the Council of the city of Bath. Bath Tourism Plus (BTP) is the official Destination Marketing Organization for Bath and the surrounding area. The company took over the management of tourism promotion from Bath & North East Somerset Council in October 2003. Bath Tourism Plus takes full responsibility for coordinating the work of a busy Tourist Information Centre (TIC), the marketing of Bath and the surrounding area to leisure and business travelers, public relations activity to attract the nation's top travel writers and overseas media, a conference and venues booking service, as well as the development of Bath's official tourism internet site,www.visitbath.co.uk. Important dates for the new website: (i) 2005 online accommodation booking (developed by NewMind - http://www.newmind.co.uk/) (ii) 2007 online shop (developed by British Telecom).

Most important sections on the websites: Bath Tourism Plus, should generate income to support the company, this slightly affects the areas of BTP work. The website as well as the company has a double role: (i) promote the destination and (ii) generate income for the sustainability. Bath Tourism Plus is not a "fully commercial" body, but it has a strong focus on the commercial activities (e.g. there is a small commission on the hotel reservation). Main incomes areas: online shop, hotel reservation plus, try to drive business to the tourists information center. What is proposed on VisitBath website, in general terms is different to what is published on other websites (e.g. the hotels are different from Tripadvisor.com). In order to appear on the website, business must be associated with the tourism board. Business receive the statistics of the visit to their page on visitbath.co.uk.

Type of Bath visitors: visitors comes to Bath because of the heritage, history and architecture.

Other activity coupled with the website: the web site is an on-line version of the tourists information office (TIC). It offers all the services given also by the TIC, as for example Bath visitor's card (discounts for restaurants and attractions). On site Bath TIC supports tourists,, provides guides (e.g. for shopping), and profiles the visitors. Other campaign have been created to mix online and offline communication: the Jane Austin Campaign (2007) and the Shopping Campaign (2008).

Other activities performed on the website after it has been launched: technicians constantly monitor the search engine positioning of the website on the natural raking. Recently (2007) the online shop section has been added to the website.

Integration of web2.0 instruments: web2.0 is seen as difficult instrument because Bath Tourism Plus has a commercial responsibility to the associated business and because it requires someone to manage it.

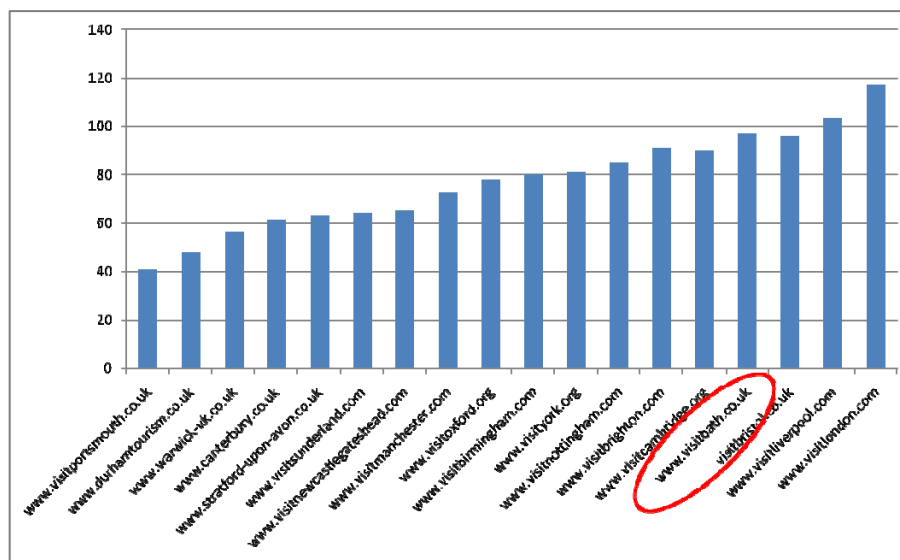## 4.2.2 Visit Bath content and functionalities analysis

In order to understand how the DMO website of Bath is positioned in its relevant market, a content and functionalities analysis among visitbath.co.uk and other destination websites has been performed. Content and functionalities analysis has been presented in the methodology section (Chapter 3) and is based on the list of indicators provided in annex two. Particularly Bath tourism has been confronted with the English suggested city breaks (listed on VisitEngland), Regions capitals and UNESCO cities.

The destinations used in this part of the study are:

|		
1. visitbirmingham.com	8. visitlondon.com	15. visityork.org
2. visitbrighton.com	9. visitmanchester.com	16. visitnottingham.com
3. visitbath.co.uk	10. visitnewcastlegateshead.com	17. visitsunderland.com
4. visitbristol.co.uk	11. visitoxford.org	18. durhamtourism.co.uk
5. visitcambridge.org	12. visitportsmouth.co.uk	19. chester.gov.uk
6. canterbury.co.uk	13. stratford-upon-avon.co.uk	20. hull.co.uk
7. visitliverpool.com	14. warwick-uk.co.uk	

Overall visitbath.co.uk ranking in the sample

The website of Bath Tourism Organization, has been confronted with the above quoted websites thanks to a content and functionality grid (annex 2). The grid was filled in November 2008. Among the 172 indicators and the 20 websites used as a sample, visitbath.co.uk ranked in 4th position with 97 indicators (figure 23).

(Figure 23 – VisitBath.co.uk, content and functionalities ranking)

Then visitbath.co.uk has been compared with the other websites in the sample. The indicators of each macro categories have been aggregated and studied (figure 24).
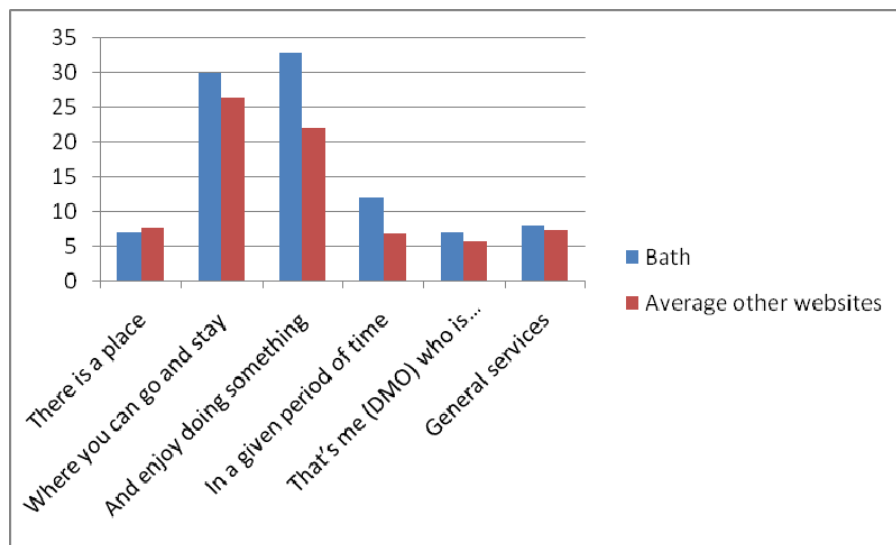
(Figure 24 – VisitBath.co.uk, content and functionalities ranking of Bath and average of other website)

In general terms, the Bath DMO website is well-designed in terms of contents and functionalities. The only macro category where the average of the information competitors is higher is "there is a place", which is the most "introductory" category.

Therefore, it is possible to say that the VisitBath website has a fair number of indicators with respect to other websites in the same domain. The crucial issue is now to understand whether all these indicators are harmonically and qualitatively represented online.

4.2.3 Visit Bath usability

As described in the methodology chapter (Chapter three), the method used to investigate usability of the website was Mile+ - Milano Lugano Evaluation Method (Triacca et al., 2005); the evaluation was based on the Destination Usability Kit (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009), which counted 8 user profiles (i.e. description of possible users of the application), 10 goals (i.e. high level objectives of the possible users), 72 tasks (i.e. atomic actions which the user can perform on the application) and 40 evaluation heuristics (i.e. evaluation metrics).

35 usability issues were found as a result of the analysis. The three most important usability issues were isolated and presented below; those issues are most important as they affect the major number of tasks in the usability kit.
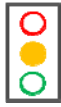
Search results: this usability issue refers to the way search results are presented to end users. In order to be highly effective, internal search engine should have high precision and recall and present the results harmonica

Depth Anticipation: this usability issue refers to the fact that users may get lost with difficult navigation paths. Often starting navigating through the website, the users ignore the fact that several clicks are needed to reach the desired information.
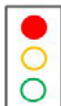
Shop Section: the shop section has been recently implemented and presents several usability issues that may also be investigated for the relevance given to it by Bath Tourism Plus online manager.

Search Results

Search results organization and representation is poor. The database appears to be well-structured, with precision and recall in general terms respected, but an improvement on the look and feel of the results may be an important issue.

Number of tasks affected by the problem 6 (T2.1, T3.1, T4.1, T4.2, T6.2, T8.1).

Example: (T2.1) Find the list of attractions. The list of attractions is accessible through the search engine in the attractions section. Three parameters may be set by the users (type, location, and keyword). This kind of search engine is very useful when the user knows what s/he is looking for. It would be less useful when the user is simply exploring attractions. Some problems may arise when the user searches for "any attraction" in "any place" or for "any attraction" and "Bath". The following screenshot (figure 25) shows the search results for "any attraction" in "any place" (1).
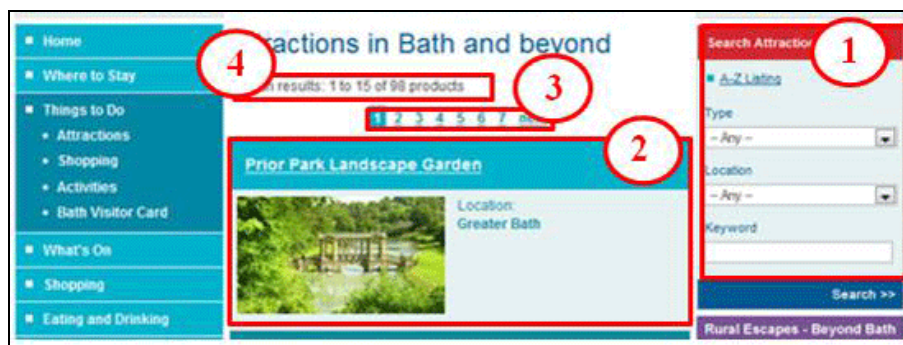
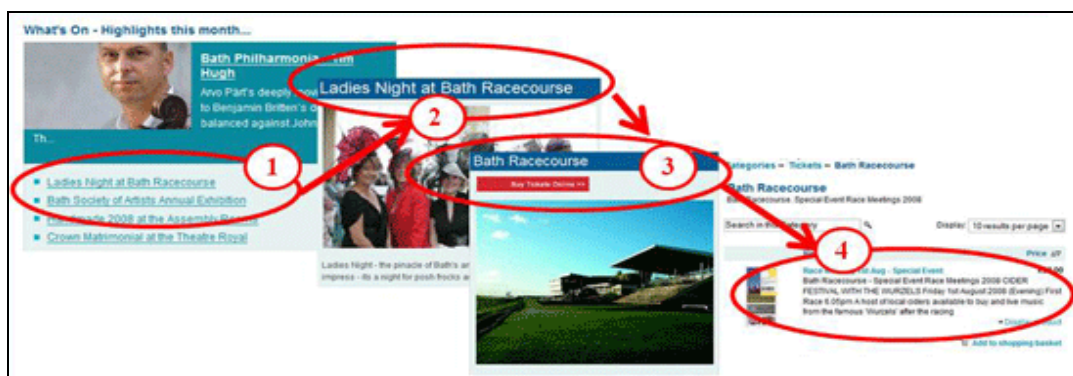(Figure 25 - Visitbath.co.uk, usability issues in search results page)

Usability issues include accuracy and conciseness. The search activity gives seven pages of results with 98 results organized in 15 results per page (3). The order seems to be random, and users may scroll through a number of pages before finding what s/he is interested in. The attractions are not introduced to the user (2): no information except a picture is given. There is also an accuracy issue regarding the fact that the search engine retrieves attractions, not "products" (4), as indicated on the web site.

Depth Anticipation

It refers to the fact that users may get lost with difficult navigation paths. Often starting navigating through the website, the user ignores the fact that several clicks are needed to reach the desiderate information. Depth anticipation is related not only to the search results but also to the general design structure of some information paths on the website.

Number of tasks affected by this problem: 5 (T1.7, T2.12, T2.13, T3.1, T3.8).

Example: (T3.9) Book a ticket online. The user is trying to buy a ticket for one event of the month, highlighted in the home page. The choice is "Last Night at Bath Racecourse", the user clicks on the event location in order to have more information, and from the location s/he can access the online shop. In the online shop there are not only tickets for the event, but also other tickets related to the normal activity of the racecourse (figure 26). Usability issues about orientation and depth anticipation include the huge amount of clicks involved and the final landing page in the Bath shop may disorient the user. With regards to the depth anticipation, it is not possible to understand where the website is bringing the user.

(Figure 26 - Visitbath.co.uk, steps for booking a ticket online)

Shop Section

The shop is a stand-alone website. There is no connection between the shop and the rest of the website. This problem is a usability issue that refers to the entire goal of G7 (namely "shop online"). Access to the online shop was problematic for end-users (Figure 27). The problems are summarized in Figure 3, a collage of the usability issues.
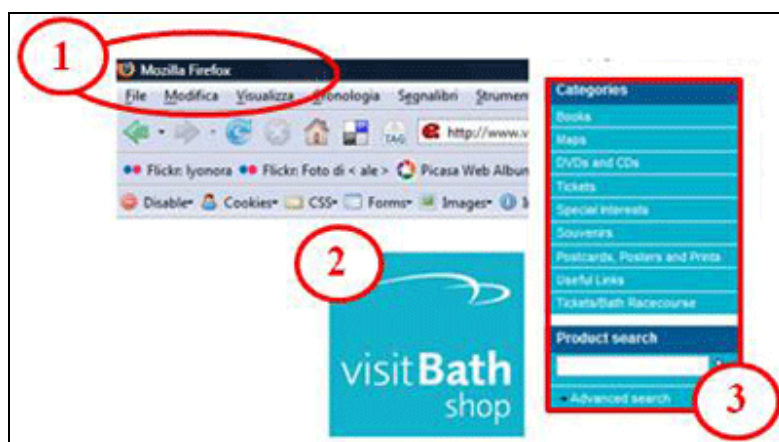
(Figure 27 - Visitbath.co.uk, shopping section)

Usability issues about *orientation and backward navigation*: the shop looks very similar to the rest of the website. The graphic style is the same, but the links highlighted in red are not the same as in the main web site (3). Developers took the same website template yet there is no way to return to the destination website: the convention of using the logo for backward navigation is not respected (2). The user is in a different website, which looks the same as the one s/he was browsing before with no possibility to go back to the main website. Finally, the page does not have a title (1).

In general terms, the shop section is something very important for Bath Tourism Plus, as they need to generate a revenue from the website, but the number of articles present in the shop and the hard navigation style do not justify its presence.

4.2.4 Visit Bath usages analysis

The log file analysis carried out during the considered period (1st of May 2007- 3rd of April 30 2008) visitbath.co.uk received 132,682,766 hits, for a total number of 867,071 unique visitors. Log files analysis has been done filtering robots, crawlers, internal access and reserved areas. The most relevant keywords used by visitors to reach the web sites are the ones in table 7: those keywords represent the 39,7% of the whole traffic through the website in the considered period.

	Search Term	Hits
1	bath	334,047
2	bath hotels	36,488
3	visit bath	23,633
4	hotels in bath	18,070
5	bath tourist information	14,631
6	things to do in bath	14,403
7	bath tourism	14,242
8	bath spa	11,924
9	bath england	10,876

(Table 7 – VisitBath.co.uk, nine most relevant keywords for visitbath.co.uk website)

Visitors (Figure 28) were mostly Nord American, (486,557) and European (194,454); but also some visits from Oceania (12,300), Asia (11,961), South America (5,623), Africa (590) were counted (unsolved IP # 154,885, Unknown # 231)

(Figure 28 – Visitbath.co.uk, visitors map overlay source Funnel Web Analyzer)

The most relevant page visited was the home page (968,765 hits). Other popular sections included "where to stay" (1,634,991 hits), "things to do"   (1,043,512   hits) and "whats on" (197,455 hits). Book online and search engine related pages counted for 1,505,862 hits.

Figure 29 shows a graph of the most viewed pages (from Funnel Web Analyzer)
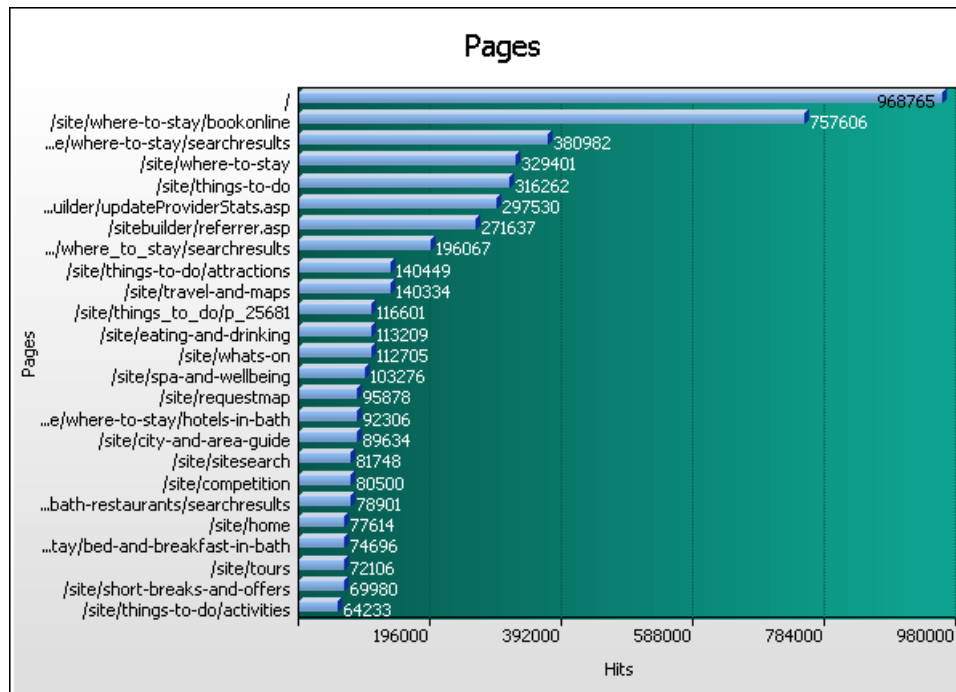
(Figure 29 – Visitbath.co.uk, page views source Funnel Web Analyzer)

Users' Paths and Goals

Main path observations helped in shaping and enhancing the goals and tasks of the usability kit. Users' paths on the website could be easily translated into Ukit elements (namely the scenarios in which tasks may be inferred and created). The three most popular sections of the website are: (i) where to stay, (ii) book online and (iii) things to do. Many individual user paths end up in those sections.

