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PRACTICE PAPER

An investigation to evaluate the websites of tourism departments of universities in Turkey

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Abstract

The purpose of this investigation was to conduct a content analysis of the websites of schools of higher education that play a role in supplying tourism enterprises with staff. With this aim, the websites of 102 advanced vocational schools and 30 universities were analysed using an evaluation form comprising 45 items. The findings of the survey showed that the websites of state universities are more functional and have more features than those of private universities. It was also found that the websites of the schools providing tourism are independent of their institution. These sites are generally designed and updated by the lecturers. The fact that most websites at universities providing tourism education do not have a foreign language option, nor enable their usage to be personal, is also noteworthy.

Keywords: Academic website; Tourism education; University; Institution of higher education

Introduction

Vocational tourism education is a form of training that seeks to provide educated, knowledgeable, talented, productive and dynamic people to the tourism sector (Hacıoğlu, 1992). Countries wanting to obtain a larger share of the international tourism market must compete with one another, so the quality of service must be maintained. Service is second to price as a determining factor in maintaining a successful tourism industry. Good relations between tourists and those who provide them with services depend on whether or not the individuals employed have a high level of vocational and technical knowledge (Kizilirmak, 2000). Universities providing tourism education at the higher level are expected to make extensive use of information technology. The training of students with a relevant occupational and technical background depends to a great extent on whether institutions operate using modern teaching methods and information technology. The race between firms active in the

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tourism business has made tourism education essential, and the need to provide a quality service has also emerged. Providing a service of the highest quality is fundamental; those employed must have adequate occupational training (Timur, 1992).

Tourism education at the advanced vocational school and university level is of great importance in fulfilling tourism's labour needs with a quality workforce. It is therefore necessary for students at schools of higher education to be given sufficient training in technological services. Websites and the services they provide help students become better equipped. With this point as a basis, this study evaluates the websites of tourism administration and hotel management, tourism and hotel management schools and other tourism-related departments at advanced vocational schools and universities.

Website evaluation utilises the use of investigative procedures and research to systematically determine the effectiveness of a web-based information system on regular basis. Evaluation plays a key role in organisational planning, monitoring website activities and services, and in modifying goals and objectives. This form of 'formative' evaluation, whereby the goals and user needs interact with the evaluating process, contrasts with a 'summative' form of evaluation through which the degree to which the website is meeting set goals and user needs is determined (Thompson, McClure & Jaeger, 2003).

This research was constructed on the functionality of university websites. A questionnaire was prepared and 54 students were interviewed in order to identify their expectations of university websites. In addition, the websites of Xavier University (2006), San Diego State University (2005), School of Visual Arts Website (2004) and Chestnut Hill College Admissions Site (2003), awarded the Best Web Site prize by the Web Marketing Association, have been examined. The Web Marketing Association (www.webaward.org) assessed the websites in terms of design, ease of use, copywriting, interactivity, the use of technology, innovation and content. Twenty-one assessment criteria were formulated in the categories of:

- functionality (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006; Doolin, Burgess & Cooper, 2002; Evett & Brown, 2005; Fang & Holsapple, 2007; Huizingh, 2000; Karamustafa, Bickes & Ulama, 2002; Lees, Haris & Maulana, 2005)
- customisation (Baloglu & Pekcan; Barnes & Vidgen, 2003; Bauer & Scharl, 2000; Dervos & Psarras, 2005; Fang & Holsapple; Muylle, Moenaert & Despontin, 2004;)
- globalisation (Muylle et al.; Susser and Ariga, 2006; Lees et al.)
- communication (Baloglu & Pekcan; Barnes & Vidgen; Bauer & Scharl; Karamustafa et al., 2002; Wan, 2002)

with reference to a range of literature evaluating websites.

The categories of 'independence', 'general publicity' and 'information for students' were determined by interpreting the literature, identifying students' expectations of the university websites and by examining the awarded university websites. As a result, an evaluation form comprising 45 assessment criteria was prepared to evaluate the websites of universities running tourism education courses in Turkey. The websites of the institutions were accessed and the evaluation form used.

Aims

This research aims to identify the features that university websites must include from students' perspectives. It also explains the current situation, analyses the content of schools of tourism websites at higher education institutions, and thus contributes to the development of university websites. The fact that almost every university offers tourism education in Turkey, a developing country, highlights the importance of university websites.

Tourism education and training in turkey

Most Turkish educational institutions remain the responsibility of the state. Entry to university in Turkey is based on a universal examination. The national education system provides different levels of tourism training and education. Professional tourism education is overseen

by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Education. Vocational training in tourism at university level (i.e. two-year, four-year and graduate programmes) is the responsibility of the Council of Higher Education. Since 1967, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has carried out activities related to tourism education in accordance with regulations related to its establishment through the law: the General Directorate of Research and Education. As far as vocational courses for hospitality and tourism training are concerned, the Ministry sponsors seven-month courses in Tourism Training Centres (TUREM) in ten different locations.

