

The Evaluation of the Use of Websites by Four and Five-Star Hotels in the Marmara Region of Turkey

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For businesses, the use of the internet and electronic commerce has opened the door to a vast number of potential customers and is able to be used to great effect in order to increase competitive advantage, particularly within crowded marketplaces. By means of the global structure of the internet, businesses such as accommodation providers are able to promote their services to potential customers throughout the world, circumventing traditional boundaries imposed by differences in time zone and geographic location. In order for businesses to successfully take advantage of e-commerce and leverage their position however, the design of quality websites is essential (Hernández, Jiménez, & Martín, 2009). The aim of this study was to employ the method of content analysis in order to evaluate the use of key website design features by four and five-star hotels within the Marmara region of Turkey, considered as key to success within the world of e-commerce. Resultant from the analyses conducted, it was found that hotels classified as being five-star and those belonging to a chain attached a greater level of importance to several design issues such as content and speed. Additionally, it was found that while the websites of independent and four-star hotels were more static and provided general information, five-star and chain hotel establishments were more dynamic in the content and design of websites.

KEYWORDS: *Hotel, Hotel Websites, Website Contents, Website Design, E-Commerce.*

1. INTRODUCTION

First developed in the 1960's as a network primarily designed to be used by government and educational institutions in order to readily disseminate information between agencies (White, 2009), the internet has undergone a great many changes to evolve into what it is today. In the mid 1990's, the use of the internet spread beyond that of government and educational organisations, with households and businesses around the world taking advantage of its speed of access to information through services such as websites and email. Of the services available to individuals through the internet, perhaps that which is most commonly associated with the internet, or 'the net' as it is often referred to, is that of websites. According to Lee and Koubek (2010), websites are able to

be classified into four general categories according to their purpose; those which provide entertainment (e.g. youtube.com), those which provide users with information (e.g. Wikipedia.org), those which facilitate communication between users (e.g. social networking sites) and those which are based on commerce, allow users to make transactions and purchase goods and services by means of an online marketplace (e.g. eBay and Amazon.com). This fourth category of website is known broadly as electronic commerce, or e-commerce, and though most commonly associated with online shops and auction places, is multi-faceted (Schneider, 2007). Included within Schneider's definition of e-commerce, is the traditional business to consumer (B2C) model, business to business (B2B) as well

as the use of the internet to aid transactions between businesses, governments, and others.

The ubiquitous nature of the internet, together with the innovation of e-commerce, according to Sigala (2002), has helped define the way in which the world conducts business, allowing businesses to increase sales while decreasing costs. Further to this point, the utilisation of the internet through websites allows business and organisations throughout the world to promote their goods and services in competitive or limited markets which may have previously been considered as being unreachable, and is ideal communication channel for accommodation providers (Hernández et al., 2009; Lee & Koubek, 2010; Schmidt, Cantalops, & dos Santos, 2008). Thus, particularly for hotels, websites have become an indispensable means of presenting themselves to the world, facilitating the increase of profits in a crowded and highly competitive marketplace (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006). Hotel establishments have adapted to change and begun to create websites, accelerating the process of communication with customers, learn about questions or problems consumers may have, answer them at the shortest time and perform their promotions and marketing via their own websites or via the website of intermediary institutions (such as hotel review and booking websites, tourism organizations etc).

When booking systems at the website were first designed for users, importance was attached to factors such as price, security and comprehensibility. With an increase in the use of websites, the importance of accessing information, emphasizing the functionalities of operations (such as clarifying information about purchasing, services and products etc) and integrating them into the booking systems of hotels was realized (Kim & Kim, 2004). The primary reasons why the use of websites by business has increased are the ability of customers to directly search for products and services and the provision of an opportunity for focusing their promotional efforts. Additionally, websites allow establishments to collect information about the visitors to their site such as what terms they searched for and whether or not they purchased products or services after visiting the site. In this way, websites have had great potential as a means of marketing planning. In parallel to an increasing demand for electronic commerce, hotel establishments have created websites in order to increase their services and products. So, they have begun to acquire their share from new online markets. Within this scope, websites have begun to function as a channel between consumers and hotel establishments to carry out the operations of the establishment and obtain information about consumers (Chung & Law, 2003). According to

Hernández, Jiménez, & Martín (2009), the success of websites may be achieved through a variety of factors. The factors cited by Hernández et al., (2009) as contributing to the success of websites include effective design, appearing among the top results of search engine, fast website access, optimisation of information quality and for websites concentrating on e-commerce, the provision of information relating to privacy, security and payment methods.