- Where to Stay: five different user paths in 161.500 user sessions

- Book online: eight different user paths for 222.149 user sessions

- Things To do: four different user paths in 157.596 user sessions

Among the usability results, the most relevant problem is represented by the search engine: the usability inspection found out that it is a critical issue that could be improved; usages analysis confirms the fact that this is a critical issue for the website success. Search results are one of the major drivers for information-seeking activities in

the website, according to the log files, 5.24% of the users use the internal search engine to access information.

5.1.5 Visit Bath content analysis

In order to understand the range of competitors of the Bath DMO website in the online tourism space, 18 search activities (9 key words for each of the two search engines – table 8) were performed. The first three results per page being considered as of key relevance (comescore, 2006). The 540 search results (270 for each search engine) were qualitatively organized and classified in order to have a clear understanding of the websites galaxy around the destination (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009, Baggio et al., 2007).

The nine keywords extracted are as follows: (i) bath, (ii) bath hotels, (iii) visit bath, (iv) hotels in bath, (v) bath tourist information, (vi) things to do in bath, (vii)bath tourism, (viii)bath spa, (ix)bath england.

A positioning analysis has been performed in order to understand the ranking of visitBath.co.uk (table 8) within the result pages of Google and Yahoo search engines for the above keywords (for the positioning analysis the popular software WebCeo - http://www.webceo.com - free version has been used).

Search Term	Google Ranking	Yahoo Ranking
bath	1	3
bath hotels	4	4
visit bath	1	1
hotels in bath	7	/
bath tourist information	1	1
things to do in bath	1	19
bath tourism	1	1
bath spa	14	/
bath england	2	10

(Table 8 - Visitbath.co.uk, google.com and yahoo.com ranking - September 17th 2008)

Despite the fact that the keywords used are the most popular ones used by real users to reach the official DMO website and that they correspond to the general users' image of the destination – or the so-called mental model - visitbath.co.uk has problems with the two keywords "bath spa" and "hotels in bath" (respectively 14th and 7th in Google.com and not present in Yahoo.com). The keywords "bath england" and "things to do in bath" (respectively 10th and 19th in the Yahoo.com ranking) were also problematic in Yahoo.com. However, in most of the cases, the official DMO website is present in the first page of search engine results (13 times out of 18). This means that when the DMO website is not ranked in the very first positions, there is space for its information competitors to "sell" the destination and to reach the end-user.

Unique results were isolated and divided in three (2+1) categories, namely (please refer to methodology for detailed description):

(i) BMOW – "Brick and mortar" organizations' websites,

(ii) MOOWAI – Mere online organizations' websites and individual websites

(iii) NR/NW, not relevant/not working.

Among the first group (brick and mortar), the visitbath.co.uk websites was highlighted, and among the second websites group (mere online) the ones with User Generated Content (UGC) were isolated.

	Unique Results	BMOW	Visit Bath	MOOWAI	UGC	NR/NW
Google.com	205	69	9	83	20	53
Yahoo.com	222	28	4	93	38	101

(Table 9 - Visitbath.co.uk, information competitors unique results classification)

Table 9 shows the classification of unique results retrieved from the two search engines for the given set of keywords. The table shows the numbers of retrieved websites on the basis of unique results (column 1): similar results have been considered only once, for all of the search activities in each search engine.

Google.com retrieved 205 unique results over 270 results in total. Among these results 69 websites belong to the BMOW category (official - nine websites belong to the Bath DMO), 83 belong to the MOOWAI category (unofficial - 20 host user-generated contents) and 53 are not relevant or not working.

Yahoo.com, retrieved 222 unique results over 270; among these results 28 websites belong to the BMOW category (official - four websites belong to the Bath DMO), while 93 belong to the MOOWAI category (unofficial - 38 host UGC) and 101 are not relevant.

These results demonstrate how the long tail (Anderson, 2006) is already becoming mainstream (Gretzel, 2006) in the information search process and the fact that prospective tourists need to go through a wide range of unofficial websites to reach the official information.

It is clear that out of the 427 unique results only 13 belong to Visit Bath, demonstrating that the online information, promotion and branding of the destination online is undertaken by a plethora of websites, all with different objectives, orientations and policies.

Two additional conclusions can be drawn from these results: Google.com considers more relevant Brick and Mortar (official) websites than Yahoo.com (respectively 69 and 28) does; while Yahoo.com considers more important Mere Online (unofficial) websites than Google.com (respectively 93 and 83). Among mere online results, the cumulative percentage of web2.0 websites among those retrieved by the studied search engines and presented in the first three results accounts for 32.9%, while most of the DMO official websites information competitors are Web 1.0 websites (66.1%).

The websites belonging to the MOOWAI category (as well as VisitBath official websites) have been used as input for the next phase of the content analysis study: the reputation analysis. Among the 540 retrieved results (427 unique results), only the websites belonging to the MOOWAI category have been considered for reputation analysis. Hence, the content analysis corpus was composed of 176 websites, plus 13 VisitBath.co.uk websites that emerged as unique search engine results.

Coding results: brick and mortar/ mere online presence

The items analyzed in the VisitBath official website present mostly factual arguments (86.4%) expressing a positive value judgment about the destination (63.6%). In contrast, the MOOWAI category presents both factual arguments (33.1%) and also emotional arguments (55.6%). Emotional arguments are dominant (i.e. "the item presents only emotional arguments") only in a small part of the analyzed items (16.7%). In most cases (38.8%), emotional arguments are present but not dominant (i.e. "the item presents factual arguments as well as emotional arguments" and " the item presents more factual arguments than emotional arguments"). Moreover, in the case of websites belonging to the MOOWAI category, the general evaluation of the destination is good: 54.2% of arguments express an overall positive judgment.

| Arguments	Official DMO	MOOWAI
No Arguments	0.0%	11.3%
Factual	90.9%	53.8%
Emotional	9.1%	34.8%
Positive	63.0%	54.2%
Neutral	37.0%	37.9%
Negative	0.0%	7.9%

(Table 10 – VisitBath.co.uk, arguments classification)

Official DMO websites (i.e. visitbath.co.uk) tend to perform the marketing function for the destination with factual arguments, even though some emotional arguments are present in several items. The value judgments expressed by DMO websites are mostly positive or at least neutral. In contrast, MOOWAI players' communication is based more on emotional arguments – but also factual arguments are relevant . Value judgments of

MOOWAI sources are different from official sources: in most cases they are positive or at least neutral. Only a small percentage of items express negative value judgments.

Coding results: mere online websites description

In order to described the MOOWAI market around the destination, coders were asked to classify the websites according to the following criteria (elaborated from Xiang and Gretzel, 2009): (i) Virtual Community (e.g. Lonely Planet, IgoUgo.com, Yahoo Travel), (ii) Consumer Review (e.g. Tripadvisor.com), (ii) Blogs and blog aggregators (e.g. personal blog, blogspot), (iv) Social Networks (e.g. Facebook, Myspace), (v) Media Sharing (Photo/Video sharing – e.g. Flickr, YouTube) (vi) Other (eg. Wikipedia, Wikitravel) and (vii) Web1.0 web site (not social media or web2.0).

MOOWAI information market around Bath online tourism domain have been represented in figure 30.
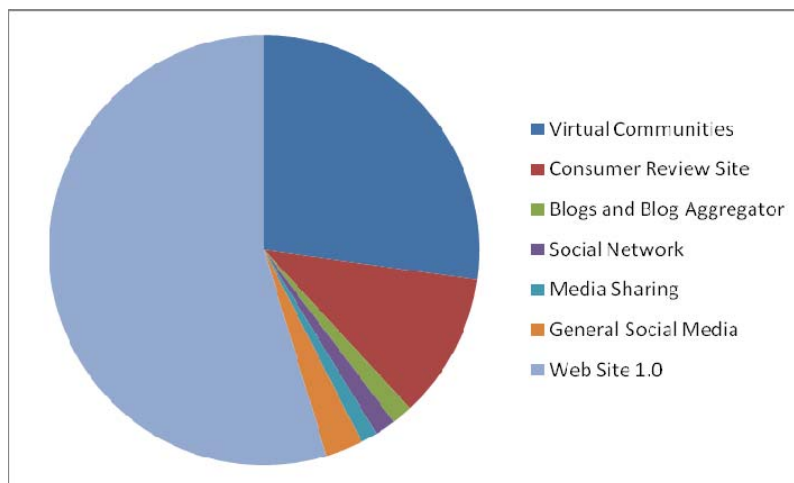
(Figure 30 – VisitBath.co.uk, MOOWAI distribution in Bath Tourism Domain)

MOOWAY information competitors for visitbath.co.uk are mostly web1.0 websites (54.7%), then virtual communities (27.2), consumer review sites (10.9), General Social Media (2.8%) and blogs and blog aggregator (1.6%), social network (1.6%), media sharing (1.2%).

Coding Results: mere online arguments results

This first group of results helps to understand that the city of Bath is in general well-considered on the web, and its reputation is in general supported by many statements online. The next results are compiled regarding the coding activity for MOOWAI items and sub-items.

Due to the research keywords used, the following topic category of items and sub-items (Table 11 column 1) were incorporated into the codebook. The "item" column (Table 11) represents percentages of items found for each topic, and the sub-items column represents percentages of sub-items found for each topic.

Topic	Item	SubItems
Destination	25.9%	8.2%
Travel Experience	**4.2%**	**1.8%**
Accomodation	34.7%	48.6%
Restaurant/Pub/Social Life	3.4%	10.9%
Attraction	20.6%	17.7%
Event	2.8%	3.6%
News	0.9%	0.0%
Other	7.5%	9.2%

(Table 11 – Visitbath.co.uk, items and subitems distribution)

With regards to the first-level items, accommodation is the most relevant topic (34.7%), then the destination (25.9%) and attractions (20.6%); the sub-items refer mostly to accommodation (48.6%), attractions (17.7%) and amenities (restaurants, pubs and social life places) (10.9%)

The items as a whole present a comparable amount of factual arguments (41.3%) and arguments with an emotional connotation (46.9%). The value judgments are distributed as shown in Figure 31.
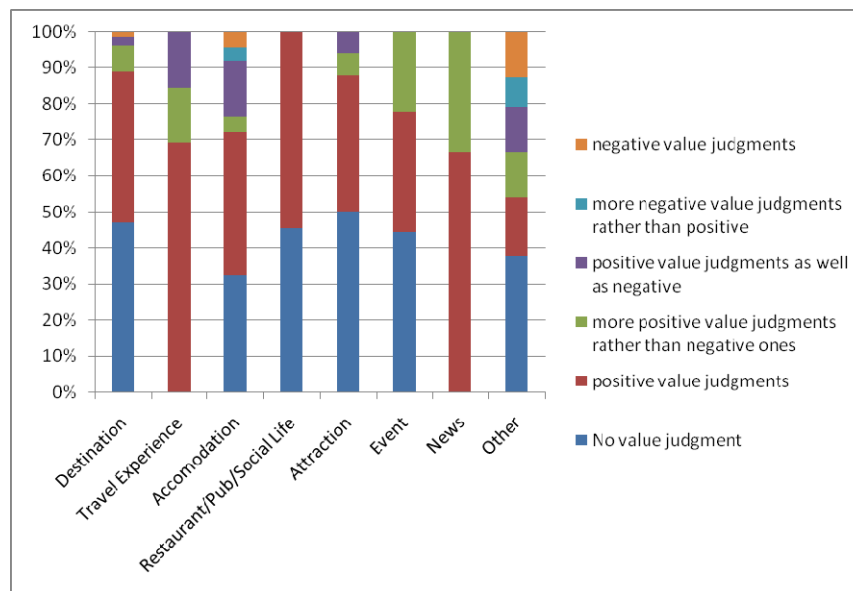
(Figure 31 – VisitBath.co.uk, items value judgments distribution)

Accommodation, travel experiences and attractions are the most critical topics. The destination as a whole presents a small number of (almost) negative judgments. Although the "item level" gives important information to the destination managers, this level of analysis is not sufficient to identify the real reputation shortcomings, because emotional arguments have the same percentage as factual arguments. Therefore, a more detailed analysis must be carried out.
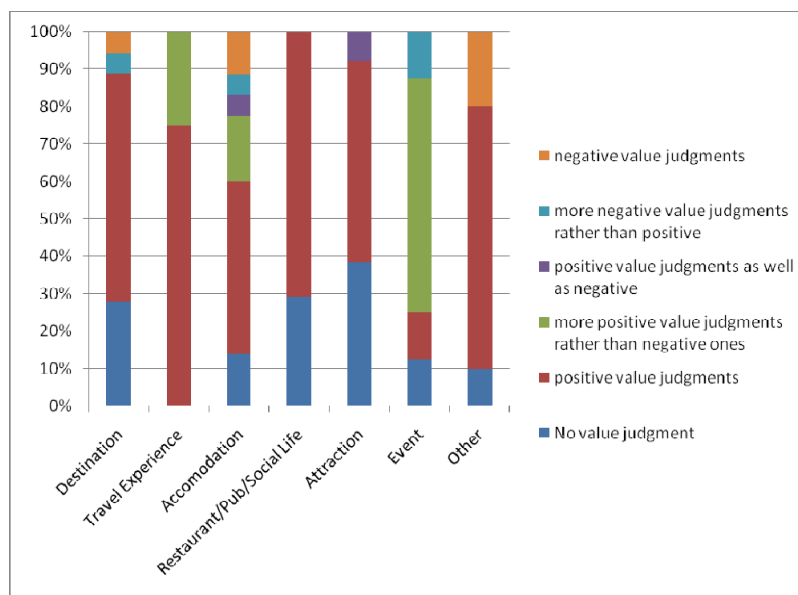
(Figure 32 – VisitBath.co.uk, subitems value judgments distribution)

The last and final level is the sub-item level. Sub-items are just a click away from the result page and its items. To consider the example of a blog: the blog post about the city of Bath would be the item for the content analysis, while the comments of the post would be its sub-items. Sub-items have a strong emotional connotation: 63.2% of them have emotional connotations whilst 28.6% are factual. Sub-items may help destination managers to focus more on the problems of the destination as a whole. As described in Figure 4, the real reputation shortcomings from the travelers' perspective lie in the accommodation and in the general perception of the destination. From these last two analyses it is now possible to present recommendations for destination managers to raise the destination's web reputation: shortcomings for Bath's web reputation are primarily concerned with (i) accommodation, (ii) the overall perception of the destination and (iii) attractions.

4.3.1 Turismo Ravenna online manager's interview

Interview with Maria Grazia Marini, head of Ravenna Turismo, and Simona Trotolo responsible of Online Communication of Ravenna Turismo.

Introduction to the website: Ravenna Tourism office is responsible for the tourism communication of the city of Ravenna. The website is an important instrument used by this office to market Ravenna on the web and to give specific information to specific publics. The website, after having the static contents about attraction is based primarily on events and on the news sections. As Ravenna is an UNESCO listed site, the website was primarily funded by public funds (i.e. law #77 on UNESCO sites.). Having the UNESCO stamp on the website is the first quality mark for the city of Ravenna. There is an agreement between the city council and the church (which owns most of the cultural sites) which entrust the Ravenna Tourism organization as communication channel for perspectives visitors. The websites target publics are teachers and schools, cultural tourists, but also academics that are looking for specific information online.

Most important sections on the websites: the most important contents on the website are: cultural contents, news and events. The document which assess the entrance of Ravenna in the World Heritage List is online to be read and downloaded (both in English and Italian), to let end users understand why Ravenna is unique. So far, there are no sections devoted to specific target publics, but in the next few years, sections devoted to schools will be studied and implemented. In addition, a commercial section (which should allow online reservation) has been implemented, but hoteliers are not committed, and it is not working so far.

Type of Ravenna visitors: there are mainly two types of tourists in Ravenna. The first one is the cultural tourist who stays in the city center, while the second one is the leisure tourist who use the seaside infrastructures. In the very city center there are 20 hotels, while along the coast around 20 hotels on 35 km of beaches. Taking into account the only city of Ravenna, the most important publics for tourism in city center, where UNESCO site are located, are schools.

Other activities coupled with the website: for the Ravenna tourism office, online and offline communication are coupled. In recent months, a reservation system has been implemented in the tourist information office and the project is to extend this practice also to the online environment but using email.

Integration of web2.0 instruments: the website is institutional to the effect that Ravenna tourism responsible are not taking into consideration to host web2.0 contents. They study the back-links to their website and the information written on other websites to verify that it is correct. But also in this case there are no structured methodologies to monitor these contents.

