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# **Online Communication of Ecotourism**

A Multiple Case Study of NTOs' Websites

by

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# **Abstract**

Tourism is one of the biggest industries worldwide, while ecotourism is growing in importance, because of the negative environmental and social costs of conventional tourism. For this reason, the European Union encourages local and national DMOs to focus on sustainability initiatives.

The tourism industry relies to a great extent on internet communications. Due to the importance of ecotourism, but its low levels of conversion rate, NTOs need to figure out appropriate ways of communicating about it. Since websites are the main tools in online communication, there is a growing need to assess their impact in the context of ecotourism, and appropriate models are required to contribute in this field.

The aim of this research is to develop such a model by exploring the different elements utilized in this type of communication from NTOs. This will be achieved by the conduction of a multi-case study of NTOs' websites in four Scandinavian and four Mediterranean countries through a content analysis, guided by Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map about website assessment.

In general, Scandinavian countries communicate in a wider extent about ecotourism than the Mediterranean, with the exception of Denmark. The basic outcome of this study is that different cases vary widely in the ways they utilize different elements. Another finding is that the line between ecotourism and massive tourism communication is not always easily identifiable within the different elements. Based on the empirical analysis, the original 7Cs framework map has evolved to become the 7Cs framework map for ecotourism, which synchronizes the knowledge from previously relevant developed models in tourism literature.

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# **Abbreviations**

CI: Conservation International

DMO: Destination Management Organization

E-WOM: Electronic Word-of-Mouth

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

ICT: Information and Communication Technologies

MEET: Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism

NTO: National Tourism Organization

UN: United Nations

WQI: Web Quality Index

WTO: World Tourism Organization

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Research Background**

### **1.1.1 The importance of sustainable tourism and ecotourism**

Tourism is a sector that has grown over the last fifty years to become one of the largest economic sectors globally, accounting for 9% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and providing over 200 million jobs (WTO, 2013). However, even though the heavy increase of tourism, the sector is considered as one of the least prepared for climate change (Scott, Hall & Gössling, 2012). Furthermore, the tourism industry has a number of negative aspects, such as its significant and growing contribution to climate change, currently accounting for around 5% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This is mainly generated by transport, but also by the operation of tourism facilities such as accommodation. In some areas, tourism results in local pollutions of land and water, due to poor treatment of solid and liquid waste by tourism businesses and from the activities of tourists. Furthermore, poorly sited tourism developments and inappropriate activities can be very damaging to biodiversity in sensitive areas. Negative impacts to cultural heritage sites might occur when the visitor management is poor. Moreover, accommodation businesses are often major users of non-renewable and valuable resources, such as land, energy and water. In some areas a resort may consume many times more water per person than the local community with which it competes for sufficient supply (WTO, 2013).

The stress from these negative consequences has been recognized by the sector and this year, 2017, has been named by the United Nations as the 'International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development', showing the growing urgency of the subject. Their goal is to promote tourism's role in five key areas: 1) Inclusive and sustainable economic growth; 2) Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction; 3) Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change; 4) Cultural values, diversity and heritage; and 5) Mutual understanding, peace and security (UNWTO, 2016a). Moreover, the European Union is encouraging local and national DMOs to focus on sustainability, with the aim being to reach a European standard that includes ecotourism (European Ecotourism Conference, 2013). As Europe has historically been the most visited continent and has the highest levels of tourism with a share of 51% of all arrivals (Innovation Norway, 2015), the importance of

sustainable tourism and the maintenance of the landscape is even higher here (Gössling, 2012).

The International Ecotourism Society suggests conservation, communities and sustainable travelling as the three main components of sustainable tourism, developing the concept of ecotourism as an answer to the problematic consequences of mainstream tourism. Their definition of ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" (TIES, 2015, cited in TIES, 2017). Tourism is one of the biggest industry sectors worldwide, with wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation reportedly making up one of its fastest growing sectors. This indicates a desire for natural activities and highlights the importance of the development of this kind of tourism.

### 1.1.2 Marketing communication of ecotourism

Consumers and tourists today are aware of and concerned about the problems with climate change and unsustainable consumption, while they show a high support for actions to reduce their negative effects (Whitmarsh, 2009). However, even though most consumers claim to be concerned about sustainability, many appear reluctant to participate on a personal level in eco friendly consumption activities (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Weaver, 2012). The translation of rhetoric into reality is thus mismatched, making demand not equal to the actual purchases (Weaver, 2012).

Moreover, the communication of sustainable tourism products and services appears not to be very prolific. Several tourism product or service providers have been seen to participate in eco friendly activities and sustainability initiatives on a corporate level, even though without communicating it to the consumers. The consumers thus remain unaware of these activities and their purchasing decisions are not influenced by them (Black & Crabtree, 2007). Other organizations, such as NTOs, are opportunistically distributing information about sustainability on the Internet. Some organizations are seen to lack a strategy of which information and from which sources they should provide to their users (Weaver, 2012).

This creates a discrepancy when it comes to ecotourism communication online. Tourists today are among the first in adapting new technologies. In a world of rapid technological evolution and an economy of digitalization, consumer behavior is continuously changing and new ways of searching for information are used. For example, Internet, mobile and other innovative mediums are today used to a higher extent, dominating the channels used by tourists (Gorlevskaya, 2016). The World Wide Web has become the primary tool used by tourists in order to search for information (Fernández- Cavia, Díaz-Luque, Huertas,

Rovira, Pedraza-Jiménez, Sicilia, Gómez & Míguez, 2013), while websites are one of the most important communication mediums in destination branding (Míguez-González & Fernández-Cavia, 2015). Digital information sources provide knowledge and can potentially impact travelers' opinions and serve as platforms to communicate perceptions (Költringer and Dickinger, 2015). As a result, tourism websites showcasing destinations need to be appealing and must communicate information in an appropriate and suitable manner (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013). Due to the importance of sustainable tourism, but low levels of conversion rate, tourism organizations need to find appropriate ways of communicating efficiently about ecotourism, in order to inform and attract the interested and relevant target groups.

### 1.1.3 Ecotourism as part of destination marketing

Another aspect of the communication of eco friendly tourism activities or services is its ability to position a destination and strengthen its competitive advantage. Even though sustainability nowadays should be a relevant issue for each and every destination, that is not yet the case (Weaver, 2006). The acknowledgement of the economic benefits from tourism have led to a bigger tourism supply and thus a growing competition of the tourists amongst different destinations (García, Gómez, & Molina, 2012). Competition is fierce, with 194 nations fighting for a share of the tourists' heart, mind and wallet. This indicates a need for a more strategic approach to brand communication, as it leads to greater economic value, growth and welfare (Balakrishnan, 2009). Every country within the globalized environment tries to promote its distinct characteristics and maintain its position, aiming for the creation of a unique trait. This is associated with strategic policies of tourism planning, marketing and communication of the need to promote unique characteristics of a place, while taking into consideration the way visitors consider this place, region or country (Kavoura, 2014). In the current tourist scene, place marketing and the development of destination brands have become strategic tools (García, Gómez, & Molina, 2012).

As branding is an inseparable part of marketing (Blaće, Ćorić & Jurič, 2015), place branding is a concept assembling a number of branding techniques applied to places. Ideas and management principles of promoting products and corporations are adopted by cities, regions and nations (Kavoura, 2014). This process is used to develop a unique identity and personality that is different from other places (Gilmore, 2002; Zouganeli, Trihas, Antonaki & Kladou 2012). Destination marketing is now acknowledged as a pillar of the future growth of sustainability in tourism destination within the increasingly globalized and competitive market (Pike, 2013). Sustainable tourism, as a fast growing cultural and economic activity, offers

great opportunities for the steady development of branded regions with a unique identity (Blaće, Ćorić & Jurić, 2015). Communication strategies are an important part of this process (Balakrishnan, 2009), and consequently the communication of ecotourism is now even more interesting to explore.

## 1.2 Research Gap and Research Question

Nowadays, tourism is one of the most important industries worldwide, while ecotourism is growing in importance, because of the negative environmental and social consequences of massive tourism. The tourism industry relies to a great extent on digital communications. Consequently, there is a growing realization of the need to assess the impact of the Internet on tourism, furthermore in the extent of ecotourism, and appropriate models are required to contribute in this field (Bhat & Shah, 2014). Yet, research on the marketing of destinations in the digital environment is sparse. This lack of knowledge represents a significant gap in tourism marketing theory and leaves practitioners with little guidance. A possible factor for this lack of knowledge is that NTO's assign the design of their website to digital agencies, as they view it as no more than another channel in their communications strategy (Azad Hanna & Rowley, 2015). Tourism websites need to be attractive and must communicate their message in an appropriate and convincing manner. However, despite the importance of these websites, there is no methodology in place to assess the quality and communication that is scientifically sound and universally accepted (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014). Website evaluation research over the last years has led to various approaches and findings, rather than a unified understanding of success factors that should be measured to estimate the performance of a website (Park & Gretzel, 2007).

A number of researchers (Babacan & Erdem Koker, 2008; Parker, Sears & Smith, 2012; Slivar & Pavlović, 2012; Inversini, Cantoni & DePietro, 2014; Míguez-González & Fernández-Cavia, 2015) proceeded with tourism websites' evaluations, following an array of different methodologies. For instance, Babacan and Erdem Koker (2008) analyzed the websites of three destinations, namely Turkey, Spain and Dubai, in a quantitative manner in order to determine the quality of internet usage especially in the field of marketing communications. Parker, Sears and Smith (2012) reviewed the web design practices of tourism authorities in Atlantic Canada and New England by utilizing a content analysis coding scheme. Inversini, Cantoni and De Pietro (2014) investigated the relationship between website design and user experience of a vast number of English tourism destinations, borrowing his research methodology from different domains and including both

a quantitative and qualitative approach.

Furthermore, some scholars attempted to create frameworks in order to provide tools to measure the quality of a tourism website (Park & Gretzel, 2007; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014; Del Vasto-Terrientes, Fernández-Cavia, Huertas, Moreno & Valls, 2015; Azad Hanna & Rowley, 2015). For example, Park and Gretzel (2007) used a qualitative meta-analysis methodology to synthesize a unified framework of commonly used website success factors, including a total of nine factors. Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014) used a host of indicators grouped into twelve parameters that lead into establishing a Web Quality Index (WQI) for tourism destination websites. A year later, Del Vasto-Terrientes et al. (2015) proposed the complementation of the WQI assessment system for DMOs with the Multi-criteria Decision Aiding method ELECTRE.

Still, it is very seldom to track any studies related to ecotourism, especially when connected to digital communication (Lovelock, 2009; Platania, 2014; Cheng, Wong, Wearing & McDonald, 2017). Lovelock (2009) conducted a study regarding the promotion of hunting and fishing tourism on the internet, by conducting a survey of NTO's websites. Platania (2014) evaluated agrotourism websites in an Italian region to analyze the strategic choices made by farmers by utilizing the eMICA methodological approach to analyze the quality of the websites. Cheng et al. (2017) investigated the use of social media by ecotourism management agencies and how this potentially changes the relationship between the tourist and the natural environment, while creating a framework for the use of social media to market ecotourism.

Based on the previous discussion and as many of the conducted studies have been of a quantitative approach, these studies might not have been able to uncover indirect meanings in the communications and have furthermore failed to provide an elemental understanding of the phenomena. Furthermore to the fact that there is not yet a universal framework to evaluate the communications quality of a tourism website, even more there is not such a tool developed yet specifically in the ecotourism sector. Only very recently, Cheng et al. (2017) has developed such a framework for marketing ecotourism through social media channels. Bearing in mind the importance of an official tourism website in a destination's marketing communication (Lovelock, 2009; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014; Choi, Ok & Choi, 2015; Azad Hanna & Rowley, 2015), it is considered crucial to develop a specified tool dealing with online communication of ecotourism in official tourism websites. Therefore, the research question leading this study is:

## **How do official organizations communicate their ecotourism initiatives through websites?**

### **1.3 Research Aim and Objective**

Following the work of Cheng et al. (2017), the aim of this research is to minimize the existing gap around online communications in ecotourism literature, by extending Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map. With an aimed theoretical contribution of unifying scattered models and theories, this study propose to provide an initial framework for ecotourism website evaluations, as such a model is currently absent. In order to gain an initial understanding of NTOs' communication practices, the objective of this study is to extend previous communication models developed for the online environment, as they have not been created to support specific areas of the tourism industry and are not based on empirical research. This will be achieved by the conduction of a content analysis of NTOs' official tourism websites, guided by Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map about website assessment. On a managerial level, the aimed contribution is to provide further understanding on online marketing communications of ecotourism, based on the development of a framework map for ecotourism communication through websites. By suggesting empirically developed subcategories, the proposed achievement lies in the privity of highlighting techniques for communicating ecotourism online, as well as evaluating the aspect in tourism websites. This easily applied model will supply DMOs, NTOs and other tourism organizations interested in this field with firm suggestions and knowledge of communication practices for ecotourism on the Internet.

### **1.4 Thesis Outline**

This study is divided into six sections. In the first section, the knowledge background of the topic is provided, accompanied by the research question and aim. In the second chapter of the study, relevant literature around tourism and marketing communications is reviewed, while the theoretical framework upon which the analysis is completed is provided. In part number three, the methodology used for this study to be accomplished is put under the microscope. Here, issues like the research approach and design as well as the data collection and analysis methods are explained. The fourth chapter is divided in two main sub chapters: findings and analysis. In findings, the researchers offer an overview of the empirical results gained through the NTO's website analysis. In analysis, the empirical results are put down in comparison with the original 7Cs framework map, resulting to the

modified 7Cs framework map for ecotourism. In the fifth section the new framework is discussed with previously developed models, as it attempts to synchronize the results with already developed literature around this topic. The last section includes the most significant conclusions, together with the limitations of this research and opportunities for future research.

## 2. Literature and Theoretical Review

In this chapter, a literature review around several areas concerning this study, as well as the theoretical framework based on which the analysis is achieved, are provided to the reader. First, the discussion around tourism terminology and the difference between sustainable tourism and ecotourism is provided. Second follows a brief description of DMOs and NTOs. Third, the text evolves from describing general marketing communications, touching the tourism industry, to end up in discussing the implications within the online environment. Then, several models of website evaluation are briefly described, while the one chosen for this study is analytically explained in the last section of the chapter.

### 2.1 Literature Review

#### 2.1.1 Multiple definitions of tourism

Tourism is the second largest industry in the world, with daily international revenues of approximately 2 billion dollars and investments of 12 percent of the global GDP (Balakrishnan, 2009). While it is a complex phenomenon with proved socio-economic importance, its status as scientific object within an academic field still seems to be in question (Darbellay & Stock, 2012). Even though tourism has been around for centuries, it is only recently that this field of study has been considered seriously, while there is still lack of agreement of the common terms in use today (Pike, 2008). This is probably a reflection of the recently developed concepts of tourism, but it is definitely remarkable that it took more than fifty years to reach agreement even on the basic characteristics of the world's second largest industry (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998). In tourism, there have been almost as many different definitions as there are researchers, while it has even been suggested that generally defining tourism is almost conceptually impossible. Complications around defining tourism arise from the multidisciplinary nature of tourism research, the ambiguity of what constitutes a tourist and tourism business, and overlaps with the concepts of travel,

hospitality and leisure (Pike, 2008).

Tourism scholarship has been organized across two distinctive streams, economic development and tourism impacts (Pike, 2008). Leiper (1979, cited in Pike, 2008) developed a general framework for tourism that would bridge these two streams and identified three approaches. The first was economic, where definitions only recognized business and economic aspects of tourism, such as:

*“Tourism is an identifiable nationally important industry. The industry involves a wide cross-section of component activities including the provision of transportation, accommodation, recreation, food and related services”* (Leiper, 1979, cited in Pike, 2008, p. 22)

Nevertheless, Leiper has criticized this approach for the lack of an array of elements, the most important being the human dimension. The second approach was technical, where the interest was in monitoring the characteristics of tourism markets, such as describing tourists, travel purpose, distance travelled and length of time away. The third approach was holistic, where the attempt was made to capture the whole essence of tourism, such as:

*“Tourism is the study of man away from his usual habitat, of the industry which responds to his needs, and of the impacts that both he and the industry have on the host’s sociocultural, economic and physical environments.”* (Leiper, 1979, cited in Pike, 2008, p. 22)

A more recent definition of tourism has been provided by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), according to which:

*“Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes”* (WTO, 1993, cited in Middleton & Hawkins, 1998)

The most recent definition of conventional tourism identified in relevant literature has been developed by Weaver (2006), according to whom the tourism industry that forms the core of conventional tourism can be defined as:

*“The sum of the industrial and commercial activities that produce goods and services wholly*

*or mainly for tourist consumption" (Weaver, 2006, p.59)*

## 2.1.2 Sustainable tourism and ecotourism

Sustainable tourism has risen and is still evolving as a result of developments both internal and external to the tourism industry over the past fifty years. It may be considered as the application of the sustainable development principles in the tourism sector, meaning tourism development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Essentially, sustainable tourism involves the minimization of negative and the maximization of positive impacts. Yet, while sustainable tourism can be regarded as a type of sustainable development, there is not a direct relationship between these two. The Brundtland Report, the first report published about sustainability in 1987, does not refer to tourism, even though the latter has been characterized as a mega sector during the 1980s. This was evident some years later in the Agenda 21 strategy document that was created in the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, which made only a few incidental references to tourism as both a cause and potential solution of environmental and social problems (Weaver, 2006).

Meaningful discussions using the term sustainable tourism first emerged in the early 1990s among tourism academics and organizations (Weaver, 2006). Not surprisingly, a number of critics have risen along the way; for instance, Moscardo (2008, cited in Dangi & Jamal, 2016) supports that there is no such thing as sustainable tourism. She concludes that it would be better to view tourism as one among many possible development options to assist in socioeconomic development in the destination area, which might help facilitate innovation, development of a different set of evaluation criteria and the development of sustainability monitoring systems. However, since then the amount of research related to sustainable tourism has increased in volume and sophistication, as the idea has moved rapidly from a position of peripherality to centrality within the knowledge platform. This is rather evident in the extent to which the concepts of sustainable tourism has been officially recognized in organizations both internal and external to the tourism sector, such as the United Nations (UN), Conservation International (CI) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) among others (Weaver, 2006). According to the WTO, sustainable tourism can be defined as:

*"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (WTO, 2013, p.17)*

During the last years, an increasing number of destinations and businesses are pursuing ecotourism as a specialized part of their sustainable tourism development strategies (Weaver, 2006). According to the same, nowadays it is widely accepted that ecotourism involves an emphasis on nature-based attractions, educational interactions with these attractions and management practices that make every effort to achieve environmentally, socially and culturally sustainable outcomes. However, Cosmescu and Cosmescu (2007) argue that the wide variety of definitions of the term ecotourism implies that the debate over what ecotourism is still continues.

Among the first researchers trying to provide a definition of ecotourism is Hetzer (1965, cited in Cheia, 2013), who talked about ecologically responsible tourism by defining four key factors of it, namely: the lowest possible impact on the environment, respect for the host culture, increased benefits to local people and increased tourist satisfaction. The wider emergence of ecotourism in the mid-1980s is closely associated with the Mexican Ceballos-Lascuráin, who defined the industry as including traveling

*"to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past and present) found in these areas" (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1988, cited in Weaver, 2006, p.192)*

This often cited definition deals with two criteria of ecotourism, nature-based attractions and educational motivations. These two characteristics have since then become almost internationally recognized as two of the three core prerequisites of an ecotourism experience. The third criterion, environmental, social and cultural sustainability, is implicit in most of the definitions that have been subsequently put forward. As an example, Wood defines ecotourism as

*"purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources financially beneficial to local citizens" (Wood, 1991, cited in Weaver, 2006, p. 192)*

Last but not least, Fennell regards ecotourism as

*"a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive and locally oriented" (Fennell, 1999, cited in Weaver, 2006, p.192)*

From the previous discussion, it is concluded that the debate about what consists ecotourism is still ongoing. However, the researchers in this study take into consideration all previously mentioned criteria in the different given definitions of what ecotourism is.

### 2.1.3 Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and National Tourism Organizations (NTOs)

Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) operate at multiple levels ranging from the national to the regional and have evolved over the years to respond to the geographical and political needs that are associated with tourism (Dodds, 2010). Depending on the view each researcher takes, the DMO is either a marketing organization, responsible for driving business to the destination, or it is a management organization, providing leadership and direction for the tourism system. Regardless of whether one perceives the role of these organizations as management or marketing, DMOs are a key component of destination success (Line & Runyan, 2014). A National Tourism Organization (NTO) is a country's official organization that is responsible for the development and promotion of tourism within this country (Lovelock, 2009; Soteriou & Coccossis, 2010). NTOs have been suggested as the most significant travel motivators for destinations. They increasingly play an important role in promoting new tourism products, such as ecotourism, as destinations seek points of difference in a relatively unified mass tourism market (Lovelock, 2009).

