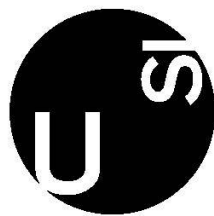




How Do National Tourism Organisations' Websites Cover Soundscapes?

MUSIC AND TOURISM: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY: HOW DO NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATIONS' WEBSITES COVER SOUNDSCAPES?



**Università
della
Svizzera
italiana**



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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Cover title: Young hipster woman listening to music in the city

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1. Introduction

Tourism is perceived as a holistic experience, which involves all the senses as well as our memory, feelings, intelligence, spiritual life, and capacity to engage in meaningful relationships with other people.

It encompasses places to see, things to do, to eat, people and traditions to encounter and to understand... and also things and people to listen to.

In recent years tourism-related narratives have improved, from being mostly focused on the “tourist gaze”, as it was named by John Urry in 1990, to include other experiences. This process has been facilitated by the usage of multi-media digital communication tools, e.g. websites, mobile apps, social media channels, augmented and virtual reality, and the like.

However, the audio experiences connected to every place have still to find a wide coverage and inclusion within marketing messages by tourism destinations. Besides ad-hoc services for niche travellers, sound-scapes do need still attention, and a deeper inclusion in touristic narratives.

Tourism narratives and experiences can benefit from such wider perspective, able to include not only material heritage – natural and cultural ones, as per the definitions proposed by the 1972 UNESCO Convention – but also the intangible cultural heritage – as defined by the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

The celebration of the first European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018 appears to be a great opportunity to reflect on how national tourism organisations can (re)present sound- and music-related information on their websites, leveraging on the extensive affordances granted by multimedia communication.

Thus, the purpose of this exploratory study is to provide a first comprehensive map of how ETC (European Travel Commission) members represent soundscapes on their websites.

As it is clear, there is no “right” or “wrong” solution, or “one-fits-all” model, rather, a reflection on how current practices could promote a better understanding of the different possibilities, and, ideally, a more extensive and a wiser inclusion of the auditory experiences within communication and marketing strategies of destinations.

2. Music and Tourism

Sound is generally part of tourism experiences starting from the very first encounter of the tourists at the destination by helping them to absorb the environment of the place through auditory perceptions. The language spoken at the destination, intonation, noises, gestural talks, nature sounds, sound of musical instruments, traditional music and many more audio inputs are part of the auditory tourism experience. Along with visual senses, audio inputs help to create tourism “soundscapes” enriched by attractions and experiences. The study of soundscape in tourism brings in place the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in terms of mobile applications and websites that generally enable tourists to access audio files in order to discover the music or sounds of a destination. Indeed, ICTs allow tourists to discover the place with auditory senses, whether before or during a trip (Truax, 2001).

2.1 Music Tourism as a part of Cultural Tourism

The combination of sounds creates music, and in its turn, music might become part of the national identity of the place being an integral part of the cultural context of the nation as an aesthetic value (Attali, 1985; Misiak, 2013). Indeed, music is not only illustrated in a representation of intangible cultural heritage but can be used as a trademark of a place. Specific forms of music and sounds of places contribute to define their social and cultural identities. The consumption of cultural soundscapes pushes destinations to consider music as an asset for tourism experiences, and use this tool to attract tourists via musical heritage; thus, creating a new tourism niche called music tourism (Johnson, 2002; Connell & Gibson, 2005).

Music tourism experiences can be grouped as follows (Connell & Gibson, 2007), where places and music are linked to:

- Artists/composers/icons (e.g. Mozart, Elvis Presley, Beatles)
- Genres of music created in place (e.g. New Orleans-jazz, Nashville- country music)
- Performances/festivals/events (e.g. Berlin, Prague, Sydney, Austin)
- Sites (e.g. birthplace of Mozart in Vienna, mansion of Elvis Presley in Memphis)
- Nostalgia (e.g. music history of the city)
- Heritage (e.g. musical heritage recognised by UNESCO such as aboriginal music)
- Other type of arts (e.g. tango dance from Argentina, flamenco in Spain)

Places can have the traits of multiple categories at once.

