THE ROLE OF INTERNET AND NEW INFORMATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES IN MARKETING, ADVERTISING AND INFORMATION PROVISION OF TOURIST DESTINATION - A CASE STUDY OF SOFIA, BULGARIA

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Abstract: *The aim of the paper is to examine whether the tourism business of the accommodation sector in a specific destination of Bulgaria – the Capital Municipality of Sofia – recognizes the role and importance of the internet and the new technologies for destination marketing, and in particular – for promotion, advertising and distribution of information. Assessments of the internet site of the Municipality of Sofia with regards to selected criteria are done too.*
Key words: *internet, marketing, tourism, destination*

Introduction

In recent years internet and new informational technologies are entering all areas of business - manufacturing and service, management, distribution and advertising, etc., and all sectors of economy, including tourism:

"The development and application of informational technologies in tourism sector is a key to survival in today's tourism industry. Dynamics of the global tourism market promote the use of gradually evolving program applications with powerful features in management, communications, advertising, promotion, distribution and tourism services" (Velev, 2005).

The advent of the new technologies and internet in the field of marketing is particularly important. The use of internet is essential for conducting marketing activities in tourism in order the competitive positions of the organizations providing goods and services to tourists to be sustained:

"Internet evolved a lot in recent years, causing a fundamental change in the travel information sought. For this reason in the field of tourism, we have seen a large number of web-related marketing campaigns and successful internet solutions" (Assenova, Marinov, Dogramadjieva, Semerdjiev, 2010).

Internet and the new technologies contribute to the increase of the number of tourists. Their role is due to the fact that tourists are increasingly seeking information on the internet before buying products and trips. That is why the task of every tourist destination and local authorities is the effective use of internet and new informational technologies in conducting marketing events and activities.

The key tourists prefer perspective destinations that meet the requirement of providing the option of using internet for finding information about the destination and products, which are of interests for the tourists (Mileva, 2006).

In order to choose which product to buy, a large number of tourists, especially the ones who come from perspective markets, are searching the information on the internet. This number is continually growing.

Studies reveal that "there is a lasting trend of increasing the share of tourists who use internet for gathering information and taking decision about the choice of a destination (Anastasova, 2002).

This trend is due to the fact that internet and new technologies have great advantages over the other methods - marketing instruments - of informing, promoting and distributing. Significant advantages of the Internet are the following:

Internet marketing has some undeniable advantages, namely: lower costs for setting up business and attracting new customers; saving costs for sales personnel and stores; easier identification of needs and desires of customers; higher speed of reach of the information to the users, etc. (Anastasova, 2001).

Therefore the internet brings benefits to both the suppliers and the customers of tourist services. The benefits to the supplier organizations are that the later reach a large number of tourists from nearer or further markets, searching information about the products on the internet, at the expense of lower costs. They can quickly spread, amend or update information about products and offerings. In turn, potential buyers receive this information immediately in any place and at any time. Information on the internet is easy to use and amend. Supplier organizations or local authorities can gather information about potential tourists by communicating with them and use this information to develop and offer products that meet their specific preferences. It is not necessary that the interaction between buyers and sellers should take place at one and the same time and at the same place.

The role of the internet and new technologies for the development of an appropriate image of the destination among potential tourists is important too:

"Internet, which offers global reach and multimedia capability, is an increasingly important means of promoting and distributing tourism services."…. "The content of tourism destination web sites is particularly important because it directly influences the perceived image of the destination and creates a virtual experience for the customer" (Doolin, Burgess, Cooper, 2002).

However, it is necessary that the web-sites meet certain requirements in order the benefits of using internet to be realized. The most important ones are:

"Current generic usability research suggest that eight main factors are important in web site design:" functionality and utility; information content; ease of use; image; innovation; ease of purchase; multi-browser functionality; simple graphics and text (Akehurst, Banks, 2002).