The accreditation by tourism communities of the need to become organized in order to achieve destination competitiveness has led to the beginning of DMOs, particularly since the 1960s. The history of DMOs is relatively short, with the first emerging in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. While there is a growing body of literature interpreting the development of modern tourism, the published literature on the evolution of DMOs around the world is relatively rare. The establishment of the New Zealand Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 1901 represented the world's first NTO. Many nations did not create an NTO until decades after New Zealand. For instance, one of the key neighboring competitors to New Zealand in European markets, Australia, did not become involved in tourism marketing until 1929. In Europe, the French NTO was established in 1910. By 1919, when the Italian NTO was created, the Alliance Internationale du Tourisme had been formed in Brussels, bringing together 30 European NTOs. In Britain, the government provided financial support for the

1929 establishment of the Travel Association of Great Britain and Ireland. The first official NTO in Sweden has only been established in 1976. Following the Second World War, the international Union of Official Tourism Organizations, the predecessor of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), had around 100 member NTOs in 1946. By 2006, WTO membership included 150 countries, seven territories and 350 affiliate organizations (Pike, 2008).

NTOs' responsibilities vary widely depending on various factors such as the political, economic, social, and cultural backgrounds of a country, the size of the country, and the importance of tourism to the national economy (Soteriou & Coccossis, 2010). The roles of a DMO are dictated by the mission, goals and objectives, which, in general, are similar around the world. Key themes include: coordination, strategy, stakeholders, economics, marketing, product development, lobbying, information provision, research and the host community (Pike, 2008). Alongside with the previously mentioned, DMOs work to make a destination attractive by showcasing its unique aspects and attractions (Dodds, 2010). Both strategic planning and the integration of sustainability in NTOs face problems that limit the potential of strategic planning to contribute substantially towards sustainability (Soteriou & Coccossis, 2010).

#### 2.1.4 Marketing communications: definition, development, objectives

Marketing communications is a management process through which an organization engages with its various audiences. Through understanding an audience's communications wants and needs, organizations seek to develop and present messages for their identified target groups (Fill, 2005). According to the same, marketing communications have evolved in four categories during time: information and promotion; process and imagery; integration; and relational. Information and promotion refers to communications used to persuade consumers into product purchase using mass media communications. The emphasis here is on rational, product-based information. Process and imagery describe communications that are used to influence the various stages of the purchase process. In this type, the emphasis is on product imagery and emotional messages. Integration means that communication resources are used in an effective way to enable customers to have a clear view of the brand proposition. The emphasis lays on strategy, media neutrality and a balance between rational and emotional communication. Last but not least, relational refers to communication used as an integral part of the different relationships that organizations share with consumers. The emphasis is on value and meaning plus a recognition of the different communication needs and processing styles of different target groups.

Based on De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van den Bergh (2010), marketing

communications objectives can be divided into three categories: reach goals, process goals and effectiveness goals. The reach goal of communication is to touch the target groups in an effective and efficient way. For this purpose, a good segmentation and audience definition is obligatory, as well as insights into the media behavior of the desired groups. Process goals are conditions which should be established before any communication can be effective. All communications should capture the attention of the target consumers, then appeal and last but not least processed. The third type of communication goals are the effectiveness goals. They are the most important ones, since reach goals only assure sufficient exposure, and process goals only ensure enough processing of the message to make the effectiveness goals possible.

#### 2.1.4.1 Marketing communications in tourism

The recent shift in thinking of countries and destinations as brands requires a management approach that focuses on developing relationships with travelers rather than simply focusing on generating sales. As already been described, one such approach is integrated marketing communications. A concrete definition of integrated marketing communications is:

*"a process of managing the customer relationships that drive brand value. More specifically, it is a cross-functional process from creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them." (Duncan, 2002, cited in Pike, 2008, p.263)*

Marketing communications need to promote the distinct characteristics of the country or destination that is branded. It is the national agents' role, when speaking about a country, to incorporate in their communication strategies the way potential visitors understand the country's touristic characteristics in an appropriate manner (Kavoura, 2014). Messages can be delivered to specific target groups only when they utilize the services of particular media. The variety of media is continually growing, while all of them have strengths and weaknesses that impact the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the message. The main categories of media are: Broadcast (Television, Radio), Print (Newspapers, Magazines), Outdoor (Billboards, Transit), New media (Internet, Digital television) and Others (Cinema, Exhibitions, Product placement) (Fill, 2005).

In a world of digital evolution consumers are continuously changing, and tourists are

among the first. Their behavior, media consumption, engagement level and expectations influence the transformation of communication tools in use. In recent decades, the pace of change became even faster. Media consumption has shifted to internet, social media, mobile and other innovative mediums, which play an important role in the tourism industry. To be successful, actors in the tourism industry should gain competitive advantages by differentiation, using powerful ideas and keeping up with new technology. The implementation of powerful ideas for specific target groups by relevant communication tools is the right way to build effective marketing communications in tourism (Gorlevskaya, 2016).

### 2.1.5 Online marketing communications

The development of digital technology communications has had a profound effect on conventional marketing communications. The full potential of these new technologies is yet to be revealed, as customer behavior adapts and learns new ways of adopting these facilities (Fill, 2005; Gorlevskaya, 2016). Interactivity and rapid two way communications enabled by the internet require the development of new communication strategies and a fresh understanding of what consumers want and need (Fill, 2005; Oliveira & Panyik, 2015).

According to Fill (2005), the internet impacts on marketing in two basic ways: distribution and communication. The first concerns distribution and marketing channels. The internet provides a new, more direct medium to reach customers, which can either replace or supplement current channel arrangements. The second concerns the internet as a communication medium. It provides a means of reaching wide new audiences and enabling the provision of huge amounts of information.

The use of the internet as a medium to attract specific target groups is becoming an increasingly important aspect of marketing communications (Fill, 2005; Gorlevskaya, 2016). Websites are the most important tools of internet activity for organizations, regardless of which industry they conduct their operations and whether the purpose is only to offer information or provide transactional services as well. The characteristics of a website can be critical in determining the user's length of stay, activities purchased and the probability for a visitor to return to the site another time (Fill, 2005).

#### 2.1.5.1 Online marketing communications in tourism

In spite of the increasing access to information technologies such as the Internet, DMOs often struggle to keep up with the rapid advantages in this area and their implications for marketing (Pike, 2008). Even though, it is crucial that a coherent and strategic approach is adopted to destination branding and that this approach is multi channel and embraces

digital destination branding as well (Azad Hanna & Rowley, 2015). The advantages of internet as a communication tool makes it a very important and effective channel for service industries, especially for tourism. However, the most important issue is to manage internet based communication activities in a quality manner (Babacan & Erdem Koker, 2008). DMOs and other organizations associated with destination marketing need to be proactive in developing their digital presence and in developing their understanding of the unique features of the digital arena as a communication, service delivery, and branding medium (Pike, 2008; Azad Hanna & Rowley, 2015).

In recent years, most tourists want to know a considerable amount of information about a destination when planning a trip. However, they cannot physically test tourism products and services compared with tangible consumer products. With technological advances and the increase of web communication, DMOs' websites enable potential visitors to have indirect experiences of destinations, while such experiences can help tourists choose a destination (Lovelock, 2009; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014; Choi, Ok & Choi 2015; Azad Hanna & Rowley, 2015). According to Palmer (2005, cited in Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013, p. 625): "the internet provides tremendous opportunities for developing powerful destination brands affording tourists genuine benefits. However, having a website is not in itself a guarantee of the success of the destination.". The need to develop virtual presence via successful websites is one of the primary challenges of NTOs because, as Rincón recalls (2010, cited in Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013, p. 626), "integrating and supplementing the physical and virtual dimensions calls for efforts that go beyond space-time dimensions in order to attain a genuine inter-related paradigm". Therefore, considering that the Internet can bring potential benefits and reach new customers, it is important that websites are complete and attractive (Platania, 2014), as well as that NTOs set clear objectives for their websites and develop strategies for online marketing communication (Choi, Ok & Choi, 2015).

Today DMOs invest considerable amounts of money in the development of websites as part of their general promotion efforts. With increasing pressure on their budgets, it becomes ever more important for these organizations to assess the quality of communication of their websites and evaluate the return on their investments. Website evaluation measures have been proposed in many ways and various contexts over the past decades (Park & Gretzel, 2007; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014). However, it is difficult to make a systematic and complete evaluation of their quality due to their diversity of categories, which makes them complex to analyze (Del Vasto-Terrientes et al., 2015).

## 2.1.6 Presentation of selected website evaluation frameworks

Currently, the design and functionality of a website is recognized as a significant aspect of an organization's communication strategy. What constitutes a quality website has been the subject of much debate, marked by the lack of efficient empirical work to determine a common framework (Fill, 2005), since much of the existing models are based on theoretical assumptions. According to Park and Gretzel (2007) this debate takes place since 1997 for website evaluations external to the tourism industry and since 1999 internal to the industry. Based on Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014), no comprehensive method of assessment exists to enable communications managers and directors to find out whether their destination's website is appropriate even in recent times. Of the many ideas presented, four are discussed here, because of their development during time and the spanning from general to tourism communications.

Karayanni and Baltas (2003, cited in Fill, 2005) suggest that websites have four main characteristics, namely interactivity, navigability, multimedia design and content. This breakdown is useful because it indicates the main facilities that a useful site would include. However, what it does not provide is a depth of insights that would help organizations design their sites more appropriately (Fill, 2005). Park and Gretzel (2007) develop a unified framework of commonly used website success factors, which includes a total of nine elements: Information quality, Ease of use, Responsiveness, Security, Visual appearance, Trust, Interactivity, Personalization and Fulfillment. Even though more developed, this framework includes certain elements that are not immediately connected to tourism, such as Security and Trust, while they eliminate others, which are necessary in tourism website evaluation, such as Connection.

Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014) offer a Web Quality Index (WQI) for tourist destination websites which determines as well an overall index. Their index is separated into 4 main categories, each one including 3 subcategories. More analytically, these categories and subcategories include: Technical aspects (information architecture, web positioning, usability and accessibility), Communicative aspects (homepage, languages, content amount and quality), Relational aspects (mobile communication, social web, interactivity), Persuasive aspects (marketing, branding, discourse analysis). However, they also eliminate certain important to tourism aspects, such as Customization and Connection, and their developed framework is vastly detailed when attempting to analyze a new touristic theme for the first time. Azad Hanna and Rowley (2015) suggest the 7 C's of digital strategic place brand management, which includes the following elements: Channels, Clutter, Community,

Chatter, Communication, Co-creation, and Co-branding. Even though these researchers provide a good balance in the number of elements under evaluation, they oversee two of the most important elements for website assessment, namely Context and Content.

## 2.2 Theoretical Review: The 7Cs Framework Map

Rayport and Jaworski (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) offer a 7Cs framework that they subsequently develop into a map, which can be used to analyze websites in order to design them more effectively. The 7Cs framework is comprised from the following elements: Context, Content, Community, Customization, Communication, Commerce and Connection. Initially developed in 2004 by Rayport and Jaworski, the 7Cs framework map was described from an e-commerce perspective, even though it is a general framework for evaluating a website's quality. The latter is the reason as to why only one year later, Fill (2005) describes the same framework map from an online marketing communications point of view.

From the previous discussion in section 2.1.6, it is concluded that even today there is still no unified framework in website evaluation. Even though it might appear reasonable to proceed by utilizing either Park and Gretzel (2007) or Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014) frameworks, the researchers decided to conduct the analysis by utilizing Rayport and Jaworski (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map because of the following reasons. First and foremost, this framework map is one of the fundamental models used in website evaluation analysis (Fill, 2005). It includes all important elements to proceed with a balanced evaluation, while it is not too detailed. Therefore, it provides a good background for a topic which initially has not been much analyzed, such as ecotourism. Both Park and Gretzel (2007) and Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014) frameworks are quite extended for a first time evaluation. Moreover, and as discussed above, both frameworks include certain elements not immediately related to tourism while overlook others more important to the tourism industry. Last but not least, Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014) framework is useful for a quantitative rather than a qualitative assessment of a website.

The 7Cs Framework Map developed by Rayport and Jaworski (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) is described analytically in the following sections:

### Context

Context considers the layout and design of a website. It is concerned with the balance between the functional and aesthetic look and feel of the site. Websites that focus on functionality try to provide the reader with information. Aesthetically designed websites aim to emotionally engage their users. The balance between the functional and emotional design

of a website can be termed as integrated. In an integrated website, the users experience a site that provides a suitable level of information, is easy to navigate and still is interesting and engaging in terms of the emotional satisfaction derived from using it (Fill, 2005).

### Content

Content refers to what is presented on the website, in terms of audio, text, graphics, images and video. It is concerned with the dominant category for which information is provided. The content can be considered in terms of its: offering mix, appeal mix and multimedia mix (Fill, 2005). More specifically:

- Offering mix refers to the balance between information, products and services.
- Appeal mix refers to the balance between functional (attribute and benefits) and emotional (feelings and brand).
- Multimedia mix refers to the selected combination of audio, text, graphics, images and video.

Rayport and Jaworski (2004) divide content into three categories: product dominant, service dominant and information dominant. Product dominant websites refer to online stores, whose primary purpose is to sell physical goods. Service dominant refers to websites that provide the service of being the interface between the users. Information dominant are websites with vast archives of info or tools to find specific topics.

### Community

Online communities describe the interaction between the users of a website, but not between the website and its users. These interactions can be one to one (e.g. via e-mail) or among many (e.g. via chat rooms) and are significant to organizations as they can be a source of information about customer feelings. Communities in a website may range from nonexistent to strong. The increasing role and significance of online communities in recent years indicate that website design should reflect the importance of the existence of these communities to organizations (Fill, 2005).

### Customization

Customization refers to the extent to which a site is capable of being adapted to the individual needs and wants of its visitors. Different sites provide varying levels of customization, from low through medium to high levels, and this is reflected in the user's experience (Fill, 2005). Rayport and Jaworski (2004) classify customization into three levels, namely generic, moderately customized and highly customized. Generic websites offer the

same face and content for every user. Moderately customized sites are especially created for their target audiences. Highly customized websites provide users with an individualized experience.

### Communication

The type of communication provided by a website is to some extent a reflection of the type of relationship offered by the organization. The communication may be broadcast (content update reminders or mass mailings), where one-way communication prevents the user reaction and with it the opportunity for dialogue. On the other hand, interactive communication (user ratings or feedback) enables user response that can lead to dialogue with the organization (Fill, 2005).

### Commerce

Commerce refers to the ability of the user to conduct commercial transactions through the website. This element can range from low to high levels (Fill, 2005).

### Connection

Connection refers to the number of other linked sites in the organization's website. These links may redirect the user to another site when clicked. Outside links make it difficult for the user to return to the original page and are therefore not used extensively (Fill, 2005). Websites can be grouped under three categories regarding connection: destination sites, hub sites and portal sites. Destination websites provide self-generated content almost exclusively, with very few links to other websites. Hub websites are a combination of self-generated content and links to related websites. Portal websites consist almost exclusively of outsourced info and links to other sites (Rayport & Jaworski, 2004).

<b>Context</b>	Aesthetically dominant	Functionally dominant	Integrated
<b>Content</b>	Product-dominant	Information-dominant	Service-dominant
<b>Community</b>	Nonexistent	Limited	Strong
<b>Customization</b>	Generic	Moderately customized	Highly customized

<b>Communication</b>	One-to-many, nonresponding user	One-to-many responding user	One-to-one, nonresponding user	One-to-one, responding user
<b>Commerce</b>	Low	Medium	High	
<b>Connection</b>	Destination	Hub	Portal	

**Table 1:** The 7Cs Framework Map (Rayport and Jaworski, 2004, cited in Fill, 2005)

### 3. Methodology

In the following sections, the methodology of this study is explained. First, an explanation of the researchers' view on the research philosophy, in terms of ontology and epistemology, is provided. Thereafter arguments towards the chosen research strategy and design are presented, as well as the sampling process. Furthermore, the method choices of data collection and analysis process is elaborated. Lastly, the research setup is critically evaluated in terms of how credibility and validity have been ensured, given the limitations of the research project.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

##### 3.1.1 An internal realism ontology and constructivist epistemology

The ontology of this research is internal realism, as it suggests that there is a truth, but it is obscure and cannot be directly accessed (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In this study, the phenomena of online communication is seen as a real phenomena, which exists independently of the researchers and has real life consequences for the visitors of NTOs' websites. However, to measure it and truthfully explain the phenomena is seen to be hard, as it is a complex one. Different countries offer different tourism products, due to the unique climate, culture and history among others, which provides the NTOs' with different starting-points in their communication, making the truth multifaceted and convoluted. However, it is still a concrete phenomena and to indicate what is going on in NTOs' online communication of ecotourism, the researchers have no interest in diverse interpretations of

the actual phenomena. With this ontological stance, the researchers see the present as an approximation of reality, and even though the use of hands on-models to capture the phenomena, no universal theory can be found due to its elusiveness (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

The epistemology of this research is based on the social constructivist position, which argues that knowledge is socially constructed. Meaning is given by people in their daily interactions with others, making communication an interesting phenomena (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Words and pictures are seen as part of the social world and are meaningful within themselves, when interpreted in the context in which they were produced (Mason, 2002). As this research is exploring NTOs' online communication of ecotourism, this epistemological stance acknowledges the fact that the people producing the communication have a purpose in their actions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The internal relativism in combination with the social constructionist position provide the view of communication as an elusive but concrete phenomena, which is given meaning by people. More concrete, pictures and texts are seen to mediate a special meaning within the ecotourism context that elsewhere would not make sense, making context and interpretations of the content important. However, the communication practices are understood as distinct matters, whose existence is not to be debated upon as what is there is a universal truth.

### 3.1.2 A qualitative and abductive research strategy

This research is conducted with a qualitative approach, as it allows the researchers to gain a holistic view of the field. The emphasis lies on the interpretive aspects of a phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and allows the ability to discover indirect and implicit ways of communication (Mason, 2002). As the field of interest in this study lies in exploring the NTOs' online communication, a qualitative method gives the ability to notice implicit nuances in their communication (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Another advantage of the qualitative method is its emphasis on context and contextual understanding of social behavior (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As earlier described, NTOs' have different opportunities and challenges in their work with communication, such as various economic and social working conditions. This might affect the communication choices being made, the reason why it is important that the researchers acknowledge the context. As this study does not aim to develop a generalizable theory, but rather explore and describe a particular phenomena in its natural setting, a qualitative study is legitimate (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Furthermore, the qualitative approach enables a flexible and limited structure of the research. This offered style of unstructured data collection can help the researchers suggest alternative ways of thinking about the phenomena of interest (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It allows a more interpretive analysis and might uncover evolving patterns throughout the research process and data analysis (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007), which opens up for the opportunity to see beyond the obvious (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

With the aim to explore and elaborate on existing theory, the research is conducted in an abductive manner. The abductive approach starts from incomplete observations and provides the best prediction, which may be true (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This is in line with the ontological stance of this research, where the truth is seen to be hard to capture. This technique allowed the researchers to bring together things which had not before been associated with one another (Reichertz, 2009), meaning the NTOs' online communication of ecotourism and Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map. From this perspective, the researchers used Blumers (1954, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011) idea of 'sensitizing concepts', which suggest "a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances" (Blumer, 1954, in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.393). The 7Cs framework map provided context and direction in the research and has acted as "means for uncovering the variety of forms that the phenomena to which they refer can assume" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.393).

By using a logical inference, but still taking the empirical findings seriously, the researchers could use the framework in an open-ended way to uncover how ecotourism communication has been achieved (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2007). The researchers held an open-minded attitude towards pre-known literature, without specifying any relationships between variables and theories beforehand, in order not to force data into a fixed model (Eisenhardt, 1989).

## 3.2 Research Design

### 3.2.1 Reasoning for an explorative multiple case study design

Within the range of constructionist research designs, with the characteristics of being fluid and flexible (Mason, 2002), an exploratory case study was perceived to be most suitable for the researchers to investigate the phenomena within its real-life context, to fulfil the aim of this study (Yin, 2009). As the chosen field of study is scarcely researched, the research project has been chosen to be of an exploratory nature. This research intends to

provide a better apprehension of NTOs' communication of ecotourism, and not to provide conclusive evidences. As the 7Cs framework map functions as a framework rather than a theory, this approach is aligned with the abductive method (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

Furthermore, a case study is defined as "a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.534) and has an in-depth focus (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As the research question is connected to the width of the phenomena, this research opted for a multiple case study, due to its generation of rich insights for each single case, thus highlights the broadness of communication practices. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity of comparison within and across cases to discover similarities and differences between the cases (Eisenhardt, 1989). This is seen to provide the study with more rich data, which enable the goal to explore and elaborate on new theory.

### 3.2.2 Case selection and units of analysis

Eisenhardt (1989) argues for an ideal number of four to ten cases in a multiple case study. With consideration of this project's restricted scope and time limits, 8 cases are perceived as a reasonable number in order to cope with the conductions of in-depth analysis for each case. To define the cases, the research question and units of analysis are considered (Yin, 2009). As the study aims to explore how NTOs communicate ecotourism online, the unit of analysis is the NTOs' online communication of ecotourism. However, as there is a need for concrete boundaries (Yin, 2009), each case is defined to be the official tourism website on a national level. The NTOs are chosen to operate on a national level, as they form the country brand and thus set boundaries for regional DMOs (ETC/UNWTO, 2009).

A strategic sampling is employed to purposefully choose cases, which help in a meaningful way to generate rich broad data about the field of study. However, this technique does not provide a representative sample, but rather encapsulates a relevant range within a specific context (Mason, 2002). It is a type of theoretical sampling, as the aim is to elaborate on already existing theory (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The criteria for selecting cases is that the website devotes parts of its page to nature, natural activities and sustainability. When several potential cases appeared too similar, an evaluation based on the amount of ecotourism presented on the website and the country images was achieved in order to differentiate them and to choose the most suitable cases. Furthermore, the researchers had to consider access limitations, such as potential language barriers, when choosing cases

(Eisenhardt, 1989).