2.2 The role of music on a destination’s website design

According to Joliffe, Rowe, & Davis (2002), destinations rich in cultural heritage are ideal candidates for branding themselves through the use of the online channels. Internet allowed different cultures to represent themselves, and to inform people more about specific cultural-related characteristics of the places. Through official tourism websites of destinations, cultural heritage is displayed on a global scale, exposing tourists to locations and cultures that are unfamiliar to them. The representation of music-related content on destinations’ websites might have different formats: audio or video files, textual information on music-related experiences, interactive games, images, infographics, etc.

3. Methodology

A content analysis of the ETC members' websites has been performed in November 2017. 32 National Tourism Organisations' websites were taken into consideration (see list of analysed websites in Annex).

The English version of the websites has been taken into account. The homepage, first level menu, and in some cases relevant pages from second level menu were analysed.

Content relevant to music-related information was collected. While analysing pages of the websites, each collected piece of information was classified into five main categories (location, type of section, format, music-related topic, and type of message) and related subcategories, based on an analysis of previous studies (Connell & Gibson, 2007), and on the actual published content displayed on the ETC members' websites (Table 1).

Table 1. Categories used for the content analysis

Location	Type of section	Format	Music-related Topic	Type of message
Whole website	Culture	Text	Traditions	General description
Specific section	Attractions	Video	Events	Local/community involvement
A dedicated link	Events	Audio	Type of arts (dances, songs)	Testimonial
Widget	Things to do	Picture	Presence of intangible heritage	Video storytelling
Homepage	UNESCO ICH section	Logo	Festivals	Soundtrack
		Brochure/e-magazine	Culture/heritage	Shop
		Animation	Artists/individuals/icons	Image carousel
			History of music	
			Music attractions (birth/death/home places of artists/composers)	
		Handcrafts/Craftsmanship		