4.3.2 Turismo Ravenna content and functionalities analysis

In order to understand how the DMO website of Ravenna is positioned in its relevant market, a content and functionalities analysis (in short CandF) among turismo.ravenna.it and other destination websites has been performed. Content and functionalities analysis

has been presented in the methodology section (Chapter 3) and is based on the list of indicators provided in annex two. Particularly Ravenna Turismo has been confronted with the Italian suggested city breaks (listed on enit.it), regional capitals, and UNESCO cities. Unfortunately, not all the suggested cities breaks, regional capitals and UNESCO-listed cities have a dedicated website for the analysis.

The destinations used in this part of the study are:

1. comune.ancona.it	7. luccatourist.it	13. terresiena.it
2. iat.comune.bologna.it	8. inaples.it	14. turismotorino.org
3. cagliariturismo.it	9. aapit.pa.it	15. apt.trento.it
4. capritourism.com	10. pisaturismo.it	16. turismovenezia.it
5. firenzeturismo.it	11. turismo.ravenna.it	
6. genova-turismo.it	12. aptprovroma.it	

Overall turismo.ravenna.it ranking in the sample

The website of Ravenna tourism board has been compared with the websites quoted above using a content and functionality grid (annex two). The grid was populated in January 2009. Among the 172 indicators and the 16 websites used as a sample, turismo.ravenna.it ranked in 5th position with 75 indicators (figure 33).
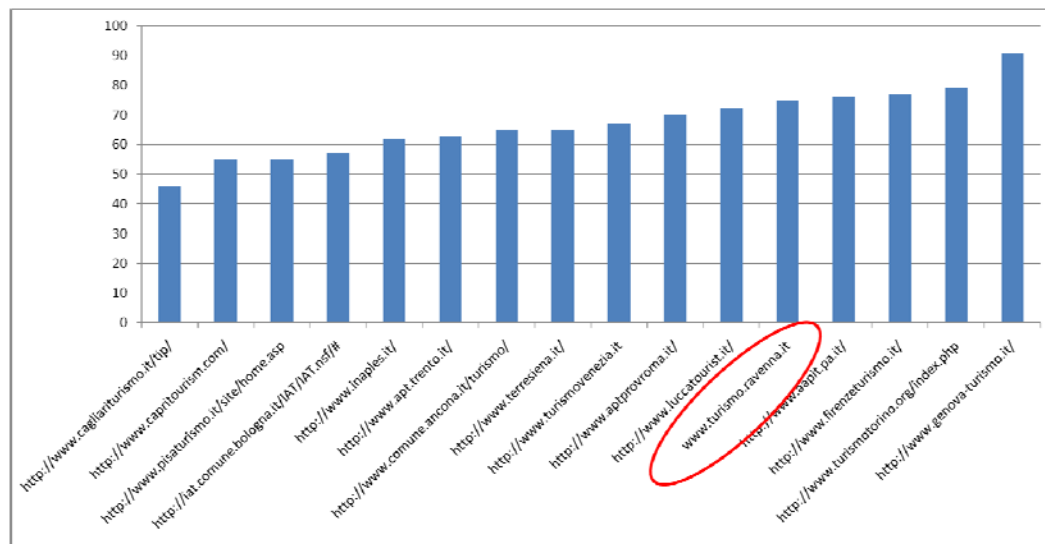
(Figure 33 – turismo.ravenna.it, contents and functionalities ranking)

Then turismo.ravenna.it has been compared with the other websites in the sample. The indicators of each macro category have been aggregated and studied (figure 34).
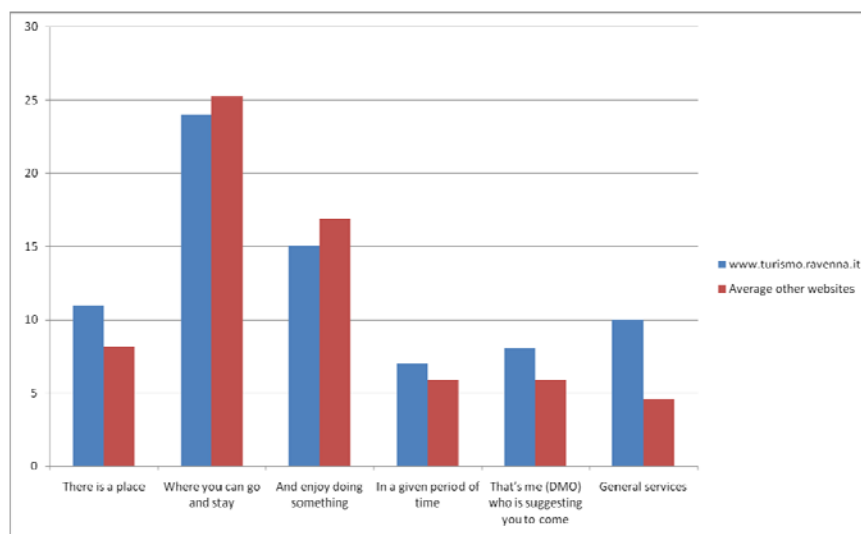
(Figure 34 – turismo.ravenna.it, contents and functionalities ranking Ravenna and average of other website)

In general terms, Ravenna DMO website is well designed in terms of contents and functionalities. In two macro category (that are crucial for a tourism website) it has several problems, namely "where you can go and stay" – which is the category related with the information on how to get there and the accommodations – and "enjoying doing something" – which is the category of tours and attractions in general. While, for the category in a given period of time (which mostly refers to events and news) is better than other websites (confirming what the managers were assessing about the importance of events and news on the website).

4.3.3 Usability and Quality

As described in the methodology chapter (Chapter three), the method used to investigate usability of the website was Mile+ - Milano Lugano Evaluation Method (Triacca et al., 2005); the evaluation was based on the Destination Usability Kit (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009) which counted 8 user profiles (i.e. description of possible users of the application), 10 goals (i.e. high level objectives of the possible users), 72 tasks (i.e. atomic actions which the user can perform on the application) and 40 evaluation heuristics (i.e. evaluation metrics).

36 usability issues were found as a result of the analysis. The four most important usability issues were isolated and presented below; those issues are most important as they affect the major number of tasks in the usability kit.

Accuracy of the information: sometimes information is also inaccurate in technical terms (external links pointing to not working websites).

Navigation Position Consistency: second level menus are positioned in a strange place, under the main text of the page.

Segmentation of the information: information is often segmented to create guided tours, but segmentation lacks of consistency. In some part of the website this is needed (and not done) while in some other is not needed (and done).
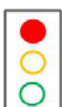
Booking section: this booking system has usability issues as a whole. Problems (e.g. labelling consistency, icons predictability, depth anticipation) will be described in detail.

Accuracy of information

Accuracy is a usability issue which regards mainly the text. In general terms, accuracy regards the conveyed information as a whole.

Number of tasks affected by this problem: 6 (T2.1, T2.8, T2.13, T4.1, T4.6, T8.2).

Example: (T2.1) Find the list of attractions: in figure 35, number 1 indicates a group of links which is placed within the Cappella Arcivescovile information: two out of three point to the same external resource. Number 2 (Figure 35) refers to an information segmentation issue. Information segmentation refers to an editorial decision of the website designers and content managers to actually segment the information within different pages. Information should be well divided and organized in the whole website in order to let the user easily access each piece of information (please refer to "information segmentation issue in the next paragraphs).

(Figure 35 – turismo.ravenna.it, accuracy of the information)

In general terms it is possible to argue that information is often not precise, and poorly structured. Hyperlinks pointing to external resources are sometimes broken.

Navigation Position Consistency

Navigation position consistency is related with the consistent position of the navigation menu in the whole website.

Number of tasks affected by this problem: 3 (T1.1, T2.1, T3.1).

Example: (T1.1) Find the city overview: the navigation menu is placed above the text (Figure 36) and it is not visible by screen with a resolution less than 1324x768. In this issue, two different usability problems can be highlighted: (i) position consistency due to the fact that it is really strange to find a second level menu above the text in the modern web application, and (ii) orientation because users may feel really disoriented while seeing a menu in this position.
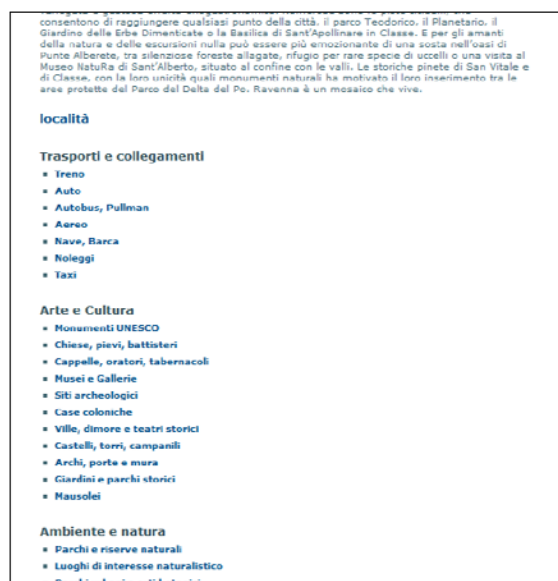
(Figure 36 - turismo.ravenna.it, navigation position consistency)

<u>Segmentation of the information</u>

Information segmentation refers to editorial decision of the website designers and content managers. Information should be well divided and organized in the whole website in order to let the user easily access each piece of information.

<u>Number of tasks affected by this problem:</u> 5 (T1.1, T1.2, T1.4, T3.8, T6.1).

Example: (T1.1) Find the city overview: the city overview and city history are easily accessible from the home page of the web site, but presents some usability issues.
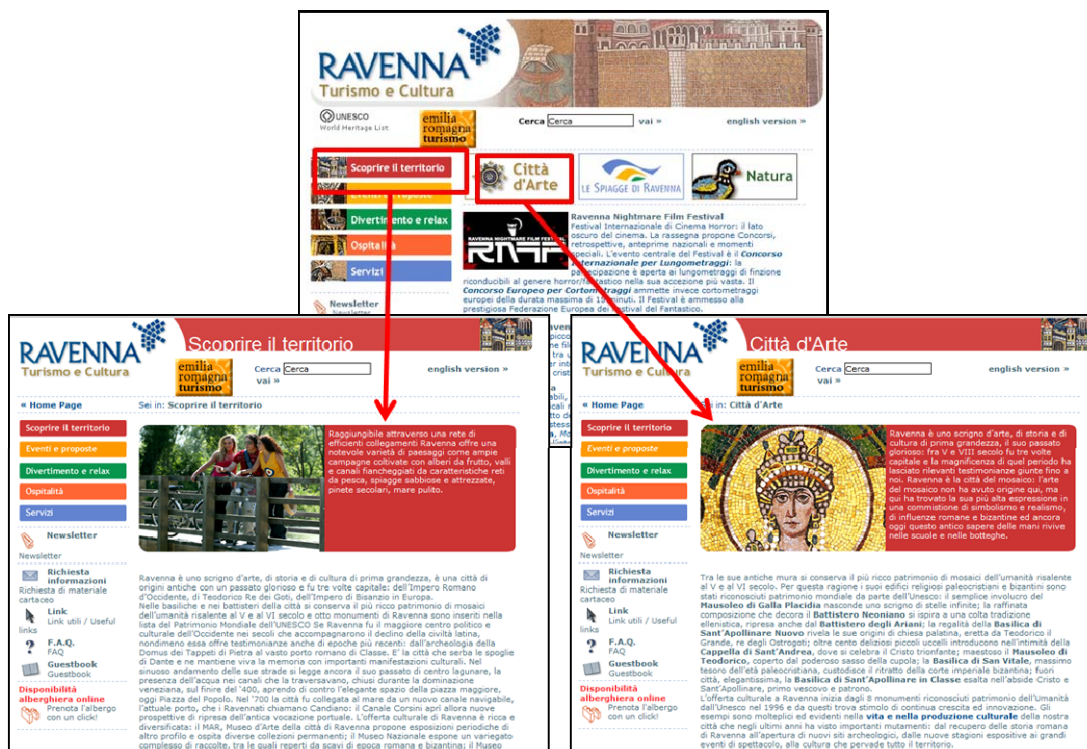
(Figure 37 – turismo.ravenna.it, segmentation of the information)

From the home page it is possible to access to two different sections (Figure 37): "scopri il territorio" with an overview on the city of Ravenna and "città d'arte" with an overview on the history of the city. Web pages are well designed and the content is clear. Unfortunately, two main usability issues can be found: (i) the labels are not good predictors of the contents of the pages, and the (ii) sections use the same colours within the header (in the whole web site, different sections have different colours). It is important to maintain the sections' segmentation rules because the user may feel disoriented within the sections.

Booking System

Finally, the accommodation section, particularly the booking system, is affected by a number of different usability issues. This issue represents a critical threat (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009) for third party stakeholders (e.g. hotels and attractions managers).

The booking system is to be a major problem which affects all the scenarios in which a booking activity is foreseen (e.g. T4.1 Find a hotel for less than x Euros per night).

Number of tasks affected by this problem: booking system seems to be a major problem which affects all the scenarios in which a booking activity is foreseen.

- *Example: (T4.1) Find a hotel for less than X£/E (e.g. 50/70£/E) per night*

T4.1 Find a hotel for less than X£/E (e.g. 50/70£/E) per night

(Figure 38 - turismo.ravenna.it, booking system)

Depth anticipation: the user is unaware of the path and steps s/he is supposed to do inside the application to accomplish the task s/he has in mind; the user should click several times before arriving to the dedicated hotel page – choosing an hotel according

to the availability – and discover that s/he need to ask (through the hotel website or, as in most of the cases, via email) the room availability.

Icons predictability: icons (number 1 in figure 38) are explained above the table of the hotel availability, but the is no clue about the meaning of the number and the letter in the cells (number 2 in figure 38).

Labeling consistency: two labels identify accommodation sections: "ospitalità" (i.e. ospitality – number 1, figure 38) and "disponibilità alberghiere" (i.e. accommodation availability – number 2, figure 38); information is inconsistent and these two different buttons lead to different pages/sections (e.g. the first lead the user to the single hotel linking her/him to the hotel website, while the second label leads the user to a table of availability in figure 39 the user reaches the enquiry form where s/he could see only the availability but not directly book the hotel)

(Figure 39 - turismo.ravenna.it, main menu labelling consistency)

4.3.4 Ravenna Turismo usages analysis

The log file analysis carried out during the considered period (1st of October 2007 – 1st of October 2008) turismo.ravenna.it received 29,637,297 hits, for a total number of 289,714 unique visitors. Log files analysis has been done filtering robots, crawlers,

internal access and reserved areas. The most relevant keywords used by visitors to reach the web sites are the ones in table 12.

#	Search term	Hits
1	ravenna	152,897
2	ravenna turismo	4,175
3	turismo ravenna	2,681
4	marina di ravenna	2,272
5	apt ravenna	2,196
6	comune di ravenna	1,533
7	lido di savio	1,395
8	ravenna eventi	1,282
9	ravenna monumenti	1,250

(Table 12 - turismo.ravenna.it, nine most relevant keywords for the website)

Visitors were mostly European (181,409) and North American (53,550), but some visits from Asia (4,462), South America (5,891), Oceania (947), Africa (189) were also counted (Figure 40).

(Figure 40 – turismo.ravenna.it - visitors map overlay source Funnel Web Analyzer)

The most relevant pages visited were the home page, which collect 69.1% (354,925 hits) of the total hits. Then different pages about the Ravenna events and initiatives such as: "notted'oro" (34,283 hits) and "mare d'inverno" (9,834 hits) are quite popular; unresolved IP (42,284), Unknown (170), Others (82).

Figure 41 shows the graph of the pages views produced by Funnel Web Analyzer.
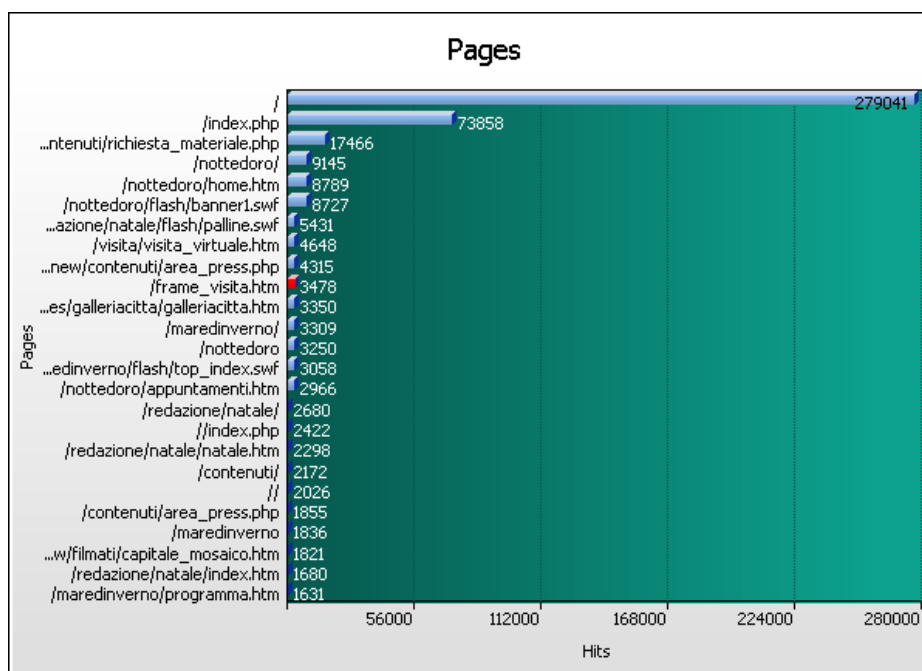
(Figure 41 – turismo.ravenna.it, page views source Funnel Web Analyzer)

Users' Paths and Goals

Main path observations helped in designing and enhancing the goals and tasks of the usability kit. Users' paths on the website could be easily translated into Usability kit elements (namely the scenarios, where tasks may be inferred and created).