Cases are chosen within the range of Europe, as this area is seen to be ahead when it comes to sustainable tourism and thus could provide a more rigid empirical material. There is an overall aim to reach a European standard that includes ecotourism, with a focus on sustainability for the whole region, and NTOs and DMOs are encouraged to focus on sustainability (European Ecotourism Conference, 2013). Furthermore, Europe is seen to be an interesting area due to its high amount of tourism. With a share of 51% of all arrivals, Europe was the most visited continent in 2015 and has historically always been so (Innovation Norway, 2015). During 2016, the number of international tourist arrivals reached almost 500 million (UNWTO, 2017). These high levels of tourist arrivals increases the importance of sustainable tourism and maintaining the landscape (Gössling, 2012).

The chosen cases are Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain (see Appendix 2). The four Scandinavian countries are generally perceived as beautiful natural landscapes, perfect for ecotourism initiatives (Travel Weekly Australia, 2008), whereas the Mediterranean countries are interesting in terms of their ecotourism potential, with a high diversity of landscapes. Furthermore, there is an ongoing project, the Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism (MEET), trying to improve the sustainability of the tourism in the area (Medecotourism.com, 2016). With this strategic sampling of four Scandinavian and four Mediterranean countries, the cases are considered to give access to richer data as well as enable more comparisons and uncover otherwise hidden patterns in their communications. With different climates and consequently a slightly different range of tourism products, the two zones are thus seen to provide the study with the opportunity to explore the online communication of ecotourism within slightly different contexts.

### **3.3 Data Collection Method**

#### **3.3.1 Visual document analysis**

As the unit of analysis is the NTO website, the collected empirical data is of secondary visual character, as it is not produced for the purpose of research, but rather an authentic representation of what has already been done (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Visual data provide the researchers with a sense of the situation and show what has been created, which is useful in an exploratory study. It further helps the interpretation of how the communication has been realized (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). To get access to this kind of data, a visual document analysis is conducted. Virtual and visual

documents, more specifically the NTO websites and the graphical and visual content shown on them, are chosen to be the empirical base. As NTOs' are significant producers of this kind of documents, and that the content of the websites plays an important role in the NTOs' communication, they are seen to suit the aim of this study (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The criteria for which websites to analyze is that they needed to be the official tourism page for the specific country, as above described. Thereby, besides allowing the researcher to find the data needed to answer the questions, Scott's (1990, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011) criteria for assessing the quality of documents, namely their authenticity, credibility, and representativeness, are fulfilled. Data were collected by screenshots and saving text-citations.

Data were collected from the following websites:

Norway	<a href="https://www.visitnorway.com">https://www.visitnorway.com</a>	[2017.04.12]
Sweden	<a href="https://visitsweden.com">https://visitsweden.com</a>	[2017.04.12]
Finland	<a href="http://www.visitfinland.com">http://www.visitfinland.com</a>	[2017.04.12]
Denmark	<a href="http://www.visitdenmark.com">http://www.visitdenmark.com</a>	[2017.04.12]
Greece	<a href="http://www.visitgreece.gr">http://www.visitgreece.gr</a>	[2017.04.12]
Italy	<a href="http://www.italia.it">http://www.italia.it</a>	[2017.04.12]
Spain	<a href="http://www.spain.info">http://www.spain.info</a>	[2017.04.12]
Portugal	<a href="https://www.visitportugal.com">https://www.visitportugal.com</a>	[2017.04.12]

## 3.4 Data Analysis

### 3.4.1 Qualitative content analysis

In order to make sense of the data collected from the NTOs' official websites, a qualitative content analysis is the chosen method, as it is a context-sensitive and flexible technique (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). As communication might be implicit, the allowed qualitative interpretation of the content (Mason, 2002) makes an important point due to the fact that documents need to be understood in the context in which they are created and for whom they are written for (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Content analysis often starts with predefined categories. However, the usage of Blumers' (1954, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011) sensitizing concepts, as earlier described, allowed the researchers to start from a broader outline and narrow it down during the process of analysis, depending on what the data revealed in relation to the model. With this abductive approach of the study, the observed empirical

material has been leading the analysis. The first step in the process was to get familiar with the cases (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). To do this, an exploratory coding process was conducted (Saldaña, 2009). This was achieved with-in cases, to generate first insights of each case. This allowed unique patterns of each case to emerge, before any generalized patterns were investigated (Eisenhardt, 1989). In Appendix 1.1, the used coding template is provided.

The used analysis methods for coding are holistic coding and provisional coding. First, the holistic coding was conducted and the researchers applied single codes to large units of data, to make sense on the overall content. This allowed the researchers to grasp basic themes when the empirical material was big (Saldaña, 2009). Thereafter, the researchers developed a start list with predetermined categories for the performance of the provisional coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2009). To avoid forcing the data into a predefined framework, with the risk of coming up with codes and categories that may not be applicable (Saldaña, 2009), these categories provided the researchers with guidelines of what to look for during the coding process, allowing some interpretation of the empirical material (Blumer, 1954, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011). The categories used were based on Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map, namely Context, Content, Community, Customization, Communication, Commerce and Connection as presented above. The researchers analyzed and interpreted the content within these categories, to create subcategories of how ecotourism is communicated within each case.

The next step in the analysis process was the cross-case analysis, in order to notice patterns and reach beyond the initial impressions of the data, by looking at it in many divergent ways (Eisenhardt, 1989). This second cycle coding, with the aim to develop a sense of a thematic organization from the first cycle coding, was realized with the elaborative coding method (Saldaña, 2009). By taking the long sequences of describing text that emerged during the provisional coding and meta-summarize them within the 7Cs, the researchers were able to group the data into meaningful units (Saldaña, 2009). The used template for the second cycle coding together with the developed categories are presented in Appendix 1.2. Thereafter, by looking for within group similarities and intergroup differences in each category, potential contextual complexity was highlighted and provided the researchers with more information of the ecotourism communication (Eisenhardt, 1989). Furthermore, this method allowed the researchers to organize their explorative data in a way that can elaborate and modify previous research (Saldaña, 2009).

### **3.5 Critical Methodological Evaluations**

### **3.5.1 Quality of the research process**

As this study is of qualitative nature, there is a relatively little standardized instrumentation used throughout the research process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, interpretation of the qualitative empirical material can be achieved in different ways, and thus the researchers consider it important to use transparent methods and guide the reader through the process. To ensure its quality, particular considerations are made in regard to the generalizability, reliability and validity of the study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). As the goal with a case study is to depict the particularities of a specific phenomena (Yin, 2009), the researchers attempt to reach an analytical generalization rather than to provide final answers (Stake, 1995). By doing so, and to contribute to new theoretical conceptualizations, the process of cross-case analyses and abduction provides conceptual propositions, which can be applied and tested in further cases.

The two researchers acknowledge their own interpretation capacity and try to hold an as neutral approach towards the research as possible, which is in line with considerations needed to be taken into account within an internal realism ontology (Alvesson, 2003; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, the coding and analysis were achieved together by both researchers, to cover a broader spectrum of perspectives and ideas, as well as eliminate potential biased thoughts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researchers follow Seale's (1999, p.158) advice of presenting the reader with "as much as is possible of the procedures that have led to a particular set of conclusions".

When it comes to validity, to ensure that the data have been sufficiently treated and include the possible perspectives of what has been attempted within the communication, the researchers used a multi-leveled coding process. This allows them to view and examine the empirical material properly (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, to demonstrate that the evolving theoretical ideas properly match the observations made, the researchers provide substantial descriptions of the findings and include screenshots of the analyzed websites in Appendix 3, allowing the reader to "cross-check" the validity of the interpretations made (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003, p.274). The authenticity of the study is ensured via the controls of the conduction of the research as well as the evaluation of the date, to genuinely mirror the collected empirical material (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### **3.5.2 Ethical Considerations**

With regard to ethical considerations, the researchers follow Bell & Bryman's (2007, cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) ten key principles for research ethics.

With the research question and units of analysis of this study, no human participants needed to take part. Thus, the first six ethical principles are not applicable, as the analyzed documents are official websites.

A greater emphasis is put on the protection of the integrity of the research community. The researchers stay true to the research question and try to avoid deception of the results by treating the data with transparency and authenticity, without trying to falsify or affect the results in any way. As Snell (1993, cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) points out, ethical issues are extremely complex. The researchers attempt to the best of their knowledge to treat the research process as ethical as possible.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Findings

The following part presents the findings of how the NTO of each case communicates ecotourism through their official tourism website on a national level. First, an initial description of all websites is provided, before a more concrete and detailed presentation of the findings is conducted. This is achieved within the categories of this research's conceptual framework: Context, Content, Community, Customization, Communication, Commerce and Connection.

#### 4.1.1 General overview

In the next paragraphs, the overall look and feel of the official NTOs' websites is described for the countries under examination, unfolding the overall impression the visitor receives around ecotourism. It is generally found that Scandinavian countries are more active in this area, with the exception of Denmark, than the Mediterranean countries. Moreover, a significant difference between ecotourism patterns was not identified between Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries.

When first entering Visitnorway.com, the Norwegian official tourism website, nature is one of the main elements that are shown (see Appendix 3.1). With the slogan "Norway - powered by nature", the page mediates the splendid scenery, the northern lights and the pure moments one can experience when visiting the country. Nature appears to play a significant role in the Norwegian tourism product. The official NTO's website in Sweden is Visitsweden.com (see Appendix 3.2) and nature is one of the main focus of this site as well.

Its main page highlights the nature and outdoor activities, such as canoeing and kayaking, the northern lights and the moose. In Finland, the official tourism website is Visitfinland.com (see Appendix 3.3). The first impression for the online user is largely connected to ecotourism. The website contains multiple kinds of multimedia that highlight the natural and unique beauties of the country (e.g. Northern Lights, Midnight Sun, Lapland etc.), as well as possible outdoor activities (e.g. skiing, kayaking, hiking etc.) the tourist may experience while visiting the country. The official Danish tourism website is Visitdenmark.com (see Appendix 3.4). In general, Denmark does not pay special attention in ecotourism in its online communication, besides when describing the country's beaches and sea.

The official tourism website in Spain is Spain.info (see Appendix 3.5). Here, the online communication mainly focuses in other aspects of tourism, like culture. However, there are certain elements around ecotourism highlighted in the website. For instance, the exceptionality of the Spanish nature is highlighted by communicating that the country is the second UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the world. Several activities, such as mountain bike, hiking, scuba diving etc. that the ecotourist can enjoy while visiting the country are displayed as well. Italy's official tourism website is Italia.it (see Appendix 3.6). Ecotourism does not play an important role in their communication, while they focus more on culture and gastronomy. Considering ecotourism, they mainly display the sea, the mountains and the lakes. Greece's official NTO website is Visitgreece.gr (see Appendix 3.7). Even though the website basically communicates the beaches and sea of the country, it devotes some of its sections around ecotourism as well. Some of these sections include: Top 5 Greek Nature, Activities, Ecotourism etc. The official NTO website in Portugal is Visitportugal.com (see Appendix 3.8). Ecotourism communication plays an important role, which is visible when displaying the homepage. Visitportugal.com focuses into three main ecotourism areas, namely Nature, Sun and Sea, and Outdoor Activities.

#### 4.1.2 Context

One of the two most important elements for a website is its context. The empiric data of this study showed that within the context of a website, significant to consider are: structure, navigation/menu, design, engagement/inspiration. Regarding these categories, the distinction between massive and ecotourism communication is not always easy, as it highly depends on the country's involvement in such initiatives. The first category under analysis is the website's structure. All examined countries have developed a well-structured official tourism website. This finding concerns both the general structure of the website, as well as the specific ecotourism sections.

When analyzing the context, it was found that different cases have different navigation systems, making it harder or easier to find information about ecotourism. Several differences have been identified considering the ease of navigation and the menus on the websites. Norway, Finland and Denmark are seen to have easy navigation systems. More specifically, Visitnorway.com provides one of the most easy to navigate ecotourism sections. There, the top menu is explicit and allows the visitor to get easy access to subpages. In the first level of headlines, one can find for example the submenu "Things to do", which presents a next level of headlines such as "The great outdoors", "Must-see nature attractions" and "Pure Moments in Norway". Furthermore, in the bottom of the page, the site has a second menu with pictures/logos (see Appendix 3.9), highlighting important aspects of the website related to ecotourism. "Sustainable destinations" and "Green travel" are part of these linkages, making it even easier to get redirected to the nature related parts of the website. Similar is the case of Finland, as the website has organized diverse menus around ecotourism, while it is easy for the user to locate such submenus, for instance the "Get outdoors" menu (see Appendix 3.10), where various activities are listed. In the case of Denmark, even though the website does not devote a wide area in ecotourism communication, these sections are easy to be found, as the visitor can easily track the sites "Best Beaches List" and "20 Most Beautiful Places in Denmark List" (see Appendix 3.11).

On the other hand, Sweden, Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal have navigation systems that make it hard to track the ecotourism information in search. In Sweden, even though they devote a major area of their website in ecotourism communication, the top menu lacks a roll-down function, making the navigation on the site slow and slightly confusing. Spain.info does not employ the most user friendly navigation either. Nevertheless, the website does provide menus concerning nature, sports and sustainability. In the case of Italy, there is a lot of information provided about nature; however this is hard to find within Italia.it, even though there are submenus for nature, mountains, sea and lakes. It is not easy for the user to navigate through Visitgreece.gr and track the ecotourism information one is looking for. This happens because even though there is a clear structure in the website, there are several submenus that make it difficult for the user to efficiently scroll around. As well in Portugal, the user navigation can be improved, as the existing multiple menus may be confusing.

While examining the different websites, another category that evolved is design. Considering design, all case countries maintain a simple design in their tourism websites. The websites are constructed with a white background, where the pictures are more visibly displayed, while the text is written in simple fonts. Some case countries also utilize colors

characteristic for them. For instance, Norway employees the red color, Sweden light blue and yellow, while Greece deep blue color. No specific changes are tracked within the ecotourism subsections considering their design, except for its content, which is analyzed in the next section.

Another category that arose in the analysis is the degree of engagement/inspiration, as it varies widely within the different websites. Considering this element, the minority of the cases are engaging to the user (Norway, Sweden), while the majority is mostly only providing information to the visitor. More analytically, Norway's website mediates an engaging and inspiring feeling, with several large images and complementing informative text. It is a well-balanced mix of information, functionality and visual, emotional-creating elements such as images. Visitsweden.com is an aesthetic website, with emotionally engaging content. The images on the site are big and of good quality. Pictures are usually accompanied with short text on the main page and longer texts on the different subpages, which aims to provide more information about the specifics. In contrast, Visitfinland.com mostly evokes the traveler's interest to gather information about the country than evoking deeper emotions. In the case of Denmark, the website is mostly providing information than evoking emotions or interest; however, the video in the homepage is an element which also evokes emotions to the user. In Spain's tourism website, pictures are rather small and not very engaging to the user. Similar cases are the ones of Italia.it, Visitgreece.gr and Visitportugal.com, where the websites are mostly informational and do not easily evoke emotions to the user.

#### 4.1.3 Content

Content wise, the cases are seen to provide information about different subjects connected to ecotourism. These subjects were divided during the analysis into the following categories: sustainability; nature; animals; activities; and unique activities. 'Sustainability' refers to content directly connected to either sustainability or ecotourism, whereas the other categories are indirectly connected to ecotourism. For example, content can be about an eco friendly activity such as hiking or biking, but without mentioning of the activities' sustainable aspects. Furthermore, the content analysis exposed different multimedia balance among the cases. As explained in the context section, some cases focused on big images and shorter texts, while others proceeded with the opposite. When analyzing the content, nature and landscape were seen to uphold the greatest part of all websites. Italy was the only exception, as they emphasized on culture more than nature. However, they provide content that deals with nature, mountains and other eco friendly activities.

Visitnorway.com puts their main focus on nature. On their main page, several pictures and texts focus on nature, different ecofriendly activities and ‘Must-see nature attractions’. In Sweden, ecotourism is conveyed through images of nature, animals and “Swedish wildlife”. Several images also portraits happy people engaging in activities in the nature. On the Finnish website, the visitor is not overloaded with detailed information around nature when scrolling through the website, as most of it is communicated in a visual manner (see Appendix 3.3). The website focuses on providing information about the different natural activities available, rather than promoting ecotourism packages. In a first place, they have pictures illustrating the northern lights, but equally displayed are pictures with the Finnish snowy wonderland as well as the lakes in summertime. The Danish website offers a mix of text and pictures, but not videos in ecotourism. In total, most pictures illustrate the sea. There are still some pictures illustrating the forest and green areas, but only the minority. Pictures with beaches either present long sandy beaches, or, on a smaller extent, cliffs next to the sea.

In Greece, the medium of communication is mainly text, with some pictures and very minor videos, which does not display nature or activities around ecotourism. Several pictures illustrate beaches and the deep blue ocean, which is the country's main characteristic in tourism communication. The pictures with beaches include several landscapes such as: sandy, rocky or green beaches. However, in general, the pictures provided are not always representative of Greece and are often very limited. The Greek site further provides descriptions of two unique activities, not found in any other cases: “The routes of the olive tree” (see Appendix 3.12) and “Caving”. In Portugal, the information around ecotourism is at a good level. The content is developed based on informational rather than on promotional purposes. The basic communication mediums are texts and pictures, while the website does not utilize video multimedia at all. The major communication medium in Visitportugal.com are pictures and a photo gallery is provided in several subpages. For instance, in the “Sun and Sea” section the pictures range from sandy to rocky beaches (see Appendix 3.13). Spain has a section of their website promoting ecotourism. In general, they use nature to describe the beauty of their country. Activities or things to see which are highlighted in Spain are for example ‘green routes’ and stargazing, where the last one is uniquely promoted in Spain.

The analysis of the textual content revealed that not only does the text describe different things in different cases; the NTOs also convey their messages differently. The Swedish site accompanies pictures with informative text, written in a humorous and easy way, creating a dreamy feeling (see Appendix 3.14). Norway sometimes uses the technique of storytelling and the text is a mix of informative and formal text with subtle elements of

humor, making the text easy-going. It conveys the beauty of the Norwegian landscape together with pure facts about it. The text provided by Denmark is informational, rather than promotional of the destinations, same as for Spain, Finland and Greece. The last mentioned, however, has some extended textual descriptions while others are very limited. The Italian NTO writes in a we-format, such as "we travel ...", mediating a brotherhood among the visitors and making the text inclusive.

When it comes to content directly connected to sustainability, the Norwegian page has a higher focus on it compared to the other cases. Several Norwegian subpages contain information about sustainability, the Norwegian 'Right of Public Access' and how the visitors should "Take only pictures and keep only memories" (see Appendix 3.15). The subpage containing information about sustainability in Norway explains the different ecolabels in Norway and general information about sustainable tourism and why it is important (see Appendix 3.16). It furthermore shows different service providers, which are or are in the process of becoming eco certified. Spain as well displays a high focus on ecotourism; they have ecotourism as a headline for one of their different tourism categories. The visitor can thus easily find information about it and the NTO presents Spain's eco and sustainability certifications, together with additional information that shows their commitment to sustainability (see Appendix 3.17). They furthermore tell that they have the second most UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in the world and that the tourists should "Discover nature but with utmost respect for the environment", highlighting the visitors own responsibility as well. In the other cases, even though they communicate ecotourism initiatives online, they do not spell it out as clearly.

Another technique, when it comes to mediate ecotourism or natural activities, is to provide toplists, such as "Top 5 Greek Nature" (see Appendix 3.18) or "Top 20 Most Beautiful Places in Denmark". What is common with these subpages are that they gather information and tips in one sole page, providing the visitor with easy-accessible information and inspiration. Sweden takes it one step further and provides lists with ecotourism certified tips. All cases use text and images, while some also utilize videos or moving materials. The Scandinavian countries incorporate moving material already in the hero image on their main page, while the others provide it on different subpages, however not inevitably in regard to ecotourism. Some cases extend the mix even more, creating interactive features on the site. An example of this is Sweden, which provides a couple of interactive experiences on site, where the visitor can click around to explore and read more, while being in touch with moving material and sound effects (see Appendix 3.19). Another commonly used media among the cases are maps, static or interactive. All sites provide some kind of map and/or

an activity and information distribution divided on geographical areas in the country. Sweden, for example, has divided its content in geographical areas, besides for the activities division, and focuses on providing information about different nature experience rather than ecotourism in specific. In Finland, several maps are provided, also dividing the country based on the different natural interest points (e.g. Lapland, Lakeland, Archipelago (see Appendix 3.20). The maps are interactive, so that the visitor can extract information about specific locations as well.

#### 4.1.4 Community

In terms of community, three major categories have been identified: Social Media traditional, Social Media unique and Social Media visibility/engagement. In the first category, the website connects to the widely used social media channels, while in the second with more innovative ones. The third category describes the attention a website pays in social media display, i.e. whether it is only connected with them or devotes a wider area of the website to showcase them.