With this in mind, the purpose of this study is to analyse the use of websites by four and five-star hotels situated within the Marmara region of Turkey. Within the scope of this project, the literature pertaining to the success and usability of e-commerce websites through design and the inclusion of key features and characteristics, generally, and more specifically within the hospitality and tourism industry is also to be reviewed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the great efforts made for investigations of design, it is seen that the use of most sites is difficult. In the studies that examine electronic commercial sites (Şarman, 2007), it is suggested that only 56% of the users expressed that sites successfully fulfilled their duties. Forrester Research Company (cited in Şarman, 2007) suggested that of all online shopping tours, 65% culminated in failure and that 40% of all visitors did not want to visit the site again due to experiencing problems with design. The design of websites is understood to be important to the success of websites through the facilitation of access to information and through the enhancement of usability. Usability, as defined by the International Standard Organisation (ISO) (as cited in Lee & Koubek, 2010, p. 330) is “the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction”. In addition to the ISO definition, Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú (2008), consider website usability to include ease of understanding functions and contents, simplicity of use, speed of use, ease of navigation to achieve desired goals, and the ability of the user to readily, and effectively control their actions. Thus, within the context of e-commerce within the tourism, and the hotel industry, it can be inferred that usability refers to the ability of consumers to access websites and their contents with ease in order to successfully achieve goals such as the gathering of information or the purchase of goods and services such as the reservation of hotel rooms.

According to Lee and Koubek (2010), the design characteristics of websites, such as content and visual organization, colour schemes, font choice, and navigation systems are closely related to the notion of website usability. Studying the effects of design characteristics on user preference for e-commerce websites, Lee and Koubek found that website design maintained a significant positive effect on consumer preference. In coming to this conclusion however, Lee and Koubek hazard practitioners against focussing their efforts purely on the aesthetic or visual elements of design such as colour and typography. Rather, it was found that the more practical elements of design had a higher correlation to, and effect on user preference. In particular it was found that the organisation of content and visual aids and the ease in which users were able to navigate their way through the contents of a website had the greatest impact on preference. As such, it was recommended that when designing a website intended for the purpose of e-commerce, that designers give preference to the organisational structure and layout of content. Echoed within this recommendation are the findings of Rosen and Purinton (2004), who found that user preference was primarily driven by the ease of which they were able to navigate the contents of e-commerce websites, driven through simplicity of design rather than the aesthetics.

Though outside the scope of their study, Lee and Koubek (2010) additionally posited that user preference for e-commerce websites may be related to, and perhaps better explained by perceptions of trust elicited by websites, suggested as being related to design attributes. The viewpoint that trust in e-commerce sites is associated with preference and increased business is one which echoed by Li and Yeh (2010), who state that perceptions of trust are often associated with higher levels of purchase intention and loyalty rates. Partially bridging the gap suggested by Lee and Koubek, are Robins and Holmes (2008), by means of their study on website aesthetics and its link to perceived credibility. According to Robins and Holmes, the credibility of websites is a critical issue for businesses involved in e-commerce, in part due to the vast number of websites engaged in e-commerce, thus increasing the level of competition, and in part due to the visual nature of the internet. This visual nature of the internet, it is argued, leads consumers to make initial judgments on credibility subconsciously based upon aesthetic appeal and design elements prior to cognitive processes such as the reading and comprehension of content takes place. To this end, Robin and Holmes sought to investigate the speed of which users make assessments on website credibility and whether websites with a high level of aesthetic appeal were

perceived as being more credible than those with a low visual appeal. In answering these questions, websites whose visual appearance had been altered to reflect having a high and low level of aesthetic appeal were shown to a sample of twenty students. Resultant from this research it was found that there was no statistical difference in speed of credibility judgments between websites with high aesthetic appeal and those with low, with the average time taken for judgment to take place at just 3.49 seconds. In regards to the effect of design on credibility however it was found that by increasing the level of aesthetic appeal while leaving the content unchanged resulted in an increased credibility rating in 90% of cases, suggesting the design of websites has a significant impact on the perceived credibility of websites. Similarly to Robins and Holmes, Li and Yeh sought to investigate the impact of design aesthetics on user perceptions of trust and credibility with e-commerce sites. The findings of Li and Yeh provide additional support for those of Robins and Holmes, with website aesthetics found to increase consumer confidence in vendors of e-commerce through increased perceptions of trust and credibility. Though the work of Li and Yeh was conducted within the realm of mobile or m-commerce (whereby e-commerce sites are accessed via mobile phones rather than personal computers), the findings serve to highlight the importance of well designed and visually appealing websites for businesses involved in internet based commerce so as to increase perceptions of trust amongst consumers.