4. Results

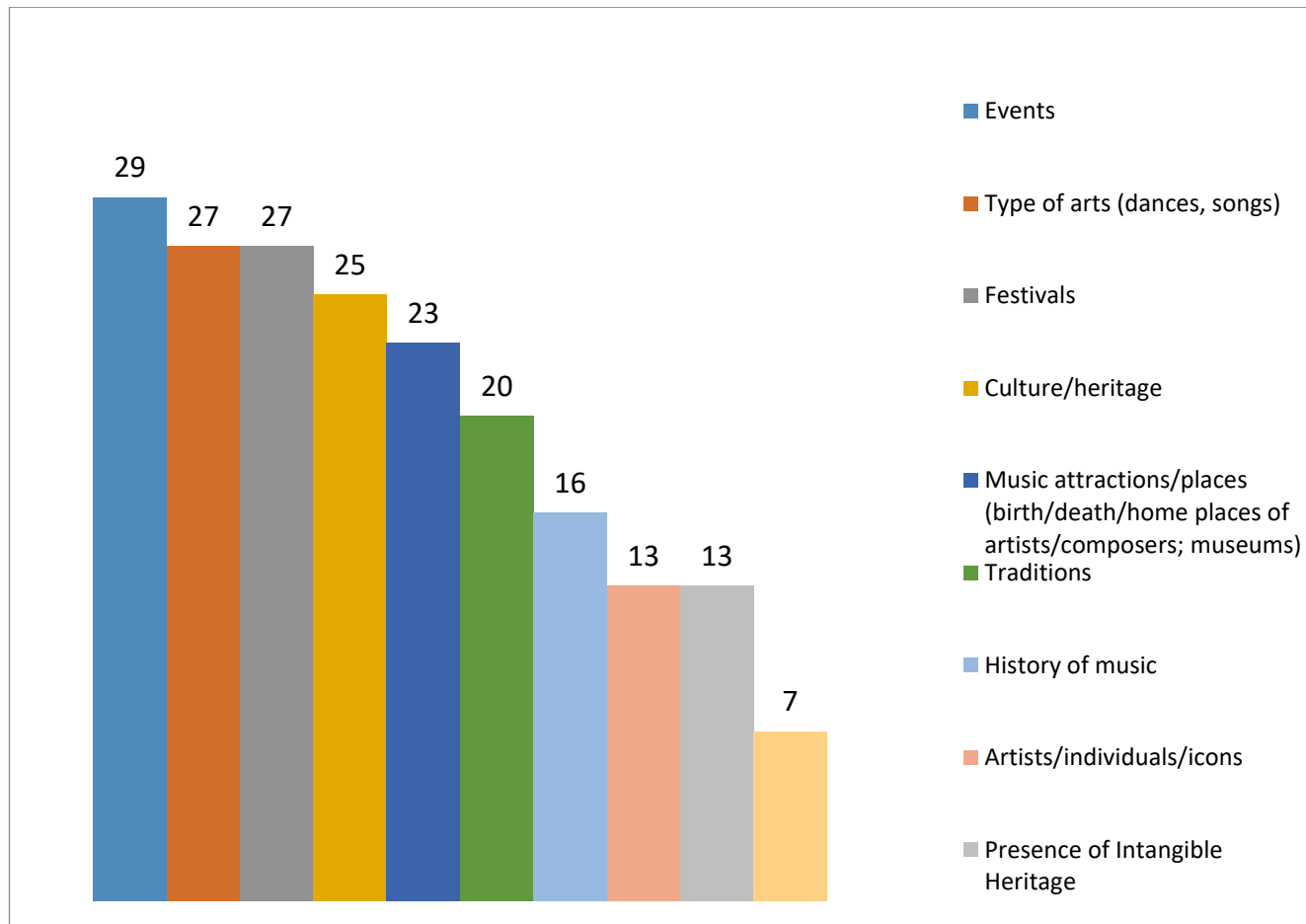
Hereafter results are presented providing two different perspectives: first, the presence of different music-related topics within the analysed websites is assessed and discussed, then a tentative map is provided, which portrays also the presence of different types of messages, and the inclusion of audio/video materials.

4.1 Covered music-related topics

All of 32 analysed websites provide information on music-related activities. Although music is widely represented across the websites, it is not the central element of the tourism offer of destinations. Indeed, music is generally not the primary source of attraction, but rather linked to places, other types of arts, etc. Regarding the format of the music information, it should be noted that multimedia, such as videos and audios, are not fully integrated while presenting music-related topics.

When it comes to the music related covered topics, ten main categories emerged. Music is mostly associated with events-related information (29 websites), meaning that even if the destination does not provide any major musical heritage, there are at least musical events displayed on the website that might attract tourists (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Music-related topics covered by the National Tourism Organisations' Websites



In the coding, events and festivals have been separated: the second ones (present in 27 websites) refer to a specific day/days or period of celebration intended as recurring events. Interestingly, in 27 websites music is represented or linked to dances and songs. This is explained with the fact that, in most cases, music is considered as a part of art, and gives meaning to it. Music related to culture and heritage is shown in 25 websites, which explains the importance of music as a heritage for such destinations. Additionally, 20 websites associate music within their traditions.

Places related to music, such as birth- or death-places of artists/composers, museums about music, theatres, opera houses etc. are indicated by 23 websites, which means that destinations include music-related places in their tourism offers.

In terms of “History of music”, 16 websites cover this topic, which means that destinations include an historical overview on how a specific music (e.g. classical music) has developed over time.

Artists / individuals / icons are mentioned only by 13 websites. This can be due to the fact that not every destination has famous musicians to feature on their website. Also, in 13 cases music is represented among Intangible Cultural Heritage. Lastly, 7 websites cover the craft of making instruments.