Recurrent paths were mostly related with events: notte d'oro (16,169 sessions) and mare d'inverno (2,538 sessions).

One unexpectedly popular session also regarded the bus and cycling paths download (4,099 sessions). Nevertheless, most of the sessions initiate and terminate in the home page (116,193 sessions).

In general terms, it is possible to claim that the events section was the most popular section within the website (1,331,800 hits and 334,683 user sessions); here users can find and download online guides, maps and brochures.

The accommodation section presented few accesses: total hits count for the whole accommodation section over the given period (the analyzed year) is 901 (i.e. 0,003%). Among these, 297 hits were on the home page of the accommodation section (32% of 901) but only few user sessions stopped on the accommodation home page (0.002%): anyway due to the website structure it was not possible to follow all the user paths inside

the accommodation section because some parts of it have been hosted on a different web server (different server log files were not available for analysis).

4.3.5 Ravenna Turismo content analysis

In order to understand the range of competitors of the Ravenna DMO website in the online tourism space, 18 search activities (9 key words for each of the two search engines) were performed, the first three results per page being considered as of key relevance. The 540 search results (270 for each search engine) were qualitatively organized and classified in order to have a clear understanding of the website galaxy around the destination.

Starting from the nine most relevant keywords (Table 12, left column), a positioning analysis was performed in order to understand the ranking of the official Ravenna website within the result pages of Google and Yahoo search engines (The positioning analysis was performed with the help of the popular software WebCeo - www.webceo.com - free version).

The positioning analysis was very important to understand the level of information competition (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009) around the official tourism website for its relevant keywords in the first three pages within Google and Yahoo. Table 1 shows that (i) the input keywords are almost in Italian (outlining an Italian tourism market), (ii) keywords 2, 3 and 8 are very well positioned (i.e. searchers find turismo.ravenna.it high ranked in the first results page), but (iii) the website positioning is quite poor for keyword 1 and 4. Finally (iv) Google ranking for keyword 1, 5 and 6 is quite high, while no results in the firsts three pages are retrieved in Yahoo. Furthermore, as the keywords were all in Italian and they reached, altogether, 55.4% of the whole traffic on the website, it seemed useful to add also the ranking for the local Italian search engine where the ranking on the search engine results pages increases.

	Keywords	Google.com Ranking	Yahoo.com Ranking	Google.it Ranking	Yahoo.it Ranking
1	ravenna	3	NL	2	1
2	ravenna turismo	1	1	1	2
3	turismo ravenna	1	1	1	1
4	marina di ravenna	NL	NL	10	NL
5	apt ravenna	1	NL	1	NL
6	comune di ravenna	3	NL	3	2
7	lido di savio	NL	NL	7	NL
8	ravenna eventi	3	1	4	1
9	ravenna monumenti	9	14	10	1

(Table 13 – turismo.ravenna.it, positioning analysis for the nine most relevant keywords)

In order to understand the range of competitors of the Ravenna DMO website in the online tourism space, 18 search activities (9 key words for each of the two search

engines) were performed. The first three results per page being considered as of key relevance. The 540 search results (270 for each search engine) were qualitatively organized and classified in order to have a clear understanding of the websites galaxy around the destination. Unique results were isolated and divided in three (2+1) categories, namely:

(i) BMOW – "Brick and mortar" organizations' websites,

(ii) MOOWAI – Mere online organizations' websites and individual websites

(iii) NR/NW, not relevant/not working.

Among the first group (brick and mortar), the visitbath.co.uk website was highlighted and among the second websites group (mere online) the ones with User Generated Content (UGC) were isolated. Then, as described in the previous section, nine search activities were performed on each search engine (namely Google and Yahoo) in a given moment in time: January, 17th , 2009. The searches considered only the first three pages of results (iProspect, 2006), and the 540 retrieved results were organized as follows (Table X).

	Uniqiue results	BMOW	*Ravenna*	MOOWAI	*UGC*	NW/NR
Google	246	74	*9*	113	*34*	59
Yahoo	228	47	*6*	110	*34*	71

(Table 14 – turismo.ravenna.it, BMOW and MOOWAI unique results classification)

Google (Table 14 first row) retrieved 246 unique results (i.e. unique websites) out of 270 total websites. Among them, 74 were *"Brick and mortar" websites* (BMOW), while 113 *Mere online organizations' websites and individual websites"* (MOOWAI). On one side, among the BMOW, 9 were from the official website of Ravenna (turismo.ravenna.it). On the other side, among the MOOWAI, 34 were hosting User Generated Contents (UGC).

Yahoo, (Table 14, second row) retrieved 228 unique results, 47 BMOW websites and 110 MOOWAI websites. The official Ravenna tourism website appeared only 6 times, while the number of UGC websites among the MOOWAI was the same as in Google. The last column of the table shows not working (NW) or irrelevant (NR) websites.

Coding results: brick and mortar/ mere online presence

Table 15 describes the arguments distribution among the official DMO website and the Unofficial information sources. Official DMO website (i.e. turismo.ravenna.it) tends to perform the marketing function for the destination with factual arguments, even though some emotional arguments are present in several items (here are considered also the small emotional presences within the text). The value judgments expressed by DMO

websites are mostly positive or at least neutral. In contrast, MOOWAI players'
communication is based both on factual and emotional arguments (neutral arguments are
almost irrelevant). Value judgments of MOOWAI sources slightly different from official
sources: in most cases, they are positive or at least neutral. Only a small percentage of
items express negative value judgments.

Arguments	Official DMO	Unofficial
No Arguments	30.7%	3.7%
Factual	46.2%	78.4%
Emotional*	23.1%	17.9%
Positive	69.30%	60.5%
Neutral	30.70%	38.4%
Negative	0%	1.1%

(Table 15 – turismo.ravenna.it, arguments classification)

Coding results: mere online websites description

In order to describe the MOOWAI market around the destination, coders were asked to
classify the websites according to the following criteria (elaborated from Xiang and
Gretzel, 2009): (i) Virtual Community (e.g. Lonely Planet, IgoUgo.com, Yahoo Travel),
(ii) Consumer Review (e.g. Tripadvisor.com), (ii) Blogs and blog aggregators (e.g.
personal blog, blogspot), (iv) Social Networks (e.g. Facebook, Myspace), (v) Media
Sharing (Photo/Video sharing – e.g. Flickr, YouTube) (vi) Other (eg. Wikipedia,
Wikitravel) and (vii) Web1.0 web site (not social media or web2.0). The MOOWAI
information market around Ravenna online tourism domain has been represented in
figure 42.
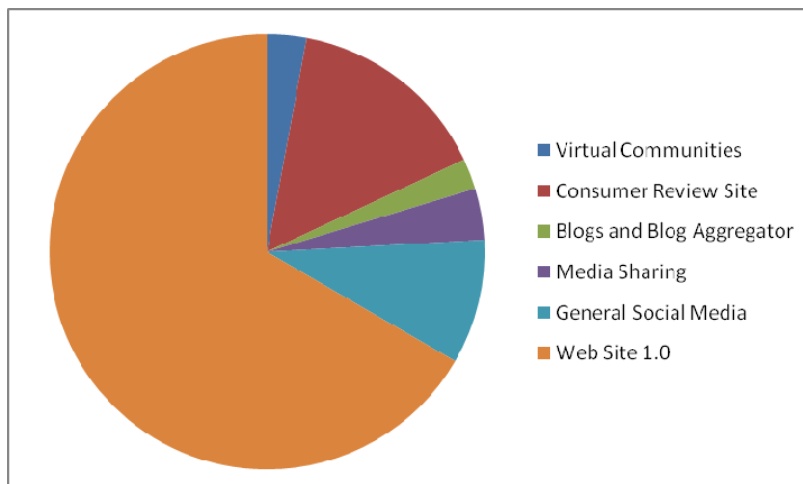
(Figure 42 - turismo.ravenna.it, MOOWAI information market around Ravenna online
tourism domain)

The majority of websites were web1.0 websites (66.7%), followed by consumer review websites (15.1%), general social media (9.2%) then virtual communities, blogs and media sharing websites (2.9%, 2.3% and 3.8% respectively). Within these different websites, the topic were analyzed: the most discussed topic was accommodation (52.8%), then attractions (18.3%), events (11.4) and the destination (9.5%). Few mentions were counted for travel experience (2.7%), restaurant/pub/social life (1.2%) and news (0.3%).

Coding Results: mere online arguments results

The next results are compiled regarding the coding activity for MOOWAI items and sub-items. Items should present more descriptive and factual information from an empirical observation, while sub-items often highlight emotional comments.

Due to the research keywords used, the following topic category of items and sub-items (Table 16 column 1) were incorporated into the codebook. The "item" column (Table 16) represents percentages of items found for each topic, and the sub-items column represents percentages of sub-items found for each topic.

Topic	Item	Subitem
Destination	9.6%	3.7%
Travel Experience	2.7%	2.4%
Accomodation	52.9%	58.2%
Restaurant/Pub/Social Life	1.2%	0.9%
Attraction	18.4%	20.3%
Event	11.5%	11.5%
News	0.3%	0.4%
Other	3.4%	2.3%

(Table 16 – turismo.ravenna.it, percentage of Item and Subitem in the Ravenna Turismo online space)

With regards to the first-level items, accommodation is the most relevant topic (52.9%), then the attractions (18.4%) and the event (11,5%); the sub-items refer mostly to accommodation (58.2%), attractions (20.3%) and, again, events (11.5%)

Items value judgments have been studied and described in figure 43.
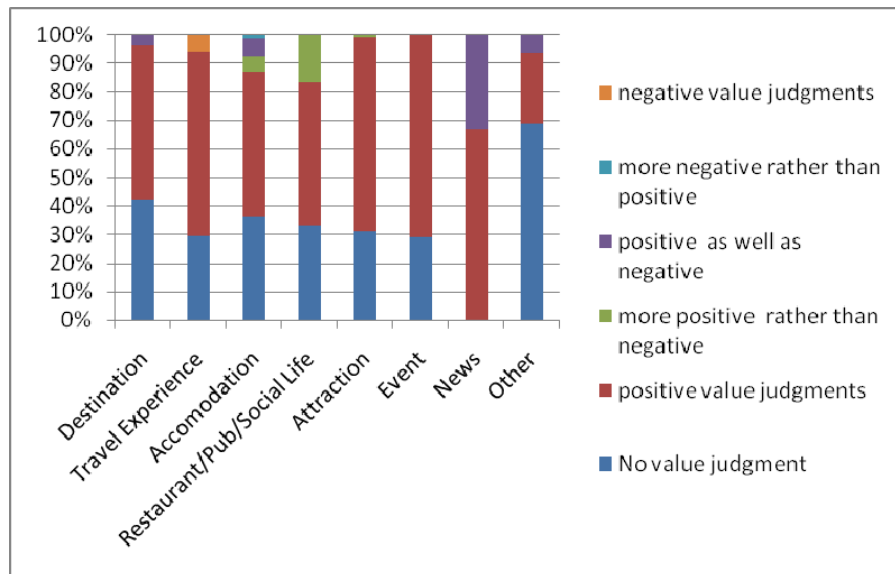
(Figure 43 – turismo.ravenna.it, items value judjements)

Accommodation and travel experiences are the most critical topics. The destination as a whole presents a small number of (almost) negative judgments. Although the "item level" gives important information to the destination managers, this level of analysis is not sufficient to identify the real reputation shortcomings, because emotional arguments have the same percentage as factual arguments. Therefore, a more detailed analysis has to be carried out.

The last and final level is the sub-item level. Sub-items are just a click away from the result page and its items. To consider the example of a blog: the blog post about the city of Ravenna would be the item for the content analysis, while the comments of the post would be its sub-items.

Sub-items have a stronger emotional connotation and they may help destinations' managers to focus more on the problems of the destination as a whole.
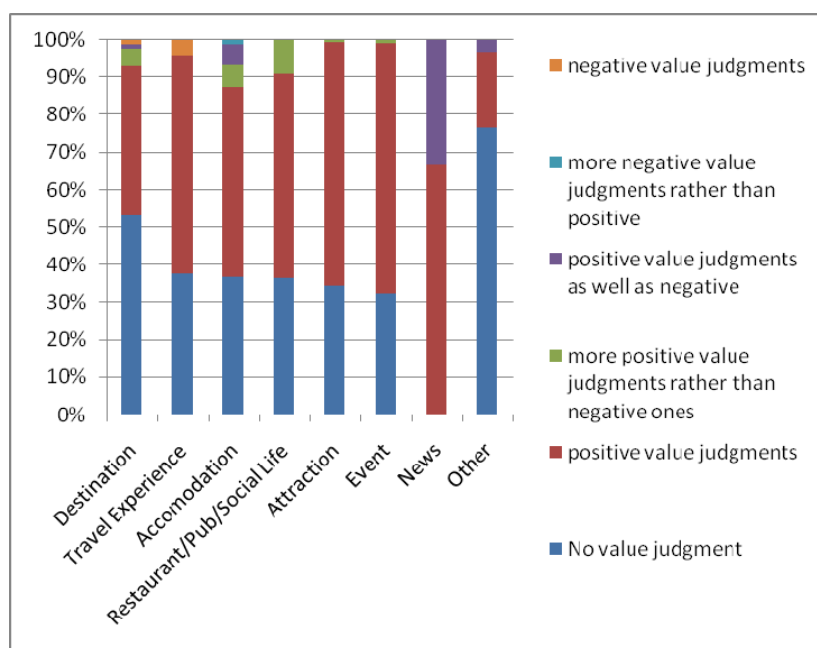
(Figure 44 – turismo.ravenna.it, subitems value judgment)

Figure 44, the real reputation shortcomings from the travelers' perspective lie in the accommodation and in the general perception of the destination. From these last two analyses it is now possible to present recommendations for destination managers to raise the destination's web reputation: shortcomings for Ravenna's web reputation are primarily concerned with (i) accommodation, (ii) the overall perception of the destination and (iii) travel experience.

4.4.1 Bellinzona Turismo manager interview

Interview with Franco Ruinelli, head of Bellinzona Turismo.

Introduction to the website: the website is extremely important for Bellinzona since it has be listed by UNESCO world heritage. The online communication of Bellinzona is split into two websites: (i) the first one is more institutional and linked to the general tourism, while (ii) the second one is totally devoted to the UNESCO castles. Moreover, Bellinzona Tourism has been entrusted by the Canton for the correct administration and communication of the UNESCO attractions. Given this, it has been decided to create two different websites.

Most important sections on the websites: the most important contents are the agenda of events and the castles descriptions. Additionally, guided tours and schools tours are very important: a specific guide for primary schools has been realized by the tourism office in collaboration with the Lombardy region (Italy) for primary schools.

Type of Bellinzona visitors: visitors stay in Bellinzona fewer than two days. The city tries to attract visitors from the nearest lake regions (Maggiore and Lugano) in order to give them a brief cultural experience. In any case, over the whole year schools are the most important public.

Other activity coupled with the website: there are no eCommerce activity on the website. Attractions and hotels manage their eCommerce activity by themselves (e.g. The Teatro Sociale di Bellinzona is starting to sell tickets online thanks to a specific ticket platform). Guided tour reservations, as well as castle room reservations, are done online thanks to an online form which generates an email.

Integration of web2.0 instruments web2.0 could be an issue in the coming years. Mr. Ruinelli thinks that there could be problems related to the freedom given to users.

4.4.2 Bellinzona Turismo content and functionalities analysis

In order to understand how the DMO website of Bellinzona is positioned in its relevant market, a content and functionalities analysis among bellinzonaturismo.ch and other destinations' websites has been performed. Content and functionalities analysis has been presented in the methodology section (Chapter 3) and is based on the list of indicators provided in annex two. Particularly bellinzonaturismo.ch has been compared with the Swiss suggested city breaks (listed on Myswitzerlnad.com), regional capitals and UNESCO cities. Unfortunately, not all the suggested cities breaks, regional capitals and UNESCO-listed cities have a dedicated website for the analysis.