In ensuring the success of e-commerce businesses through competitive advantage, Hernández et al., (2009) suggest a number of key factors which should be considered by management and website designers alike. Advocated by Hernández et al., as contributing to the success of e-commerce websites is the appearance within the top results in search engines through utilisation of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), the design of quality websites which provide users with ease of use and are easy to navigate through well structured menus and site maps, and the provision of content which is accurate, regularly updated and relevant. Additionally, Hernández et al., recommend that e-commerce websites are fast to download and engage in promotional activities through cross-linking with other websites which are appropriate in the relevance. In a similar vein, Lin (2007) suggests that in order to satisfy the needs of consumers, online business should strive for sites which are well designed, have a high degree of usability through navigation and speed of access and are reliable. Furthermore, Lin advises that customer satisfaction can further be increased through the inclusion

of up-to-date, useful information and by employing modes of online transaction which are secure from misuse and fraud, serving to help boost perceptions of trust and confidence. Congruent to the advice of Lin and Hernández et al., is that of Casaló et al., (2008). Amongst the recommendations made by Casaló et al., for the operators of e-commerce sites, it is advocated that e-business operators cross-link to relevant websites, particularly official organisations and associations. Casaló et al., claim that in doing so e-businesses may be able to increase their level of reputation or credibility via association and thus generate gains through competitive advantage.

Further in their recommendations to e-business operators, Casaló et al., (2008) highlight the importance of designing websites that are high in their level of usability rather than focusing solely on aesthetics and visually appealing features that may result in “complex websites full of multimedia effects” (p. 339). In creating successful websites that deliver competitive advantage however, neither usability nor aesthetic functions should be favoured to the extent that one or the other is adversely affected. Rather a balance between the organisational and visual design elements should be struck, allowing for user satisfaction through design that rather than being complex, maintains a simple yet efficient structure, resulting in increased usability (Casaló et al., 2008; Gürses, 2006). When preparing websites for accommodation providers, it is recommended to primarily ensure that the design is in harmony with the purpose of the company and that the design is assisted by those who understand the market position of the establishment (Casaló et al., 2008; Şarman, 2007).

Within this context, Karamustafa, Biçkes, and Ulama (2002) suggest that accommodation providers conducting business within the realm of e-commerce incorporate a number of features or characteristics within their website so as to maximise potential advantage. Among the features suggested by Karamustafa et al are email, general tourist information, information related to discounts and promotions, FAQs, the ability for users and customers to provide feedback, multiple language options and information on booking and the ability to make online payments. The suggestions of Karamustafa et al as to the incorporation of specific website characteristics for hotels is largely supported by Law and Hsu (2005). Surveying international visitors to Hong Kong who had visited the website of an accommodation provider in the last year, Law and Hsu sought to investigate the importance of hotel website dimensions as perceived by consumers. The five dimensions explored, in level of importance as judged by

respondents were reservation information, facilities information, contact information, surrounding area information and website management. Among the attributes found to be most important were the provision of room rates and availability, the ability to make reservations online and with secure payment systems, up-to-date information, the choice of multiple languages, contact details such as telephone numbers and email addresses, as well as maps detailing the location of the hotel and surrounding public transportation. The perceived importance of these features, specifically, content providing potential guests information as to the services and facilities, as well as nearby tourist attractions is echoed by Schmidt et al (2008); stating that these characteristics aid the effectiveness of hotel websites. In particular, Schmidt et al state that the inclusion of such content in hotel websites can be associated with the acquisition of new guests and retention as well as increased market share, demonstrating the usefulness of e-commerce in highly competitive marketplaces.

