Chapter 8
Usability Audit Model for Tourism Destination Websites

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ABSTRACT

In a globalized world, tourist destinations must have a website containing accurate information for potential tourists. However, there is currently no model that serves as a guide to evaluate the usability of tourism websites. A web usability audit manual is presented in this work with the application of a case study methodology, which combines theoretical contributions with those of a real audit of a tourism institution. Apart from the description of the manual itself, the results of this work have made it possible to identify a series of actions to be taken into account, as well as others that should be avoided when a usability audit is being carried out in the tourism field.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the phenomenon of globalization, the tourism sector today can be considered a single market in which each country, region or city competes with others to attract tourists (Manhas, Manrai, & Manrai, 2016). This gives rise to a concern on the part

of the governments of the different destinations to generate an attractive image that allows them to settle in a competitive position within the tourism market (Singh et al., 2020; Singh, Mondal & Das, 2020; Sharma & Das, 2020; Das, 2020). One of the most effective ways to promote this competitive position is the construction of a recognized brand that can represent its identity in an attractive way for potential clients (Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002).

It is in this competitive and global context that tourist destination websites play a decisive role (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013; Fernández-Cavia, Rovira, Díaz-Luque, & Cavaller, 2014). This implies that it is not enough for tourist destinations to work on the creation of a competitive image on the Internet (Mondal, 2020; Nadanyiova & Das, 2020; Mondal & Sahoo, 2020). The large amount of information currently available to users on the network complicates the task of capturing the attention of the tourist, increasingly demanding in terms of easy use, speed or design of websites based on a single website (Das & Nayyar, 2020; Das, Nayyar & Singh, 2019; Das & Nayyar, 2019). This has resulted in a tendency among different tourist destinations to put greater emphasis on improving the website, in order to meet the demands and expectations of users and thus ensure that they have a satisfactory experience during their interaction with its web portals (Martinis, Papadatou, & Kabassi, 2019; McCartney, Butler, & Bennett, 2008).

This means that tourist destinations want to offer a promotional website that not only provides information about the destination, but is also presented in the appropriate way so that it is useful and simple for the user seeking information or intending to plan a trip (Singh et al., 2019; Mohanty et al., 2019; Gupta et al., 2019; Singh & Das, 2018). This implies that the presence of information about the destination on a website is not enough, and that it must be presented in the appropriate way (Singh et al., 2019; Jain, Jain & Das, 2018; Das et al., 2018) This is where the concept of usability arises, meaning the degree to which a product or system can be used by specified users to achieve specific goals effectively, efficiently and satisfactorily, as defined by ISO standards (Das & Nayyar, 2019; Mondal et al., 2017) However, on many occasions, managers of tourist destination websites have felt lost, since they do not have a model to serve as a guide for evaluating the usability of their website (Mondal et al., 2017). This is precisely the objective of this work: the elaboration of a manual that explains the steps to follow when auditing the usability of a website in the tourism sector.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In a study whose main theme is the web usability audit of tourist destinations, we should start with a brief theoretical compilation based on the doctrines and

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