The destinations used in this part of the study are:

1. basel.com	9. zug-tourismus.ch	17. maggiore.ch
2. biel-seeland.ch	10. zuerich.com	18. bellinzonaturismo.ch
3. thun.ch/en/tourism.html	11. fribourgtourism.ch	19. neuchateltourisme.ch
4. martigny.com	12. geneve-tourisme.ch	20. sarnen-tourism.ch
5. berninfo.com	13. luzern.org	21. st.gallen-bodensee.ch
6. luganoturismo.ch	14. montreuxtourism.ch	22. winterthurtourism.ch
7. Siontourism.ch	15. churtourismus.ch	
8. lausanne-tourisme.ch	16. solothurn-city.ch	

The grid was filled in February 2009. Among the 172 indicators and the 22 websites used as a sample, bellinzonaturismo.ch ranked in 21st position with 44 indicators (figure 45).
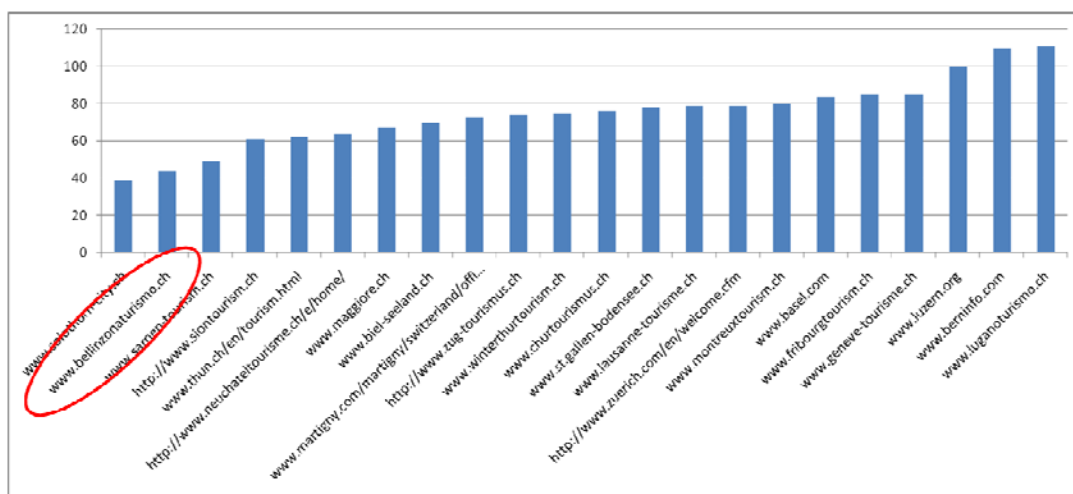
(Figure 45 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, content and functionalities ranking)

Then bellinzonaturismo.ch has been compared with the other websites in the sample. The indicators of each macro category have been aggregated and studied (figure 46).
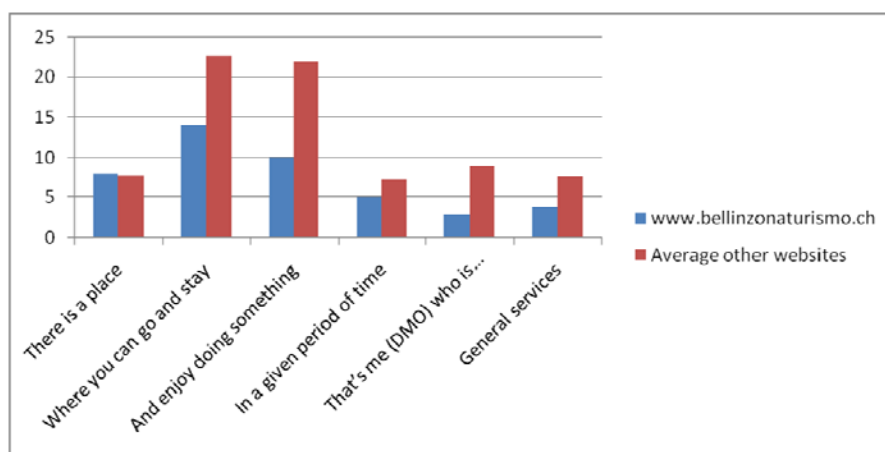
(Figure 46 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, content and functionalities ranking Bellinzona and average of other website)

In general terms, the Bellinzona DMO website is performing poorly with respect to the other Swiss websites in the sample. Only in the first category, "There is a place" does it outperform the information competitors, while in the other categories it loses several indicators with respect to the other websites.

Of course content and functionalities analysis gives back only a general overview of the website and of the external world. Having all the indicators do not mean to have the best website. Therefore, the Bellinzona website will to be studied in depth.

4.4.3 Bellinzona Turismo usability

As described in the methodology chapter (Chapter three), the method used to investigate usability of the website was Mile+ - Milano Lugano Evaluation Method (Triacca et al., 2005); the evaluation was based on the Destination Usability Kit (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009) which counted 8 user profiles (i.e. description of possible users of the application), 10 goals (i.e. high level objectives of the possible users), 72 tasks (i.e. atomic actions which the user can perform on the application) and 40 evaluation heuristics (i.e. evaluation metrics).

22 usability issues were found as a result of the analysis. The three most important usability issues were isolated and presented below; those issues are most important, as they affect the major number of tasks in the usability kit.
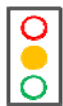
Accuracy of information: it refers to the accuracy of the information presented in the website and to the degree of precision in which a text is written in the website.
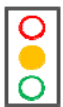
Navigation position consistency: the second level menu is creatively positioned in different positions within the website. This would confuse the user while navigating the website.
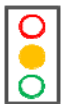
Backward navigation: it refers to the fact that users can go back and forth during the navigation without using the "back button" of the browser.

Accuracy

Accuracy refers to the degree of precision by which a test is written and formatted within the web page.

Number of tasks affected by this problem: 4 (T1.8, T2.1, T2.7, T2.8).

Example: (T1.8) Find deals for visiting the attraction (e.g. tourist card)

The website offers valuable deals for visiting the attractions, in particular a tourist card advertised there. Some problems arise with the link position on the website and with the formatting of the text within the page offering the card.

(Figure 47 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, text accuracy)

Once the user accesses the "cultural pass" (1) page the content is inaccurate and the formatting is wired (2). There is no possibility of buying the card online and, moreover, no contacts are displayed on the page. Without references to the physical world, it would be impossible for tourists to access this card. The card is advertised on the website, but no references of possible ways to buy it are given.

Navigation Position Consistency

Navigation position consistency is related to the consistent position of the navigation menu throughout the whole website. Users can feel lost while navigating the website if they lack structured information.

Number of tasks affected by this problem: 4 (T1.7, T2.1, T2.7, T2.8, T7.1).

Example: (T7.1) Find the online shop

The shop section could seem to the user to be a real online shop, but it is not. In reality, it is a showcase of all the articles that could be found at the real shop (located in the tourism office). Some usability issues could be found within this section of the website. The contextual menu which appears in the section could lead to a usability problem of position consistency(figure 48).

(Figure 48 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, navigation position consistency I)

Contextual menu is similar to the one opened in under the main label in the root menu. It is a repetition and could confuse the user.
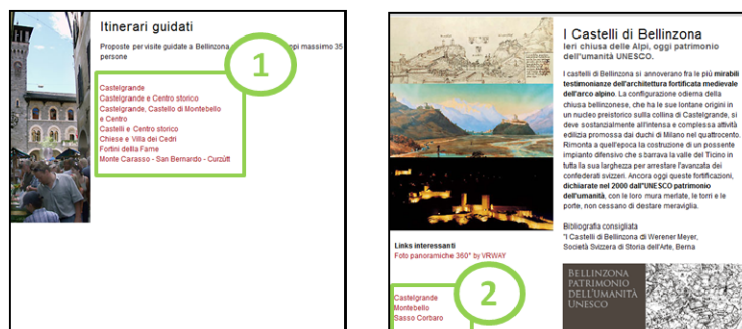
(Figure 49 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, navigation position consistency II)

Contextual menus appear every time in a different position in the web site (1 - 2) . The users do feel disoriented by these changes. The colour of the menu is red, while the text is black, and this is the only way to distinguish links within the website.

Backward Navigation

Backward navigation refers to the possibility of navigating backward within the website. This navigation should not be demanded to the browser buttons but it should be designed in whole the website.

Number of tasks affected by this problem: 2 (T2.8, T3.4).

Example: (T1.1) Find visit path along the attraction
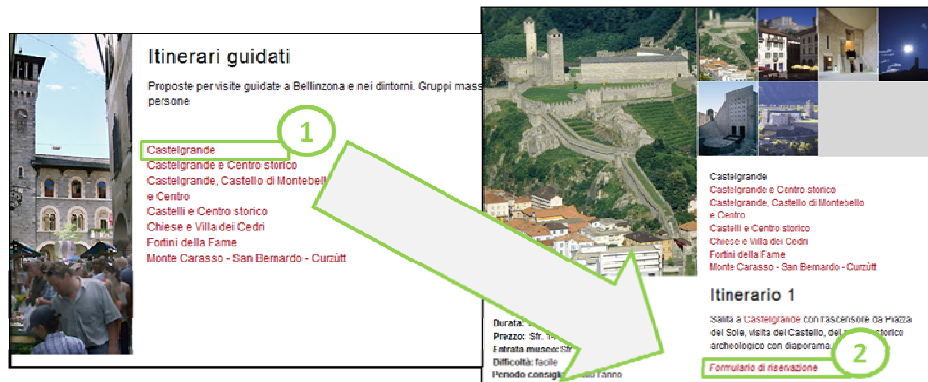
(Figure 50 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, backward navigation)

When the user chooses the path (1), along with the description of the path comes a reservation form (2). Clicking on the form link, the documents open in the same website window with no possibility of navigating back to the page on which the user waspreviously.

5.3.4 Usages analysis

The log file analysis carried out during the considered period (1st of February 2008- 9th of July 2008) reveals that bellinzonaturismo.ch received 3,881,588 total hits, for a total number of 56,161 unique visitors. Log files analysis has been done filtering robots, crawlers, internal access and reserved areas.

The most relevant keywords used by visitors to reach the website are the ones in table 17.

#	Search Term	Hits
1	bellinzona	22,498
2	bellinzona turismo	2,801
3	castelli di bellinzona	1,122
4	castelli bellinzona	1,083
5	ente turistico bellinzona	799
6	www.bellinzonaturismo.ch	492
7	castel grande bellinzona	449
8	Curzutt	371
9	turismo bellinzona	345

(Table 17 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, search keywords)

Visitors were mostly European (2,801,482) and North Americana (524,284); but also some visits from Asia (26,539), South America (15,379), Oceania (6,626), Africa (661) were counted (Figure 51).

(Figure 51 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch - visitors map overlay source Funnel Web Analyzer)

The most relevant page visited was the home page (38,137 hits), followed by different pages all about the castles. It has here been decided to focus attention on the language: Bellinzona's website has access to castle content in four different languages: Italian (15,215 hits), German (8,453), English (2,965 hits), and French (675 hits).

Figure 52 proposes a graph of Bellinzona pages accessed by users (from Funnel Web Analyzer).
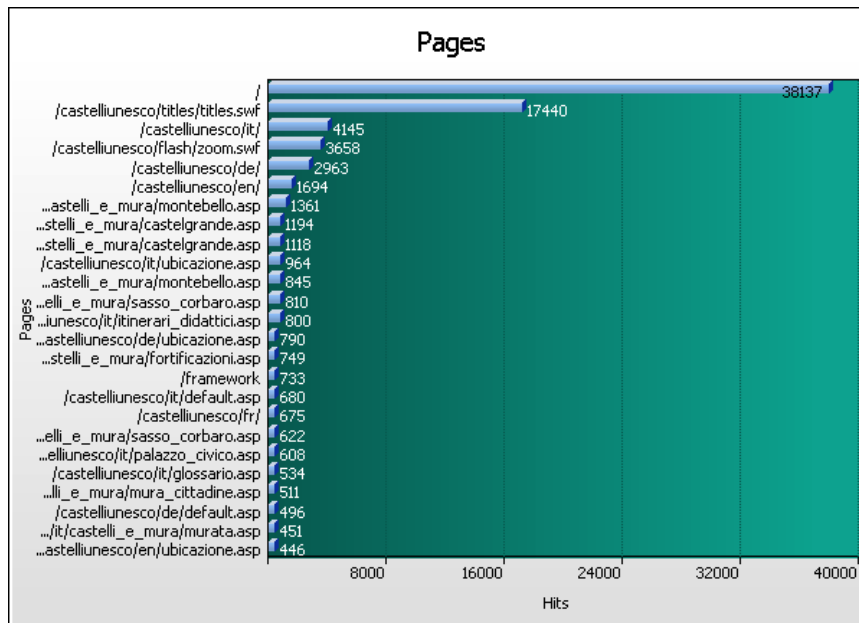
(Figure 52 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, page views source Funnel Web Analyzer)

Users' Paths and Goals

Main path observations helped in shaping and enhancing the goals and tasks of the usability kit. Users' paths on the website could be easily translated into Usability kit elements (namely the scenarios, where tasks may be inferred and created).

The most recurrent paths are the ones related with the castles in all the above mentioned languages (20,269), but two interesting paths were highlighted: the one related to the hotel guide (PDF document download – 2492 user sessions) and the one about the audio-guide service (853 sessions)

4.3.5 Bellinzona Turismo content analysis

As for the other case studies described above, a positioning analysis has been carried out in order to understand the Google and Yahoo positioning of the two websites. As for the case of Ravenna, also a local positioning analysis has been carried out because all the keywords results were in Italian. In this case, two local search engines were considered: the Italian and Swiss version of Google and Yahoo.

		www.bellinzonaturismo.ch		www.bellinzonaunesco.ch	
	Keywords	Google.com	Yahoo.com	Google.com	Yahoo.com
1	bellinzona	NL	5	NL	NL
2	bellinzona turismo	2	10	NL	NL
3	castelli di bellinzona	1	1	7	12
4	castelli bellinzona	1	19	10	NL
5	ente turistico bellinzona	1	14	NL	NL
6	www.bellinzonaturismo.ch	1	1	9	NL
7	castel grande bellinzona	1	NL	NL	NL
8	Curzutt	3	16	NL	NL
9	turismo bellinzona	3	1	NL	NL

		www.bellinzonaturismo.ch			
	Keywords	Google.it	Yahoo.it	Google.ch	Yahoo.ch
1	bellinzona	4	5	2	5
2	bellinzona turismo	1	1	1	1
3	castelli di bellinzona	1	5	1	5
4	castelli bellinzona	1	3	1	3
5	ente turistico bellinzona	2	9	2	0
6	www.bellinzonaturismo.ch	1	1	1	1
7	castel grande bellinzona	2	9	6	9
8	Curzutt	5	4	NL	4
9	turismo bellinzona	1	1	2	1

		www.bellinzonaunesco.ch			
	Keywords	Google.it	Yahoo.it	Google.ch	Yahoo.ch
1	bellinzona	22	NL	4	NL
2	bellinzona turismo	NL	8	NL	8
3	castelli di bellinzona	4	3	2	3
4	castelli bellinzona	6	7	15	7
5	ente turistico bellinzona	1	NL	1	NL
6	www.bellinzonaturismo.ch	25	NL	NL	NL
7	castel grande bellinzona	10	20	3	26
8	Curzutt	NL	NL	NL	NL
9	turismo bellinzona	NL	NL	NL	NL

(Tables 18, 19, 20 – Bellinzonaturismo.ch, positioning analysis for Bellinzona websites)

What is possible to argue from these tables is that bellinzona UNESCO website is not listed both in the international search engines (google.com and yahoo.com) and it is poorly listed within the local search engines (Google.it/Yahoo.it and Google.ch/Yahoo.ch). Besides, bellinzonaturismo.ch seems to rank relatively well both at a national and at an international level. This indicates that the primary way to access the Bellinzona UNESCO website is via the Bellinzona Turismo website (or through direct access – i.e. knowing the full address of the website).

Coding results: brick and mortar/ mere online presence

In order to understand the range of competitors of the Bellinzona DMO website in the online tourism space, 18 search activities (9 key words for each of the two search engines) were performed. The first three results per page were considered as of key relevance. The 540 search results (270 for each search engine) were qualitatively organized and classified in order to have a clear understanding of the websites galaxy around the destination. Unique results were isolated and divided in three (2+1) categories, namely:

(i) BMOW – "Brick and mortar" organizations' websites,

(ii) MOOWAI – Mere online organizations' websites and individual websites

(iii) NR/NW, not relevant/not working.

Among the first group (brick and mortar), Bellinzona's websites were highlighted and among the second websites group (mere online) the ones with User Generated Content (UGC) were isolated. Then, as described in the previous section, nine search activities were performed on each search engine (namely Google and Yahoo) at a given moment in time (February 2008).

	Unique results	BMOW	BellinzonaTurismo	MOOWAY	UGC	NW/NR
Google.com	212	82	14	114	50	16
Yahoo.com	196	88	34	88	31	20

(Table 21 - Bellinzonaturismo.ch, BMOW and MOOWAI unique results classification)

Google (Table 21, first row) retrieved 212 unique results (i.e. unique websites) out of 270 total websites. Among them, 82 were *"Brick and mortar" websites* (BMOW), while 114 *Mere online organizations' websites and individual websites"* (MOOWAI). On one side, among the BMOW, 14 were from the official website of Bellinzona. On the other side, among the MOOWAI, 50 were hosting User Generated Contents (UGC).

Yahoo, (Table 21, second row) retrieved 196 unique results, 88 BMOW websites and 88 MOOWAI websites. The official bellinzona tourism websites appeared 34 times, while the number of UGC websites among the MOOWAI was 31. The last column of the table shows not working (NW) or irrelevant (NR) websites.

Coding results: mere online websites description

On one side, taking into account the official DMO website, the analyzed items were mostly factual (95.3%), and at least there were no arguments (4.7%). Those items expressed in the majority of the were cases neutral arguments (85.7%) or at least positive ones (14.3%). On the other side, unofficial websites promoted not only factual

arguments (62%), but also emotional ones (12.1%). Among all these arguments no negative value judgments were present, but rather only positive (69.3%) and at least neutral (30.7%).