It is important that the web site of a tourist destination can easily be found. Therefore, it should be included in a number of search engines and in front positions. Once the user finds the site, it should raise the interest and impress him/ her. In this regard a variety of pictures, audiovisual applications and the content of specific information can be useful. Graphics and applications should not be very complicated, neither should they distract from the main purpose of the site. The content of the web site should correspond to the image of the destination; create a certain sense of the destination, its role of meeting the needs of the perspective customers and the priorities concerning tourism development. The site must look up-to-date and different from the ones of competitors. It should be useful to potential customers. It should provide a lot of information about the destination and its products. The information should be complete, comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date. Examining the site of the tourist destination should be much easier for the customers. In this respect the site should work with all major browsers, the pages should be opened fast, the messages should be clear, the user should easily search and navigate the desired information, easily reach different application and return to the homepage. There should be alternative accesses to the same informational content too. The informational content should be well-structured and logical.

An advantage is if the site provides the option for on-line purchases. There should be clear contacts details. The customers should easily reach the information about the products and the on-line purchases should be done with one or two clicks.

The site should be a medium of communication with potential and actual customers. The destination or supplier organization should be able to communicate with customers with a view of understanding and acting according their specifics and preferences. Thus, there will be an opportunity for development of products that meet the needs of the

perspective clients and increase of the number of loyal customers who retain and return to the site and consequently - return to the destination.

Methodology of the study

The aim of the paper is to examine whether the tourism business of the accommodation sector in a specific destination of Bulgaria – the Capital Municipality of Sofia – recognizes the role and importance of the internet and the new technologies for destination marketing, and in particular – for promotion, advertising and distribution of information. Assessments of the internet site of the Municipality of Sofia with regards to selected criteria are done too.

In this paper data from a questionnaire survey conducted by the authors of representatives of the accommodation sector in the Municipality of Sofia in 2013 as a result of an assignment (project) by the Capital City "Tourism Service" Enterprise are used (Marinov, Dogramadjieva, Petkova, 2013).

The planned sample of the survey includes the priority hotel establishments in the accommodation sector of Sofia. As a result 173 hotel establishments with a total capacity of 8561 beds were included in the survey, which represents 46% of the categorized hotel establishments of Sofia and 51% of their bed capacity. There is sufficiently high similarity between the structure of the general population and the sample and therefore the results are representative for the opinion of the accommodation sector in Sofia, revealing the full range of statements and contradictive assessments. The survey was conducted from the end of April to the end of May 2013 by the method of personal interview, followed by the distribution of the questionnaires by e-mails. The respondents were mainly owners (43%) and general managers of hotel establishments (30%), and in rare cases – managers at lower levels (19%) or employees (8%).

The data were broken down by different criteria (specifics, characteristics of hotel establishments), which provides a comprehensive and detailed picture, and facilitates the explanation of the findings, opinions and assessments. The standard breakdown used in most of the questions includes the criteria: type, capacity (number of beds), category and location.

According to the type the hotel establishments are grouped as follows:
- Hotels - all types of hotels and motels, holiday villages and holiday houses
- Hostels and pensions are grouped together

- Guest rooms and guest houses are grouped together.

According to the location (the districts of Sofia Municipality), the hotel establishments are classified as located in three main areas:

- Center (central areas, downtown): covering the central business district and the historical core of the city (area 37 km2);
- Urban periphery (suburban areas): including the rest of the city within its construction boundaries with prevalence of neighborhood and residential quarters (area 216 km2);
- Rural areas, including small parts of the actual city (districts), small towns and villages and major agricultural and natural districts, including mountains (area 1138 km2).

  The groups according to the category are as follows:
- Low category – 1-2 stars
- Medium category – 3 stars
- High category – 4-5 stars.

The results of the study regarding the evaluation of the web-site of Sofia Municipality are compared with own research and analysis of the authors. Moreover, a comparative analysis of the site of Sofia Municipality and the web-site of another city - a famous world tourist destination - London - according to the data at the end of November, 2013, is made.