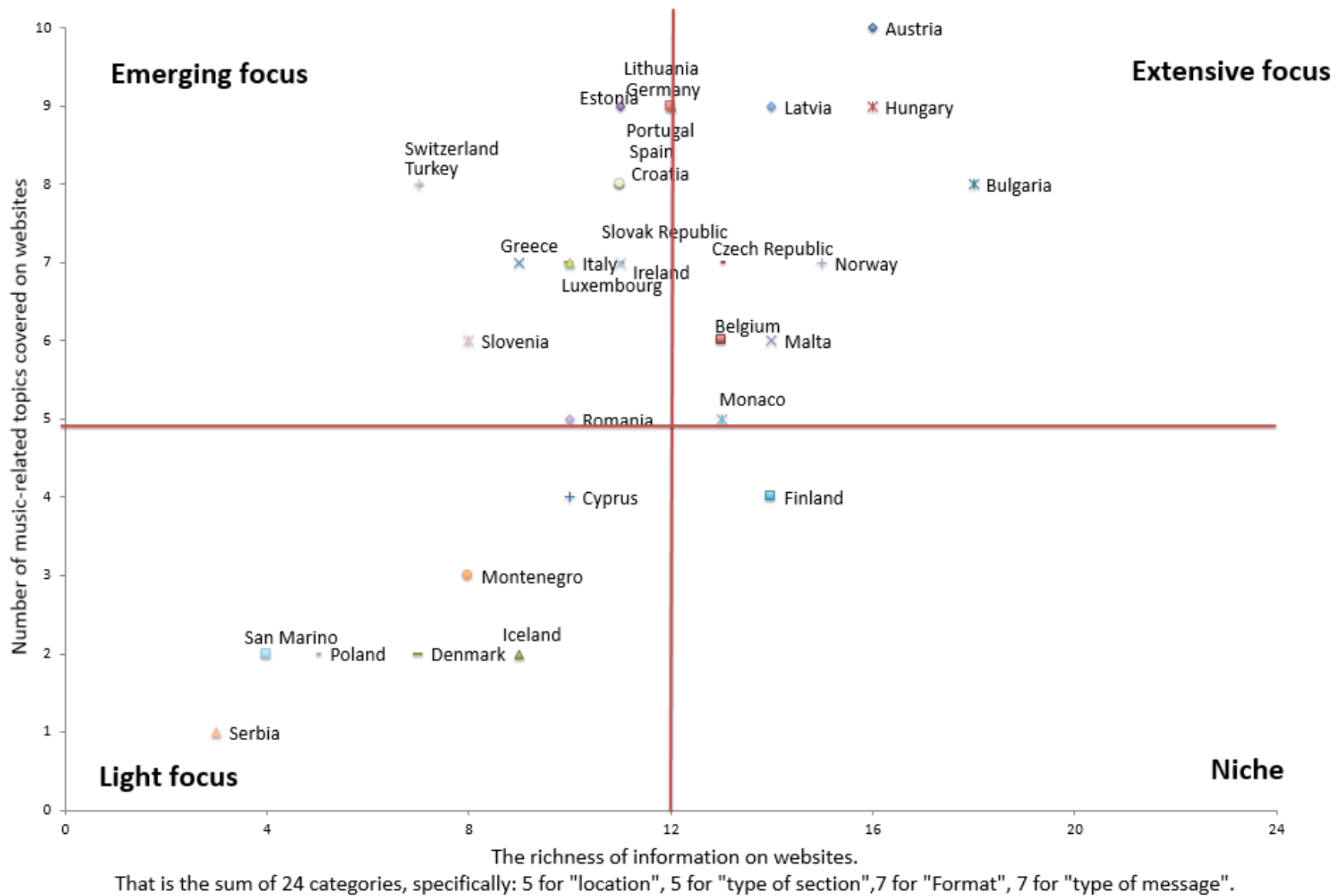
4.2 Tentative map of destinations’ coverage of music-related info on their websites

A scattered plot (Figure 2) is proposed to visualise where websites stand in terms of providing music-related information. A description of the different quadrants presented in the scattered map is provided in the next pages. The websites are assessed based on the numbers of topics that they cover as well as on the information richness, which encompass types of messages and media used (from “Location”, “Type of Section”, “Format”, and “Type of Message” categories. See Table 1). Table 2 presents the countries distribution as proposed in the scattered map.