In their evaluation of websites of accommodation providers in Turkey, Karamustafa et al (2002) stated that basic features such as electronic mail, offering online booking, various alternatives of foreign language, and the presence of still photographs of the facilities as well as information such as booking information, information about travelling and transportation and special promotions were commonplace on websites. However because the accommodation establishments operating in Turkey were dependent on tourism intermediaries in their marketing activities, the web pages had the characteristic of being static web pages intended largely for promotion. It was suggested that in line with the requests and expectations of consumers, accommodation establishments need to create a web page with an interactive feature in order to make their web pages more active, contrary to the findings of Law and Hsu (2005). Interestingly, though web design elements such as site maps, download speed and the ability to perform searches within the site are seen as important in regards to issues of user preference and perceptions of trustworthiness (Casaló et al., 2008; Hernández et al., 2009; Lee & Koubek, 2010), these characteristics were seen in the results of Law and Hsu as being considered only somewhat important, while their existence among the websites of Turkish hotel operators were not reported by Karamustafa et al. In a similar vein to Karamustafa et al, Baloglu and Pekcan (2006) investigated the use of website design by four and five-star hotels, providing descriptive statistics as to the use of features and characteristics. In this manner it was reported that more than 60% of hotels

surveyed promoted their services through the inclusion of informative text and photographs of the hotel and rooms and available rooms. Additionally, Baloglu and Pekcan found that approximately 65% of hotels websites were effective in the degree of usability experienced. The usability of hotel websites, as reported by Baloglu and Pekcan was influenced by an ease of navigation, provided through a consistent navigation structure (such as ensuring that menu options are consistent across pages) and that websites were readily accessible. Of the shortcomings however, it was reported that approximately 75% of hotels failed to effectively implement online payment options, links to tourist information and the ability for users to request further information online. In differentiating between the use of websites by four and five-star hotels, Baloglu and Pekcan comment that the websites of five-star hotels outperforms those of four-star hotels in terms of design and marketing features, particularly through the inclusion of a greater array of information and features such as links to relevant websites and promotional offers.

In the literature reviews, it was seen that very few studies were made on the use of websites in hotel establishments. Therefore, a field survey was carried out in the light of the literature, and the levels of use of websites by the sampled hotel establishments were investigated.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The levels of use of websites by hotel establishments in the Marmara Region and the contents of websites were analysed in the study according to the type and class of hotel establishments. In this way, it was aimed to determine the situation of hotels with respect to the use of websites. The method of content analysis, a qualitative research technique, was used when collecting data about the websites of hotel establishments. Content analysis is a scientific research method that covers the operations of scanning, categorizing and summarizing any data with a message value in line with a purpose as well as analysing and interpreting the findings in line with the purpose of the research (Başfirinç, 2008). The basic operation in content analysis is to gather the similar data within the framework of specific concepts and themes and to arrange and interpret them in such a way that the reader can comprehend (Creswell, 2007; Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson, 2002).

When preparing the data collection scale used in the research, the previous studies by Karamustafa et al (2002), Baloglu and Pekcan (2006), Musante, Bojanic and Zhang

(2009), and Bayram and Yayli (2009) were taken as the basis, and a new assessment scale consisting of 64 items was created. A distinct assessment form was used for each website visited, with websites assessed according to the specified 64 criteria. Those hotel websites which were under construction were excluded from the assessment. The hotel websites were visited only once, and the prepared assessment form was filled in according to the obtained information about the hotel websites. The criteria on which the websites were evaluated were assessed as being Present (1) or Absent (0). In testing the reliability of scales, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is regarded as the most used measurement tool used to detect the reliability of scales. Reliability of the data was tested, and the reliability of the scale was found as $\alpha=0.828$, indicating an acceptable level of reliability in the scale (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). The frequency (f) and percentage (%) distributions of the information obtained from the analysis of data were considered in the assessments.

The research universe consisted of the four and five-star hotel establishments in the Marmara Region of Turkey that had a tourism operation license obtained from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Since the data of Ministry of Culture and Tourism were not updated, the numbers of four and five-star hotels were updated using the internet. In order to update the number of hotels known to the researchers, four popular hotel websites situated within the top ten ranks of Google were utilized; these websites were www.hotelguide.com.tr, www.turkiyotellerirehberi.com, www.istanbulotelleri.net and www.istanbulhotels.com. Within the Marmara Region, the number of four-star hotel establishments was found to be 135, while the number of five-star hotel establishments was found to be 55. Of the 190 hotels found to exist within the region, one four-star hotel website and two five-star hotel websites were under construction. Additionally, two four-star and one five-star hotel did not maintain an internet presence in the form of a website; thus a total of 184 hotel establishments constituted the sample of the study.

