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Case study on hotels' websites in Kosovo

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Abstract

In the past few years, Internet and Internet technologies became very popular and transformed all kind of businesses. The rate of connectivity to the Internet is and will be high for a long period of time. To be seen on the computer screens around the world, companies spent a lot of effort and huge amount of money to build a solid image of their products and/or services. Websites seems to be the best ever known method to penetrate virtually any kind of target market. Globalization is just happening. In Kosovo, tourism development is a priority for the Government. As a consequence, hotel companies cannot stay apart. Thus, is interesting to visit and observe websites belonging to hospitality industry and find out how the Web service of the Internet is implemented at the level of this very important sector of Kosovo economy.Case study objectives: conduct research in order to find out the stage of developing specific websites for hotel organizations.Case study methods: visit and analyses as many hotels and motels websites could be found in a reasonable period of time. Target number: 30 visited websites.

1. Finding the websites to be analyzed

One of the simplestways of finding websites for a specific sector is to use one of the search engines like Magellan, Hot Bot, Lycos, and AltaVista etc. I personally prefer the advanced section of Google at *www.google.com* where I started searching the key word "HotelenëKosovë"contained in pages written in Albanian(fig.1).
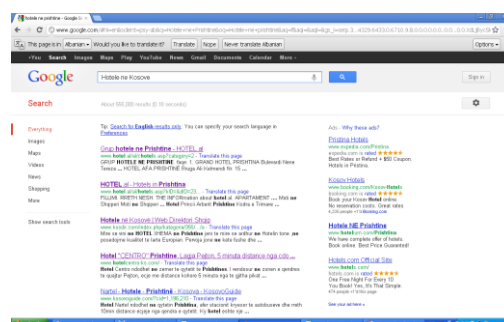

Figure 2Searching key word Hotels in webpages[1]

Among about 555,000results found it can be observed on the first position HOTEL.AL –Online guide to hotels and other accommodation facilities throughoutBalkans Countries, especially Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo. At www.hotels.al with sections are in Albanian, Turkish, German and English. The main page of the site is shown in fig.2.
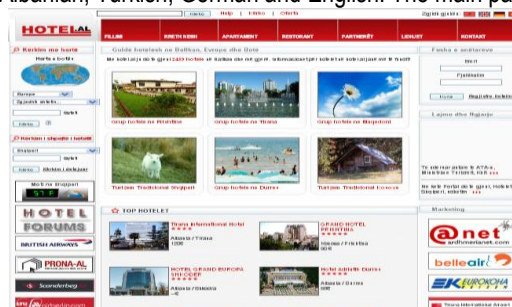

Figure 3 HOTEL.al – the main page of the site[2]

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[1]*http://tinyurl.com/c7acujs*
[2]*http://www.hotel.al/*

Hotel.aloffers you over 10,000 hosts Balkan worldwide. Hotel.al staff phones every hotel on an annual basis to check numbers of beds and facilities.It was very good to see that the database contains over 2459 hotels with detailed information, photos and links to hotels' websites. But surprise: when clicking to the links I could find no more than 45 active hotels' websites in Kosovo. Either websites did not exist or the links were made in wrong way. As a consequence the analysis is limited to the 30 webpages found.

2. Hotels' websites pages or pages' content taken into consideration

A hotel, motel or any other organizations' website can consist in a very large number of webpages, this number being dependent on many parameters (company dimension, field of activity, management, location, costs etc.). There are no fix numbers of pages per website but anybody can observe when surfing the Web that there are some "standard" pages. This case study took into consideration the pages named or containing the following:

1. *Welcome* – this page is designed to make visitors feel welcome to the hotel site. It offers the links which facilitate navigation and the possibility of rapidly finding the needed information. Also, it should contain original graphics able to illustrate the main message.

2. *Foreign languages versions* – facilitate the attraction of tourists from different target markets. For countries with limited speakers of their national language, it is recommended to have versions for widely spoken languages like English, French, Spanish, German and Italian.

3. *About us* – is the page which contains the company overview: goals, strengths and strategies. Also, it gives information about company roots and background, and – very important – a message from the owner or the general manager.