Table 2: The division of the National Tourism Organisations’ Websites according to scattered map

Extensive focus	Emerging focus	Light focus	Niche
Austria Belgium Bulgaria Czech Republic Hungary Latvia Malta Monaco Norway	Croatia Estonia Germany Greece Ireland Italy Lithuania Luxembourg Portugal Romania Slovak Republic Slovenia Spain Switzerland Turkey	Cyprus Denmark Iceland Montenegro Poland San Marino Serbia	Finland

Figure 2. Scattered map of how National Tourism Organisations' Websites cover music-related topics



Hereafter a description of each quadrant of the map.

1. Extensive focus – many topics and much information

The right upper quadrant indicates the websites that have more topics related to music and provide rich information about them.

Interestingly, out of all countries in this section, Norway stood apart by implementing musical heritage through the creation of new sounds. The project, introduced on the website, is dedicated to the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Henrik Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" play. Four Norwegian musicians have made their own versions of three Edward Grieg's compositions written for the play: "Morning Mood", "In the Hall of the Mountain King", and "Anitra's Dance". This way, they introduce new methods of reviving music from the past to attract tourists.

2. Emerging focus – many topics but less information

Most analysed destinations belong to this cluster, meaning that the destinations do cover music as part of their traditions, events, cultures, etc. However, the websites provide only limited information on such topics.

An example is Romania. In fact, the website includes elements of sense-scape, which might easily be extended to include traditional music.

3. Light focus – few topics and less information

These are the websites that do not cover many music-related topics, and do not have rich information about them. In most cases, the available information covers musical events happening at the destination, as well as theatres and concert halls as attractions to visit.

4. Niche – few topics but much information

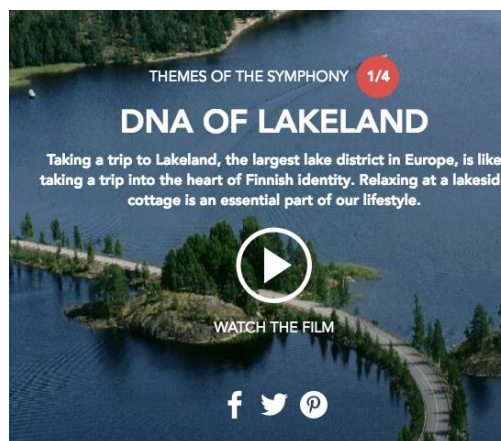
The lower right quadrant is devoted to websites that provide a variety of information on a very limited number of topics, this way focusing on the richness of the content (e.g. multimedia presence, engaging content, music games, sounds, music projects etc.) rather than on the coverage extension.

This category would include websites that explore a new perspective of integrating music in different tourism offers and consider music as a creator of the authentic sense of place. Although this category includes nowadays only one website, it can be said that there is potential for other countries to move into this quadrant.

Finland, the only country in this category, combines and implements modern technology and music to promote the destination. The Finnish website hosts a dedicated section named "The Symphony of Extremes – Born From Finnish DNA" by "Visit Finland" where dedicated videos are displayed to explain how the proposed symphony has been created and linked with the characterising aspects of the destination making this music an expression of the territory. Overall, the website covers just few music related topics, that is, information about events,

festivals, and mention of the music as heritage, but it uses this creative initiative in order to communicate the Finnish identity using music. It adds emotional value and attachment with the place, leading to the creation of “sense of place” (Figures 3 and 4).