The research conducted for this study was limited by time, with the websites of hotel establishments analysed from August 3, 2009 to August 15, 2009. The decision to conduct the analysis over a specific, short timeframe was a deliberate one due to the nature of websites. Websites are dynamic, in that they are constantly evolving in terms of content and design, because of this, this study analysed websites as they appeared between the dates of the study. Any evolution of the specific websites, through alterations of design and content that took place following the study

will enable researchers in the future to analyse any differences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prior to conducting analysis, the four and five-star hotel establishments in the Marmara Region were located using the popular search engine Google, and their status of being within top ten ranks on the page was checked. At the same time, their links to travel portals (such as expedia.com) on the first page of Google results were also examined. Later on, the hotel pages were visited, and evaluated using the specified criteria. In order to understand the likelihood of the noticeability of the importance of marketing via the website by hotel establishments, the booking stages of all hotels (on request-online booking) were performed respectively, and the criteria were assessed accordingly. The criteria prepared for the level of use of websites by hotel establishments were examined under 6 main titles, totalling 64 subtitles.

- Design (11 subtitles)
- Content (15 subtitles)
- Useful Links (4 subtitles)
- Contact Information (14 subtitles)
- Promotion (17 subtitles)
- Privacy (3 subtitles)

Four and five-star hotel establishments were searched using Google search engine. The hotels were all included in the top ten ranks. Of five-star hotels, 43 performed their promotion and sales at www.bookinturkey.com. As a result of the research, it was determined that of four-star hotels, 51 were members of www.bookinturkey.com, 19 were members of www.booking.com, six were members of www.travelguide.com, 10 were members of www.reservationeurope.com and three hotels were members of the www.expedia.com travel portal with their sales performed at the relative website. The distributions of four and five-star hotel establishments included in the research are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Distribution of Hotel Establishments by Type and Class

	<i>Hotel Type</i>		<i>Hotel Class</i>	
	<i>Chain Hotel</i>	<i>Independent Hotel</i>	<i>Four-Star</i>	<i>Five-Star</i>
n	57	128	132	53
%	30.8	69.2	71.4	28.6

Accordingly, it is observed that of the hotels within the scope of the sample included in the research, 71.4% were four-star hotel establishments, 69.2% were independent hotel establishments, 30.8% were chain hotel establishments and 28.6% were five-star hotel establishments. The frequencies and percentages of the criteria that were formed to assess the electronic marketing practices of the sampled hotel establishments at the websites were presented in the research.

TABLE 2. Design Criteria for the Use of Websites by Hotel Establishments (n = 185)

<i>Design</i>	<i>Present</i>		<i>Absent</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
About	108	58.4	77	41.6
Quick Opening of The Site	168	90.8	17	9.2
Hotel Info	93	50.3	92	49.7
Quick Access	170	91.9	15	8.1
Searching Within The Website	11	5.9	174	94.1
Easy Switch Between Pages	154	83.2	31	16.8
Intros	7	3.8	178	96.2
Closing The intro	5	2.7	180	97.3
Music Broadcasting on The Site	31	16.8	154	83.2
Easy Music Switch Function	19	10.3	166	89.7
Dynamic Sites	89	48.1	96	51.9

Design: When the alternatives entitled ‘feature of design’ are considered, the high rates of the features of Quick Access (91.9%), Quick Opening of the Site (90.8%) and Easy Switch between Pages (83.2%) might be interpreted as an intention to enable customers to have a quick access to the information they desired, to extend the time of their stay at the site and to create user-friendly sites when preparing the websites of hotels. The high rate of use of no intros at the website (96.2%) and, depending on this alternative, the high rate of use of the feature of closing the intro (97.3%) might account for the importance the hotel establishments attached to their customers’ turning their time at the hotel websites to good account. We might state that the reason why the feature of searching within the website was not preferred so much (94.1%) resulted from the easy use of switching between pages and the considerable serviceableness of the designs of sites.