Considering this element, it is hard to distinguish whether an external community exists collectively for tourism or exclusively for ecotourism. This can only be achieved by investigating the different social media profiles for each country, which exceeds the scope of this research. However, these categories are thought to be equally important for ecotourism online communication as in conventional tourism. In all country cases, the website does not enable immediate user to user communication through an in-site community, e.g. a chat room. However, all cases are connected to the mainstream social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter etc. Three of the case countries, namely Finland, Italy and Greece, are also connected to more innovative social media channels. Visitfinland.com is connected to VKontakte and Weibo, on top of the traditional social media platforms. Italy is also present in Foursquare, while Greece is correspondingly linked to both Flickr and Foursquare. Last but not least, Italy devotes a wide area of its website in social media display (see Appendix 3.21). Italia.it maintains a section of its website, where an immediate display of comments, posts etc. in social media channels is achieved. However, the rest of the websites only connect their social media channels through an icon, usually on their homepage.

#### 4.1.5 Customization

With regard to customization, no case country in this study offers it on an individual level and does not provide specific information depending on the person. The Swedish and

Finnish sites have each a function where the visitor can plan his/her trip. However, as the visitor still needs to participate in creating the outcome, it is not seen as pure customization.

Several cases provide customization on a cultural level, by offering different language opportunities to the visitor and then adapting the content on these country-specific version of the websites. An example of this is Visitorway.com, which depending on the target market, puts a greater emphasis on ecotourism and nature in some versions. However, the context of the sites are the same. Similar with the Swedish website, which for example highlights the Moose in their German site (see Appendix 3.22) while the Russian version focuses more on the Northern Lights (see Appendix 3.23) and the Italian focuses on design and sustainability. The context and design of visitsweden.com is slightly different for the Norwegian and Danish versions. The Danish website is also provided in different languages. Except for the language, the website is customized on a wide extent in the culture of each country, also referring at ecotourism in certain cases. Still, most of the different versions focus on promoting the sea. Some versions follow a totally different structure, for instance in the German version, where the visitors can book housing for their holidays in the homepage (see Appendix 3.24).

However, the rest of the examined cases have not gone through the effort of customizing on a cultural level. Visitfinland.com is only provided in different languages. The customization of content basically refers to the different popular articles and videos displayed in a first view. The Portuguese website is provided in several different languages. Except for the language translation, the website is not being further customized, not even for the most exotic countries like China or Japan. The same principles are found in the Spanish and Italian websites, which provide different language options but no further adaptation of the content. Noteworthy, the Italian site provides a Chinese version of the website, which has a different context and to a higher level focuses on nature (see Appendix 3.25). The Greek website is only offered in Greek and English, with no deeper level of language customization or cultural adaptation.

#### 4.1.6 Communication

Considering the element of communication, two major categories were defined, each one including three subcategories. The first main category describes the one-way communication, with its subcategories including the newsletter, blog and website. The second main category describes the two-way communication, with its subcategories including the contact us, feedback and social media. However, no communication functionality around the previously mentioned categories has been specifically designed

around ecotourism.

The main medium of achieving one-way communication for all case countries is their website. Yet, the amount devoted to ecotourism communication varies widely between the eight cases. For instance, Norway and Portugal are two of the most pioneering countries in communicating about their ecotourism initiatives, while Denmark and Italy are two of the least engaged in ecotourism communication. Newsletters are the second most preferred one-way communication medium for NTOs. The possibility for a user to register for a newsletter is possible in most of the case countries, namely Norway, Denmark, Spain, Greece and Portugal. However, there is no such an offering only covering ecotourism subjects in any country. Blogs are not very popular among NTOs. Only three out of the eight examined countries own their blog, namely Finland, Greece and Portugal. Visitfinland.com offers the possibility to visitors to write an article about their traveling experience in a section called "Things they said" (see Appendix 3.26). Among these articles, quite some are written around the Finnish nature. Visitgreece.gr owns a blog (see Appendix 3.27), where those interested can write an article with opinions, impressions, events etc. about the country. However, rarely is a post written around ecotourism. The Portuguese NTO has developed its own blog as well. Nevertheless, the blog focuses more on publishing event related than nature related articles (see Appendix 3.28).

As already discussed in the element of community, the most famous alternative for maintaining a two-way communication for NTOs are social media platforms. All case countries are connected to the most popular social media channels, while some of them are also connected to more unique platforms. Another widely applied tool to maintain two-way communications with their visitors is the "Contact us" section. There appears to be a balance in the path a user may utilize to get in touch with an NTO, as half of the countries utilize contact forms to get in touch with their visitors, while the other half accepts e-mail requests. The countries that employ contact forms are: Norway, Spain, Italy and Portugal. On the other hand, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Greece accept email requests. Specifically in Finland, this functionality is not visible on a first sight to their website's visitor. The possibility for a user to add feedback on a website is very rarely found, and more specifically it is only found in Visitportugal.com. Here the user is able to add feedback by creating a profile in several subpages illustrating areas of natural interest, which is a unique functionality from several NTOs websites (see Appendix 3.29).

#### 4.1.7 Commerce

The findings of this research have revealed that the case countries have different

methods for selling or providing booking options for ecotourism activities, as well as a different focus on the amount of commerce connected to the website. The most commonly used way of providing ecotourism booking/buying opportunities on the NTO's websites is by cater the visitors with links to external service providers, where the visitor can carry out the booking or purchase. All cases are in different ways using this method, however Italy, Greece and Portugal do not further state any information about the link or what and how the purchase can be achieved. The redirections appear to rather be to websites where one can read more about the services, without knowing anything about the potential of a booking opportunity.

Sweden and Finland take the commerce one step further, by providing the visitor with a function in which one can plan and organize his/her trip. The Swedish version is called "Plan your trip" and the Finnish "My stay" (see Appendices 3.30). These two functions work in the same way and collect and provide specific information about activities and booking information relevant to each individual's trip, making the booking process slightly easier. Denmark, Norway and Spain on the other hand, offer booking or purchasing possibilities immediately on their sites or provide easily accessible information of how they can be completed. The international version of visitdenmark.com offers booking opportunities through their subpage "Accommodation", where the visitor can find and book several types of accommodations, ranging from city hotels to campsites (see Appendix 3.32). Online booking for accommodation is available in the Danish and German version in the homepage as well. However, it is not shown whether or not a hotel is eco friendly or certified. In the Danish version, the visitor can furthermore book several activities, also related to ecotourism, such as biking.

On Visitnorway.com, on the top menu, the NTO provides a "Book"-option, which furnishes the visitor with links to a number of external service providers. Here, there is no further information about the services and whether or not they are eco friendly. However, on the different pages on the site, where they provide information about activities etc., there is a system of showing hotels and service providers that are eco friendly, by labeling them with a tussock of grass (see Appendix 3.31). This system also easily and clearly redirects the visitor to a website where one can proceed with a purchase. The Spanish site has a high level of commerce, as they have a well-developed booking system (see Appendix 3.32). All activities or accommodations, which they provide information about, is bookable directly on the site. They provide all information needed to make a purchase, such as available dates, current prices and which categories each activity falls under. Ecotourism and Nature are two of the categories. Furthermore, the site has a search function with filters, where the visitor

can easily find the activities containing each category (see Appendix 3.33).

As discussed above, despite the different methods of providing different alternatives of commerce, the provided booking alternatives can also be labeled or marked as eco friendly or not. However, Norway and Spain are alone in having a system of ecolabeling, which clearly highlights what is eco friendly, while Denmark, Sweden and Finland only indicate if anything is eco friendly. The different methods of providing commerce on the webpage also results in a different range of commerce on the webpages. Some NTOs' have high focus on commerce while others have none or very little. Only Spain has a fully developed booking system on site, while the others provide links and information in different extent. This is seen to be depending on the general strategy for commerce in each case, as the ecotourism alternatives are catered similarly as other activities on the site. The exception here is Norway, which has a special system to label eco friendly activities exclusively.

#### 4.1.8 Connection

The ways of connection between the official tourism websites and other sites are similar in-between the cases. All case countries are linked to their social media sites, as discussed in 4.1.3 Community. The pages are also connected to national parks/green routes, activity or outdoor distributors or organizers, TripAdvisor, different ecotourism partners and sometimes to phone applications.

Visitnorway.com provides several links to the visitor, both within the organization (such as to their own social media) and external to different service providers and organizations offering more information about ecotourism. Some of these links are marked as eco friendly, making it easy for the visitor to sieve among the offered services to find the ecotourism related ones, as already explained in the section about commerce. The same method of providing links is seen in the cases of Finland, Portugal and Spain, however without the distinct system of marking links as eco friendly. The Finnish website is, except social media, linked with diverse ecotourism websites. Visitportugal.com offers external agencies links for outdoor activities through a search functionality (see Appendix 3.34). They seem to have partnerships with several European organizations, however not with ecotourism organizations. Spain, more similar to Norway, provides useful links to external sites on the bottom of each page (see Appendix 3.35). They also provide connection to a phone application called 'Eco tourist in Spain'. The visitor can easily find the link needed for more information about ecotourism.

Visitgreece.gr offers an array of external links, however not connected to ecotourism. For instance, they have a site with external links, but no relevant ecotourism partnerships

are found (see Appendix 3.36). Furthermore, the Danish website is not vastly linked to third-party sites. The Danish NTO has no partnerships with ecotourism organizations or similar. On Visitsweden.com, the general number of linkages on the site is low. The linkages to their own Social Media is not greatly highlighted and the number of links to external ecotourism organizations are both low in number and hard to locate on the site. The Italian website provides a big array of links, but it is hard to understand if it is an external or internal link.

## 4.2 Analysis

The following section presents the findings in relation to Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) original 7Cs framework map. The categories developed from the analysis are compared to the subcategories in the conceptual framework. This highlights differences and similarities between this study's findings and the original framework map and provides a contextual modification of it. The adopted ecotourism framework map is presented at the end of this chapter.

### 4.2.1 Context

Context considers the layout and design of a website. Websites that focus on functionality try to provide the reader with information. Aesthetically designed websites try to engage their users and evoke their interest and emotions. The balance between the functional and emotional design of a website can be termed as integrated (Rayport & Jaworski, 2004, cited in Fill, 2005). Within the context of a website, this study has identified the following categories as important: structure, navigation/menu, design and engagement/inspiration. Regarding these categories, the differentiation between massive and ecotourism communication is not always easy, as it highly depends on the country's involvement in such activities.

The first category in the original 7Cs framework map considers aesthetically dominant websites. This category basically remains untouched, while only the specification of engagement/inspiration is added. This subcategory is considered important to include, as engagement/inspiration stands for the most significant emotions a tourism website can generate to its users, in order to gain more visitors. The second category considers functionally dominant websites. This category is extended by adding three subcategories, namely: structure, navigation/menu and design. These parameters are necessary for achieving decent online communication in terms of functionality. More analytically, for a

website to be easy to use, it needs to maintain a good structure, easy navigation with roll down and clearly named menus, and simple design, so that the content stands out. The third category considers integrated websites, meaning a website which is balanced between aesthetics and functionality. This category remains as such, as it is already well described and the research did not indicate further findings.

Considering the case countries of this study and in which category would each of them fit, Norway seems to have an integrated website, as it considers all areas as equally important. Sweden employs a more aesthetically dominant website, since it lacks in easy navigation. The rest of the case countries have more functionally dominant websites, since they lack in including the right elements to evoke emotions.

#### 4.2.2 Content

Rayport and Jaworski (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) have divided the element of content into three categories: product dominant, service dominant and information dominant. In the context of ecotourism, the categories are understood as following: Product dominant websites provide the opportunity of buying tangible eco products, while information dominant websites focus on providing eco related information and service dominant on the commerce of eco friendly activities or services in which one can participate. As the findings showed, no case employed a product dominant website; the NTOs websites' main focus is on providing information. Spain was the only case falling under the service dominant category, as they had a larger focus on commerce than on providing information. The remaining cases are thus information dominant. Due to this, the category 'product dominant' needs to be removed from the original framework, as it is not relevant in this industry.

Furthermore, content containing various aspects of ecotourism is seen to be provided, forming several content genres. General content genres are not regarded in the original 7Cs framework map. However, as the found subcategories of incorporated content types are seen to exist regardless if the website is service or information dominant, the subcategories provide apparent insights of ecotourism communication. To highlight the importance of different ecotourism content genres, in which a NTO can engage, these findings need to be included in the framework. The researchers decided to call this category 'Provided information', under which the following content genres fall: Sustainability; Nature (Forest, Mountains, Snow, Lakes, Sea etc.); Animals (Moose, Reindeer, Bear etc.); Activities (Ski, Snowboard, Trekking, Biking etc.); and Unique Activities (Routes of the olive tree, Caving, Surfing etc.).

Another category not included in the original framework, but existing in the

communication of ecotourism and seen as relevant, is the multimedia balance. To indicate which options the NTOs have, that are seen to be in use, when communicating ecotourism online, the framework needs the addition of the subcategories Toplists; Maps; Interactive features; Text; Image; and Videos. As for the content genres, these multimedia subcategories show where the content is mediated.

#### 4.2.3 Community

According to Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005), online communities describe the interaction between the users of a website. These interactions can be one to one (e.g. via e-mail) or among many (e.g. via chat rooms). Communities in a website may range from nonexistent to strong. In the case of ecotourism online communication, internal communities are completely non-existent from the case countries official tourism websites. However, all countries are linked to external communities, i.e. social media, in different degrees.

Considering the external communities linked to the diverse NTO's websites, their level ranges from medium to high. Their classification depends both on how many and which social media platforms do they link in the websites, as well as to the degree of engagement with their visitors. It is therefore considered important to modify the element of community in the initial 7Cs framework map and adjust it in ecotourism communication by first characterizing its externality. After this characterization, the category of a non-existent community is not realistic and removed from the updated framework. In the remaining two categories - limited and strong - the following classification is being achieved. A limited community corresponds to a website that only connects to the traditional social media platforms. A strong community corresponds to the websites that not only connect to the previously mentioned platforms, but also either to more innovative ones or provide to the visitor a higher degree of visibility directly from a website's section.

Considering the case countries and how they would fit in the modified framework, the majority adopt a limited community (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Portugal), while only a minority develops a strong community (Finland, Italy, Greece).

#### 4.2.4 Customization

Rayport and Jaworski (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) explain customization as to which a site is capable to offer adapted content to individual needs and wants of its visitors, fluctuating between a generic, moderately and highly customized level depending of the user's site experience. The findings of this research showed that the cases were either

adapting the language to their different target markets or taking it one step further and adapting its content. As only language adoption does not answer to the visitors' individual needs, translating the website in foreign languages is seen to be customization on a low level. Both language and content adaptation are seen to be on a moderate level, as it provides a better experience for the visitor, but not on an individual level. As the found categories fit in the current framework, no moderation is seen to be needed, except for the addition of the subcategories.

Considering the cases and how they would fit in the modified framework, the majority adopt a generic customization with only language adaptation (Finland, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) and some are moderately customized (Norway, Sweden and Denmark). No cases are highly customized.

#### 4.2.5 Communication

Based on Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005), the type of communication provided by a website is a reflection of the type of relationship it wishes to accomplish with its users. The communication may be broadcast (e.g. mass mailings), which prevents the user reaction and with it the opportunity for dialogue. On the other hand, interactive communication (e.g. feedback) enables user response that can lead to dialogue with the organization. Concerning this study, it is rather difficult to distinguish online communication achieved between the NTO and the users regarding traditional tourism or ecotourism. This happens because there are no specific communication tools developed for ecotourism, rather the communication tools designed for massive tourism also include sections of ecotourism in certain cases. Regarding the element of communication, it is considered important to examine each category of the original 7Cs framework map separately, ranging from one-way to interactive communications, explaining how they should be modified and the underlying reasons behind this modification.

One-to-many nonresponding communication is extended to include two major subcategories: website and newsletter. As already discussed in findings, the communication of ecotourism with these tools highly depends on the stance of each country towards it, where pioneering countries utilize them in a high extent (e.g. Norway), while others (e.g. Italy) in a low extent. This extension in the original framework is considered important, as websites are the main tools of one-way online communication for official tourism organizations. There is not one-to-one nonresponding communication tracked, neither on massive tourism nor in ecotourism. This category is not identified, as NTO websites are not customized on an individual level. Therefore this category is considered non-existent and is

eliminated from the original framework, since it does not add any value in this sense.

One-to-many responding communication is extended to include social media and blogs. Social media have already been widely discussed, therefore it is already concluded that their engagement in ecotourism highly depends on the NTO's general engagement in this area. Similarly in blogs, posts related to ecotourism highly relates to the sensitivity of the country towards this kind of tourism. Even though blogs are offered only by the minority of the case countries (Finland, Greece, Portugal), with two of them posting in a less extent about ecotourism (Greece, Portugal), blogs are considered to be an important tool to increase dialogue around this subject, next to social media channels. One-to-one responding communication is extended to include two subcategories: contact us and feedback. Some of the examined websites, like spain.info, highlight their contact us page, in an attempt to make their visitors become more interactive with the organization. Moreover, Portugal is the only case country that offers a feedback functionality (also concerning ecotourism subpages), showing that it considers its users' opinion. Both sections are important to increase opinion sharing both to the organization and in a public sense.

Considering this element, all case countries fit in all three categories in the modified framework, as all of them own a website, are connected to social media and have a contact us subpage. However, not all of them correspond to the subcategories in the same extent, as only some of them offer the possibility to subscribe in a newsletter, write in a blog or share feedback.

#### 4.2.6 Commerce

Commerce refers to the ability for the user to conduct commercial transactions through the website. This element can range from low to high level, as decided by the amount of offered commerce (Rayport & Jaworski, 2004, cited in Fill, 2005). In the context of NTOs' communication of ecotourism fully developed booking opportunities on page are not common. Only Spain has a fully developed system, including prices etc. Other cases, such as Norway, offer limited booking-opportunities on site. As already explained, most cases in this study are information dominant websites and do not offer much commerce on site. This indicates that the original framework cannot explain the differentiated commerce situation in the context of NTO websites. The analysis of this study confirmed the need for a modification, as the findings showed cases which do not engage in any commercial activities. The modification is thus an addition of the subcategory 'None'.

Another category that came up in the analysis, but is not covered in the original framework, is the ecolabelling system of buyable services. As this method sheds light to

ecotourism, it is seen to be important in this context and thus needs to be included. Two new categories therefore need to be added in the framework, namely 'Ecolabeling' and 'No ecolabelling'.

#### 4.2.7 Connection

Connection refers to the number of other linked sites in the organization's website, which may redirect the user to another site when clicked. Websites can be grouped under three categories regarding connection: destination sites, hub sites and portal sites, depending on the number of links provided in relation to self-generated content (Rayport & Jaworski, 2004, cited in Fill, 2005). As already explained, several websites in this study provide a large amount of external links. However, the amount of self-generated content is also large in those cases, making them hub sites with regard to the framework. Only Denmark and Spain are considered destination sites, due to their low percentage of links. No portal sites have been seen, making this category irrelevant in the developed model.

Another observation is the different types of links presented, something that is not covered in the original framework. Whereas some linkages are within the organization, others are external. The internal linkage subcategories are Social Media; Partners; and Phone Application. The external subcategories are National Parks etc.; Activity/Outdoors distributors/organizers; and TripAdvisor. To explain the different kinds of links, the categories 'Internal linkage' and 'External linkage' need to be added to the framework.

#### 4.2.8 The ecotourism modified 7Cs framework map

<b>Context</b>	Aesthetically dominant <i>*Inspiration/ Engagement</i>	Functionally dominant <i>*Structure *Design *Navigation/Menu</i>	Integrated
	Information-dominant		Service-dominant
<b>Content</b>	<i>*Provided Information Sustainability / Nature / Animals / Activities / Unique Activities</i>		
	<i>*Multimedia Balance Toplists / Maps / Interactive features / Text / Images / Videos</i>		

Community	External		
	Limited *Social Media -Traditional -Unique	Strong *Social Media -Visibility/Engagement	
Customization	Generic *Language-Translation n	Moderately customized *Cultural-Adaptation	Highly customized *Individual
Communication	One-to-many, nonresponding user *Newsletter *Website	One-to-many responding user *Social media *Blog	One-to-one, responding user *Contact us *Feedback
Commerce	None	Low	Medium
	*Ecotourism label/search filter		*No label/search filter
Connection	Destination	Hub	
	*External Links National Parks, Green Routes etc.   Activity/Outdoors distributors/organizers   Social Media   TripAdvisor   Partners   Phone Application		

**Table 2:** The modified 7Cs Framework Map for Online Ecotourism Communication

## 5. Discussion

In the following section, the modified Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map for online ecotourism communication, hereby referred to as the modified 7Cs framework map or the 7Cs framework map for ecotourism, is discussed. The comparison to previous models and theories will further define and profile the result of this study in the range of existing research, and unify the scattered models in the area of online ecotourism communication.

## **5.1 New insights in the 7Cs framework map**

The initial objective of this research is to extend previous communication models developed for the online environment, with the aim to minimize the existing research gap in ecotourism communication. The findings resulted in a modified 7Cs framework map with categories adapted for ecotourism communication on NTOs' official tourism websites and with subcategories highlighting different kinds of ecotourism communications. The modified 7Cs framework map is thus much more empirical near than Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) original framework map.

As the original framework map is one of the fundamental models used in website evaluation analysis (Fill, 2005), it includes all important elements to proceed with a balanced evaluation, while it is not too detailed. It provides a good background for a topic which initially has not been much researched (Rayport & Jaworski, 2004, cited in Fill, 2005), meaning that the modified framework map can provide an initial understanding of ecotourism communications, however not on a very detailed or complex level. Nevertheless, due to the lack of models in this specific area, the modified framework map gives a first suggestion of what is being achieved.

