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Corporate Websites and their Multilingual Dissemination. An analysis of Southern Spain Tourism Sector

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Abstract

Information and Communication Technologies provide valuable opportunities for companies to expand their business. In this sense, the availability of a multilingual corporate website can be of great help when it comes to reach international targets at a reduced cost. This is especially relevant in countries with remarkable tourism flows and foreign population, which is the case of Spain. The aim of this paper is to analyze the web presence and the multilingual dissemination of their corporate information of small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) from the tourist sector located in Andalusia (Spain). To meet this objective, a sample of 160 SMEs has been analyzed. A frequency analysis has been carried out as well as decision trees, the latter in order to identify drivers for influencing companies for having a website and its subsequent translation. Results show that, although around 70% of the companies had a corporate website, less than 40% of them translated their content and, if they do it, they mostly offered only one translated version of the webpage.

Keywords: Corporate websites; Corporate information; Multilingual Dissemination; Translation; Tourism

1. Introduction

Today, companies have great opportunities and resources to establish and expand their business thanks to globalization and modern information technologies. Among these opportunities, opening new markets and reaching international clients stand out, as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) allow to spread messages globally at a very reduced cost. Consequently, the use of ICTs is a good indicator of the ability of companies when it comes to modernize and compete in international and globalized contexts [1]. This is paramount for companies settled in regions with strong tourism flows, which is the case for Spain [2]. More specifically, Andalusia is among the three main tourist destination in Spain the Canary Islands is the main tourist destination in Spain (30.3%), followed by Catalonia (18.1%) and Andalusia (14.5%), according to the last official report [3]. However, companies

have to face numerous challenges when it comes to accessing new markets [4]–[6], among which are overcoming language and cultural barriers. These obstacles are especially relevant in fields such as tourism, given that a remarkable amount of their clients and potential customers come from international countries. Consequently, reaching this target audience via the multilingual dissemination of their corporate information is essential for the success of these companies [7]. To meet this aim, the availability of a multilingual corporate website plays an essential role, as the Web is not subject to geographical limitations and can reach users from very large audiences by fostering a friendly environment that generates engagement and develops a branding strategy [4], [8], [9]. Thus, website translation and localization – the cultural adaptation of the content and language for an specific culture or *locale* – contribute to Small and Medium-sized companies (SMEs) internationalization and helps to overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers of users from different socio-cultural and linguistic contexts [10]–[12]

In the light of these scenario, having an appealing multilingual website in line with their interests and objectives is highly advisable for companies aiming to get started in digital marketing, as it will serve as a public relations vehicle for promoting and commercializing their products and services, improve the buying experience and fostering the geographical expansion and success in international markets [4], [13]–[17].

On another note, it is undeniable that SMEs play a key role in the global economy, as most of the enterprises in European Union, including Spain, are small and medium-sized enterprises, accounting for 99.8% of all the enterprises in the EU non-financial business sector, and, in addition, 93% of these companies are micro-SMEs. Moreover, around 74% of these companies have a corporate website, according to the last official data [18]. In the case of Spain, the figures are quite similar as 99.9% of the business fabric is composed of SMEs and 81.9% belong to the service sector, in which tourism-related companies are included. Concerning the availability of corporate website, according to the last official report [19], around 78% of the Spanish SMEs have a website. More specifically, Andalusia accounts for 15.6% of the national SMEs, being the third autonomous community with the largest number of these companies. As in the case of Spain, with regard to the activity sector, more than 82% of the Andalusian SMEs are included in the service sector [20]. Finally, in terms of Web 2.0 tool usage, Andalusia follows the national and European trend as around 70% of the Andalusian SMEs have a corporate website, according to the official data [19].

In the light of the above, the focus of this work is on Andalusia, as it is the most populated region in Spain, with a very rich and diverse linguistic and cultural context due to tourism and migration [3], [21]. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyze the web presence of southern Spanish companies from the tourism sector – more specifically from the ecotourism area – as well as the multilingual dissemination of their corporate information. In addition, this work soughs to identify the drivers that influence companies for having or not a website and translating its content.

2. Methodology

The sample of study was selected using the information from the Tourism Establishments and Services Search Engine (Buscador de Establecimientos y Servicios Turísticos) offered by the government of the autonomous region of Andalusia (Junta de Andalucía). The data were collected during the months of December 2021 and January 2022. The sample comprised the 165 companies included in the sector corresponding to ecotourism, according to the Tourism Establishments and Services Search Engine. These companies were reviewed and those which were not companies, such as nonprofit organizations were discarded from the sample. Thus, the final sample was formed by 160 companies whose main business activity was focused on the area of ecotourism.

The companies were located throughout Andalusia and all the Andalusian provinces were represented in the sample. Jaen is the province with most representation, accounting for 29.4% of the companies, followed by Sevilla (16.3%), Almeria (14.14%), Granada (10%), Cordoba (8.8%), Cadiz (8.1%), Huelva (7.5%) and Malaga (5.6%). Fig. 1 shows the geographical distribution of the sample.
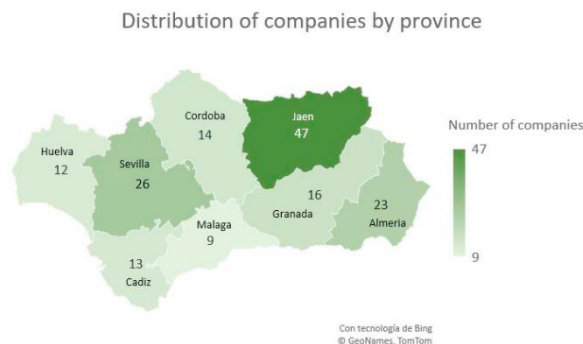
Fig. 1. Geographical distribution of the sample