Results of the study

Respondents from the accommodation sector are asked how they think Sofia Municipality should promote Sofia as a tourist destination and stimulate higher consumption by tourists. A wide range of possible activities (18) is offered that should have been estimated by respondents according to 5-point scale, from 1 to 5. Results are presented as mean values.

All activities listed in the questionnaire are considered as important by the respondents. However, some of them are more important than others. The most important ones are the promotional tools associated with new technologies, such as maintenance of specialized tourism web-site of Sofia and promotion of Sofia by active electronic marketing, followed by participation in tourism fairs and exhibitions abroad (mean values 4.3-4.5) (Table 1).

Table 1. Promotional Activities of Sofia as a Tourist Destination

Issuance and dissemination of promotional and informational materials about the sites of Sofia (brochures, leaflets, maps, films, etc.)	4.0
Issuance and effective dissemination of cultural calendar of Sofia	3.7
Issuance and dissemination of promotional catalogue of accommodation establishments	3.7
Participations in tourism fairs and exhibitions in the country	3.9
Participations in tourism fairs and exhibitions abroad	4.3
Organization of promotional events	3.7
Active electronic marketing (electronic media, social networks, search engines, thematic portals and platforms, etc.)	4.4
Maintenance of specialized tourism web-site of Sofia	4.5
Print advertisement of Sofia	3.4
Radio and TV advertisement of Sofia	3.6
Outdoor advertisement (billboards, posters, displays, public transport, etc.)	3.6
Introduction of 3-day discounts cart for visiting sites and using public transport in Sofia	4.0
Provision of quality information to tourists in Cultural and Information Center of Sofia	4.2
Expanding the range of services provided by the Cultural and Information Center-Sofia	4.0
Opening tourism information stations in more places in the capital	4.0
Organization of tours for journalists	3.5
Organization of tours for tour operators	3.5
Dissemination of informational and promotional materials through other informational centers in the country and abroad	4.2

The results are similar to the ones of a survey of the opinion of travel agents regarding similar questions conducted in the same year. Both groups of respondents lay strong emphasis on electronic media activities - maintenance of internet site (ranked first by both groups with estimates 4.5 by accommodation establishments and 4.6 by travel agents) and active electronic marketing, which includes the utilization of electronic media, social networks, search engines, thematic portals and platforms, etc. (ranked second by accommodation establishments

with estimate 4.4 and third by travel agents after the provision of quality information to tourists in Cultural and Information Center of Sofia (4.5) with estimate 4.3) (Marinov, Assenova, Dogramadjieva, Baikov, Petkova, 2013).

There are some differences in the estimates of the separate groups of respondents - types of accommodation establishments - concerning the promotional activities of Sofia as tourism destination, requiring utilization of internet and the new technologies. The active electronic marketing has greater than the average importance for hotel establishments of medium (51-100 beds) and highest capacity (above 200 beds), of medium (3 stars) and high (4-5 stars) category and is of less importance for hostels and pensions. The maintenance of a special tourism site of Sofia is of a greater than average importance to the biggest establishments (with more than 200 beds) and of a medium category (3 stars) ones, and less important - to hotels and pensions.

The specific differences according to the groups of the respondents can be summarized as:

- The maintenance of a specialized web-site of Sofia and the active electronic marketing are of a lesser importance for hostels and pensions (with mean values of 4.1 and 3.6 accordingly) than for the other hotel establishments.

- The active electronic marketing is of a greater than average importance for accommodation facilities with a capacity of between 51 and 100 beds (4.7).

- The active electronic marketing and maintenance of specialized tourism site of Sofia have greater than average importance to biggest hotel establishment (over 200 beds) - both with estimates of 5.

- For accommodation facilities of a medium category (3 stars) of a greater than average importance are both the maintenance of a specialized tourism site of Sofia (4.9) and the active electronic marketing (4.7).

- The hotel establishments of high category (4-5 stars) attach greater importance to the active electronic marketing (4.7).

- There is no great deviation from average in the groups classified by location (Table 2).