Arguments	Official DMO	Unofficial
No Arguments	4.7%	25.9%
Factual	95.3%	62.0%
Emotional	0.0%	12.1%
Positive	14.3%	69.3%
Neutral	85.7%	30.7%
Negative	0%	0.0%

(Table 22 – bellinzonaturismo.ch arguments value)

Coding Results: mere online arguments results

As in the previous cases, the attention was focused on the mere online websites: as in the previous cases, Web 1.1 websites were the majority (49.4%) but also media sharing websites were relevant for this case (21.4%), then virtual communities (9.6%), general social media (6%), consume reviews, blogs and blog aggregators (4.8% each). Finally, general social networks reached 4.2%.
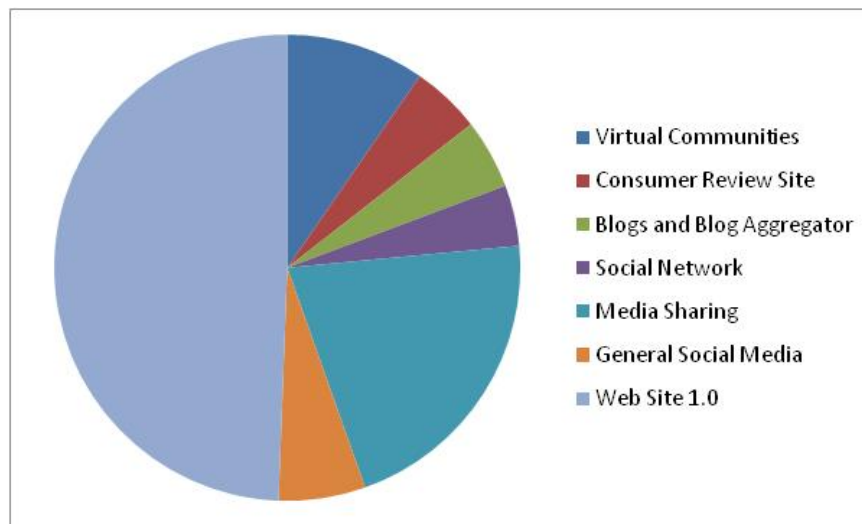
(Figure 53 - Bellinzonaturismo.ch, information competitors distribution)

Topics were mostly related to attractions (38%) and the destination in general (31.3%).

Taking a deeper look into the sub-item sphere, it is possible to note that sub-items are present only in the attractions topic (62%), in the accommodations' (27%) and in the destination and news (8.10% and 3% respectively).

Topic	Item	Subitem
Destination	31.3%	8.10%
Travel Experience	1.2%	
Accomodation	9.0%	27%
Restaurant/Pub/Social Life	1.8%	
Attraction	38.0%	62%
Event	4.2%	
News	0.6%	3%
Other	13.9%	

(Table 23 - Bellinzonaturismo.ch, items and subitems distribution)

This lack of sub-items in the travel experience, restaurant/pubs /social life, events and others will also influence the analysis of value judgement, which will be handled in the following paragraphs.

The analyzed items presented, as a whole, positive value judgements (or at least neutral) in all the topics described above.
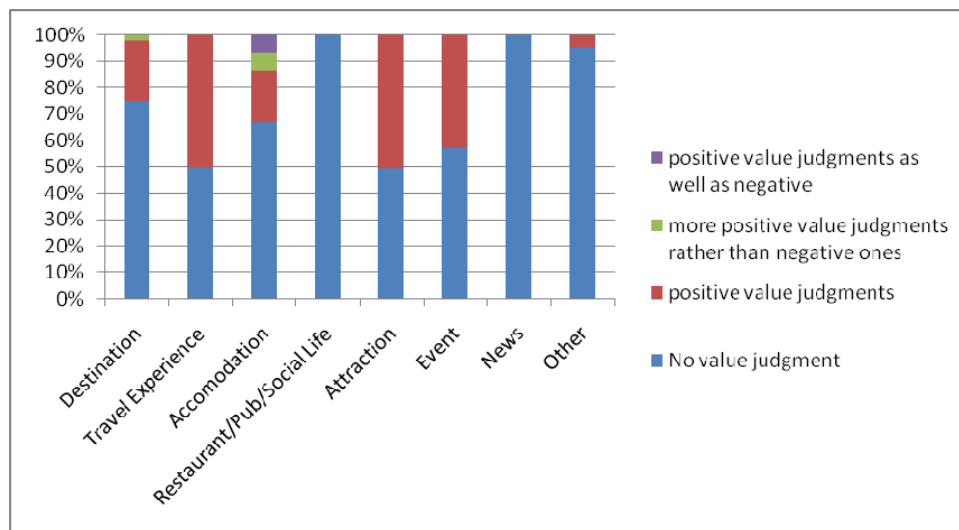
(Figure 54 –bellinzonaturismo.ch, items value judgments)

Only in a few categories (such as destination and accommodation) are there traces of negative value judgements. Other categories presented a positive, or at least neutral value judgement. The same distribution is repeated for sub-items. ASeveral categories are presented as described above. (figure 55).
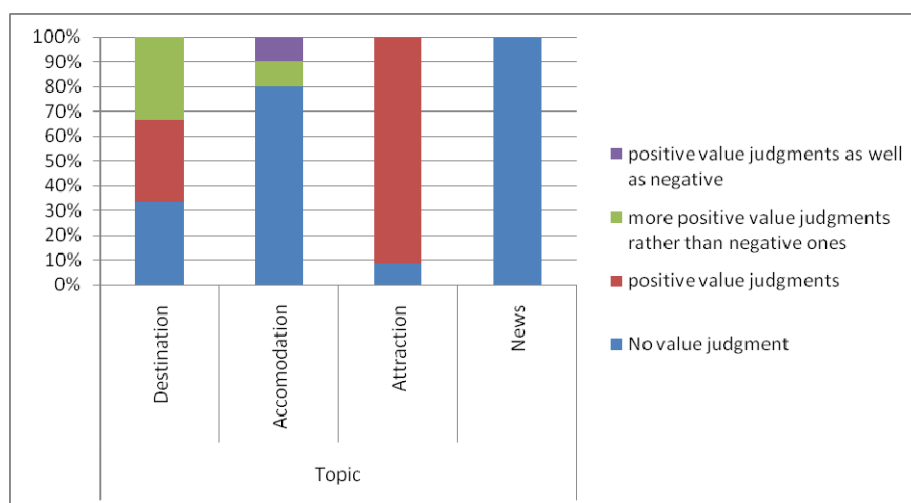
(Figure 55 – bellinzonaturismo.ch, subitems value judgments)

05.

Discussion & Conclusions

Chapter introduction

This chapter provides discussion of the results and conclusions; it is also discussed the main limitations of the research and future steps are suggested.

5.1 Discussion

This research investigates cultural destinations' online communication from different angles and perspectives. New media in cultural destinations' communication are essential to market the destination on a broad level. In general terms it is possible to say that online communication is perceived as essential for the destination overall communication.

The survey (Chapter 4) has been helpful to investigate and describe the cultural tourism domain at high level: although there has been a low response rate some hints on the differences on contents and publics between cultural and leisure destination can be highlighted.

Moving to case studies, usability studies and usages analysis demonstrated that there is an overall good quality of the information and of the interface/design, and that two destination out of three (Bellinzona is the exception) are well positioned in terms of content and functionalities analysis.

In semi-structured stakeholder interviews (i.e. case studies - Chapter 4) it has been noticed that online communication is a crucial issue for destinations. Moreover, it is particularly relevant for the UNESCO-listed destinations, entrusted by UNESCO itself and by the public administration (e.g. region or state) to administrate and market the listed sites. Case studies websites (except in the case of Bellinzona) ranked quite high with respect to the other information competitors (i.e. content and functionalities analysis, Chapter 4).

Destinations' managers are also trying to target their online communication (i.e. the message itself) to specific publics (e.g. teachers and school), but in analyzing semi-structured interviews, only Bellinzona has specific guided tours and guides for schools.

Although in the manager interview the issue do not completely arise (but within the survey it has been clearly highlighted), MOOWAI (Mere Online Organizations' Websites and Individual websites) represent a context that destination managers should take into account. Official information competitors studied within the content and functionalities methodology represent a benchmark for a destination website, but they are marketing the destination in a factual way. What seems to be crucial is identifying a way to make sense out of the huge amount of contents produced by users within the so-called web2.0.

The concept of reputation seems to be an interesting way to consider web2.0 contents for tourism destinations as it is considered to be a major asset for individuals, firms, organizations and countries. The term has been defined by the Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913) as "the estimation in which one is held; character in public opinion; the character to attribute to a person, thing or action […]". One of the

latest and most complete definitions of reputation was presented by Solove (2007): the author explained it as a core component of the identity, defining reputation as the opinion of the public, which is formed upon the behaviour and character of an individual, firm or country. Fombrun, Gardberg, and Sever (1999) explained that, when the concept of reputation is linked to corporate or business field, there is still disagreement on how to use or define it. Dowling (2001) complemented this definition by arguing that the sum of all the activities performed by a firm contributes to the creation of its reputation. Reputation is created or formed based upon information. This information, which might come from different sources (e.g. press releases, word-of-mouth, advertisement, etc.), is the result of all behaviors, actions or activities performed by a firm. From this information, each individual then creates her/his own personal perception or reputation.

Thus, in order to create a positive reputation, it is important to control the information and actions of the organization, taking into consideration how they will be perceived by current and potential consumers, as well as by the general public.

Dowling (2008) complemented this idea by stating that the way to achieve "good" reputation is by creating value for stakeholders. The tourism industry, as any other service industry, sells intangible products characterized mainly by being inseparable (production and consumption occurring at the same time), perishable (services cannot be stored and consumed at a later point in time) and heterogeneous (substantial differences in the services due to the human factors as production inputs) (Sirakayaa & Woodsideb, 2005).

Dowling (2001) argued that firms in the services or experience industry, and tourism is one of them, should invest more in developing their image and reputation. Furthermore, he explained that due to the inseparability and heterogenous nature of the tourism products, customers are keener to select tourism service providers upon their reputation. For this reason, tourism destinations definitively need to manage their reputation.

The study on MOOWAI websites proved the fact that an online reputation (studied with the content analysis) exists. The aggregation of these online feedbacks (Dellarocas,2003) can be studied and managed. Aggregating all the content analysis results from the three case studies it is possible to further investigate the reputation phenomenon. MOOWAI websites are divided among the case studies in the following way: 33% are related to visitbath.co.uk, 56% are related to ravennaturismo.it, and 11% are related to bellinzonaturismo.ch.

Table 24 shows how social media are distributed around the three different case studies. Websites 1.0 have got a strong role within the online tourism domain: they are the majority for Ravenna and Bellinzona, while the tourism online domain of Bath seems to be composed mostly of virtual communities. Consumer review websites are relevant

both in the case of Bath and Ravenna, while for Bellinzona media sharing websites are really relevant.

	visitbath.co.uk	ravennaturismo.it	bellinzonaturismo.ch
Virtual Communities	37.5%	2.9%	9.6%
Consumer Review Website	21.0%	15.1%	4.8%
Blogs & Blogs Aggregators	1.2%	2.4%	4.8%
Social Network	2.1%	0.0%	4.2%
Media Sharing	1.0%	3.8%	21.1%
General Social Media	1.7%	9.2%	6.1%
Website 1.0	35.5%	66.6%	49.4%

(Table 24 – social media distribution in the tourism online domain for the three case studies)

Reputation is then created (and should be monitored and managed) also within these websites.

Table 25 shows that social media, in general terms, are transmitting positive value judgements; only for consumer review websites is the value judgement is spread across all the different categories (with an 8% of negative value judgment). Blogs, meanwhile, are spreading a generally positive value judgment about the destination (85.3%).

	No value judgment	positive value judgments	more positive value judgments rather than negative ones	positive value judgments as well as negative	more negative value judgments rather than positive	negative value judgments
Virtual Communities	28.3%	56.1%	8.0%	3.8%	2.5%	1.3%
Consumer Review Website	26.7%	25.1%	19.5%	14.3%	6.4%	8.0%
Blogs & Blogs Aggregators	8.8%	85.3%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Social Network	39.9%	10.1%	44.4%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%
Media Sharing	41.8%	55.4%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%
General Social Media	29.7%	69.3%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Website 1.0	47.9%	48.5%	1.4%	2.1%	0.0%	0.1%

(Table 25 – social media value judgement in the tourism online domain for the three case studies)

In conclusion, after having analyzed the website typologies where the destination online reputation is created, it is critically important to destinations' managers to understand which kind of websites are more likely to be monitored for bad reputation of the destination.

What is also happening in social media communication is that the user has also become the information player (not only the information consumer), such that it is important to understand to whom to target the online communication. In general terms, most of the analyzed contents (70.5%) are impersonal (i.e. pure description), but 28% are written in first person (1.5% are written in third person).

	First person	Third Person	Impersonal
Virtual Communities	43.5%	3.0%	53.5%
Consumer Review Website	64.1%	1.6%	34.3%
Blogs & Blogs Aggregators	61.8%	0.0%	38.2%
Social Network	66.6%	5.6%	27.8%
Media Sharing	62.2%	0.0%	37.8%
General Social Media	4.0%	0.0%	96.0%
Website 1.0	10.8%	2.2%	87.0%

(Table 26 – who is speaking on social media the tourism online domain for the three case studies)

What is happening in consumer review websites, blogs and blogs aggregators and social network and media sharing is than the first person (the user as a subject of the communication) is very relevant; therefore, online activities and communication should be more personal and targeted not only to a generic user but to the real user who is discussing the destination issue (positive or negative) online.

5.2 Conclusions

This research gives an overview of the current state of the art of cultural destinations' online communication, analyzing and describing the domain thanks to a survey and to three case studies in three different countries. This research contributes to the analysis of a specific domain - cultural destinations' online communication - from an empirical viewpoint.

Unfortunately the low response rate of the survey (20% - Chapter 4) showed that there is more work to do in the field to deeply investigate some of the presented research questions: generalizations are not appropriate, but some hints will be useful for future research in the field.

Moreover, the concept of destinations' online reputation has been here studied and discussed and represents a first step in the online communication management for destinations. The following paragraphs will analyze each hypothesis presented in the dissertation.

In general terms, it is possible to argue that among cultural destinations the type of content presented on the website (i.e. the message) plays a strong role. The importance of cultural and historical content is crucial for cultural destinations (please refer to survey, Chapter 4). Therefore, cultural destinations are spreading online quite a different message (Hp1) which is more based onto the cultural assets of the destination. The case of Ravenna (see Chapter 5) is emblematic: the tourism office of Ravenna is coordinating two different realities: one is the cultural destination (Ravenna city Center), while the other one is the seaside (i.e. 35 km of seaside). Nevertheless, the website of Ravenna in

terms of contents concentrates on the cultural aspects of the city, using news and events as a vehicle more for marketing the city than the seaside.

Publics are also slightly different. Teachers, schools and other "learning" publics are crucial for cultural heritage destinations (Hp2), but usages analysis within the case studies does not give any suggestion that website visitors seek cultural contents. In practice, the website of Bath leverages accommodation and things to do, while Ravenna mostly concentrates on events and Bellinzona on general services (such as list of hotels and audio guides). Recalling the Mc Kercher classification of cultural tourists (Mc Kercher, 2002), where the most important target publics for cultural destinations are the purposeful cultural tourist and sightseeing cultural tourist, one may argue that if the cultural destinations should leverage on these two publics, it can effectively attract more purposefully cultural tourists and sightseeing cultural tourists. In the case of Bellinzona, some initiatives have been promoted for these specific target users (such as the PDF guide for primary schools). In other cases (such as Ravenna), destination managers are understanding the importance of these specific publics and are starting to create new strategies for attracting specific publics. Finally, as demonstrated by the Ravenna interview, the website is also a vehicle for researchers and academics interested in the world heritage. Sometimes the Ravenna tourism office receives requests for information or meetings by researchers who need to know more about the destination and its cultural sites.

As regards the message quality (Hp3), it is possible to argue that although from survey responses not perceived as a relevant issue, the case studies demonstrate that there is a improvement margin for destinations in assessing communication quality. In fact, of 65% of respondents recognizing the importance of quality as critical success factor, very few of them actually performed quality studies such as usability.

Only in the case of Bath the usability study performed on the website was taken into account to enhance the website. Mrs. Jasmine Simmons, online communication manager of Bath Tourism Plus, was very interested and committed to the usability analysis, and after the report was delivered the website slightly changes with regards to the usability issues underlined.

Indeed, the case of VisitBath is quite different from the other two cases studied (chapter 5). Bath Tourism Plus is a public company, part of the council of the city of Bath, and aggregates all the different attractions and accommodations on the website in order to sell tickets and room nights (and gadgets in the shop area). The website of Bath acts as a virtual hub for all the stakeholders involved within the destination (Inversini and Cantoni, 2009), leveraging the cultural assets of the destination to sell more products (i.e. attractions ticket and room nights). The other analyzed cases do not implement a business model both at administrative level and on the website level; usability is not a crucial issue for them-- in other words, it is a "nice-to-have", not a "must-have".

Finally, content analysis on destination websites as well as on long tail players (Anderson, 2004) has been carried out. What is clear is that destinations' managers are not fully aware of what is happening in the web2.0 (this is confirmed both from the survey and from the semi-structured interviews). What has been demonstrated with the content analysis is that long tail players are spreading on the net the same content as the official destination players (Inversini and Buhalis, 2009). Few survey respondents are taking into consideration to monitor, answer or partially integrate some of the information published by end users online (only Ravenna managers do monitor through back-links what is said about the destination, but the methodology is unstructured and time consuming). Nevertheless survey respondents thought that a kind of destination online reputation does exist. The main differences among long tail players and official websites are related to the writing style of these contents online and with the value judgement expressed by users: actually, destination websites are marketing the place mostly in a factual way (Hp4), expressing neutral value judgements or at least positive ones. Besides, long tail players (i.e. MOOWAI) are talking about the destination more in an emotional way (Hp5), expressing not only positive value judgements but also negative ones. This means that there could be a huge market to be explored about UGC in tourism, not only assessing its presence, but through finding, harvesting and analyzing those contents thus determining the added value..

The discussion it has has also revealed which MOOWAI websites concur to reach end users' attention. The value judgements have been highlighted and the subjective way of writing in web2.0 has been demonstrated.

In general terms it is possible to argue that cultural tourism online communication is a phenomenon, which requires more attention. Although in the recent years the advent of the internet revolutionized tourism communication and the way DMO managers are marketing their destinations (e.g. Buhalis, 2003), there is a long way to go before the ICT will be fully exploited by cultural destinations. What seems clear is that destination managers are perceiving that if fully exploited, ICT and the internet can generate a tremendous added value for the destination. However, in most of the cases the internet seems to be a "nice-to-have" tool for them. In other words, most of the destinations have a website up and running but the overall strategy is (yet) undefined.