The original 7Cs framework was developed for e-commerce websites (Rayport & Jaworski, 2004), but later evolved into a map suiting several different contexts, especially good for marketing communications and general website evaluation (Fill, 2005). However, several of the modifications were necessary due to the fact that NTOs' websites are not within the typical e-commerce sector, but rather the tourism sector, which is more service dominant (Weaver, 2006). The goal within national tourism websites lies not in selling products, but rather on providing information and inspiration (Lovelock, 2009; Kavoura, 2014). Due to these different purposes, modifications in elements such as Content, Commerce and Connection need to be compiled, as the original model does not consider the unique traits of tourism websites. This again makes the modified 7Cs framework map more detailed and empirically near the ecotourism sector, providing a holistic overview and hands on categories for understanding the communication practices.

As content and context are seen to be two of the most important categories, the researchers deem it important to highlight these two more in the discussion. For content, the addition of subcategories of what kind of ecotourism related content is provided and are seen to provide an appreciation of the complexity of ecotourism activities as well as shed light to indirect ways of communicating it. Yet, as the context of the website gives direction of interpretation, as explained in epistemology, this opens up for opportunities of

communication without a persistent use of the word ecotourism. The added content genres are making this premise visible. The original framework does not address this issue, which might be attributed to its deficiency of empirical data. Thus, the modified 7Cs framework map provides a more complete model for the ecotourism sector, as it includes indicative subcategories.

## **5.2 Synchronizing online marketing communications with ecotourism**

When it comes to online communication of ecotourism in general, very little was found in literature. A possible explanation for this might be that even though the first definition of ecotourism was developed already back in 1965, by Hetzer (1965, cited in Cheia, 2013), the phenomena is still not commonly agreed upon. For instance, Moscardo (2008, cited in Dangi & Jamal, 2016) argue that there is no such thing as sustainable tourism, while Cosmescu and Cosmescu (2007) argue that the wide array of definitions about ecotourism means that the discussion over ecotourism is still ongoing. Furthermore, the historically late development and growth of NTOs (Pike, 2008), as well as the quick changes in tourist behaviors (Gorlevskaya, 2016) might affect that research is slightly lagging behind. Another aspect is the recent paradigm shift in viewing destinations as brands and not only places (Kavoura, 2014) and the realization that ecotourism can be used as a competitive advantage (Blaće, Ćorić & Jurić, 2015), which have not yet been fully covered in research.

However, on a more general agenda, except the already discussed framework map by Rayport and Jaworski (2004, cited in Fill, 2005), researchers that have developed frameworks concerning tourism website communications are Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014) and Azad Hanna and Rowley (2015). More abstract communication frameworks for website evaluations are Karayanni and Baltas (2003, cited in Fill, 2005) and Park and Gretzel (2007). In relation to these, the modified 7Cs framework map for ecotourism online communication provides a first suggestion of what is achieved in website communication of ecotourism as well as an initial framework of the assessment of ecotourism communications on websites, filling the identified gap. More specifically, the modified 7Cs framework map for ecotourism relates to the other models by proposing a synchronization of categories for evaluation, and unifies them in the context of ecotourism. While the modified 7Cs framework map offers useful categories, without being too complex, it elaborates on the existent knowledge in the subjects of website evaluation and marketing communications.

### 5.2.1 Context

As already mentioned, the element of context is one of the most usually met when analyzing websites, and official tourism websites are not the exception. Park and Gretzel (2007) refer to the context of a website as the ease of use, including terms such as usability, accessibility, navigability and logical structure. On the other hand, Fernández-Cavia et al. (2013) consider usability as to the user-friendliness of the website and whether it achieves the goals set in an effective, appealing and error-free manner. In a future study (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014) they added the term accessibility, meaning the suitability for use by people with sensory difficulties. In this study Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014) also examine another parameter, namely information architecture, which observes the manner in which the website is organized and structured in order to enable users' access to information. A year later, Del Vasto-Terrientes et al. (2015) identify as well both usability and accessibility as key aspects for the communication of tourism websites. According to them, their strong relationship has led to their union into a general parameter. Here, usability refers to the ease of use of the website, whereas accessibility is concerned with the resources that make the website accessible for disabled users. In this study, when referring to the website's context, a combination of all the previously mentioned parameters are taken into account, except for accessibility. The latter is not considered, as it consists a unique parameter, appropriate to be considered in a more detailed study. The parameters have been included as subcategories, as based on the result of this study in the element of context, making for a collective view of the element in relation to the other studies.

Another aspect of context, according to Inversini et al. (2014), regards the navigation and amount of information, as a large amount of information does not imply that those pieces of information are easily accessible to the users. At the same time, a website with few contents and functionalities could prove extremely useful for tourists needing specific information and who are willing to perform specific tasks. This finding is in agreement with several case countries of this study, which even though they provide a significant amount of information around ecotourism, their poor navigation consist these information hard to be traced from the user, therefore useless for online ecotourism display.

### 5.2.2 Content

Moving further to the element of content, the modified 7Cs framework map exposed different subcategories for ecotourism related content. However, this result has not previously been described. Fill (2005) discusses content in regard to the balance of the

content, where Offering mix refers to the balance between information, products and services; Appeal mix refers to the balance between functional (attribute and benefits) and emotional (feelings and brand); and Multimedia mix refers to the selected combination of audio, text, graphics, images and video. Park and Gretzel (2007) discuss content in terms of its attract attention and accuracy of information. Azad Hanna and Rowley (2015) did not discuss content in their frameworks, potentially missing to show the complexity of direct and indirect communication, whereas Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014) discuss it in terms of content amount and persuasive aspects of the website. These different frameworks provide a scattered apprehension of how content should be analyzed. The modified 7Cs framework map is a simplification of these analytical aspects, providing an initial understanding of the containment of content in the context of ecotourism.

### 5.2.3 Community

According to Azad Hanna and Rowley (2015), the element of community can be defined as contributing to the community associated with a place, through managing or facilitating digital spaces where users can interact with each other. Their definition of community in the developed 7Cs of digital strategic place brand management is in agreement with the definition of this element in the 7Cs framework map developed by Rayport and Jaworski (2004, cited in Fill 2005), revealing this element's uniformity. In terms of developing such a community, many experts point on its importance as a mechanism for conveying information users believe being reliable; even though their existence is rare in the case of most destinations (Míguez-González & Fernández-Cavia, 2015). The examined countries in this research are not the exception, as internal communities in all cases are non-existent. However, Bath and Shah (2014) argue for the importance of communities, as e-WOM is perceived as more credible by tourists. Thus, destinations are advised to take full advantage of the possibilities of established social media channels, if setting up their own virtual community proves to be costly and inefficient (Míguez-González & Fernández-Cavia, 2015). This study has exposed the extent in which official NTOs' websites utilize these possibilities, especially when considering the traditional social media channels.

Furthermore, in their study, Míguez-González and Fernández-Cavia (2015) have found that concerning the presence of social web elements, the results are not so poor, but the average score is still unsatisfactory. Generally, destinations have shown a profound interest in allowing users to employ the most common social media tools like Twitter, Facebook or platforms for videos. According to the analysis, adoption of external communities by utilizing social media platforms scores at a high level. This lean towards the

adoption of the mostly used social media channels has also been pointed throughout this research, while only a minority of case countries adopt more innovative channels as well. Nonetheless, based on the same, certain areas could be improved, such as access to social media via open windows instead of icons (Míguez-González & Fernández-Cavia, 2015). This recommendation is only utilized in one of the examined cases in this study, while all the rest still utilize icon tools.

In his study, Platania (2014) indicates that there is a large group of Italian agrotourism providers that have been slow in taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by the Web, whereas another group, which is less numerous, makes use of social networking tools. Moreover, the findings of Cheng et al. (2017) provide a framework for the use of social media to market ecotourism. Their framework outlines the importance of the meanings associated with this form of communication through its promotional appeal to tourists and the outcomes for both the ecotourist and site management. Even though agrotourism is not immediately connected to ecotourism, these studies are the closest relevant, indicating the importance of social media platforms acting as external communities for ecotourists.

#### 5.2.4. Customization

When it comes to customization, based on Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014), an important characteristic of official tourism websites is the choice of languages, because, if a destination wishes to promote itself on international markets, it needs online versions in the languages of the main targeted countries. Due to the growing competition in the sector, this is seen to become even more important (García, Gómez, & Molina, 2012). In the studies by Fernández-Cavia et al. (2014), this subject area addressed only language management on the official tourism websites (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013; Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014). Their focus is partially in agreement with this research, as here not only the language but also cultural adaptation is deemed important in the analysis of official NTO websites in their ecotourism sections, as some targeted countries focus more on ecotourism than others.

Two specific researches analyzing language customization in tourism websites have been identified. In the first one, which is the most relevant as it has analyzed agrotourism websites, Platania (2014) observed that in the majority of the cases, the websites also featured a version in English, whereas the minority of sites provided a website also in a third language. In the second one, Parker et al. (2012), identified one of his case websites being offered only in English, while the other being offered also in other languages, like French, German or Japanese. In this study though, the majority of the NTO websites offer their

ecotourism related content also in a third language, other than English. This differentiation between findings may be because Platania (2014) and Parker et al. (2012) have researched regional and not national tourism websites, which have less resources to implement a more holistic language customization strategy.

Personalization is only mentioned as a parameter of analysis from Park and Gretzel (2007). They describe personalization in their framework as individual to the user customization of offerings and information. However, this research has not identified any official tourism website attempting personalized content on an individual level, neither on massive tourism nor on ecotourism, even though it has recently become a generally growing phenomena in website communications.

### 5.2.5 Communication

The element of communication is widely met in relevant literature, also with different names, such as responsiveness and interactivity (which includes as well the meaning of community). In their 7Cs framework, Azad Hanna and Rowley (2015) define communication as creating dynamic digital communication, through the website and other channels, that responds to the changing needs of a diverse audience. Park and Gretzel (2007) term communication as responsiveness, meaning the accessibility of service representatives, e-mail service, and contact information among others. In other studies (Del Vasto-Terrientes et al., 2015, Fernández-Cavia et al., 2014, Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013), interactivity examines the two-way communicative relationship between the user and the website content, the user and the destination managers, and the user with the user. The most important aspects considered to assess interactivity in this sense include the free download of leaflets and maps, the availability of interactive resources related to the destination, the existence of a chat room and the possibility to post experiences, photographs and videos by the users themselves. This study considers community and communication as two diverse elements, therefore its approach is significantly different from the majority of previous researchers. Moreover, another big difference is that this research considers only human communication between visitors and the organization through several different digital mediums. However, Azad Hanna and Rowley (2015) and Park and Gretzel (2007) have a similar approach to communications as the one defined here.

Furthermore, the importance of having strong communication as a tourism organization is strongly stated within the analysis of this study. This is also highlighted from Oliveira and Panyik (2015), who support that pre and after-trip interactions enrich travelers' experience, enhance their destination image through virtual presence and cultivate their

loyalty toward the destination. In their research, Babacan and Erdem Koker (2008) discovered that all of the case countries provide the users of the related websites with participation opportunity through e-mail. However, both the analysis of this study and the one from Míguez-González and Fernández-Cavia (2015) show that there is little interest among official tourism organizations in providing users with instruments to give opinions or to share information. Moreover, they both identify that user-administrator interaction is poor in most of the cases analyzed, as few websites offer the service of making comments on or voting for content. Therefore, both studies conclude that official tourism organizations should better foster dialogue with potential and present visitors, as a way to deliver a more satisfactory experience, to get to know the tourists' interests and motivations and to inspire and attract new visitors through the comments and opinions of the people that have already visited the country. The subcategories in the modified 7Cs framework map for ecotourism draws attention to this, extending the shattered views with a more utterly profound indication of where to focus.

### 5.2.6 Commerce

The element of commerce is specifically considered in official tourism websites, as it functions as a promotive tool for a destination (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2013), with the need for a strategic approach towards its marketing initiatives (Kavoura, 2014). However, as Bath and Shah (2014) argue, tourism is mostly about providing information rather than a physical product or service until the tourists get to their chosen destination. The commerce is thus very information-centric, making the distribution of the product and services complicated in terms of how and where to provide purchase opportunities. This is confirmed by the result of this study, as the commerce ranked from non-existing to high in amount. No universal way of offering commerce is identified. Even though, Bhat and Shah (2014) further explain that e-commerce in tourism facilitates personalized travels and allow customers to have access to information through mobile phone whenever and wherever they may be. This could answer to the tourists' demand of easy-accessible information and use of communication technologies (Gorlevskaya, 2016).

Regardless, commerce is not widely concerned in general models. Park and Gretzel (2007) talk about commerce in terms of fulfillment, with the focus on the e-commerce process and experience. Fernández-Cavia et al. (2013) also examine the various booking systems provided at tourism websites, with the subcategories yes, partly or no. Same methods for evaluation are seen in the modified 7Cs framework map, compiling commonly agreed elements in the context of ecotourism.

### 5.2.7 Connection

With regard to connection, Fill (2005) argues that external links make it difficult for the user to return to the original page and should therefore not be used extensively. However, Bhat and Shah (2014) found that the linkage to commercial and public sites increases the number of guests to tourism websites. No other frameworks discuss connection in the context of tourism, but as it is seen to be important, this element in the modified 7Cs framework map is argued to provide useful understanding of the websites network. Furthermore, to strengthen the modified 7Cs framework map's position in the network of disunited models, it is the first website framework in the sector of tourism that includes the element of connection.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study investigates the elements utilized in online ecotourism communication, by conducting a multi-case study of four Scandinavian and four Mediterranean case countries, while utilizing the elements of Rayport and Jaworski (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map for website assessment. In general, Scandinavian countries talk more on their websites about ecotourism than the Mediterranean, with the exception of Denmark. The main finding of this study is that different cases vary widely in the ways they utilize different elements. An interesting finding is that the line between ecotourism and massive tourism communication is not always easy to be identified within different elements.

The empirical analysis of this research revealed that within the element of context, significant to be considered are: structure, navigation/menu, design, and engagement/inspiration. All examined countries have developed a good structure in their official tourism website. Among the examined cases several diverse navigation systems have been developed, making it harder or easier to track information about ecotourism. All case countries maintain a simple design in their tourism websites. The degree of engagement/inspiration varies widely within the different websites, as the minority of the cases are engaging to the user, while the majority are mostly only providing information to the visitor.

Considering the websites' content, the cases are seen to provide information about different subjects connected to ecotourism. These subjects include the following categories:

sustainability; nature; animals; activities; and unique activities. Furthermore, the analysis of the websites exposed different multimedia balance among the cases. In the majority of the countries, text, pictures and maps are the dominant content tools, while videos and interactive features appear only in the minority of the websites.

Regarding the third element, community, three major categories have been identified, namely: social media traditional; social media unique; and social media visibility/engagement. In all country cases, the website does not enable immediate user to user communication through an in-site community. However, all cases are connected to the mainstream social media platforms. A minority is also connected to more unique social media channels. Only one case country devotes a wide area of its website in widely displaying social media.

In terms of customization, the majority of the examined cases have not gone through the effort of customizing their websites on a cultural level, rather only on language translation. Only the minority provide customization on a cultural level, by also adapting the content on these country-specific version of the websites. No case country in this study offers customization on an individual level.

Considering the element of communication, two major categories were defined, each one including three subcategories. The first main category describes the one-way communication, with its subcategories including the newsletter, blog and website. The second main category describes the two-way communication, with its subcategories including the contact us, feedback and social media. The main medium of achieving one-way communication for all case countries is their website. Yet, the amount devoted to ecotourism communication varies widely between the eight cases. The most famous path for maintaining a two-way communication for NTOs are social media platforms.

The most common way of providing ecotourism booking or buying opportunities on the NTO's websites is by providing the visitors with links to external service providers. The different methods of providing commerce on the website results in a different range of commerce on the case countries. Some NTOs' have high focus on commerce while others have none or very little. The provided booking alternatives can also be labeled or marked as eco friendly or not, a system that is utilized only by two case countries.

The ways of connection between the official tourism websites and other sites are similar between the cases under examination. All case countries are linked to their social media sites. Most websites are also connected to third-party links, such as national parks, activity or outdoor organizers, TripAdvisor and different ecotourism partners.

This study has identified specific categories for online ecotourism communication

through websites. Based on the empirical analysis, the 7Cs framework map has evolved to become the 7Cs framework map for ecotourism. During this modification, some categories have remained untouched (Context, Customization), while others have been shrunk (Content, Community, Communication, Connection), or expanded (Commerce). Lastly, all elements have been elaborated to include specific to ecotourism subcategories.

## **6.1 Theoretical Implications**

This study has led to several theoretical implications in the area of tourism communications in the online environment. Since very little was found in the literature with regard to official online marketing communications in the area of tourism, and almost none in the area of ecotourism, this study has synchronized and complimented the limited knowledge and scanty developed models in the subject.

The distinct entailment of this research is the modification of Rayport and Jaworski's (2004, cited in Fill, 2005) 7Cs framework map. By providing an adapted framework map for the exploration and comprehension of ecotourism communication practices, this study offers initial answers in this unexplored research area. The development of detailed subcategories assists in the gaining of more insights within this specific context, while it stresses the significance of awareness of indirect communication mediums. As seen, this compounds previous literature and steeps the shared appreciation of online website communications. Furthermore, the 7Cs framework map for ecotourism amplifies the online communication tools developed for and utilized by tourism organizations, by offering a coordinated view and methodology for first time evaluations. Therefore, it provides the ability of extending existing knowledge of evaluating online communications of traditional tourism also in alternative areas of the industry, through the researchers affine to the subcategories.

## **6.2 Managerial Implications**

This study reinforces the recommendation for the use of specific developed models from NTOs to achieve quality explicit online communication of ecotourism, or other alternative forms of tourism. The results are of direct practical relevance, as they reveal that different cases vary widely in the ways they utilize different elements, while ecotourism versus conventional tourism communication is not always easy to be identified in different elements. The modified 7Cs framework map for ecotourism is useful for tourism websites evaluations, making ecotourism specific suggestions of what to review. Furthermore, it provides clear and hands on categories and subcategories, which can act as guidelines for

practitioners in the development of websites around or about ecotourism, as it is shedding light over indirect aspects of communication, which otherwise might be overlooked.

More specifically, this study's analysis and discussion resulted in a number of practical recommendations: Within the element of context, significant to be considered is the ease of navigation, so that users can easily track relevant information to their needs. Creating more engaging to the tourist websites should be on the list as well. To achieve that, within the element of content, videos could be used as a tool to inspire the traveler with the technique of storytelling. Moreover, they could display social media posts in a wider extent to give the feeling of engagement to their users as well as an improvement of their two-way communications. Furthermore, they should consider customization on a cultural level, as a predecessor to the upcoming personalization on an individual level. For the countries that choose to provide commerce opportunities, the provided booking alternatives can also be labeled as eco friendly or not, through a system that is currently underutilized.

### **6.3 Research Limitations**

Despite the fact that the research was conducted with the study's purpose constantly in mind, certain limitations were unavoidable. This was mainly due to the trade-off regarding the choice of methods. With a focus on the width of the phenomena, but still with the acknowledgment of meaning as something socially constructed, a qualitative multiple case study was seen to be most suitable to catch what had been communicated. However, this method created limitations in the restricted number of cases that could be analyzed and thus the results may not cover all potentially different ecotourism communication practices. Furthermore, as the analyzed cases were all within the range of Europe, initiatives in other areas, which may be more exposed to the negative consequences of mass tourism and thus more eager on conveying the tourists to sustainability, could thus not be caught.

Another limitation concerns the fact that most cases focused on the nature and its importance in ecotourism. Initiatives in regard to sustainable housing or employment were not found in any greater extent, with the exception of the Norwegian and Spanish way of ecolabelling in the element Commerce. As thus, this could not be included in the modification and the researchers are aware of this potential weakness.

The above mentioned limitations restrict the authors' ability to draw general statements regarding how official organizations communicate their ecotourism initiatives through websites. However, on an aggregated level the researchers believe that they have received substantial answers to explore and analyze the research question in a sound manner.