Table 2. Promotional activities of Sofia as a tourist destination regarding marketing and new technologies - average estimates of the groups of hotel establishments

Activities/ Types of hotel establishments	Active electronic marketing (electronic media, social networks, search engines, thematic portals and platforms, etc.)	Maintenance of specialized tourism site of Sofia
Total	**4.4**	**4.5**
Type		
Hotels	4.6	4.6
Family hotels	4.3	4.6
Hotels and pensions	3.6↓	4.1↓
Guest rooms and guest houses	4.6	4.5
Capacity		
Up to 20 beds	4.2	4.4
21-50 beds	4.5	4.5
51-100 beds	4.7↑	4.7
101-200 beds	4.2	4.4
Over 200 beds	5.0↑	5.0↑
Category		
1-2 stars	4.2	4.4
3 stars	4.7↑	4.9↑
4-5 stars	4.7↑	4.6
Location		
Center	4.5	4.5
Urban periphery	4.3	4.5
Rural areas	4.3	4.5

The respondents were asked to estimate the importance of current and potential activities of the Cultural and Information Centre of Sofia to their business. Moreover, the respondents, familiar with the activities of the Center, were asked to estimate the actual state of the current activities. The next question requires respondents to evaluate various aspects of the new tourism web-site. The questions are closed. All options has been estimated according to a 5-pont scale with estimates from 1 to 5, as 1 is the lowest and 5 - the highest rating. The results are shown by mean values on Table 3.

The importance of the activities of Cultural and Information Centre of Sofia is estimated relatively high by the respondents (the total estimate is above the average). The current activities are concerned as more important than potential, suggesting that Cultural and Information Centre has largely "found" the most important activities in terms of accommodation. All currently available services are considered

important (the lowest estimate is 3.4). However, several groups of services in terms of the evaluation of their perceived significance are identified as most important, such as the maintenance of the web site – with mean value 4.5. The estimates of the activities offered currently by Cultural and Information centre of Sofia are relatively high and similar. They vary in the range between 3.3 and 4.0 (rather good estimate). The results show that the highest estimates (3.8-4.0) are given to the provision of printing and advertising material (4.0), provision of oral information for tourists (3.8) and organization of free walking tour of the Sofia city centre (3.8). These activities have higher estimates than the maintaining of the web-site, whose estimate is about the average (3.6). The other activities have lower estimates. All activities of Cultural and Information Centre have received comparatively high estimates in terms of both importance and current state and the gaps between the estimates of the two aspects are relatively small (0.0-0.9), as the maximum value is 0.9. However, the maintenance of the web-site has the highest gap (0.9). To sum up, in terms of the combination importance-current state-gap the maintenance of the web-site could be specified as an activity of particular importance (4.5) and considerable gap between the estimates of the importance and the current state (0.9).

Table 3. Estimates of the importance and the actual state of the activities of Cultural and Information Centre of Sofia

	Importance	Current state	Gaps
Real activities			
Provision of oral information for tourists	3.9	3.8	0.0
Provision of printing and advertising materials (tourism map, etc.)	4.3	4.0	0.3
Organization of a free walking tour of Sofia city center	3.8	3.8	0.0
Development of specialized cognitive routes of Sofia and its surrounding area	3.9	3.5	0.4
Maintenance of web-site	4.5	3.6	0.9
Participation in tourism fairs and exhibitions	4.1	3.5	0.6
Gathering, processing and presentation of information about the aims of the tourism policy	3.8	3.5	0.2
Gathering, processing and presentation of information for visitors of the tourist center	3.8	3.5	0.3
Development and dissemination among hoteliers and tour operators of calendar of events	4.2	3.4	0.7
Assistance with booking accommodation	4.1	3.3	0.8
Assistance with car rental	3.4	3.3	0.1

Potential activities			
3-day card for discounts at visiting sites and using public transport	3.8		
Tourist guide services	3.8		
Reservations for accommodation/ meals	3.6		
Sale of souvenirs	3.1		
Sale of tickets for cultural events	3.6		
Car rental	3.1		
Bicycle rental	3.1		