As regards the Website Communication Model (Cantoni and Tardini, 2006), it seems clear that pillar one (contents and functionality), pillar two (interface) and pillar three (administrators) are launched and functional (although some revisions, such as quality management are required), while pillar four (end users) and the fifth element (relevant market) are far from being integrated within the overall strategy. Improvement for destinations' online communication could start with the understanding of their potential publics and with the creation of an overall strategy (content and services) for these publics (somehow this process seems to be started, but the research shows that it could be improved at various levels). Besides having a clear online strategy, destination managers should care also about what is happening out there in the so-called virtual world. Often, users freely comment on given destination items (e.g. accommodations,

attractions, etc). The so-called user generated contents can be seen as an aggregation of online feedback that can generate a kind of destination web reputation. Destination managers should be at least aware of what is happening outside their destination and what users are saying about the destination in order to start effective online marketing initiatives and possibly even act at the "physical" level, as well.

5.3 Limitations and Future Work

This research act as a ground breaking work. Two instruments such as a survey (at the macro level) and three case studies (at the micro level) have been used but some limitations and future works to be performed in a second round research could be foreseen.

5.3.1 Research Limitations

Survey response rate: the redemption of the online survey has been quite low (20%). This is due to the fact that only three countries have been chosen for the analysis. From one side, not all the destinations have an active website, and on the other side, in some cases, although the website was active, the email was left unanswered. This low response rate allowed to describe the domain without drawing generalization on the selected domain.

Reputation analysis: the reputation analysis is time consuming. Content analysis needs strongly trained coders who must agree not only on the categories but also on how to consider the different value judgements within the items. Coders for this research have been trained and the inter-coders reliability (Riffe et al., 1998) was acceptable. Moreover, content analysis of web reputation consider only a specific moment in time and can be considered as a snap shot of the situation in a specific moment of time.

5.3.2 Second round research

Future work is of high relevance following this research. This research can be considered a ground breaking work; the study of the specific cultural tourism online communication should be better investigated because it represent a "*unique*": different stakeholders are involved at high level (e.g. destination managers, hotels managers, attractions managers , UNESCO and so on) and the DMO website should act as a hub promoting all the involved stakeholders. Thus, cultural destinations present very peculiar communication needs. within the online tourism domain, the interplay between cultural assets and destinations' assets should be harmonically represented.

Furthermore, cultural destinations are very interesting from a communicative perspective because they are complex organizations with complex assets and variegated publics.

What is needed in future work is to better investigate the domain. This could include for example the possibility of enlarging the sample for the analysis to all the destinations that host UNESCO listed sites and collecting more data with different strategies (e.g. telephone calls with destination managers) in order to understand whether there is a shared vision about the Website Communication Model pillars.

Finally, on one side, the results obtained by the above presented survey and by the case studies reinforced the hypotheses (i.e. differences among cultural and leisure destinations in terms of contents and publics) and can be used as preliminary results.

On the other side, managers should be aware of the possible communication strategies that they can undertake in the online environment. Especially in terms of information competition, destination managers should be aware of what is happening around their destinations in the so-called online tourism domain. Hence, destinations need to manage their online presence and their online reputation holistically, attempting to coordinate the players offering information about themselves and also amalgamating the entire range of information and service providers.

06

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ANNEX 1 – Online Survey
ANNEX 2 – Content and Functionalities grid
ANNEX 3 – Codebook for Content Analysis
ANNEX 4 – Usability Kit (MiLE+)

Annex 1

Stakeholder Survey

The population under investigation is composed of destination managers operating in three different countries (Switzerland, England, and Italy). Particular criteria for selecting the population are:

- Switzerland: City Breaks (MySwitzerland), Cantons' capitals, UNESCO cities, Regions.

- England: City Breaks (VisitENgland), Regions' capitals, UNESCO cities, Regions.

- Italy: City Breaks, (Enit.it), Regions' capitals, UNESCO Cities, Regions.

The population size can be estimated to be around 205. 70 of these tourism managers use no websites or other modalities of online communication. The population is therefore restricted to the remaining portion of professionals (N=135).

Response rate was 20% (n=27). Reasons for the high dropout rate are different. At the general level it is possible to argue that managers could be poorly motivated to answer an online survey without any reward; nevertheless, some of the email addresses given on the website were not working, and some websites were not updated, demonstrating a lack of accuracy. Attempts to maximize the response rate were accomplished via 3 reminders.

Survey questions and structure

PART ONE: Demographic Information & Destination Information

1.1 Please insert your website address (e.g. www.city-xy.com)

1.2 How many years have you been working for this website/company?

1.3 What is your role within the website/company?

2. On average, how long does a tourist visit your destination?

1 single day / 2-3 days / 3-7 days/ More than a week

2.1 Are tourists returning to your destination?
Yes/No

3. When do tourists come to your destination (presences peaks)? (Please choose more than one month)

January / February / March / April / May / June / July / August / September / October / November / December

3.1 Do you know why (e.g. seasonality)?

4. Which is the average number of users (unique visitors) on your website per month?

5. Which are the months of highest access peaks on your website? (Please choose also more than one month)

January / February / March / April / May / June / July / August / September / October / November / December

5.1 Do you know the reason for these access peaks?

PART TWO: Content and Functionalities / Interface

6. What are the most relevant contents of your website? (1 not relevant – 5 very relevant)

- Destination Overview

- Place to stay

- Attractions and Things to Do

- News /What's On

- Events

- Eating and Drinking

- History and Culture

- Suggested and organized Tours

- Internal Transportation

- Maps

- Photo galleries, videos and rich media

- City /Area Guide and brochures

- Other Tourists' Experiences

- Online shop

7.Do you have downloadable items on your website?
Yes / No

7.1 If yes please specify:

- City/Attraction Guides

- Pictures

- Maps

- Podcasts/Videos

8. Who designed and created the website?

Internal people / External Agency / I do not know

8.1. Who is in charge of the technical / graphic maintenance (e.g. graphic design, database administration)?

Internal people / External Agency / I do not know

8.2. Who is in charge of contents maintenance?

Internal people / External Agency / I do not know

9. Have you ever run a quality test? (multiple choices available)

No / Usability / User testing / Usages analysis

10. Please rate the following statements about Web2.0 applications (examples are: social software & social networks - Tripadvisor, YouTube, Flickr -, repositories of user-generated contents - Blogs, Wikipedia, Wikitravel) (1 do not agree at all – 5 completely agree)

- I have integrated some Web2.0 features in my website

- I am planning to integrate some Web2.0 features in my website in 2009

- Web2.0 is an increasingly important communication medium for tourism

- Web2.0 is a *Nice to Have* communication medium

- My website points to some external web2.0 sites

- I am planning to let my website pointing to some external web2.0 sites in 2009

- I do not care about web2.0

- Many users of my website acquire information trough other web2.0 websites

10.1 Do you pay attention to what people is saying about your destination online (personal websites, blogs, review etc.)?Please rate the following statements (1 do not agree at all – 5 completely agree).

- No, it is not important because our marketing is mostly offline

- I know that could be important but we do not pay attention to it

- Yes, what people is saying online is interesting

- Yes, what people is saying online is interesting, we also care about our accommodations and services

10.2 Do you think that exist a kind of "destination web reputation"?
Yes / No / I do not know
10.3 Do you have any comment about that?

PART THREE: Users

11. Please indicate (from your data and/or experience) who are the relevant users of your website: (1 not relevant – 5 very relevant)

- Families

- Teachers/Schools

- Young people (18-30 years)

- Single tourists (above 30 years)

- Business tourists

- Elderly, retired people

11.2 Do you provide special sections targeted to these users in the website?

Yes / No

PART FOUR: Managers

12. The main goals of your website are: (1 not relevant - 5 very relevant)

- Drive tourists' attention on the destination/attraction

- Provoke tourists' interests

- Augment touirsts' desire

- Enable tourists' actions

13. Which statement does describe most closely the main goal of your website before (A) during (B) and after (C) tourists' visit? What is the most relevant content you provide to your users in the three moments? (1 not relevant – 5 very relevant).

- Support tourists while preparing the visit

  o Information on "how to get there"

  o Internal Transportation

  o Place to stay

  o Attractions and "things to do"

- o Eating and drinking

- o News

- o Whether forecasts

- o Attractions' Timetables

- o Facilities (e.g. for disable persons)

- o Travel tips

- o Organized tours

- o Destination Activities

- o Other

- To support tourists experience "during" the visit

  - o News

  - o Attractions facilities (e.g. for disable persons)

  - o Printable material (e.g. maps, information…)

  - o Multimedia material (e.g. pictures, videos, interactive guides)

  - o Travel tips

  - o Other

- To support tourists "after" the visit

  - o Experience sharing

  - o Online shop

  - o eCards and pictures download

  - o Rewarding Programs

        o Other

14. Do you generate revenue from your website?

Yes / No

14.1 If yes, please choose the revenue sections:

- Hotel reservation

- Tours reservation

- Online ads

- Gadgets/Souvenirs shop

- Other

15. How many people work on the website?

- 2-5 persons

- 5-10 persons

- More than 10 persons

15.1 Equivalent to how many full times?

16. How can you define the structure management of you website?

- **Centralized** – a person decides and confirms every content and service and any other aspect regarding the site.

- **Autonomous** – there are responsible for the different areas and each one is completely autonomous (or almost) in his decisions.

- **Collective** – keeping with a partial autonomy of the managers of the different areas, the strategic decisions are taken collectively and/or with the confirmation of the main responsible.

17. Who is authorized to take decisions about the web communication (e.g. what has to be published, what has to be changed)?

- Only the destination manager

- A small group of people

- It is a group work

    o Everyone

18. What is the usual way of communication within the team work?

- Personal (face to face communication)

- email

- telephone

- videoconference

19. How much is you annual budget for the online communication?

20. How it is divided (eg. 20% website technical enhancement, 20% contents development, 5% research, 40% human resources, 10% online promotion, 5% consultancies)

Annex 2 – Content and functionalities grid

#	Macro Area	Area	Categories
1	There is a place	In geography	Destination map
2			Information about the nature
3			City (or cities) description
4		Whith a story	Destination history
5			Cultural places
6			List of the places protected by UNESCO
7			Monument symbol of the Country (Region/City)
8		With people living there	Information about folklore
9			Languages & dialects
10			Famous people of the city
11		Being organized in a given (political) way	Main cities / main places
12			Destination history
13			Geo-poli-eco-demographic information
14		Practical info	Weather conditions
15			Weather forecasts
16			Weather report (e.g. Snow)
17			Webcams
18	Where you can go and stay	Destination overview	Tourism information center
19			Special offers
20			Travel planner
21			Destination highlights
22		Getting there	Maps
23			Gps Information
24			Train Stations
25			Ports
26			Airports
27			Highways
28		Local transportation	Local transportation overview
29			Local transportation prices & conditions
30			Local transportation deals (tourist card)
31			Train Stations
32			Trains Timetables
33			Taxi
34			Underground
35			Underground Timetable
36			Bus Stations
37			Bus Timetables
38			Boat - Ferries Informations
39			Sightseeing overview
40			Sightseeing conditions and companies
41			Rental services
42			Traffic and road info
43			Parking places
44			Driving Rules
45		Places to stay	List of accommodations
46			Search for an accomodation (search engine)
47			Search accomodation by map
48			Accomodation booking service
49			Hotels
50			Hostels

51		Residences
52		Apartment
53		Bed and Breakfast
54		Camping
55		Farm Holidays
56		Accomodation rating
57		Accomodation Suggestions
58		Accomodation reviews
59	**Organize a trip**	Suggested itineraries (byDMO)
60		Tourism packages (advertised by DMO)
61		Suggested itineraries (by users)
62		Travelling tips
63		Podcasts
64		Interactive guides
65		Virtual Tours
66	**With certain conditions**	practical information
67		Visa
68		Health
69		Currency
70		Laws
71	**And enjoy doing something**	**Discover and Visit**	Place of interests
72		List of monuments
73		Monument descriptions
74		List of major museum and theaters
75		Museums description
76		Exhibition description
77		Cultural association and heritage associations
78		Interesting places on maps
79		Top ten sites to visit
80		3D monument tours
81		Attractions ONLINE ticket purchasing
82		Excursions suggestions
83		Top ten things to do
84		Guided tours
85		Group suggestions
86		Information by season
87		Tours ticketing and booking
88		Events ticket purchasing
89		Parks and gardens info
90		Gps point of interests for PDA
91		Interesting places in the vicinity a city
92	**Amusement / Entertain**	Leisure tips
93		Nightlife
94		Cinema info
95		Disco Information
96		Entertainment places
97		Sport information
98		Clubs
99		Casinos
100	**Eating and Drinking**	Local Food Description
101		List of bar and restaurants
102		Restourant information
103		Bar Information
104		Wine itineraries
105		Restourant Reviews

106		Local recipies
107	**Shop**	Shopping info
108		Currency
109		Local products
110		List of shops
111	**Study**	List of the Univerities
112		Studing "here" tips
113		Languages Schools
114		Different Schools
115	**Special needs**	Accessibile places
116		Wedding tips
117		Group information
118		Gay and lesbian information
119	**In a given period of time**	**Events**	List of events
120			Events search
121			Agenda events
122			Calendar
123			Cultural events
124			Gastronomic events
125			Recurrent events
126			News
127			List of conference place
128		**Seasonal Tourism**	Winter experience
129			Christmas market
130			Summer Experience
131	**That's me (DMO) who is suggesting you to come**	**Who we are**	About us
132			Structure
133			Board
134		**Contacts**	Contact List
135			Adresses and Maps
136			List of tourist offices
137			Web contact (email)
138			Web contact (form)
139		**Services**	Services for businesses
140			Chat with tour operators
141			Brochure by surface mail
142			Job offers
143			Press area
144		**Ambassies**	Ambassies addresses
145		**Partners, sponsors & contributors**	Partners, sponsors & contributors
146	**General services**	**Online shopping**	Country gadget
147			Cities gadget
148		**Reviews**	Users suggestions
149			Users complaints
150			Insert tourist opinion
151		**Web Site Personalization**	My discovery
152			Online favorite folder
153			Wish list
154			Read tourist notes
155		**Other services**	FAQ

156		Accessibility statement
157		Accessibile website
158		Brochures' download
159		Guides Download
160		Donations
161		Forum
162		Games
163		Mailing list
164		Multilanguage
165		Page printing
166		Podcast
167		ePostcards
168		Rss
169		Interal search engine
170		Send a page to a friend
171		Site help
172		Web site map

Annex 3

Usability Kit

User ProfilesLibrary

User 1
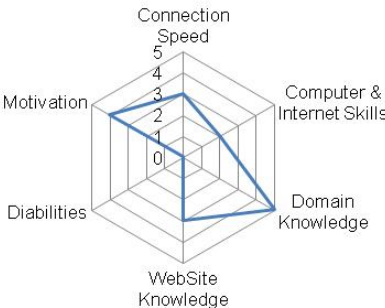
User 2
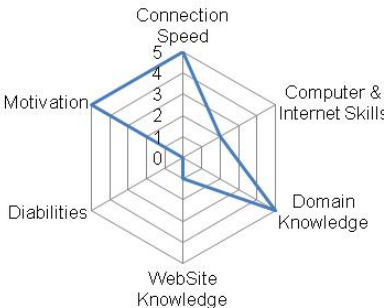
User 3
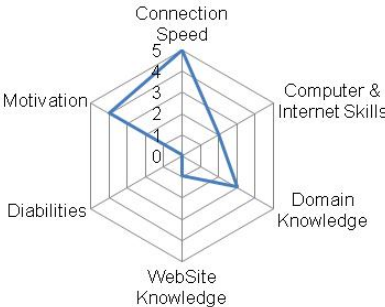
User 4
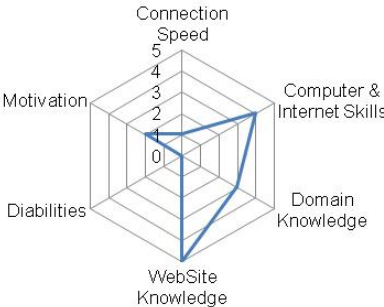
User 5
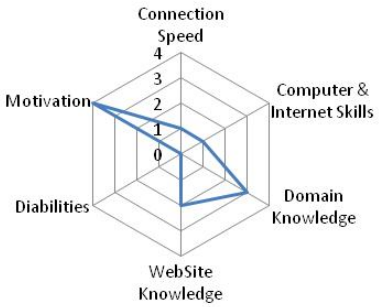
User 6
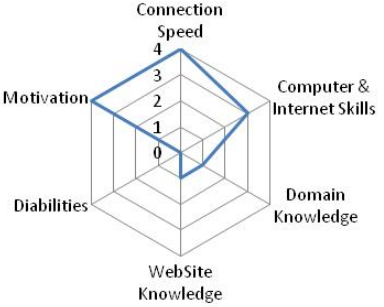
Goal and Tasks Library

G1	Obtain destination information
T1.1	Find the city overview
T1.2	Find the city history
T1.3	Find information on how to get there by car
T1.4	Find information on how to get there by train
T1.5	Find information on how to get there by plain
T1.6	Find GPS information
T1.7	Find detailed map of attractions
T1.8	Find deals for visiting the attraction (tourist card)
T1.9	Find city internal transportation
T1.10	Find deals for internal transportation