## **6.4 Future Research**

Despite this study's exploratory nature, it offers insight into how official organizations communicate their ecotourism initiatives through websites. The researchers have studied the phenomena with a focus on width, to capture ecotourism related communication practices. From this, however, four streams of further research needs arose. Firstly, the need to test the outcome of the ecotourism initiatives within the modified 7Cs framework map is seen, as it would provide further understanding of tourists' information search behavior and which elements and subcategories are the most efficient. The second question that was found during the research process answers to the depth of the phenomena, namely why the NTOs are doing as such. This is an important issue for future research, as it can evolve practical experience of ecotourism communication so far not abstracted and explained by theory. Third, to test the model or apply the same methodology in additional cases will make for more generalized conclusions and further confirm the validity of the modifications. Lastly, this study can serve as a base for future studies in other interesting areas of alternative tourism, such as agrotourism, active tourism, volunteering tourism etc. In this way, more specific online communication frameworks can be developed, complementing and revealing the diversity in this under-researched area of tourism.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Coding Templates

### Appendix 1.1: First Cycle Coding Template

Case Country Name	Case Country Website	
Holistic Coding_Date		
What kind of ecotourism do they communicate?	How do they communicate about it?	Notes
Provisional Coding_Date		
Context		
Content		
Community		
Customization		

**Communication**

**Commerce**

**Connection**

## Appendix 1.2: Second Cycle Coding Categories

Initial coding frame	Developed categories
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Structure</li> <li>*Navigation/Menu</li> <li>*Design</li> <li>*Engagement/Inspiration</li> </ul>
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Provided Information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sustainability</li> <li>-Nature (Forest, Mountains, Snow, Lakes, Sea etc.)</li> <li>-Animals (Moose, Reindeer, Bear etc.)</li> <li>-Activities (Ski, Snowboard, Trekking, Biking etc.)</li> <li>-Unique Activities (Routes of the olive tree, Caving, Surfing etc.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>*Ecotourism labels</li> <li>*Multimedia Balance</li> <li>-Majority: Pictures, Text, Toplists</li> <li>-Minority: Videos, Maps, Interactive Features</li> <li>*Amount and Size of Multimedia</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Social Media</li> <li>-Traditional</li> <li>-Unique</li> <li>-Visibility/Engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Customization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Language Translation</li> <li>*Cultural Adaptation</li> <li>*Individual Personalization</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*One-way</li> <li>-Newsletter</li> <li>-Blog</li> <li>-Website</li> <li>*Two-way</li> <li>-Contact us</li> <li>-Feedback</li> <li>-Social Media</li> </ul>
<b>Commerce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*None, Low, Medium, High</li> <li>*Ecolabeling</li> </ul>
<b>Connection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*External links</li> <li>-National Parks, Green Routes etc.</li> <li>-Activity/Outdoors distributors/organizers</li> <li>-Social Media</li> <li>-TripAdvisor</li> <li>-Partners</li> <li>-Phone Application</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 2: Tourism information on selected case countries**

### **2.1 Norway**

<https://www.visitnorway.com>

In 2015, Norway had 5,4 million international arrivals (The World Bank Group, 2017b). 1 of 15 is working within the tourism sector and in 2015 they had 31,6 million commercial guest nights at hotels, with an 8 % increase of foreign commercial nights during 2014-2015. Nature is a big part of the Norwegian image. Spectacular scenery, the chance of experience natural phenomenon, such as midnight sun and northern lights, and their good hiking opportunities are some examples that are characterizing the Norwegian tourism (Innovation Norway, 2015).

### **2.2 Sweden**

<https://visitsweden.com>

Tourism in Sweden is growing. In 2015, the country had 6,5 million international arrivals (The World Bank Group, 2017b) and there were almost 15,2 million foreign nights spend in Sweden, which is an increase of 10,4%. The foreign tourists then spent 112,6 million Swedish kr, which is an important part of the Swedish economy (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2016). VisitSweden.com has a strategic plan in which they aim to profile the country as ecofriendly and good for nature tourism, especially to markets such as India and China (Regeringskansliet, 2015). The current image is also strongly associated with beautiful, untouched nature, freedom and sustainability (Visit Sweden, 2016).

### **2.3 Finland**

<http://www.visitfinland.com>

During 2015, Finland had 2,6 million international arrivals (The World Bank Group, 2017b). Tourism is a business field that has recently grown to be more and more important for Finland and the number of international tourists has doubled during the past 15 years. In 2016, there were 5,8 million foreign overnight stays, which provides employment for 140,000 people, which is 5,5% of all employed people. Russia is the most important market (Ministry

of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, n.d.).

## 2.4 Denmark

<http://www.visitdenmark.com>

During 2015, Denmark had 10,4 million international arrivals (The World Bank Group, 2017b). Tourism is important for the Danish economy, with a turnover close to 91,9 bn DKK representing 3,6% of the Danish export. The number of foreign commercial bed nights are 23,2 million and continuously growing. Within the tourism field, coast and countryside tourism has the biggest turnover rate by business sector, and 75% of the tourists interested in this field names the coast, sea and beaches as a reason to visit Denmark. 70% also mentions the nature and 62% names the importance of Denmark being clean and environmentally friendly. 54% of the tourists interested in city tourism also agrees on the later, highlighting its importance. Germany is the biggest target market (Visit Denmark, 2015).

## 2.5 Greece

<http://www.visitgreece.gr>

During 2015, Greece had almost 23,6 million non-Greek arrivals, making tourism a big and important part of the country's economy (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2017; The World Bank Group, 2017b). Greece is famous for its beautiful nature and many islands. The sea is the main attraction for several tourists, even though the country's nature also consists of mountains with great potential for ecotourism (Greekka, 2017).

## 2.6 Italy

<http://www.italia.it>

During 2015, Italy had 50,7 million international arrivals (The World Bank Group, 2017b) and the number of nights spent had increased by 2,7 percent, compared to the previous year (Istat, 2016). The foreign tourism stands for 5% of the Italian import economy (The World Bank Group, 2017a). Italy is mainly famous for its culture, history and beautiful art, but there is a growing focus on ecotourism (Serafino, 2016). Non-profit organizations are aiming to spread information about it, to improve the tourism experience and sustainability in the country (Manucka, 2011).

## 2.7 Spain

<http://www.spain.info>

During 2015, Spain had 68,2 million international arrivals (The World Bank Group, 2017b), with an increase of 6,1% in 2017. The United Kingdom, Germany and France stands for the biggest markets and the Canary Islands are the main destination, with 26,2% of the total arrivals (Trading Economics, 2017). Spain emphasizes on protection of nature areas and the developing of sustainable attractions, and has several service providers certified by the EUROPARK Federation (The EUROPARK Federation, 2017) and UNWTO (UNWTO, 2016b).

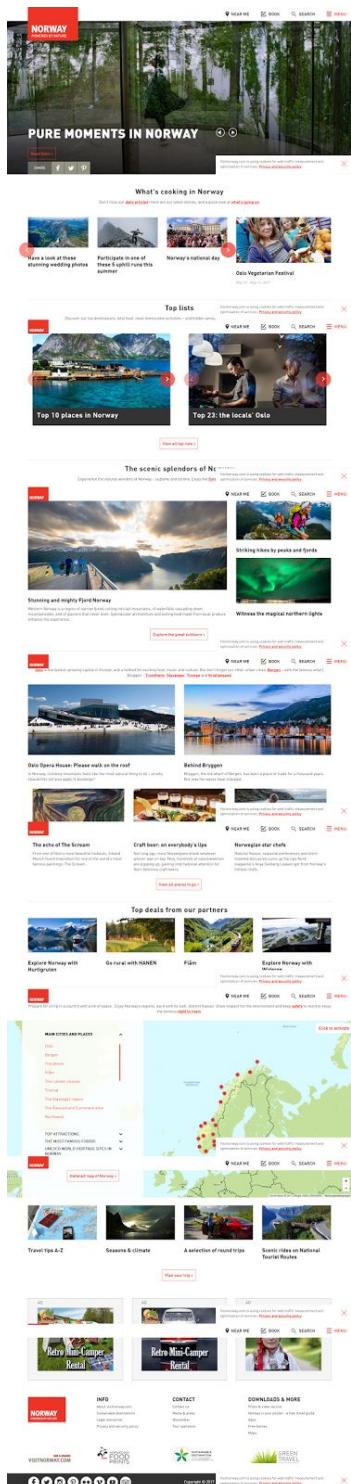
## 2.8 Portugal

<https://www.visitportugal.com>

During 2015, Portugal had 9,9 million international arrivals (The World Bank Group, 2017b), with an increase of 4,4% of the tourist arrivals. The revenue has increased with 9,3% and tourism expenditure had a growth of 8,9%. Visiting friends answers to the biggest reason why tourists visit the country (44,8%), while “Leisure, recreational or holiday” was the second biggest with 44,2%. Spain, France and Germany stand for the biggest markets (Estatística Oficiais, 2016).

# Appendix 3: Indicative Examples of NTOs websites

## 3.1 Homepage, Norway



## 3.2 Homepage, Sweden

The screenshot displays the official website for Visit Sweden, featuring a large banner image of a coastal landscape with the text "Welcome to Sweden". Below the banner, there's a section titled "Plan your holiday to Sweden" with three categories: "Destinations", "Nature and outdoors", and "Culture, heritage & arts". A "SHOW MORE" button with an arrow points to additional content. The next section, "Northern Lights - The greatest light show on earth", includes a sub-section about "Hiking" with a "Launch Experience" button. Following this are sections for "Flams from Sweden", "Culture in Gothenburg", and "Canoing & Kayaking". A "Summerhouse" section follows, featuring a red wooden house in a forest setting with a "Launch Experience" button. Below this is a "Some tips" section with four cards: "The Travel Dream Transformer", "West Coast & Islands", "Gotland, Sweden's largest island", and "Malmö and The Bridge". The final section at the bottom is "Meet the King of the Forest", featuring a moose silhouette and a "Launch Experience" button. The footer contains links for "Press", "Corporate", "Travel Trade", and "Brochures", along with the "Sweden Sverige" logo and copyright information.

### 3.3 Homepage, Finland

The VisitFinland.com homepage is a dynamic travel guide featuring several distinct sections:

- Top Pick: Strange Nature Sites to Explore in Finland**: A large banner image showing a massive rock formation in a forest, with the text "TOP PICKS STRANGE NATURE SITES TO EXPLORE IN FINLAND". Below the banner are six smaller thumbnail images: "Helsinki Weekend with Iltava", "SNOWY METROPOLIS", "ALAND: A SPECIAL PIECE OF FINLAND", "LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN", "ENCHANTING PLACES", and "THE FISHING NATION EXPERIENCE".
- What's Hot**: A section titled "What's Hot" with the subtext "These events ready for the great debate!". It includes three video thumbnails: "CAMPING IN THE FINNISH ARCHIPELAGO", "JOIN THE FINNS IN THE SAUNA", and "10 MIN FOR COFFEE LIFE".
- Destinations**: A grid of images showing various landscapes and experiences, including birch trees, northern lights, and a sunset over water.
- Experiences**: A banner titled "EXPERIENCES RELAX" showing a person sitting by a lake at sunset. Below it is another banner for "DESTINATIONS LAPLAND" featuring snowy forests.
- Social Media and Footer**: A section titled "YOU CAN ALSO FIND US HERE:" with links to Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Facebook, Viberate, and Weibo. The footer contains a navigation menu with links to Home, Travel Info, About Finland, Destinations, Seasons, Experiences, My Trip, and English, along with a copyright notice: "© 2017 VisitFinland.com".

## 3.4 Homepage, Denmark

The VisitDenmark homepage features a large banner image of a harbor town with a church steeple. Below the banner, the main heading is "Welcome to Denmark". A sub-headline reads: "You've made it to the official travel site for Denmark, Scandinavia's greatest little kingdom!" Navigation links include "VisitDenmark", "THINGS TO DO", "DESTINATIONS", "ACCOMMODATION", and "PLAN YOUR TRIP". A search bar is at the top right.

**Looking for Unique Things to Do?**  
Get inspiration for things to do in one of the world's happiest countries, then come and be a part of it!  
» Famous sights & attractions   » Cultural activities & events   » Popular places to go

**7 reasons why you should visit Denmark in 2017**  
There's a lot happening in Denmark this summer! Here are 7 reasons why...

**How to get more hype in your life**  
Want to make more noise together? Check out these 5 things...

**RECOMMENDED: 20 beautiful places for your bucket list**  
Top 20 Natural Beauty Spots

**Find your happy place in Denmark!**  
Did you know that the DreamWorks Trolls come from Denmark? The hair-raising companions of your childhood are back. Follow their story

**Go wild! Top 20 unique things to do**  
Try any of those weird and wonderful things to do in Denmark and see Scandinavia's smallest kingdom from a whole new perspective

**Copenhagen Illustrations: Nikita Singh**  
As part of her travels, Canadian engineer and designer Nikita Singh illustrates her experiences in her notebook. See her Copenhagen haul!

**Events Worth Traveling For**  
From Roskilde Festival to chilly Winter Swimming, get a taste of Denmark's biggest and most unusual events.  
» See event calendar

**See the exciting events happening in Denmark in 2017**  
Denmark's biggest events in 2017

**Nationals events this year in the European Capital of Culture 2017**  
Aarhus2017 highlights

**Join other music lovers at the world-famous festival Roskilde**  
See Roskilde's 2017 lineup

**Other sites**  
Press  
Trade  
Business Events

**Helpful links**  
Contact  
Feedback  
A-Z  
Disclaimer

**Join the conversation**  
Facebook  
Twitter  
Instagram  
YouTube

VisitDenmark - The official tourism site of Denmark ©

## 3.5 Homepage, Spain

The screenshot shows the homepage of Spain's official tourism portal. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for NEWSLETTER, CONTACT, ABOUT US, BROCHURES, SELECT COUNTRY (International (English)), and a search bar. A large banner features a scenic coastal view with the text "Spain is what you want. Spain is what you need" and "Spain #SummerInSpain". Below the banner, there are several sections:

- HIGHLIGHTS:** "Costa Brava, the quintessential Mediterranean" featuring a photo of a boat in a bay.
- ACTIVITIES:** "Plan and book your trip" featuring a photo of people hiking.
- COMING TO SPAIN? TRAVEL TIPS:** Includes a weather forecast for Gijón (17° / 12°).
- WHERE TO GO? INTERACTIVE MAP:** An interactive map showing the weather in Spain.
- ARE YOU INTERESTED?** "300 reasons for coming back" featuring a photo of a sunflower field.
- DON'T MISS:**
  - "Let's go out for tapas!" featuring a photo of tapas.
  - "Explore Las Palmas de Gran Canaria" featuring a photo of a city skyline.
  - "It's Festa time in Cadiz" featuring a photo of a crowd.
  - "Summer is for dancing" featuring a photo of a concert.
  - "Do you feel like relaxing?" featuring a photo of a person getting a massage.
  - "The charm of a coastal village" featuring a photo of a harbor.
- CULTURAL CALENDAR:** "Picasso. Portraits" featuring a photo of a portrait painting.
- STUDY IN SPAIN:** "Exuberant fun and equestrian culture are the unique features of the Fiestas in Jerez, Cádiz." (13 to 20 May).
- MOST POPULAR SEARCHES:** Cities, towns, and villages; calendar of events; holidays; seaside destinations; art; Toledo; Valencia; Bilbao; nature; Seville.

At the bottom, there is a footer with links for WEB MAP, LEGAL NOTICE, ACCESSIBILITY, CONSENT AND USE OF THE INFORMATION, USE OF COOKIES, TERMS AND CONDITIONS, NEWSLETTER, ABOUT US, BROCHURES, MEETINGS AND INCENTIVE TRIPS, and a copyright notice: "All rights reserved. Turismo de España © 2017". There are also social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, along with logos for FEDER and the European Union.

## 3.6 Homepage, Italy

The screenshots illustrate the layout and content of the official Italian tourism website:

- Top Navigation:** The header features the "ITALIA" logo, social media links (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn), a search bar, and a language selector (EN).
- Travel Ideas Section:**
  - Art Cities:** Perugia, Umbria (image of Palazzo dei Priori).
  - Gastronomy:** Pesto genovese (image of pesto sauce).
  - Travel Ideas:** Rome (View of the Colosseum), Ravenna (Basilica di San Vitale).
  - Discover Italy:** Apulia (Lecce, Piazza Sant'Oronzo), Lombardy (Milan, Cathedral), Campania (Naples, Castel dell'Ovo).
- News Section:** Current news feed.
- Social Media Integration:** Links to Pinterest, YouTube, Facebook, and Google+.
- Newsletter:** Form to enter email address and subscribe button.
- High-speed Trains:** Image of two high-speed trains.
- Museums:** Buy your tickets online.
- Footer:** Logos for ANSA, ARERA, Farnesina, Automobile Club d'Italia, ASSOTURISMO, CONCERTEGNA, and CONFEDERAZIONE CONFINDUSTRIA. Social media links for YouTube, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
- Footer Links:** Discover Italy, Travel Ideas, News, Video, Info, Maps, and a footer menu with links to: Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Emilia Romagna, Marche, Molise, Puglia, Sicily, Toscana, Trentino Alto Adige, Liguria, Lombardy, The Marches, Molise, Piedmont, Apulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Tuscany, Veneto; TRAVEL IDEAS: The Sea, The Mountains, Lakes, Nature and Wildlife, Art and History, Culture and Entertainment, Art Cities, Business and Study, Religion and Spirituality, UNESCO World Heritage, Cities, Gastronomy, Sports and Wellness, Ways to Travel, Made in Italy; MEDIA: Virtual Tours, Video; USEFUL INFORMATION: High speed trains, Museums - Buy your tickets online, Mobile Apps, Tourist Cards, The climate in Italy, Embassies, How to move, Documents, Rules to drive in Italy, Safety, Travel information, Accessibility, Tips for tourists, Rights for tourists; PRESS: Contacts, COLOPHON, Contact us, Newsletter registration, Sitemap, Legal Information, Privacy, Accessibility, Credits.

## 3.7 Homepage, Greece

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**visitgreece.gr - highlights**

- UNESCO World Heritage Sites**  
Explore the treasures  
During your stay in Greece explore the inspiring, majestic and unique nature over the centuries. Let yourselves be seduced by discovering 18 unique monuments and sites.  
[Read more...](#)
- Easter in Greece**  
An Unforgettable Experience  
Dive into an overwhelming spiritual atmosphere while participating in sacred rituals, ancient—old traditions and joyful celebrations.  
[Worth living it!](#)
- Top 10 Greece**  
Download before your trip  
Here is a collection of our TOP 10 guides to assist you during your trip. Find our useful travel tips and rest assured you won't miss a thing while visiting different destinations in Greece!  
[Download here...](#)
- Top & Greek Nature**  
A Breathtaking Landscape  
Virgin forests, mountains and canyons, beautiful landscapes, unique environments and much more make up the unique landscape of Greece. The choice is yours...  
[Read more...](#)
- Flavours of Spring**  
Let's Set the Table  
Fresh vegetables and aromatic herbs, raw or cooked, are the main ingredients for these mouthwatering recipes. Savour payable dishes "topped" with spring's aromas.  
[Take your pick...](#)

**Upcoming events**

- 8th Poseidon Athens Half Marathon**  
The 8th International Poseidon Athens Half Marathon, the great athletic challenge to raise awareness regarding health and obesity, will be held on Sunday, April 23, 2017.  
[Read more...](#)
- World Senior Sport for All**  
The European Sports for All Association and the Municipality of Varkiza Voula-Vouliagmeni bring "Greek the Senior Sport for All Games 2017", from 9 to 11 June 2017.  
[Read more...](#)
- Women of Passion Women of Greece**  
The Railway Carriage "Women of the Road" presents the theatrical performance in the framework of "Passion: Women of the Road". The performance will start on May 11, 2016.  
[Read more...](#)

**Quick Links »**

- Where to go
- Special Features
- Travel Information
- Things to See & do

Where to go

- Main Cities
- Zante
- Thessaloniki
- Crete
- Cyclades
- Ionian Islands
- Dodecanese
- Peloponnese

Special Features

- ebook
- Downloads
- Destinations
- Maps
- Newsletter
- Top 10 Greece

Travel Information

- Before you Travel
- Accommodation
- Getting there
- Weather
- Travel tips

Things to See & do

- Museums
- Archaeological sites
- Natural tourism
- Sailing
- Wellness
- Events
- Gastronomy

<sup>1</sup> VisitGreece.gr is the official tourism web site for Greece, run by the Greek National Tourism Organisation, where you'll find information on the main tourist destinations, such as cities, beaches, as well as activities, events and much more!

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## 3.8 Homepage, Portugal

The screenshot displays the visitPortugal homepage with several regional landing pages integrated:

- Douro:** A sailboat on the Douro River at sunset. Text overlay: "It was many years ago that Andrew and Paul planned to go up the Douro. Port Wine was the invitation."
- Algarve:** A colorful logo with the text "365 ALGARVE every day counts". Below it: "Visit the Algarve and do not miss the event programme that brings life to the region throughout the year. Every day counts".
- Explore Portugal:** A grid of seasonal and regional highlights: Spring holiday in Portugal, Easter in Portugal, Living Nature in Madeira, Playing golf near Lisbon, Obidos, Braga - Accessible Tour.
- Footer:** Newsletter sign-up, Remember & Share options, VisitPortugal Travel Guide (available on iOS, Windows, and Android), and social media links for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

## 3.9 Sustainable links, Norway



### INFO

Om webbplatsen  
Hållbarhet  
Juridiska bestämmelser  
Sekretesspolicy

### KONTAKT

Nyhetsbrev  
Kontakta oss  
Media och press  
Resebransch (engelska)

### NEDLADDNINGAR & ANNAT

Foto och video  
Appar  
Onlinespel  
Kartor



## 3.10 Get Outdoors, Finland

The screenshots illustrate various sections of the VisitFinland.com website:

- Home page:** Features a large image of a forest with the text "EUROPE'S LAST TRUE WILDERNESS". Below it, a person is riding a bicycle.
- Travel Info:** Shows a map of Finland with a purple hatched area indicating the location of the wilderness.
- Explore Outdoors products at My Stay:** Displays images of a bird, a bear, and a person in a forest.
- Kayaking & Canoeing:** Shows a person in a kayak on a lake.
- All articles:** A grid of thumbnail images with titles like "INTER THE WILD BY BIKE", "FIVE DAYS HIKING IN LAPLAND", and "STRANGE NATURE SITES TO EXPLORE IN FINLAND".
- Footer:** Includes links for "Name", "Travel Info", "About Finland", "Destinations", "Seasons", "Experiences", "My Stay", "English", and "Svenska".