These results are similar to the ones of the survey of tour operators. According to travel agencies the maintenance of tourism web-site is estimated as one of the absolute priorities among the current activities of the Centre in terms of the importance. The ranks and mean values of the activities given by the two groups of respondents are similar (4.5 according to accommodation and 4.4 according to travel agencies sector). The estimates of the performance evaluation by both groups could be described rather as average than good. The values of the gaps between importance and performance of the web site maintenance given by hotel establishments and travel agencies are very similar (0.8 and 0.9). Based on the estimates by the accommodation and travel agencies sector of the importance and current state of the activities of Cultural and Information Sector of Sofia, the maintenance of a web-site could be classified as an absolute priority and very important activity with high gap (over 0.5) between importance and performance (Marinov, Assenova, Dogramadjieva, Baikov, Petkova, 2013).

Table 4. Estimates of the importance and current state of the Sofia Cultural and Information Centre Activity maintenance of a web-site by groups of hotel establishments

Activity – maintenance of a web-site	Importance	Current state	Gaps
Total	**4.5**	**3.6**	**0.9**
Type			
Hotels	4.5	3.8	0.7
Family hotels	4.5	3.9↑	0.6
Hotels and pensions	4.1↓	3.3	0.8
Guest rooms and guest houses	4.6	3.1↓	1.5
Capacity			
Up to 20 beds	4.6	3.1↓	1.5
21-50 beds	4.4	4.2↑	0.2
51-100 beds	4.6	3.9	0.7
101-200 beds	4.2↓	2.8↓	1.4
Over 200 beds	4.7	5.0↑	-0.3

Category			
1-2 stars	4.5	3.5	1.0
3 stars	4.5	3.9↑	0.6
4-5 stars	4.5	3.4	1.1
Location			
Center	4.4	3.4	1.0
Urban periphery	4.5	4.0↑	0.5
Rural areas	4.7	3.7	1.0

Regarding the estimates of the importance in terms of groups of respondents of the accommodation sector, there is a consensus that the maintenance of a web-site is particularly important among the current activities. Its estimate is lower than the average (4.5) according to hostels and pensions (4.1) and establishment with capacity of 101-200 beds (4.2).

The estimates of the current state of the activity web-site maintenance by family hotels (3.9), establishments with a capacity of 21-50 beds (4.2), over 200 beds (5.0), medium category (3.9) and located in suburban areas (4.0) are higher than average and the estimates of guest rooms and guest houses (3.1), the smallest establishments (3.1) and the ones with a capacity of 101-200 beds (2.8) are lower than average (Table 4).

The web-site of Sofia Municipality visitsofia.bg, targeted at both domestic and international tourists, visitors of Sofia, is found in 2012. It contains information in Bulgarian and English about: transport, accommodation, restaurant establishment, attractions and opportunities for entertainment and recreation in the capital. There is information about specific attractions and establishments: general information, contact details, etc., accompanied by pictures.

Relatively small number of people has responded to this question – 95 people (just over the half of the respondents to the questionnaire). This probably indicates that a lot of respondents had not visited the web-site, and were not able to do it when completing the survey. However, there are free answers that show that the survey itself prompted the respondent to visit the web-site for a first time.

The level of the overall satisfaction with the tourist site of Sofia is rather on average. Although it needs improvement in all aspects, especially important sources of dissatisfaction are its product variety and graphic design.

The mean value of the overall satisfaction with the site is less than average (3.5). Various aspects received similar estimates ranging from 3.3 to 3.8. Navigation (3.8), utility and practically oriented information (3.7), ability to adapt to mobile versions (3.6) and illustrative site (3.6) have received the highest estimates. The estimates of the information variety (sufficient information about attractions, products, etc. – 3.5)

and functionality (user friendliness – 3.5) are about average. The lowest are the estimates of product variety – complete coverage of the product (3.3) and graphic design (3.4).