TABLE 3. Content Criteria for the Use of Websites by Hotel Establishments (n=185)

Contents	Present		Absent	
	n	%	n	%
Multiple Language Alternatives	158	85.4	27	14.6
Last Updating Date	41	22.2	144	77.8
Weather and Traffic Info	55	29.7	130	70.3
Map of the Hotel	149	80.5	36	19.5
Direction info to find hotel- Map of Hotel Vicinity	121	65.4	64	34.6
Site Map	33	17.8	152	82.2
Hotel Pictures	174	94.1	11	5.9
Room Images	180	97.3	5	2.7
Room Videos	59	31.9	126	68.1
Hotel Activities List	150	81.1	35	18.9
Definition of Rooms	176	95.1	9	4.9
Price Info	99	53.5	86	46.5
Price List in Different Languages	31	16.8	154	83.2
Currency Info	13	7.1	171	92.4
Currency Convertor	9	4.9	176	95.1

Contents: It is seen that the features entitled ‘content’ (room images, 97.3%; definition of rooms, 95.1%; hotel images, 94.1%; multiple language alternatives, 85.4%; map of the hotel, 80.5%; and list of activities at the hotel, 81.1%) were noted and that hotel establishments particularly attached importance to promotions of rooms. It might be stated that the attractive features of the rooms were presented to customers with descriptive information and images and that this was perceived as an essential feature for marketing. It might be expressed that the use of videos or virtual tours was preferred less in the promotion of the rooms in order not to slow the speed of website down during opening and loading. The 85.4% rate of multiple language alternatives demonstrates that it is desired to create a profile of customers from different countries and to take place among the world hotels. Apart from this feature, the reason why the alternatives of currency information (7.6%) and currency converter (4.9%) were not used or preferred frequently might be the presentation of prices generally in various rates, such as Euro, Sterling and Dollar, in compliance with the multiple language alternatives. This shows that the required foreign exchange converter systems are used actively in the back sides of the site.

Useful Links: Useful links are particularly essential for those customers, who visit the site, to learn the things to be done before the destination. As a result of the study, it was seen that useful links included the calendar of special

events (17.3%), city guide (39.5%), links for touristic information (15.7%), and links to social sites (5.4%). It was found that the number of hotel establishments that realized the importance of these features was small. It would not be wrong to say that the use of these features, which are of importance for customers, also by other hotel establishments and the creation of links are essential for the satisfaction of those customers who visit the site.

TABLE 4. Useful Link Criteria for the Use of Websites by Hotel Establishments (n=185)

Useful Links	Present		Absent	
	n	%	n	%
Special Events Calendar	32	17.3	153	82.7
City Guide	73	39.5	112	60.5
Tourism Links	29	15.7	156	84.3
Links To Social Sites	10	5.4	175	94.6

TABLE 5. Contact Information Criteria for the Use of Websites by Hotel Establishments (n=185)

Contact information	Present		Absent	
	n	%	n	%
E-Mail Address	176	95.1	9	4.9
E-Bulletin	37	20.0	148	80.0
FAQ	9	4.9	176	95.1
Help	20	10.8	165	89.2
Online Visitor Book	25	13.5	160	86,5
Feedback Form	78	42.2	107	57.8
Satisfaction Survey	19	10.3	166	89.7
Online Communication Prog.	3	1.6	182	98.4
Online Chat Program	9	4.9	176	95.1
Fax	178	96.2	7	3.8
Telephone	182	98.4	3	1.6
Announcements-news	53	28.6	132	71.4
Right Customer Complaint L.	9	4.9	176	95.1
Recommend to your Friend	12	6.5	173	93.5

Contact Information: It was seen that the features entitled ‘contact information’ (telephone, 98.4%; fax, 96.2%; and e-mail, 95.1%) were used extensively, that hotel establishments attached importance to the issue of communication and that the rates of use of popular means of communication such as online communication (1.6%) and online chat (4.9%) at the websites of hotel establishments were low despite the use of means of communication to continuously communicate with customers. The use of electronic bulletin, which offers

news from within and outside the institution, (20.0%) was found to be low. The low use of FAQ (Frequently asked questions) (4.9%) might be stated to result from easy access to customers by e-mail. It is seen that the rates of use of the alternatives of Customer Complaint Line (4.9%), Recommend (Send) to your Friend (6.5%), Satisfaction Survey (10.3%), Online Visitor Book (13.5%) and Help (10.8%) at the websites were low. It is of great importance to create the process of continuously efficient communication with customers for electronic marketing. For information and service requested by customers, more importance should be attached to the means of communication. When the study by Karamustafa et al. (2002) was considered, although the rates of use of electronic bulletin (9.32%), feedback form (7.76%) and FAQ (0.31%) were rather low, a high rate of increase was seen in the functions concerned as time passed. It might be stated that the rates of use of feedback form (44.4%), FAQ (4.2%), help (5.6%), e-bulletin (22.0%) and online visitor book (26.6%) relatively increased in comparison to the study by Bayram and Yayli (2009).