4. *Accommodation*– is the page with details about the rooms and/or apartments. Digital video clips and/or suggestive zoomed images are common ways to convince the visitor with a virtual tour of the hotel.

5. *Restaurant* – contains the data related to the restaurant affiliated to the hotel. A good impression can be made by including the menu, the prices and the opening hours. Special offer and delicious products are to be mention separately.

6. *Special services* – contains services like swimming pool, tennis, fitness, aerobic, solarium, medical assistance and all sort of outstanding services. It is the place where services can be promoted in order to differentiate the hotel/motel on the hospitality market.

7. *Human Resources* – this page might include brief biographies about key employees, in addition to a basic directory of current employees. It is designed according to database principles and provide mail and e-mail addresses, phone and fax numbers for each mentioned individual. It is recommended also to insert a photo for each individual.

8. *Jobs* – provides the company employment policies, details of how to compose and send Resumes (CV's), positions available, deadlines for applications and contact persons. It might contain subsections designed according to database principles for information regarding job requirements. A feedback online form is highly desirable.

9. *Contact information* – contains company location(s), a list of main departments and a brief description of them. It is recommended to include mail and e-mail addresses, phone and fax numbers, contact persons for each department. Photos should be included. A feedback form can help the hotel to get timely information from visitors to the site.

10. *Touristic attractions* – should be developed according to database principles. It contains the most attractive sites around the hotel/motel location. Hyperlinks, photos and digital video clips are very welcome.

11. *Touristic Offer* – contains service packages offered with all detailed information. In case of many possibilities, it can be organized as a list with hyperlinks to pages with more detailed data.

12. *Online reservations* – this is probably one of the most important pages of the entire website. Usually it contains a complex form with many fields with validation buttons in order to be completed quickly and to avoid incomplete data. Visitor can choose the ways of confirmation the reservation (e-mail, phone, fax etc.).

13. *Other information* – is the pages that contain any other information not found in the other sections of the website. This can be developed according to database principles completed with hyperlinks, photos and digital video.

14. *Rates and tariffs*– includes rack rates for rooms/apartments of all kind grouped on certain criteria. This page also specifies the prices for all other services offered. Discount policies should be mentioned in a special section.

15. *Sitemap* – is the page which lets your visitors view the entire site at a glance. It usually contains an image with active areas with hyperlinks to related pages.

16. *FAQ* – is a systematically developed list which provides clear, concise answers to frequently-asked questions about your hotel and products/services available.

17. *Image archive* – it is designed to store important, interesting and suggestive images (historical and up-to-date) inside hotel/motel and its vicinity. It might contain subsections designed according to database principles. A good idea is to offer the visitor the possibility of sending electronic postcards.

18. *Other* – it is not compulsory a page or a set of pages. Any hotel website should have a Guestbook with the opinion of people and a separate section for VIP's. Graphics is a crucial aspect and attractive colors are a determinant factor to continue visiting. Type of buttons, forms, animation and many other factors are "steeling" the attention and determine the visitor to "stay" more than initially planned. These are some of the most difficult components to be taken into consideration when analyzing

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websites. At this point it was quantified the site's attractively, surfing easiness and the loading speed.

The pages listed above should have valuable information for all kind of visitors, especially for those willing to accommodate or make preparations for an event (conference, seminar, business presentation, wedding etc.). Briefly, after the analysis, all visited sites and qualifying (very poor, poor, good, very good and excellent) were arranged in a table (MS Excel). Finally, for each qualifying it was given a certain number of points: 1 for very poor, 2 for poor, 3 for good, 4 for very good and 5 for excellent. If the site does not contain a specific page, the cells in the table have a "-" (dash). The results are given below (Table 1...6).