Both hotel establishments and travel agencies show rather average satisfaction with tourism site of Sofia. Although the total estimates are identical, there are some differences between both groups in terms of the assessments of the various aspects of the site. The estimates of the overall satisfaction with the tourism site of Sofia given by hotel establishments and travel agencies are identical – 3.5 and could be classified as average. With respect to the individual aspects of the site, there are some differences in the estimates of both sectors. The estimates by accommodation sector vary in very narrow range (between 3.3 and 3.8). Travel agencies give lower estimates to most of the aspects and their estimates vary more widely (between 2.1 and 3.5). While hotel establishments are mostly dissatisfied with product variety (3.3) and graphic design (3.4), travel agencies are not satisfied with the ability of the site to adapt to mobile versions (2.1) (Marinov, Assenova, Dogramadjieva, Baikov, Petkova, 2013).

The overall satisfaction with the site is significantly higher than average – for all respondents, representatives of the accommodation sector (3.5) - according to hotel establishments with capacity of 51-100 beds (3.9) and over 200 beds (4.3), and lower – according to family hotels (3.1), hostels and pensions (3.1) and rural establishments (2.9).

The estimates of the information variety are higher than average (3.5) according to hotel establishments with 51-100 beds (3.9) and over 200 beds (4.2), and lower – according to hostels and pensions (3.1) and rural hotel establishments (3.0).

Higher than average estimate of the product variety is given by hotel establishments with capacity of 51-100 beds (3.8) and over 200 beds (4), 3 stars hotel establishments (3.6), and lower – by hostels and pensions (2.9).

Higher than average estimate to the utility is given by hotel establishments with capacity of over 200 beds (4.5), and lower – by rural hotel establishments.

Estimates of the illustrative site are higher than average according to hotel establishments with capacity of 51-100 beds (4.0) and over 200 beds (4.3), and lower – according to family hotels (3.2), hostels and pensions (3.0) and rural establishments (3.1).

Higher than average estimate to the graphic design is given by hotel establishments with over 200 beds (3.8), and lower – by rural hotel establishments (2.9).

Hotel establishments with a capacity of 51-100 beds (3.9), over 200 beds (4) and located in suburban areas (3.9) give higher estimates to

functionality, while hostels and pensions (3.1) and rural establishments (3,2) give lower estimates to that specific.

The estimates of navigation are higher than average according to hostels and pensions (5.0) and rural hotel establishments (5.0), and lower than average – according to guest rooms and guest houses (3.3) and establishment with capacity of 51-100 beds (3.0) representatives.

According to family hotels (4), hostels and pensions (5), hotel establishments with capacity of 20 beds (4) and rural establishments (5) the estimations of the ability to adapt to mobile versions is higher than average, while hotels (3), guest rooms and guest houses (2.5) and hotel establishments with capacity of 51-100 beds (3) estimate this aspect lower (Table 5).