TABLE 6. Promotions/Privacy Criteria for the Use of Websites by Hotel Establishments (n=185)

<i>Promotion</i>	<i>Present</i>		<i>Absent</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Customer Membership Opportunity	67	36.2	118	63.8
Being found in the Search Engine	179	96.8	6	3.2
Registration in the Travel Portal	128	69.2	57	30.8
Online Collection	103	55.7	82	44.3
Other Payment	73	39.5	112	60.5
Online Call Sales Centre	15	8.1	170	91.9
Promotions	111	60.0	74	40.0
Member Promotions	48	25.9	137	74.1
Innovation	81	44.0	103	56.0
Advertisements	46	24.9	139	75.1
Dynamic Pricing	104	56.2	81	43.8
Application of Special Membership Discount	54	29.2	131	70.8
Application of Agency Discount	58	31.4	127	68.6
Simple and Comprehensive Book Form	160	86.5	25	13.5
On-Request Book.	111	60.0	74	40.0
Other Booking Alternatives	94	51.1	90	48.9
Online Booking	128	69.2	57	30.8
Privacy				
Security Credit Card Payment	101	54.6	84	45.4
Privacy Policy	100	54.1	85	45.9
Terms Of Conditions	100	54.1	85	45.9

Promotion and Privacy: Of the features entitled ‘the feature of promotion’, the rate of being found in the search engine was established as 96.8%. This rate indicated that it was important that many hotels be found by search engines and particularly take place on the first page that opened and that the activities of promotion were used by the hotels. It was observed that those hotels that were not found in search engines benefited from travel portals and enjoyed the functions of being found, realised and recognized as well as sales. The feature of use of a simple and comprehensive booking form was found as 86.5%. The simplicity and comprehensibility of booking forms that have a significant place in the abilities of hotels to perform online sales show that importance is attached to this issue, that the customers are provided with the comfort of use and that they might encourage for manipulation to online bookings. The 69.2% rate of online booking in the sample demonstrates that the importance of the matter was comprehended. In addition, the same percentages of the features of online booking and being registered in travel portals show that hotel establishments were aware of the importance of performing sales at their own websites and that they simultaneously continued to perform sales via travel portals. Except for online booking, the 60% rate of the alternative of on request (ask-buy) booking and the 51.1% rate of other booking alternatives indicate that hotels used the feature of performing sales at their own website. It was seen that the online call centre for booking (8.1%) was not used within the sample. It was observed that online collection was performed at the rate of 55.7%, while other payment alternatives were used at the rate of 39.5%. It was seen that informative pages were created as regards the security of using credit cards, privacy and conditions for use and that they were written in a quite comprehensive language. It can be stated that all hotels that performed online booking within the sample prepared their booking pages in such a way that they were quite practical, easy-to-use and professional and they could be performed in a short period of time. In comparison to the study by Bayram and Yayli (2009), the rates of use of Online Collection (40.0%), Online Booking (42.2%), Special Promotions (32.2%), Innovations (33.2%), Security-Privacy (36.0%), Conditions for Use (31.8%), Opportunity of Membership (6.6%) and Price Information (26.9%) among the criteria used in the analysis of hotel websites increased, whereas booking by electronic mail (on request) decreased. This decrease in email bookings may be explained by an increase in the use of online booking at the websites of hotels. The preference of online marketing, which offers an immediate confirmation and payment

alternative for customers, might have caused a decrease in the rate of use of booking by electronic mail. Besides, it is observed that the rate of booking by telephone and fax was high (51.1%). It was observed that the rates of subtitles of promotion varied by year.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

When the features of websites, in regards to design were examined, according to the results of the research, it was concluded that the rate of quick access to the website of hotel establishments was 91.9% and the rate of quick opening of the site was 90.8%. It appeared that quick access to websites and quick opening of the site were important, and when preparing websites, they appeared as endeavours to enable customers to have a quick access to the information they desired, to extend the time of their stay at the site and to create user-friendly sites. The rather low rates of using intros at the opening (3.8%) and music broadcast on the page (16.8%) demonstrate that hotel establishments regarded these features as time-consuming at their sites. The rate, at which the prepared websites were dynamic, was found to be low. Hotel establishments, and especially five-star and chain hotels, were observed to have attached importance to the issues of design, speed, access and 'about us' sections to their websites.