Figures 3 and 4. Screenshots of homepage from Finland website. Source: www.visitfinland.com



5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, 32 websites were analysed. Generally, countries' websites tend to include music in their tourism offers. However, the presence of music-related topics does not guarantee a high level of website experience for this specific domain, especially when it comes to media richness.

In some cases, National Tourism Organisations' websites seem to underestimate the impact that music-related info can have on their users, especially if videos, audios and animations are used in order to attract tourists to the destinations.

Further research could expand the panel of analysed websites, including other regions and continents. Additionally, the different categories can be further refined and validated, so that also the resulting map could become more precise and comprehensive. Additionally, the social media channels of the destinations could be included in the research, so to provide a wider map of their inclusion of music-related topics.

The tourists' perspective could also be included in a further research, running surveys or interviews / focus groups, as well as a content analysis of online travel reviews covering the auditory experiences of travellers.

This report could help destination managers to better reflect on their online coverage of soundscapes. This might encourage them to provide richer content on more extensive topics, as long as they are included within their destinations' tourism strategies.

In general, the following suggestions might be considered:

- Music-related content: music should be present also in audio/video format, leveraging on the endless multimedia opportunities offered by digital channels.
- Practical info: for places with major music heritage it should be considered to go beyond mere descriptive information. More extensive information could be provided, including the locations where this music can be listened to and experienced.
- "Music experiences" could be considered as a valuable add-on to the offers by a destination, to be showcased also on its website.
- Music as the "sense of place": music can be bundled with different tourism offers in a creative way, it can also be used as a tool to rebrand a destination's image and create a deeper sense of place.

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7. Annex

List of the websites analysed (November 2017):

N#	Country	Official website(s)
1	Austria	https://www.austria.info
2	Belgium	1. http://www.visitflanders.com 2. http://walloniabelgiumtourism.co.uk 3. https://visit.brussels/en/ Out of 3 websites, the 1 st one was chosen for analysis
3	Bulgaria	http://www.bulgariatravel.org
4	Croatia	https://croatia.hr/en-GB
5	Cyprus	http://www.visitcyprus.com
6	Czech Republic	http://www.czechtourism.com
7	Denmark	http://www.visitdenmark.com/denmark/tourist-frontpage
8	Estonia	https://www.visitestonia.com
9	Finland	http://www.visitfinland.com
10	Germany	http://www.germany.travel
11	Greece	http://www.visitgreece.gr
12	Hungary	http://gotohungary.com
13	Iceland*	https://www.ferdamalastofa.is https://www.inspiredbyiceland.com Out of 2 websites, the 2 nd one was chosen for analysis
14	Ireland	1. https://www.discoverireland.ie 2. https://www.tourismireland.com Out of 2 websites, the 1 st one was chosen for analysis
15	Italy	http://www.italia.it
16	Latvia	http://www.latvia.travel
17	Lithuania	http://www.travel.lt
18	Luxembourg	https://www.visitluxembourg.com
19	Malta	http://www.visitmalta.com
20	Monaco	http://www.visitmonaco.com
21	Montenegro	https://www.montenegro.travel
22	Norway	https://www.visitnorway.com
23	Poland	https://www.poland.travel
24	Portugal	https://www.visitportugal.com
25	Romania	http://www.romania.travel
26	San Marino	http://www.visitsanmarino.com
27	Serbia	http://www.serbia.travel
28	Slovak Republic	http://slovakia.travel
29	Slovenia	https://www.slovenia.info
30	Spain	http://www.spain.info
31	Switzerland	https://www.myswitzerland.com
32	Turkey	http://www.goturkeytourism.com

* Analysed in April 2018

Contributors



Gunel Sadigova graduated from Master of Arts in Economics and Communication, major in International Tourism, from USI – Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano, Switzerland). During her masters studies she worked as a teacher assistant at the eTourism Lab of USI (webatelier.net). Her Master's thesis topic was on “The role of music in online communication of destinations”. She also holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the Azerbaijan State University of Economics (Baku, Azerbaijan).

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