Table 5. Estimates for tourism web-site of Sofia

	Overall satisfaction with the web-site (correspondence with the expectations)	Information variety (sufficiently complete information about attractions, products, etc.)	Product variety (complete coverage of the products)	Utility (practically oriented information)	Sufficiently illustrative photo images	Graphic design	Functionality (user friendliness)	Navigation	Ability to adapt to mobile versions
Total	**3.5**	**3.5**	**3.3**	**3.7**	**3.6**	**3.4**	**3.5**	**3.8**	**3.6**
Type									
Hotels	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.5	3.8	3.7	3.0↓
Family hotels	3.1↓	3.4	3.0	3.4	3.2↓	3.2	3.2	4.0	4.0↑
Hotels and pensions	3.1↓	3.1↓	2.9↓	3.6	3.0↓	3.4	3.1↓	5.0↑	5.0↑
Guest rooms and guest houses	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.7	3.8	3.3	3.4	3.3↓	2.5↓
Capacity									
Up to 20 beds	3.4	3.4	3.0	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.9	4.0↑
21-50 beds	3.4	3.4	3.2	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.8	3.3
51-100 beds	3.9↑	3.9↑	3.8↑	3.9	4.0↑	3.6	3.9↑	3.0↓	3.0↓
101-200 beds	3.5	3.3	3.2	3.5	3.9	3.6	3.8	.↑	.↑
Over 200 beds	4.3↑	4.2↑	4.0↑	4.5↑	4.3↑	3.8↑	4.0↑	4.0	.↑
Category									
1-2 stars	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.9	3.8
3 stars	3.6	3.7	3.6↑	3.7	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.3
4-5 stars	3.8	3.5	3.3	3.8	3.8	3.4	3.6	4.0	.↑
Location									
Center	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.8	3.7
Urban periphery	3.7	3.6	3.5	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.9↑	3.8	3.5
Rural areas	2.9↓	3.0↓	3.1	3.0↓	3.1↓	2.9↓	3.2↓	5.0↑	5.0↑

In order, the analysis of the Sofia Municipality web-site to become more detailed, the comparison with another site of a world popular tourism destination is considered to be appropriate. In this regard the web-site of the destination of London: visitlondon.com is chosen. The web-site visitsofia.bg is in Bulgarian, English and Russian, while the web-site visitlondon.com is in English, French, German and Spanish, i.e. languages used in EU member-countries.

The survey (Marinov, Dogramdjieva, Petkova, 2013) shows that the representatives of the accommodation sector most strongly want to attract tourists from EU member states without Balkan countries. Thus translation of the Sofia Municipality web-site in other languages (besides English and Russian) such as German, French, Italian and Spanish to be done is recommended.

Regarding graphic design, it could be noticed that both web sites have color photos, landscapes of the regions. On the Sofia site the images move/ change. On the one hand, the pictures on the web-site of Sofia are more interesting and attractive, but on the other hand, there are too many photos, some of which maybe are redundant and it would be too difficult for the user searching for information to navigate in it. Overall London web-site looks simpler and the main points, aggregated into a few main menus could easily be found. Meanwhile there are more pictures and more main menus in Sofia Municipality web-site, making the seeking of information in it more difficult. Furthermore, the menus of the site of London are discerned with more readable font.

It could be concluded that at first the site of Sofia would impress much more visitors but later it would be much more difficult for the user to find any specific information so he/ she could give up and leave the web-site.

There is a great similarity between the two sites concerning the look, layout and arrangement of the homepages, e.g. in the centre are the main menus through which connections with a number of submenus are made.

In terms of navigation positive fact is that both sites have search engines for information and opportunities for easy return to the home page by clicking a sign. The pages on the web-site of Sofia load slower than those of London.

Concerning the information variety it could be concluded that both web-sites contain information about similar sites, such as: modes of transport within and to the destination; types of accommodation; events, sights, attractions; activities, services, etc. The web-site of Sofia presents individual sites and some basic information about them, such as contact details, prices, capacity, how to reach them, working hours,

etc. The hotel establishments may be selected by category. The same information about sites is available on the web-site of London, which contains general information and ratings of the sites too. Moreover, the web-site of London also contains descriptions and articles about the various aspects of the destination. This information would be useful and interesting for visitors and concerns issues such as how to get to the destination, prices of transport services, travel advices, information about licenses and the level of safety and security of the transport, etc.

There are no such explanations, descriptions and articles included in the site of Sofia where only information for individual sites is available and it is no descriptive but presented more straight. Both sites contain location details, maps and links to other sites. Moreover, both sites present weather forecasts.

There are descriptions of attractions and events, contact details and information about the location on both web-sites. The site of Sofia contains information about the history of the city, contact details, working hours, prices and location of restaurant establishments. The site of London contains information about educational institutions and general information about the destination concerning the matters: salaries, visas, local currency, currency exchange offices, information centers and special offers, such as theaters, exhibitions, performances, prices, location and calendar of events.