G2	Obtain attraction information
T2.1	Find the list of the attractions
T2.2	Find attraction by type
T2.3	Find cultural information about the attractions
T2.4	Find the detailed map of the attractions
T2.5	Download the detailed map of the attraction
T2.6	Edit the map with your personal information (hotels, shops, etc)
T2.7	Find interactive media about the attractions
T2.8	Find visit path along the attraction
T2.9	Find tourist opinion about the attraction
T2.10	Find hotel nearest one attraction
T2.11	Find attarction's ticketing information
T2.12	Book a ticket online
T2.13	Contact the attraction

G3	Obtain events information
T3.1	Find the list of the events
T3.2	Find cultural (only cultural) events
T3.3	Find the detailed calendar of the events
T3.4	Download the detailed calendar of the events
T3.5	Find interactive media about the events
T3.6	Find other tourist recommendation about the events
T3.7	Find hotel nearest the event
T3.8	Find ticketing information
T3.9	Book a ticket online

G4	Find and Book an hotel
T4.1	Find a hotel for less than X£ (e.g. 50/70£) per night
T4.2	Find a hotel in a given location (e.g. city centre)
T4.3	Find the most recommended hotel by the users
T4.4	Find hotel information
T4.5	Find hotel pictures
T4.6	Book the hotel
T4.7	Find accommodation contacts
T4.8	Send an email to the accommodation

G5	Obtain information about groups
T5.1	Find group travel itineraries (schools)
T5.2	Find where to park a coach
T5.3	Find groups offers (schools deals)
T5.4	Find groups accommodations
T5.5	Find groups restaurants

G6	Obtain info about new activities
T6.1	Find the "news" section
T6.2	Find an activity in a given date
T6.3	Find activity's information (location, costs)
T6.4	Find place contacts (if applicable)
T6.5	Book a ticket
T6.6	Find a hotel deal for the activity period

G7	Shopping
T7.1	Find the shopping section
T7.2	Find the shoppings map
T7.3	Find shoppings timetable
T7.4	Find shops by categories
T7.5	Find the online shop
T7.6	Buy an article (Bath Souvenir) from the online shop

G8	Eating / Drinking
T8.1	Find a restaurant/pub for a giving occasion (e.g. dinner with friends)
T8.2	Find a restaurant/pub in a given location (e.g. city centre)
T8.3	Find the most recommended restaurant/pub by the users
T8.4	Find restaurant/pub phone number
T8.5	Find restaurant/pub pictures

G9	Maps and guides
T9.1	Find a guide of the city
T9.2	Download (or buy) a guide of the city
T9.3	Find a map of the city
T9.4	Download (or buy) a map of the city
T9.5	Create your own map of the city with your POI

G10	Guided tours
T10.1	Find the list of guided tours
T10.2	Find tours per type (wlaking, bus, etc)
T10.3	Find city tours / sourrandings tours
T10.4	Find specific tour pricing
T10.5	Find tours' guide (or company) contacts

G11	Experience recall
T11.1	Find and Download pictures
T11.2	Rate an accommodation
T11.3	Rate and event
T11.4	Upload pictures
T11.5	Upload videos
T11.6	Suggest an accommodation
T11.7	Suggest a restaurant
T11.8	Write a review
T11.9	Write a post
T11.10	Comment a picture

Heuristics Library

CONTENT Heuristics

Feature	Text
Problem	**Accuracy**
Explanation	The accuracy states if a text describes adequately the referenced world, and if it is consistent in itself.
Problem	**Currency**
Explanation	The electronic communication over the web is supposed to be delivered in the precise moment the reader accesses it; thus the offered content must be current as the addressee perceives it, or must clearly show when it was published and the time scope of its validity.
Problem	**Coverage**
Explanation	The coverage defines the borders of the topics covered by the given website. It must be clear what the text is speaking about and what it is supposed to be covered.
Problem	**Content objectivity**
Explanation	The content objectivity indicates the commitment of the sender with respect to the conveyed content. For example, it must be clear if a message is an advertising or not (if the sender is paid to say something, I do not think that he must be really convinced of what he is saying…).
Problem	**Authority**
Explanation	Authority could be seen under two respects: adequacy of the author to the text (the competence of the author) and adequacy of the author to the reader (the goodwill predisposition of the author towards the reader). The author could be either a person or an institution.
Problem	**Conciseness**
Explanation	People rarely read Web pages word by word: they prefer to read on the screen few lines (15-25 lines). In this sense, conciseness is one of the most important aspects of the art of web-writing. For this reason it is very important to write an effective "short" and concise text.

Feature	General Communication quality (text, images, …)
Problem	**Text errors**
Explanation	The written text should not present grammatical errors.
Problem	**Multimedia consistency (images, audio, videos…)**
Explanation	All the multimedia files must be consistent with the subject of the page.

GRAPHIC Heuristics

Feature	**Overall graphic design**
Problem	**Visual identity**
Explanation	Lack of coordination with the visual identity of the company who run the site (if present).
Problem	**Use of a chromatic code**
Explanation	The correct use of colours in a website is very important for many reasons and helps the users in the navigation: - Colours can identify sections or subsections of the site; - Colours can reinforce the visual identity of the site; - Colours can attract the attention of the users on different elements of the pages (titles, links…); - The set of the colours of the site creates the look and feel of the site.
Problem	**Background contrast**
Explanation	The use of strong colours for the background or not suitable pictures can damage the readability of the contents of the website. Some matches of colours can be very difficult to read especially for people with visual disabilities.
Problem	**Font size**
Explanation	All fonts work at large sizes, problems start at smaller sizes. Text on the screen must be easy to read. Choosing the right font size is important to make it readable.
Problem	**Font colour**
Explanation	The colours used for screen texts must be accurately designed.
Problem	**Font type**
Explanation	Using a readable type of font with a readable size is important to make the reading easier.
Problem	**Text layout**
Explanation	Splitting a long text can simplify the reading. Very long pages (for example, containing an entire chapter) are difficult to scan, and scrolling up and down to refer to different sections of text can be frustrating. Also the wrong use of justification can make it difficult.
Problem	**Anchor identity**
Explanation	Anchors are used to reinforce the presence of a link on the page and it is very important to understand which are the anchors within the pages.
Problem	**Anchor states**
Explanation	When the mouse is over a link or after visiting it buttons and their anchors must communicate visible and well designed changes of state in order to help users in navigation.
Problem	**Icon consistency**

Explanation	Icons are used to represent topics to visit or tasks to do. It is important that the icon set matches with the other graphic elements of the site.
Problem	**Widgets consistency**
Explanation	Widgets are usually used to make up text and split it on the page in order to make it easily found in the text. The widget is a standardized on-screen representation of a control that may be manipulated by the user. Scroll bars, buttons, text boxes, text input area and radio buttons are all examples of widgets.

Feature	**Page layout**
Problem	**Position consistency**
Explanation	How objects are arranged on the screen determinates not only how good they look but how easy they are to understand and to use.
Problem	**Layout grid consistency**
Explanation	In the world of print and in the world of web grids give physical reference points to the space on the blank page. The role of the grid is clearest in designs that have a page-like appearance.
Problem	**Layout conventions**
Explanation	Users of western languages are conditioned to: - scan pages from left to bottom right; - assume that larger items are relevant; - assume that something above is more important that something below the page.

Feature	**Homepage**
Problem	**Redundancy – Overcrowded page**
Explanation	Because the screen has much lower resolution than a paper page, a screen that is filled with text, images, icons and other elements can be much harder to read.
Problem	**Page layout**
Explanation	Home pages have often free layout, this may cause problems in the users to understand the structure of the page.
Problem	**Use of Flash animations**
Explanation	Flash animations are used to make a site dynamic and interactive. Often these animations do not fit with the rest of the site.

Navigation Heuristics

Feature	Navigation within a topic (information object, entity)
Problem	**Segmentation**
Explanation	The different information about a topic could be segmented in different pages. For example, if we consider a museum website and the topic *"Author of the painting"*, this topic could be fragmented in different pages (e.g. Biography, Events of his live, More detailed info…). From a navigational point of view, it is important that the user might understand which pages belong to the topic and how the navigation within these pages works.
Problem	**Orientation clues**
Explanation	Within the navigation in a topic it is very important that the user can understand immediately his position within the topic (e.g., "You are in Biography").
Problem	**Accessibility of different pages**
Explanation	It is always essential that all the pages of a topic are easy to access in few clicks.

Feature	Navigation within a Group of topics (collection, set of information objects)
Problem	**Introduction list**
Explanation	The introduction list is the starting point for the navigation to a specific topic (e.g. from *paintings of 16th century* to *Venus and Adonis*), therefore it should be clear the strategy used for organizing the list. This strategy could affect the navigation of the user (e.g. if the introduction list is composed of 50 elements organized casually, the user could have some problems for identifying the elements in which he is interested).
Problem	**Orientation clues**
Explanation	It is always important that the user can understand which group of topic s/he is browsing.
Problem	**Accessibility of topics**
Explanation	It should be clear how to get an overview of all topics of the group (how many? If not, which?) and easily reach them.

Feature	Navigation within a transition (Navigation between topics)
Problem	**Transition list**
Explanation	The transition list allows the user to navigate across relevant relation between topics that are semantically connected (e.g. from a specific cloth to a particular accessories,

	the user has to go through a list of accessories); therefore it should be clear the strategy used for organizing the list. This strategy could affect the navigation of the user (e.g. if the transition list is composed of 20 elements - e.g. 20 accessories - randomly organized, the user could have some problems for identifying the elements in which he is interested).
Problem	**Orientation clues**
Explanation	It is always important that the user might understand that s/he is browsing through a transition/relation between two different topics.
Problem	**Accessibility of target**
Explanation	When browsing from a topic to another topic semantically connected, it is basic that the user accesses easily to the target topic.

Feature	**Overall Navigation**
Problem	**Landmarks**
Explanation	The access to the main sections of a web site is given by a number of landmarks. Using the landmarks the user can access easily and quickly all the macro-sections of the application. Therefore, the landmarks should be well highlighted in every page.
Problem	**Consistency**
Explanation	All the web applications have a general navigation architecture that supports the navigation of the user. This navigation has to be consistent among the different parts of the application. In this sense, it is very important that this "general" architecture emerges in a satisfactory way: the user has to comprehend how the general navigation works.
Problem	**Accessibility**
Explanation	Accessibility refers to ensuring that content is accessible, ie. ensuring that content can be navigated and read by everyone, regardless of location, experience, or the type of computer technology used.

Feature	**Tree Navigation**
Problem	**Orientation**
Explanation	Different websites are designed with a tree structure. In this site, the orientation of the user become fundamental both when the user explores a branch (section) of the tree and when he passes from a branch (section) to another. The user should be aware when a change of context happens.
Problem	**Backward navigation**

Explanation	When the user navigates within a tree (in particular when he passes from a section to another) one of the most difficult things to manage is related to the navigation to the previous visited pages. The application should support this action without the use of *back functionality* offered by the browser.
Problem	**Depth anticipation**
Explanation	Often the "tree architecture" of websites is very complex. For this reason, the user could have some problems to have a synoptic both of the website and of each branch.

Annex 4

CodeBook destinations' web reputation

Sample

The study concentrates on the Internet web reputation of a given destination. 9 different search activities have been performed on the popular commercial search engine Google. A group of unofficial web sites have been extracted from the search results, and together with the official web site of the destination constitute the core sample of the research.

Thus, the web sites sample comprises:

- The official web site of the destination
- Blogs (e.g.)
- Wikis (e.g. Wikipedia, Wikitravel)
- Communities (and social networks)
- eCommerce web sites

Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the information market available to the users while searching for information about a given destination. Actually, search engines are indexing not only official web sites but also user generated contents' web sites (such as blogs, review websites, wikis, etc.), which are concurring to gather user's attention while performing an online search.

Search results have been organized and described in order to shape the destinations' information competitors; besides, content analysis examines topics and arguments of the retrieved results outlining the web reputation of the destination. Expected results will contribute to the study of the user generated contents dynamics and to create an instrument to measure destination's web reputation.

>> SECTION 1

This first part regards the general item information. The piece of content retrieved should be classified accurately in order to define the item typology, and its relevant attributes (medium, length, publication date, author motivation and main topic)

Coder - [1]

1. Alessandro Inversini
2. ...
3. ...

Web site number [2]
Is the number of the web site in the sample list. This will help in the qualitative analysis.

Item and Sub Items [3 and 4]
We divide items and sub-items. Items are the informative contents that are displayed in the landing page. Sub-items are the relevant informative contents that are a click away from the landing page. A classical example is a blog post with two comments. The main item is the blog post, the sub-items are the comments.

Analysis Date [5 → 10]
The date in which the item has been codified is really important. Actually in Web2.0 contents could be modified by the authors and become very different *from the original.*

Medium - [11][12]
01. Social Media: Virtual Community (e.g. Lonely Planet, IgoUgo.com, Yahoo Travel)
02. Social Media: Consumer Review (e.g. Tripadvisor.com)
03. Social Media: Blogs and blog aggregators (e.g. personal blog, blogspot)
04. Social Media: Social Networks (e.g. Facebook, Myspace)
05. Social Media: Media Sharing (Photo/Video sharing – e.g. Flickr, YouTube)
06. Social Media: Other (eg. Wikipedia, Wikitravel)
07. Web1.0 web site (not social media or web2.0)

Publication Date - [13 → 18]
The date of publication should be codified in the format day/month/year. If one piece of the date or the entire date is omitted, the corresponded cells should not be filled.

Item Type - [19]
The category "item type" refers to the typology of the content. If the item belongs to an official (or institutional) or to an encyclopaedia web site it is more likely to be an informative item. Otherwise it could belong to the other categories.

1. Informative item
2. Comment/Review
3. Picture
4. Video
5. Discussion group
6. Advertisement

Item size - [20]
The category "item size" refers to length of the item. As stated in the guidelines of MiLE+ and other evaluation methodology the conciseness is a crucial issue in the web communication.

1. Small (5 lines)
2. Medium (5-20 lines)
3. Long (more than 20 lines)
4. Not applicable (pictures and videos)

Motivation - [21]
What is the motivation driving author(s) to write the item. Social media, like blogs, may be based on self expression, while the communication of the official web sites may be based on the informative motivation or advertising motivation.

0. Self expression
1. Informative
2. Entertainment / Passing Time / Social Interaction
3. Review/Rating
4. Advertising
5. Other

Speaker – [22]
Is the author writing something in first person? Is s/he describing a personal experience? In the official web site this won't be the case because the communication might be more impersonal and informative, while social media are often used to share personal experience, or third party experiences on the web.

1. First person
2. Third person
3. Impersonal

Topic - [23]
What is the most relevant topic treated in the item. Is it about the destination or about the experience in general or is it more specific dealing with the accommodation, attractions, restaurants, or events?

0. Destination
1. Travel experience
2. Accommodation
3. Restaurant/Pubs/Social Life
4. Attraction

5. Event
6. News
7. Other

>>SECTION 2

This second part regards the arguments, judgments and feelings present in the item. In order to investigate the reputation of the destination a detailed investigation should be done about arguments, judgments and feelings in order to find the grade of reputation that the destination has got with respect to the specific item.

Factual –vs– emotional arguments - [24]
What kind of argument(s) is (are) used in the item? Typically official web sites and encyclopaedias will use more factual arguments than emotional one, while social web sites might use more emotional arguments.

0. The item does not present any argument: there are no reasons explaining the positions
1. The item uses factual arguments
2. The item uses more factual arguments rather than emotional ones
3. The item uses factual arguments as well as emotional ones
4. The item uses more emotional arguments rather than factual ones
5. The item uses emotional arguments

Arguments Value - [25]
Does the argument express a judgment value? Typically official web sites and encyclopaedias will not express judgements (or only positive ones) while social web sites might use more judgments expressing their reviews, comments etc.

Example 1: "It has been a really convenient holiday" → *positive value*
Example 2: "It is not worthy to spend a night in this hotel" → *negative value*

0. No value judgment is expressed
1. The item expresses positive value judgments
2. The item expresses more positive value judgments rather than negative ones
3. The item expresses positive value judgments as well as negative judgments
4. The item expresses more negative value judgments rather than positive ones
5. The item expresses negative value judgments

Arguments feeling - [26]
Does the item express feelings? Typically official web sites and encyclopaedias will not express feelings (or only positive ones) while social web sites might use more feelings related expressions in their reviews, comments etc.

Example 1: "I love this hotel..."/ "I liked the attractions organization" → *positive feeling*
Example 2: "I hated that place..." / "I felt like suffocate in that room" → *negative feelings*

0. No feeling is expressed
1. The item expresses positive feelings
2. The item expresses more positive feeling rather than negative ones
3. The item expresses positive feelings as well as negative feelings
4. The item expresses more negative feelings rather than positive ones
5. The item expresses negative feelings

Comparison – [27]
Is the object of the item (being it a destination, city, attraction, hotel etc.) compared to another similar object? Is this comparison positive or negative? Typically official web sites and encyclopaedias will use no comparisons, or only positive ones, while social web sites might use more comparisons both positive, neutral or negative.

Example1: "The city of Bath looks like the city of Lugano" → *no value comparison*
Example2: " The city of Bath is clean as a Swiss city" → *positive comparison*
Example 3: "Museums cost too much, as in Italy" → *negative comparison*

0. No comparison is made with another object
1. No value (not positive/not negative) comparison is made with another similar object
2. The item assesses a positive comparison
3. The item assesses more positive comparisons rather than negative ones
4. The item assesses positive comparisons as well as negative ones
5. The item assesses more negative comparisons rather than positive ones
6. The item assesses negative comparisons

City Tourism Organization - [28]

Is the tourism organization mentioned (as office, contacts, name, organizer of the event, recommender etc.)?

0. Neutrally mentioned
1. Not Mentioned
2. Good Mention
3. Bad Mention