In the research, it was seen that the uses of the features of room images (97.3%), definition of rooms (95.1%), hotel images (94.1%), multiple language alternatives (85.4%), map of the hotel (80.5%) and list of activities at the hotel (81.1%), which were among the features examined under the subtitle of "content", were higher than those of other features. In their study, Baloglu and Pekcan (2006) found that quality and striking hotel and room images were used in 60% of the hotels. It is observed that the rates of use of hotel and room images used at the website quite increased in time. The efficient role played by images in the selection of hotels and in customers' decision making was also significant in this increase.

Although the rates of use of classical means of communication were quite high, the use of online means of communication, the indispensable elements of the advancing technology, by hotels was found to be inadequate. It was seen that even though the rates of use of electronic bulletin (9.32%), feedback form (7.76%) and FAQ (0.31%) were rather low in the study by Karamustafa et al. (2002), a high rate of increase was observed in the functions concerned in time. It was observed that there was a relative increase in the rates of use of feedback form

(44.4%), FAQ (4.2%), help (5.6%), e-bulletin (22.0%) and online visitor book (26.6%), in comparison to the study by Bayram and Yayli (2009). As a result of the analysis, it was concluded that the rates of use of the features of electronic bulletin, FAQ, help, announcements, and 'recommend to your friend' were high at five-star and chain hotel establishments.

As a result of the study, it was found that search engines were used by hotels. It was seen that those hotels which were not found in search engines benefited from travel portals and enjoyed the functions of being found, realized and recognized as well as sales. The following suggestions might be made regarding websites in order for hotel establishments to benefit adequately from information technologies and the Internet:

- With cameras to be placed in specific places of the hotel, a live broadcast might be provided. In this way, there might be an increase in the process of being informed about the inside and surrounding of the hotel and in the frequency of visits to the website of the hotel (Particularly if the destination, where the hotel is located, has attractive and intriguing features, the rate of visits (being clicked) to the site will increase).
- Feature of a virtual tour inside the hotel and feature of making tours in the desired location might be prepared. The customers can even have an opportunity to tour and see the hotel rooms they will select with a single click. It is doubtless that the hotel and rooms will be more influential than their images.
- The images or videos of the hotel must be prepared by professional people. In this way, their rates of use at the blogs, forums, and sharing sites might increase, and the written statements about those images that are liked might play an effective role in the promotion of the hotel.
- The alternatives of "Share this site", "Recommend to your friend" and "Add to your favourites" should be used at the websites of hotels.
- The alternative of making comparisons with similar hotel products might be added for the selection of rooms of the hotel or different services. In this way, the customers might be enabled to determine the optimum alternative for themselves among the alternatives.
- Importance should be attached to the use of links to social sites. Innovations in this field should always be tracked, and the changes should

immediately be adapted to the websites. For instance, links to common socialization sites such as Facebook and Twitter might be provided.

- Sections as regards creative issues such as playing games, entertainment, painting, and ‘you create the hotel’ and features, which may include personal forums like ‘have your voice heard’, might be added. These features might provide an opportunity for the creation of new ideas for the hotel establishment.
- If there are historical, social and interesting attractions with respect to the country, city or environment where a hotel is located, they should be strikingly emphasized, e.g. the location of a hotel in a region where world-famous people live (d) or the location of a hotel next to a chain of restaurants that is the subject of a very popular book.
- It should be ensured that all events that will take place or are considered to take place in the close vicinity of the hotel should always be announced.
- A section of useful information might be prepared according to the type, class and concept of the hotel. For instance, information might be provided with respect to the use of skis, snowboard and etc. at the hotels in the region, where winter sports are performed; the things to be done when purchasing them; and the course videos.
- It is considered that hotel establishments have to benefit from online communication and instant message software that are quite popular in communication. It might be stated that online means of communication must be used owing to their many advantages such as faster communication, easy feedback, low cost, and their use both inside and outside the establishment.
- For the fulfilment of many actions, those people who have knowledge of technology (based on applications), who are creative, who are curious, and who are researchers and followers should be assigned with the responsibility of electronic marketing and web.

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