The site of London also contains (as opposed to the site of Sofia) special tourist products, aimed at different target groups of customers - for families, luxury, classical, budgetary, etc. Another specific of the site of London, something that is not seen in the site of Sofia, is that there is information by districts (about hotels, sights, services, events, etc.).

In this regard, a recommendation can be given, namely the offers of thematic routes or products, aimed at different types of visitors to be presented, for instance proposals for cultural, eco and mountain, spa, event, skiing, shopping tourism, etc., i.e. "urban" and "non-urban" products or combined routes can be offered. This would considerable facilitate the tourists who are interested in specific activities in the region.

Both sites (of Sofia and London) have links with partner: universities, tourism organizations, etc. The site of London even contains links with the media, conference offices, etc. The site of London has a blog where various topics can be discussed, e.g. at the time of the study - the topic about New Year.

An estimation of the easiness to find both sites in internet is done (Table 6).

Table 6. Ease to find the web-sites visitlondon.com and visitsofia.bg in the search engine of Google by keywords at the end of November 2013

Keywords	Google
Sofia	The site visitsofia.bg is not available on the first ten pages
London	The site visitlondon.com is forth on the first page
Sofia+tourism	The site visitsofia.bg is fifth on the third page
London-tourism	The site visitlondon.com is first on the first page
Sofia+sightseeing	The site visitsofia.bg is not available on the first ten pages
London+sightseeing	The site visitlondon.com is second on the first page
Sofia+sights	The site visitsofia.bg is not available on the first ten pages
London+sights	The site visitlondon.com is first on the first page
Sofia+accommodation	The site visitsofia.bg is not available on the first ten pages
London+accommodation	The site visitlondon.com is second on the first page
Sofia+trips	The site visitsofia.bg is not available on the first ten pages
London+trips	The site visitlondon.com is third on the first page

From data on Table 6 it could be concluded that unlike the site of London, the site of Sofia is difficult to be found by people, who are not aware or do not remember the exact address of the site. It should be borne in mind that Internet users usually browse the sites on the first page of the search engine and not on the next. Furthermore, the presence of the site of Sofia on the Internet, as it could be detected only after the included attractions of Sofia are already found on previous sites is probably meaningless. To sum up, people who intend to visit the tourist destination Sofia Municipality are hardly to find this site.

Therefore, the use of variety of techniques that will make the site more discoverable by internet users, who wish to find information about tourist destination Sofia Municipality, is recommended. Furthermore, more descriptive information, articles, stories about the destination and its attractions should be included. This will stimulate the hesitant customers to visit the destination. The site should be easier to find, more attractive, useful and interesting for the target segments of users. The focus should be on the variety of the key attractions and the information that is useful for visitors.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, the following recommendations to Sofia Municipality "Tourism Service" Enterprise can be made:

- There are a large number of activities that could be used to promote Sofia as a tourist destination and stimulate tourism demand and each of them could be important in a particular situation.

- However when planning its activities Municipality Enterprise "Tourism Service" can focus on the ones recommended by accommodation sector as top priority or very important activities, especially activities associated with modern informational technologies, namely: (1) maintenance of specialized tourist web-site of Sofia, (2) active electronic marketing (electronic media, social networks, search engines, thematic portals and platforms, etc.).

- No significant change is needed in the scope of the activities of the Cultural and Information Center of Sofia, as far as it is acceptable for the accommodation sector. The lack of large gaps of the estimates between the current state of the activities and their importance is an indicator that no radical changes in the activities are needed, but rather continues improvement is appropriate. However, a special attention should be paid on the improvement of the performance of activities that are seen as more important and show higher deficits among which the maintenance of the web-site is leading.

- A significant improvement of tourism site of Sofia visitsofia.bg in all aspects is necessary, especially in terms of information and product varieties, graphic design and user friendliness. This activity is critical since the satisfaction with the site is relatively low and it is considered as the most import activity of the Cultural and Information Center of Sofia, and also the most important marketing activity of the destination.

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