## 3.11 20 Most Beautiful Places in Denmark, Denmark

The screenshot shows a grid of 20 cards, each representing a beautiful place in Denmark. Each card includes a small image, the name of the place, a brief description, and a 'Read more' link.

- Rønnevig Mølle**: A lighthouse on the west coast of the island of Bornholm.
- Skagen**: The northern tip of Denmark, known for its white houses and sandy beach.
- Rutkær Knob (Rutkær Knude)**: A hill located 30 meters above sea level in Rømø.
- White Cliffs of Moen (Møns Klint)**: One of the most visited places in Denmark.
- Mols Bjerge National Park**: A park with rugged and varied landscapes.
- Himmerlands Fjord Park (Himmerland)**: Denmark's oldest national park.
- Fur Island, Limfjorden**: A small island in the Limfjorden.
- Rønne Forest (Rønne Skov)**: Denmark's second largest forest.
- Morning Bay (Jærmerebugten)**: A bay with a unique landscape.
- The Wadden Sea (Vadehavet)**: A nature reserve with over 30 islands.
- The Beach Forest Anticline**: A coastal area with many islands.
- North Skåne and The Hammer**: A coastal area with limestone cliffs.
- Hvide Sande**: A coastal area with white sand and red rocks.
- Lille Vildmose**: A wetland area with large reed beds.
- Tyrstrup-Borup Lakes**: A nature reserve with lakes.
- The Sjælsøshavet Archipelago**: An archipelago with many small islands.
- Ertvoldene**: A small archipelago located east of Bornholm.

At the bottom of the page, there are links for 'VisitDenmark', 'THINGS TO DO', 'DESTINATIONS', 'ACCOMMODATION', 'PLAN YOUR TRIP', and social media icons.

## 3.12 The routes of the olive tree, Greece

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The routes of the olive tree

Tweet 3 | Print 4 | Like 36

"The Routes of the Olive Tree" is a cultural travelogue that was established through the initiative of the Hellenic Chamber of Commerce in 1999. It was continued with routes to 22 Mediterranean and European olive oil-producing countries, while it was recognized as a World Cultural Route. It should be noted that "The Routes of the Olive Tree" was even able to open the closed Algerian-Morocco border.



It is a route that symbolically begins every year from Nestor's Palace in Ancient Pylos, where clay tablets of Linear B script was discovered, with the biogram of the olive tree, and continues by road around the Mediterranean to draw closer the people of the Mediterranean – the people of the olive tree. The olive tree that embraces them, and has fed them for centuries and today opens new communication links through the trials of its own culture and its own history. This is an endeavor to promote the culture of the olive tree and the timeless value of olive oil-based products for mankind internationally through tourism and other activities inspired by the spirit of the olive tree and future, which plans to create viable conditions for the development of the olive-oil producing regions.

"The Routes of the Olive Tree" was recognized by UNESCO in 2003 as the "2nd Cultural Route in the World" and by the Council of Europe in 2005 as the "Great European Cultural Route".

You can find more details in the following website: [www.olivetreeroute.gr](http://www.olivetreeroute.gr).

**Related Links**

- Cruises
- Cruising is the ideal way to explore the outstanding Greek islands! >
- Nature
- Touring in greek nature and discovering its beauties. >
- Vacations
- An ideal suggestion to discover isolated magnificent beaches. >

**Quick links »**

- Where to go
- Greek Islands
- Main Cities
- Athens
- Thessaloniki
- Crete
- Cyclades
- Ionian Islands
- Dodecanese
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- Top 10 Greece

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- Before you Travel
- Accommodation
- General Info
- Weather
- Travel tips

**Things to See & do**

- Museums
- Archaeological sites
- Religious tourism
- Sailing
- Wellness
- Touring
- Gastronomy

Visitgreece.gr is the official tourism web site for Greece, run by the Greek National Tourism Organisation, where you'll find information on the main tourist destinations, such as cities, beaches, as well as activities, events and much more!

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## 3.13 Sun and Sea, Portugal

The screenshot displays the visitPortugal website's 'Sun and Sea' page. At the top, the visitPortugal logo is on the left, followed by a weather forecast for Santarém (32°C/16°C). To the right are links for 'CONTACT US', 'LANGUAGE' (set to English), and 'SHARE'. The main navigation bar includes 'ALL ABOUT PORTUGAL', 'LEARN ABOUT', 'REGIONS', 'WHAT TO DO?', 'LOOKING FOR...?', 'REMEMBER & SHARE', and search functions.

The main content area features a large image of a beach at Porto de Mós. Below it, a circular graphic for the '100th Anniversary of the Apparitions of Fátima' (1917-2017) is displayed. A sidebar titled 'Events' shows this graphic. Another sidebar titled 'Explore' contains a map of Portugal with red lines indicating routes or locations.

Below the main image, there are three smaller images with captions: 'Porto de Mós', 'Praia dos Salgados', and 'Praia de Carcavelos'. A 'SEARCH' bar is located above these images, along with an 'ADVANCED SEARCH' link.

A section titled 'Winter Sun' discusses the pleasant winter season in Portugal. Another section, 'The best beaches', highlights the country's long coastline and natural beauty. A third section, 'Best of Algarve', focuses on the Algarve region's climate and beaches.

At the bottom of the page, there is a navigation bar with links for 'ALL ABOUT PORTUGAL', 'LEARN ABOUT', 'REGIONS', 'WHAT TO DO?', 'LOOKING FOR...?', 'REMEMBER & SHARE', and search functions. On the right side, there is a 'LIVE CHAT' button.

### 3.14 Humorous writing, Sweden



Welcome to the Top 10 eco-tourism attractions in Sweden. Well, there are actually 14 on this list, and it is growing, but who cares? They represent the best eco-tourism attractions in the country, minimizing their, and your, impact on the environment.

### 3.15 Take only pictures, Norway

#### **Take only pictures and keep only memories**

Norway is a country of outstanding natural beauty, with dramatic waterfalls, crystal clear fjords, majestic mountains, and spectacular glaciers. Preserving this landscape, its communities, and their way of life is essential for locals and visitors alike.

Norwegian philosophy is very much that conservation is everyone's responsibility. Enjoying nature and the outdoors is considered a national pastime, and this is reflected in our attitude towards the preservation and use of the wilderness.

In practical terms, this means that even though large parts of mainland Norway consists of national parks and other protected areas, Norway's right of access makes sure you can enjoy nature more or less as you wish – even in these sensitive and vulnerable regions.

Originally an age-old tradition based on sustainable principles, long before anybody had ever heard the term, this has since been set down in law. Even today, it is still based on a long-term respect for nature and wilderness that is prevalent in Norway.

Today, knowledge of ecology and nature is much greater than it once was, but so is the wear and tear on both the landscape and the people. In order to protect both nature and community, landscape and businesses, we try to take the long view: What we enjoy experiencing today will be even more enjoyable to future generations, and it's our job to make sure it's still there when their turn comes.

The United Nations has designated 2017 as the International year of Sustainable Tourism and Development. The aim is to raise awareness of the contribution sustainable tourism makes on decision makers and the public, and also to mobilize all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change. Read more about [the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development](#).



[tourism4development2017.org](http://tourism4development2017.org)

## 3.16 Ecolabels in Norway, Norway

### A guide to environmental certifications in Norway

Make sure your holiday has the smallest footprint possible by looking for these labels and logos.

Ecotourism Norway



This national certification is awarded to businesses and operators that hold a high international level in ecotourism. Over 100 strict criteria on environmental performance, host-role, local community integration and purchasing must be met and often improved. The certificate is renewed every three years.

The ecolabel Nordic Swan



More than 5000 products in Norway are certified with Nordic Swan, which indicates that they satisfy strict demands within energy efficiency, materials, and chemicals, all the way from raw materials to end product and waste management.

Eco-Lighthouse



The Eco-Lighthouse certification places demands on energy use, waste disposal, transportation, procurement and work environment. Over 5000 businesses in Norway are certified with this, which must be renewed every three years.

ISO 14001



ISO 14001 is given to enterprises that have a high-quality environmental managing system for organizational performance.

The Green Key



Global ecolabel, recognized by GSTC, for hotels, small accommodations, campsites and attractions. Certified businesses must meet strict criteria within among others the areas of waste, energy, water, procurement, green areas, CSR and staff involvement. The high standards are maintained through annual certificate renewal, rigorous application process and documentation and frequent audits.

Blue flag



Global, prestigious award based on a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety-related and access related criteria to be met and maintained, aimed at beaches and marinas. More than 4100 sites in 49 countries are awarded with the Blue Flag.

## 3.17 Ecotourism in Spain, Spain

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Ecotourism in Spain website. At the top left is a navigation bar with a house icon and "HOME". To the right is a search bar with a smiley face icon labeled "ACTIVITIES" and a placeholder "Search for and find activities you're interested in". Below the search bar are dropdown menus for "PROVINCE/ISLAND" (set to "See all") and "CATEGORY" (set to "See all"). A large orange "SEARCH" button is located below these. On the left, there's a banner for "Ecotourism in Spain" featuring a video thumbnail of a forest with a tower and the text "Ecoturismo y turismo geológico: 13 destinos para reencontrarte con la naturaleza". To the right, there are sections for "COMING TO SPAIN? TRAVEL TIPS" (with an airplane icon), "WHERE TO GO? INTERACTIVE MAP" (with a map icon), and "THE WEATHER".

## 3.18 Top 5 Greek Nature, Greece

**Top 5 Greek nature:**

**Enjoy the beauties of a breathtaking landscape**

Virgin forests, mountains and canyons, unique landscapes, breathtaking lakes, rivers, lagoons, environmental parks and museums make up the unique landscape of Greece. In spring, when nature "revives", anything you may have seen in Greece is now different. We've put together a top 5 of spring activities in the heart of the Greek nature.

**Crossing Vouraikas Gorge aboard Oderotroto, the rack railway**

Vouraikos gorge is the pride and joy of Achaea district, holding a place among the top Greek natural sights, and the best reason for visiting it is spring. Board the rack railway from Oderotroto and enjoy the 22-km fascinating ride to Kalavryta town at a 750-meter elevation above sea level - it is said to be one of the most spectacular journeys by train across Europe.

The stunning view to the cliffs, the successive ravines and the amazing natural surroundings will take your breath away, cascading waterfalls, caves with stalactites and stalagmites, dense forests, lush vegetation and rare plant species create a picture of great beauty. At first you will pass by large olive and olive groves. Then the scenery changes completely as you go past lawns and red precipitous mountainous eroded by the continuous flow of water. While altitude increases, the loaded rail engages with a cogwheel to help the train up the steep slopes. At springtime, the station of Zaximoussa looks surreal as the crystal-clear waters and the fogs, upward plane trees lining the river banks make up a picture-perfect landscape.

**Wine routes of Halkidiki**

Explore the gorgeous region of **Halkidiki**, walk through its wine routes and visit the area's renowned wineries next to endless stretches of vineyards! They are all to be found on the west part of Halkidiki, mostly in the areas of Kallithea, Sithonia, Mount Athos (on the north-slopes of Mt. Chalkeonatas). In Aridaia, vineyards as well as in the areas of Trigila and Paralia. Taste the excellent local **wines**, or the localities they are produced, accompanied by mouth-watering traditional local dishes.

Start your long at the vineyards in **Agius Pavlos**, an area where viticulture is the leading activity. Make sure you pay a visit to **Monastiraki** (area), where the "Archaeological Site of Petralona", the oldest human skeleton in Europe was discovered. Continue your journeys through the **vineyards** side of **Sithonia**, where the verdant slopes of Mt. Melas meet the waters of **Toroneos Gulf**. The **vineyard** on the "Slopes of Mt. Athos" is one of the largest in Europe and a small organic viticultural unit, head towards the mountainous areas and visit **Amfissa**, one of Halkidiki's most picturesque villages, then you will continue to **Choreftida** and end your journey at **Mt. Athos**.

Wine lovers can sample the local fruit of the vine in the vineyards of Halkidiki, among them stand out the **PDO Halkidiki** (Protected Geographical Indication), the **PDO Slopes of Mt. Athos**, the **PDO Sithonia** wines and the **PDO Mount Athos**. The climate is ideal for cultivating top quality Greek varieties such as Assyrtiko, Athiri, Malagousia and Roditis, of which excellent white wines are produced. Limnio, a renowned local red wine comes from a native variety, already mentioned in the writings of Aristotle.

**Lake Kerkini**

Lake Kerkini is a **wetland** in Northern Greece, high in the list of the most important ones in Europe and is considered as one of the **most important bird protection areas**.

**connect and experience**

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**explore Greece by interest**

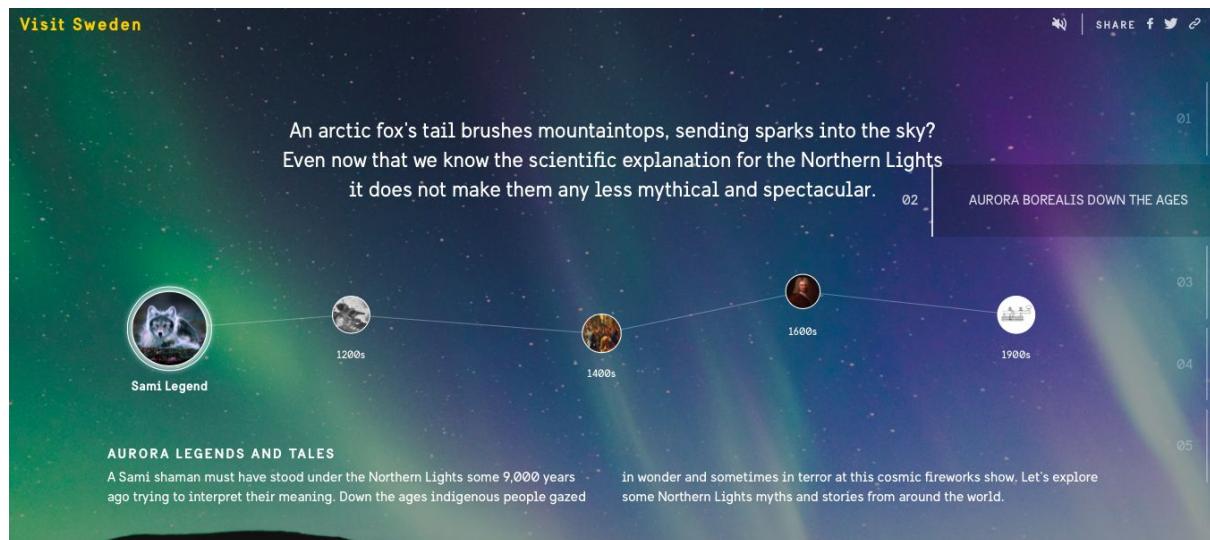
Culture	Leisure
Traveling	Gastronomy
Activities	Religious
Heritage	City Break

**useful info**

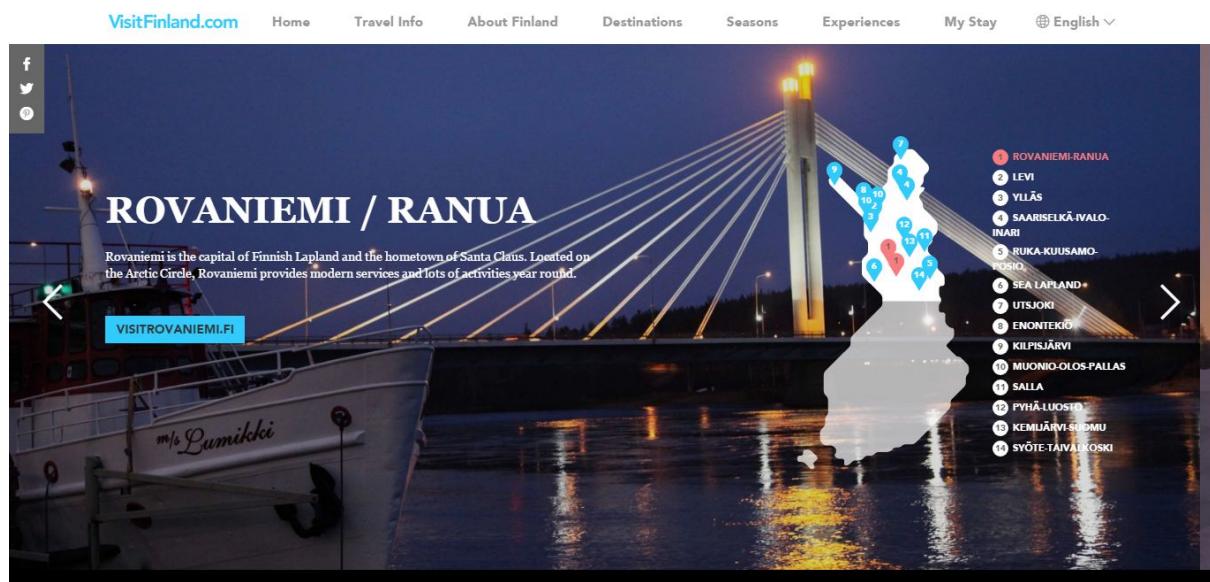
Sea Routes	SLI & B. Services
Traveling in Greece	Health & Safety
Passports & Visas	Weather
Travel Time	Calendar

**explore Greece by region**

### 3.19 The Northern Lights Experience, Sweden



### 3.20 Interactive map, Finland



### 3.21 Social Media, Italy

## 3.22 German version, Sweden

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Visit Sweden Schwedens offizielle Webseite für Tourismus und Reiseinformationsseiten

Erfahrungsberichte Registrieren Über Schweden Unterkünfte in Schweden Entdecken

Deutschland Suchen



**Willkommen in Schweden**

Hier beginnt Ihr Schweden-Urlaub und seine Planung



Mehr zeigen →

Das können Sie in Schweden erleben



Schwedens erstes Elchhotel  
Elchfans können in Schweden schon länger unter mehreren Elchparks schlafen. Neu und einzigartig sind die (noch) zwei Elchhotels auf dem Hof.

Erleben Sie die Natur Schwedens  
Erlernen Sie die schwedische Natur in drei kurzen Filmen durch Menschen, die in der Natur leben, arbeiten und sie bewahren.

Ein Land wie gemacht zum Wandern  
Schweden ist nicht nur wegen des landschaftlich schönen und atemberaubend unterschiedlichen Landes dies.

Stockholmer Sternekoch goes Veggie  
Werke des renommierten Sternekochs wie Mattias Dahlberg ein hochpreisiges, etabliertes Gourmetrestaurant mit zwei

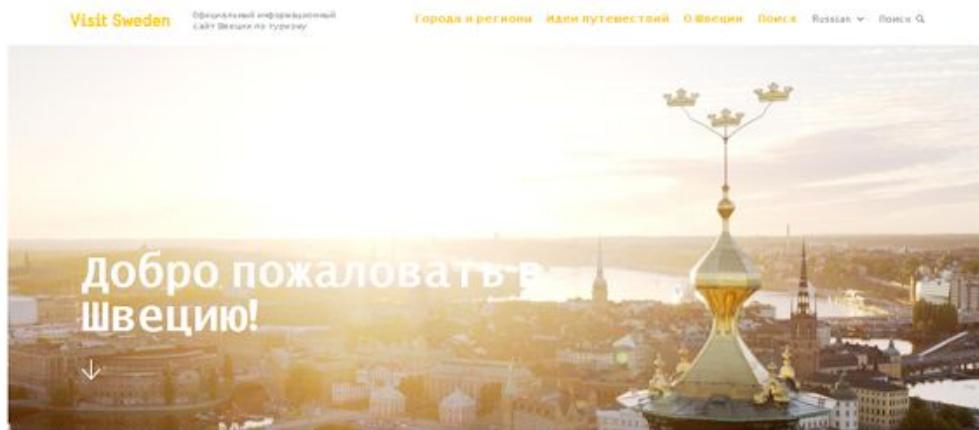


Treffen Sie den König des Waldes

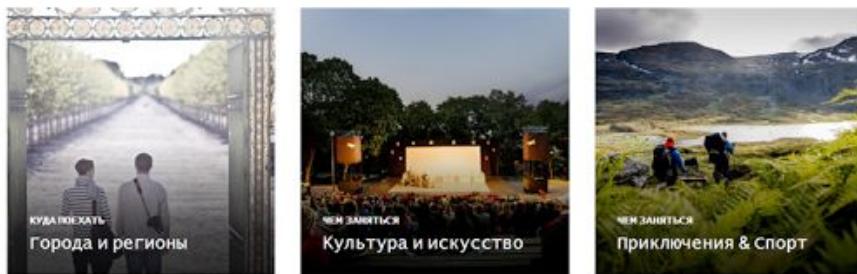
Treten Sie näher und schließen Sie Freundschaft:

ÖFFNEN →

## 3.23 Russian version, Sweden

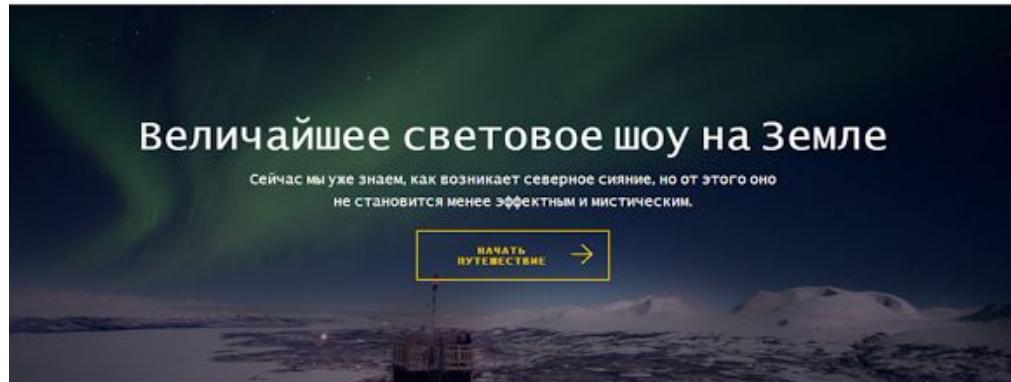
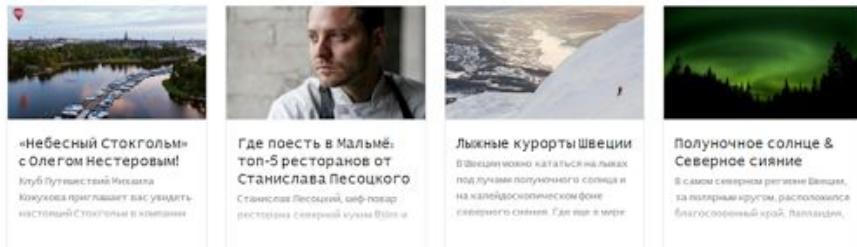


Спланируйте свое путешествие в Швецию



→

Чем заняться



## 3.24 German version, Denmark

The screenshot shows the VisitDenmark homepage in German. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'AKTIVURLAUB', 'IDEEN', 'UNTERKÜNFTE', 'REGIONEN', 'REISEPLANUNG', a language selector set to 'Deutschland', and a search icon.