In addition, companies were classified according to the services that they offered. Eleven groups of activities were identified among the analyzed companies: gastronomic and olive oil tourism, routes and excursions, sightings and observation, environmental education, accommodation, aquatic activities, photography, and travel agency. Moreover, those companies belonging to groups of activity with less than three companies were grouped into the category 'other services' and those companies whose main activity could not be identified were included in the 'unspecified' category. Fig. 2 shows the distribution of the companies according to the services that they provided.
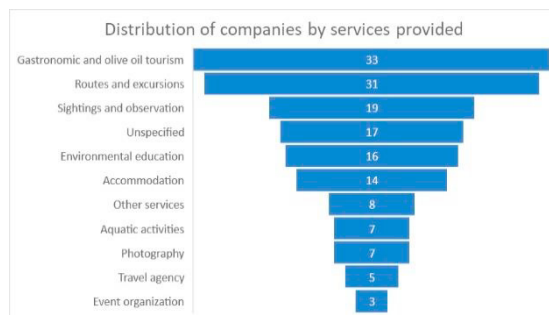

Fig. 2. Distribution of the sample according to the services provided by the companies

The following data were collected: name of the company, location, services provided, website address (if available) and translation languages (if applicable), according to the information provided by the Tourism Establishments and Services Search Engine. All the corporate websites were located both using the information available in the search engine or via Internet searches using the companies' names. In those cases were it was not possible to locate the URL of the corporate website or it could not be verified the effective belonging of a website to a given enterprise it was then determined that the company did not have – or it was impossible to locate – a corporate website. Moreover, broken links and websites under construction were omitted. The data were analyzed using SPSS statistical package via the analysis of frequencies and CHAID decision tree.

3. Results

The following results were provided by the frequency analysis. Firstly, 70.6% (113) of the analyzed companies had a corporate website, while the rest of the 47 companies (29.4%) did not have a website – or it was impossible to locate it via Internet searches. As a result, the subsequent analysis, focused on translation and language diversity, were carried out considering those companies having a corporate website (113). The CHAID algorithm was used in order to identify the most important drivers for a company having or not a website. The summary of the model shows (Fig 3.) that the services offered by the companies have predictive validity, whereas the location of the companies does not have statistical significance.

Consequently, those companies offering services related to routes and excursions, environmental education, aquatic activities, accommodation, gastronomic and olive oil tourism, and other services were more likely to have a website.
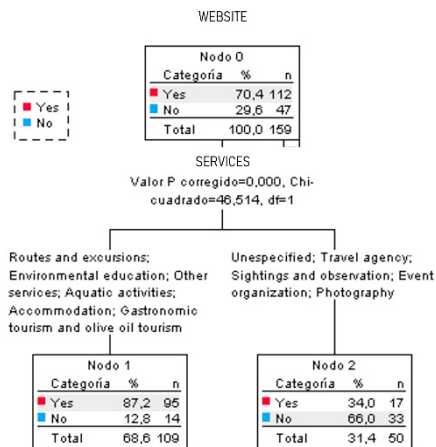

Fig. 3. CHAID decision tree for the variable website availability

Regarding the availability of translated versions of the corporate websites, only 38.9% (44) of the companies offered the content of their websites in, at least, two languages. Therefore, most companies (61.1%) did not offer a translated version of their websites. An analysis of language diversity was then carried out. As a result, most websites (61%) only offered their content in one language, as stated above, and those companies which offered translated versions of their contents normally did it only in one language (28%). Only 11% of the analyzed companies offered their websites in more than two languages. Regarding the languages available, which were identified according to the ISO 639-4:2010 standard [22], the default language was Spanish for 113 companies, followed by English (45), French (11) and German (6). The rest of the languages – Catalan, Dutch and Japanese – were present in only one website. Finally, the CHAID algorithm was used to identify drivers for a company translating or not its website, however, in this case, no variables were found to have predictive validity. Therefore, it can be concluded that neither the services offered by the companies, nor their location seem to influence companies for translating or not their websites.

4. Conclusion

This study has analyzed the web presence of Andalusian SMEs from the tourist sector, more specifically, from the ecotourism sector, as well as the multilingual dissemination of their corporate websites. In addition, it has been identified that the activity of the company may influence the fact of having or not a corporate website. The results obtained show that the web presence of the analyzed companies is remarkable, as more than 70% of the analyzed companies had a website. These results are in line with those offered by official reports [18], [19]. In addition, similar research have studied other fields such as the horticulture sector [23] or the healthcare sector [24]–[25], nevertheless, their results showed that only around half of the analyzed companies had a website. Therefore, it can be concluded that companies from the tourism sector are more likely to have websites than companies belonging to other business areas. However, it is surprising that, despite being the tourism sector highly dependent on international customers, there is a generalized lack of translation when it comes to corporate websites. Thus, less than 40% of the analyzed companies offered their websites in more than one language. Moreover, if companies translated their websites, they normally did it only to one more language, besides Spanish. Regarding translation, although the figures are somewhat higher, the results obtained in this study are similar to those obtained by previous research [23]–[25], which already pointed out the generalized lack of translation in corporate websites. This research contributes to expand the knowledge about the situation of SMEs regarding their web presence and multilingual dissemination of corporate websites. It can be concluded that more research is needed concerning the multilingual

dissemination of corporate information. Consequently, future research lines could include other sectors of tourism and other regions of Spain as well as other countries. Finally, it would be convenient to explore the perception of companies and users about digitalization and internationalization processes.

Acknowledgements

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