Table 1

Qualifying	Number fo pages qouted with	Name of the page or its content			
		Welcome	Foreign Languages Versions	About Us	Accommodation
N/A	Number of pages quoted with "-"	1	5	2	5
Very poor	Number of pages quoted with "1"	11	7	10	3
Poor	Number of pages quoted with "2"	3	18	3	4
Good	Number of pages quoted with "3"	1	0	10	9
Very good	Number of pages quoted with "4"	13	0	4	4
Excellent	Number of pages quoted with "5"	1	0	1	5

Table 2

Qualifying	Number fo pages qouted with	Name of the page or its content			
		Restaurant	Special Services	Human Resources	Jobs
N/A	Number of pages quoted with "-"	10	14	29	29
Very poor	Number of pages quoted with "1"	4	1	0	0
Poor	Number of pages quoted with "2"	3	3	0	0
Good	Number of pages quoted with "3"	6	9	0	1
Very good	Number of pages quoted with "4"	6	0	1	0
Excellent	Number of pages quoted with "5"	1	3	0	0

Table 3

Qualifying	Number fo pages qouted with	Name of the page or its content			
		Contact Information	Touristic Attractions	Touristic Offer	Online Reservations
N/A	Number of pages quoted with "-"	5	27	28	7
Very poor	Number of pages quoted with "1"	0	3	0	5
Poor	Number of pages quoted with "2"	8	0	2	1
Good	Number of pages quoted with "3"	3	0	0	9
Very good	Number of pages quoted with "4"	14	0	0	5
Excellent	Number of pages quoted with "5"	0	0	0	3

Table 4

Qualifying	Number fo pages qouted with	Name of the page or its content			
		Other informations	Rates and Tarrifs	Sitemap	FAQ
N/A	Number of pages quoted with "-"	16	19	30	30
Very poor	Number of pages quoted with "1"	9	5	0	0
Poor	Number of pages quoted with "2"	0	3	0	0
Good	Number of pages quoted with "3"	5	1	0	0
Very good	Number of pages quoted with "4"	0	2	0	0
Excellent	Number of pages quoted with "5"	0	0	0	0

Table 5

Qualifying	Number fo pages qouted with	Name of the page or its content			
		Image Archive	Attractivity	Surfing Easiness	Loading Speed
N/A	Number of pages quoted with "-"	14	10	0	0
Very poor	Number of pages quoted with "1"	7	15	10	8
Poor	Number of pages quoted with "2"	0	0	6	5
Good	Number of pages quoted with "3"	2	4	7	8
Very good	Number of pages quoted with "4"	2	0	6	6
Excellent	Number of pages quoted with "5"	5	1	1	3

Table 6

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Total number of sites per county		
NAME	SIMBOL	NUMBER
Hotel chain	-	0
Prishtine	PR	19
Peje	PE	4
Prizren	PZ	3
Ferizaj	FE	1
Gjakove	GJK	1
Gjilan	GJL	1
Istog	IS	1
	Total counted sites =	30

3. Conclusions

1. Despite the information that the database at HOTEL.AL contains more than 2459 hotels, especially in Kosovo 195, it was impossible to visit more than 30 sites – about 16%;

2. The pages "Welcome" and "Foreign Languages Versions" are concentrated between goodand excellent. The same qualifications apply to "Loading Speed";

3. The pages "About Us, "Accommodation" and "Contact Information" are concentrated inthe good and very good area;

4. The page "Touristic Attraction" is spread between not existing to poor;

5. The page "Online Reservations" is either not existing or very good;

6. The pages "Human Resources", "Jobs", "Sitemap" and "Frequently Asked Questions(FAQ)" are not existing or like not existing;

7. Too many sites have no updated information;

8. Only about 8% of the number of counties from within Kosovois represented inHOTEL.AL website. Very few hotel/motel organizations are represented for eachcounty: from 1 (the majority) to 19 – PRISHTINA, 4 – PRIZREN and 3 – PEJA.

4. Recommendation

We are living in Internet time and do not present the companies on the internet willmean much, especially for

the hotel. According to our research indicate that there has been little or no in this aspect. Hotel enterprises need to make radical changes to their online presentation. Some can improve and the others to apply it.From these results we have to work hard in this direction and much better for presentation of online enterprises, and are competitive with othercountries in this time of globalization.

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