The main content area features a large photo of a young girl in a red and white checkered dress running on a grassy hill. Overlaid on the photo is a blue Facebook logo with a thumbs-up icon. Below the photo, there's a section titled 'Dänemark-Fan auf Facebook werden' with a subtext encouraging users to follow them on Facebook for photos, videos, and promotions.

To the right, there's a 'Online-Buchung' (Booking) form with dropdown menus for location ('z.B. Stadt oder Region'), duration ('7 Nächte (1 Woche)'), date ('Datum wählen'), number of people ('4 Personen'), and pet status ('Haustier nicht wichtig'). A red 'SUCHEN' (Search) button is at the bottom of the form.

On the far right, there's a sidebar for signing up for the 'Dänemark-Newsletter' with fields for 'E-Mail\*', 'Vorname\*', 'Nachname\*', 'Country\*' (set to 'Deutschland'), and checkboxes for 'Schweiz', 'Österreich', 'Städtereise', and 'Paarurlaub'.

## 3.25 Chinese version, Italy

The screenshot shows the VisitItaly website in Chinese. The top navigation bar includes links for '首页', '主题旅游', '世界遗产', '目的地', '活动', '世博会', '实用信息', '商圈', '联系我们', and '总部网址'.

The main banner features a large image of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Below the banner is a map of Italy with color-coded regions and a link to 'Click to enable Adobe Flash Player'.

The page is divided into several sections:

- 意大利国家旅游局**: Includes a brief introduction about the Italian National Tourism Board (ENIT), its history (founded in 1919), and its headquarters in Rome. It also mentions the ENIT's presence in 21 countries and its global network of 1,200 partners.
- 世界文化遗产**: Shows a photo of a traditional building and a brief description of Italy's rich cultural heritage.
- 目的地**: Shows a photo of a mountain landscape and a brief description of Italy's 20 regions.
- 活动**: Shows a photo of a sunset over water and a brief description of the latest news and events.
- 世博会**: Shows a photo of the Milan Expo 2015 and a brief description of the exhibition.
- 实用信息**: Shows a photo of a street scene and a brief description of useful information for visitors.
- 商圈**: Shows a photo of a harbor and a brief description of shopping and dining options.

At the bottom, there's a footer with copyright information: '意大利国家旅游局版权所有 © Copyright © 意大利国家旅游局中国办事处'. It also includes a QR code and a phone number: '电话：(010) 65100000'.

## 3.26 Things they said, Finland

Media | Travel Trade | Corporate | Finland Convention Bureau |  Search | VisitFinland.com

 Visit Finland  
-Media

VisitFinland Media Media Bank Media Visits Finland Facts Things They Said



THINGS THEY SAID

We have gathered here top articles, videos and posts that tell stories about Finland. Enjoy!

SCROLL DOWN

**Things They Said**

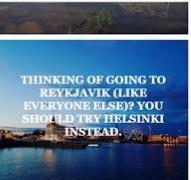
Stories about Finland:

  
WHY BREATHTAKING FINLAND IS THE ULTIMATE RUSTIC

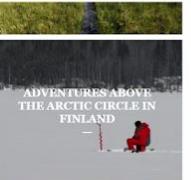
  
TAKE A DIP IN FINNISH WATERS ALL YEAR ROUND

  
EXPLORING FINLAND FROM TIP TO TIP - INCLUDING A...

VisitFinland.com Media Media Bank Media Visits Finland Facts Things They Said

  
THINKING OF GOING TO REYKJAVIK (LIKE EVERYONE ELSE)? YOU SHOULD TRY HELSINKI INSTEAD.

  
CHANNEL HOPPING ON A FINNISH LAKE CRUISE

  
ADVENTURES ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE IN FINLAND

  
LIKE A LOCAL: HELSINKI

  
NINE SAUNAS IN A DAY?

  
HELPSKI

VisitFinland.com Media Media Bank Media Visits Finland Facts Things They Said

  
AUTUMN IN FINLAND: AN ALTERNATIVE FALL FOLIAGE TOUR

  
CHASING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS IN FINLAND IS AN EXERCISE IN PATIENCE

  
INTO THE WILD

  
CYCLING AROUND FINLAND'S BEAUTIFUL LAKES AND FORESTS ON THE TRAIL OF ITS NATIONAL COMPOSER, SIBELIUS

  
10 THINGS TO DO IN HELSINKI

  
COLOURFUL ARCHITECTURE, RICH HISTORY AND REINDEER SALAMI: DISCOVER THE CITY OF HELSINKI

VisitFinland Media Media Bank Media Visits Finland Facts Things They Said

  
TURKU AND HANKO, FINLAND: THE YOUNGEST NORDIC NATION

  
WHAT TO URGENTLY SHOULD DO IN HELSINKI: EAT AND DRINK IS A GOOD START

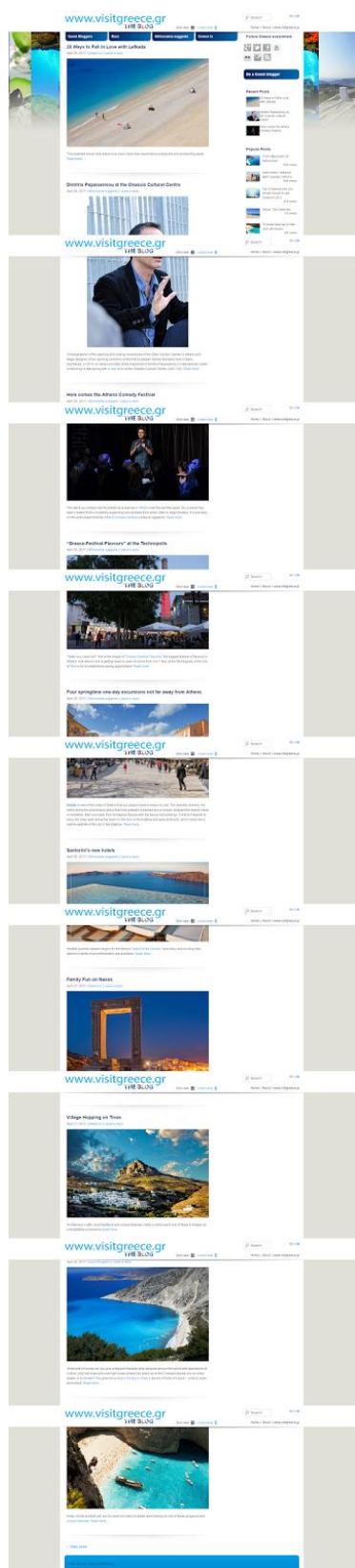
  
FINLAND: ON THE TRAIL OF JEAN SIBELIUS

[ALL ARTICLES](#)

Home	Travel Info	About Finland	Destinations	Seasons	Experiences	My Stay	VisitFinland.com
<a href="#">Lapland</a>	<a href="#">Summer</a>	<a href="#">Get Outdoors</a>	<a href="#">My Favorites</a>	<a href="#">Media</a>			
<a href="#">Lakeland</a>	<a href="#">Autumn</a>	<a href="#">Live Culture</a>	<a href="#">Travel Trade</a>				
<a href="#">Helsinki</a>	<a href="#">Winter</a>	<a href="#">Relax</a>	<a href="#">Corporate</a>				
<a href="#">Archipelago</a>	<a href="#">Spring</a>	<a href="#">StepOver</a>	<a href="#">Finland Convention Bureau</a>				

Search

## 3.27 Blog, Greece



## 3.28 Blog, Portugal



## 3.29 Feedback, Portugal

visit Portugal

FUNCHAL / SUN.15 °C  
29 °C/15°C

CONTACT US • Do you have any question? Send us a message.

LANGUAGE • English

SHARE

ALL ABOUT PORTUGAL | LEARN ABOUT | REGIONS | WHAT TO DO? | LOOKING FOR...? | REMEMBER & SHARE

Home > What to do?

### Nature

ABOUT GALLERY FEEDBACK FROM USERS

Feedback from users

Your opinion

To comment you need to log in.

SEARCH ADVANCED SEARCH

**Birdwatching**  
Despite being relatively small in terms of territory, Portugal is regarded as one of the best destinations in Europe for bird watching because it has an excellent concentration of different (...)

FIND OUT MORE |  | 

**Cycling**  
Exploring Portugal by bike is a unique experience. You can take it at your own pace, sensing the aromas and sounds that might otherwise pass unnoticed. Whether you choose the sea at your side, to go (...)

FIND OUT MORE |  | 

**Events**

21 Events

100th Anniversary of the Apparitions of Fátima | REJOICING IN THE CENTENNIAL OF THE APPARITIONS OF FÁTIMA 1917-2017

In 2017, the 100th Anniversary of the Apparitions of Our Lady of Fátima will be (...)

**Explore**

Map showing routes from Coimbra to Lisbon, including Porto, Aveiro, Viseu, Guarda, Leiria, Santarém, Portalegre, and Beira.

**Remember and Share**

Visit Portugal Portuguese Festivals

Visit Portugal  
En el estuario del río Tajo nos encontramos con Lisboa, una ciudad a la (...)

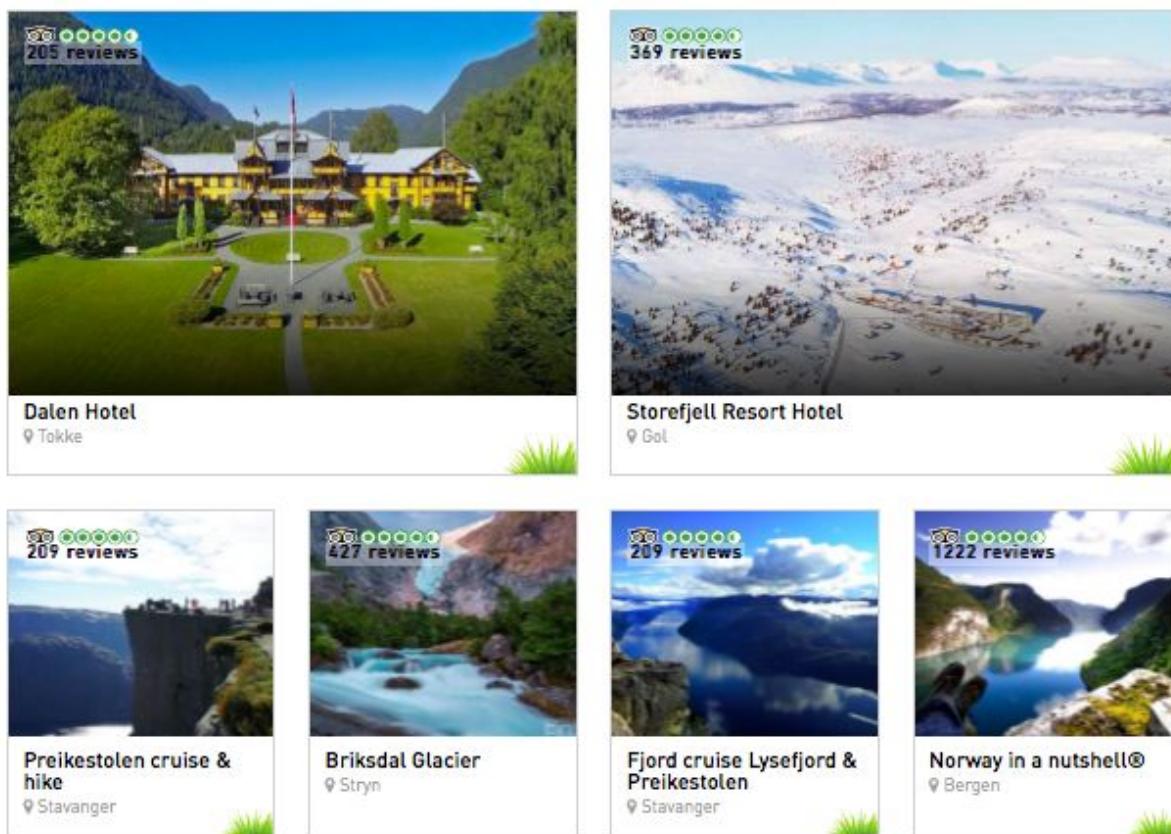
VIEW MORE YOUR OPINION

1 2 3 ...

### 3.30 My Stay, Finland

The screenshot shows the VisitFinland.com website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Travel Info, About Finland, Destinations, Seasons, Experiences, and My Stay. The 'My Stay' tab is currently selected. To the right of the navigation is a language dropdown set to English. Below the navigation is a map of Northern Europe with pins indicating various travel destinations. The map includes labels for Sweden, Norway, Finland, Russia, and major cities like Stockholm, Oslo, and Saint Petersburg. On the right side of the page, there's a sidebar with sections for 'HUSKY SAFARI VACATION IN KULLASMARINA, 2 DAYS', 'CANOEING TRIP FROM HUSKY FARM TO REINDEER FARM', 'KAYAKING IN THE SOUTH COAST ARCHIPELAGO', and 'SNOWMOBILE SLEIGH RIDE... ARCHIPELAGO'. Each section has a small thumbnail image, a title, a brief description, and 'READ MORE' and 'ADD TO MY FAVOURITES' buttons. At the bottom of the page, there's a footer with links for Home, Travel Info, About Finland, Destinations, Seasons, Experiences, My Stay, and VisitFinland.com. The footer also lists categories such as Lapland, Helsinki, Archipelago, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring, Get Outdoors, Live Culture, Relax, StopOver, My favourites, Media, Travel Trade, Corporate, and Finland Convention Bureau.

### 3.31 Ecolabeling system, Norway



## 3.32 Accommodation booking, Denmark

VisitDenmark 

THINGS TO DO DESTINATIONS ACCOMMODATION PLAN YOUR TRIP

 FAMILY HOLIDAY HOUSES 5/9

**Danish holiday homes and holiday cottages**

Are you ready for a typically Danish holiday experience? There are around 40,000 holiday homes for rent in Denmark. They tend to be located in picturesque areas, often near inland water or the coast and are decorated with individual, Danish style. They are an extremely popular holiday form amongst Danes.



**Book a holiday home**

**Online Booking**

Hotel  Resort  Holiday home  Hostel  B&B

e.g. city or area

7 nights (1 week)

Select date

4 persons

Pets unimportant

**SEARCH**

## 3.33 E-commerce search filters, Spain

**ACTIVITIES RELATING TO**

[+] Circuits and visits (1125)

[+] Sport and adventure (459)

[+] Culture and traditions (256)

[+] Nature (544)

- Agrotourism (34)
- Ecotourism (197)
- Observing nature and wildlife (118)
- Stargazing (54)
- Hiking (207)

[+] Gastronomy (419)

[+] Health and beauty (114)

Water sports (149)

Shopping (14)

Leisure parks (42)

[+] Premium Spain (102)

**DURATION**

  
LEARN SPANISH ON THE CAMINO- APRENDE INGLÉS EN EL ...  
€1,350 per person (including taxes)  
If you would like to practice one of the foreign ...(+See more)  
Arzúa,Santiago de ...

  
FLY FISHING SAFARI WITH MULES IN THE PYRENEES.  
€1,200 per person (including taxes)  
Pyrenees Fly Fishing offers you one of the most ...(+See more)  
Pont de Suert, El

  
OFFER FOR NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY & WILDLIFE  
€1,150 per person (including taxes)  
Wildlife packages: Photographic wildlife packs with ...(+See more)  
Adamuz

  
MIXED CAMINO: CYCLING & WALKING FROM BURGOS TO SANTIAGO  
€1,050 per person (including taxes)

### 3.34 Search function, Portugal

visit Portugal | SANTARÉM / TUE. 23 | 37 °C/17°C | CONTACT US | LANGUAGE | SHARE

ALL ABOUT PORTUGAL | LEARN ABOUT | REGIONS | WHAT TO DO? | LOOKING FOR...? | REMEMBER & SHARE

Home > What are you looking for?

## Protected Areas

WORD

SELECT REGION

SELECT LOCATION

SEARCH

FEATURES

- GUIDED TOURS (10)
- OUTDOOR PARKING (1)
- SIGNPOSTED ROUTES (31)

RESULTS Number of results: 37

PRINT

Protect Area Pr Silvata Faia E nestin import Specie  
[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Protect Centro Locat Special Guiha this s rarest  
[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Protected Areas Centro de Educação Ambiental de Vale Gonçalinho  
The Vale Gonçalinho Environmental Education Centre is the obligatory starting point for a visit to the Special Protection Zone for birds in Castro Verde, providing information on the region's natural heritage. Known as the 'Campo Branco' (White (...))  
[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Protected Areas Centro de Recuperação do Lobo Ibérico  
The Iberian Wolf Recovery Centre (IWRC) was created in 1987 by Grupo Lobo – an independent, non-profit  
[FIND OUT MORE](#)

### 3.35 Useful links, Spain

The screenshot shows the official website for Ecotourism in Spain. At the top, there are two main sections of activities:

- Discover the National Park of the Cabrera Archipelago:** Includes a photo of a boat on water, text about the park's experience, and a price of €1,350.
- Cottage with charm in order to enjoy the peace and ...:** Includes a photo of a traditional cottage, text about the price including transfers, and a price of €204.5.

Below these, there is a section titled "See all activities >" followed by a "More travel Ideas" section with three nature reserve options:

- Sierra de las Nieves Nature Reserve:** Photo of yellow fields.
- Alto Tajo Nature Reserve:** Photo of a waterfall.
- Cabo de Gata-Níjar Nature Reserve:** Photo of a rocky coastline.

At the bottom, there are two columns of links:

- Apps and downloads:** Features the Android logo and a link to "Ecotourist in Spain".
- Useful links:** Features logos for "Europarc Federation" and "Ceres Ecotur".

The footer includes links for "WEB MAP", "LEGAL NOTICE", "ACCESSIBILITY", "CONDITIONS OF USE", social media icons for Twitter and Facebook, a search bar, and the "ESPAÑA SPAIN IS DIVERSITY" logo.

## 3.36 External link-collection, Greece

The screenshot shows a tourism website for Greece. At the top, there is a banner with a blue gradient and a tropical beach scene, featuring a sun and palm trees. Below the banner, a call-to-action button says "Click here to visit our blog". The main content area has a light gray background and contains several sections:

- Home / Links**: A navigation bar with links to Home and Links.
- Social Media Icons**: Icons for Twitter, Google+, Print, and Gilla 15.
- Other Tourism Institutions**: A list of four associations:
  - American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA)  
Chapter President: Panagiotis Iliadis  
Cosmorama Ltd  
14 Sina St, Athens, 10672 GREECE  
Phone: +30 210 3642707  
Fax: +30 210 3648252  
E-mail: iliadis@cosmorama.gr
  - Association of Graduate Tourist Guides of Athens  
9a Apollonos str.  
105 57 Athens  
Tel : +30 210 3220090  
Fax : +30 210 3239200  
URL : <http://www.tourist-guides.gr/>
  - Association of Graduate Tourist Guides of Ionian Islands and Western Greece  
P.O. BOX 324  
491 00 Corfu  
Tel : +30 26610 52633  
Fax : +30 26610 97870  
E-mail : cfuguide@otenet.gr
  - Association of Graduate Tourist Guides of the Dodecanese Islands  
P.O. BOX 235  
851 00 Rhodes  
Tel : +30 22410 27525  
Fax : +30 22410 39251  
E-mail : xenorho@otenet.gr
- connect and experience**: A section with icons for download banners, wallpapers, guides, brochures, maps, newsletter sign-up, and an eBook.
- explore Greece by interest**: Categories including Culture, Leisure, Touring, Gastronomy, Activities, Religious, Meetings, City Break, and more.
- useful info**: Categories including Sea Routes, A.I.A. El. Venizelos, Travelling to Greece, Health & Safety, Passports & Visas, Weather, Travel Tips, and a Calendar.