In 2006, tourism and hotel management courses at university level were available at 175 schools, 132 of which offered a two-year programme (advanced vocational schools) and 43 a four-year programme (Tourism Administration Colleges). There were also 13 programmes leading to the awards of MSc and Doctorate in the field of tourism and hospitality management. Vocational courses for hospitality and tourism at the high school level (for assistant chefs, waiters, receptionists and housekeepers) were provided through a three-year programme (junior high schools) in 101 state schools with free tuition. In addition, there were 16 private high schools offering tourism and hotel administration courses (State Planning Organization, 2006).

Literature review

A considerable amount of research exists concerning the quality of websites; design and aesthetic features; and the content and features of web pages. This research is generally based on the websites of commercial enterprises. However, research evaluating educational institutions relates mainly to websites belonging to libraries. When examining the literature, the common assessment categories used for the research evaluating the websites are: functionality, customisation, globalisation and communication.

Functionality has been used as a criterion to assess websites by many researchers. Baloğlu and Pekcan (2006) examined the websites of luxurious hotels with 45 criteria in three categories: interactivity, navigation and functionality. Using these criteria, he set 16 sub-categories under 'functionality'. The research shows that the websites of luxurious hotels in Turkey are not functional at all. In their theoretical study, Lees et al. (2005) proposed that the functionality of websites is influenced by such factors as typology; transactionality; accessibility; customer type; and geographic scope. Doolin et al. (2002) assessed the websites of 26 tourism organisations according to the functionality criterion and found that the websites of the organisations were quite functional. Evett and Brown (2005) examined the effect of font types used in web pages and their functionality through a comparative theoretical study and determined what type of fonts should be used in designing functional web pages. Fang and Holsapple (2007) researched the effects of website navigation structures on functionality with seven basic features (interface, functionality, content, co-ordination, physical, control, customisation) and found that website navigation structure affects the functionality of a web page to a great extent. Huizingh (2000) looked at 651 websites related to different fields in terms of content and design. He compared the features of the websites according to 'source', 'industry' and 'size' and came to the conclusion that the larger websites were richer and more professional in content. Karamustafa et al. (2002) searched the web pages of 241 accommodation facilities in Turkey using an evaluation form consisting of 21 criteria. The research found that accommodation facilities in Turkey were in good condition in terms of the functional features of their web pages, with such features as independent url, email, language options and copying.

Customisation, which can be defined as the feature to adapt according to personal requirements, can significantly affect web users' satisfaction (Muylle et al., 2004). Middleton, McConnel, and Davidson (1999) proposed a model for the structure and content of a university website. In their study, content, accessibility, relevance and currency were all proposed for individual or group users. Representation, adequate promotion, innovation, satisfying users' needs and structure were proposed for institutional information needs. In an analysis of Spanish universities, a new web assessment index focused on four categories: accessibility, speed, navigability and content (Mateos, Chamorro, Miranda & Gonzales,

2001). Barnes and Vidgen (2003) revealed that redesigned websites with upgraded customisation features increased the visitors' satisfaction. Bauer and Scharl (2000) evaluated commercial, educational and non-profit organisation websites in terms of content and adequacy. A scale consisting of three components – content, interactivity and navigation – was applied in the study; customisation was used as sub-category under interactivity. Dervos and Psarras (2005) attempted to define criteria for academic website design and proposed a model in which an academic website must have the following features: personalisation, customisation, grouping and team-working, simplicity of use, modular design, and granular administration. Muylle et al. looked at the factors that affect visitors' satisfaction, and set out four basic features: layout, information, connection, and language customisation.

Globalisation, meaning the ability to reach the whole world, also involves accessibility for all internet users to any website. However, owing to language barriers, it is not always possible for users to keep track of websites. Muylle et al. (2004) showed that multiple language options on websites helps increase the satisfaction of users. Susser and Ariga (2006) pointed out that websites must have language options appealing to the whole world to enable them to be comparable. Lees et al. (2005) asserted that different language options on websites can make a business 'local' or 'global'.

All organisations – commercial, educational or non-profit – want to communicate with their target group and identify their expectations and needs. Thus, communication features on websites hold great significance for those organisations. Barnes and Vidgen (2003) and Karamustafa et al. (2002) determined that communication features have become one of the features most desired by users. Baloglu and Pekcan (2006), Bauer and Scharl (2000) and Wan (2002) also used communication as a criterion under the category of interactivity in their website evaluation form.

Toro (2002) determined that the features that users are satisfied with include entertainment value, information value, interactive value, and design and usability, and that websites are supposed to satisfy all users. Barnes and Vidgen (2007) evaluated websites using a 23-item questionnaire called "Webqual". In this study, assessment questions are divided into five groups: usability, empathy, design, information and trust. Boisvert and Caron (2006) applied an evaluation form comprising 91 criteria to evaluate the websites from different fields in Canada and identified 18 essential features that websites must include. Cao, Zhang, and Seydel (2005) used an evaluation form consisting of the categories system quality; information quality; service quality; and attractiveness, to evaluate e-trade websites. Chevalier and Bonnardel (2007) and Chevalier and Ivory (2003) proposed that the features client-oriented constraints (originality, branding usage, sales improvement, site structure and content) and user oriented constraints (aesthetics, attractive content) should be taken into account in website design. Cox and Dale (2002) stated that the characteristics ease of use; customer confidence; on-line resources; and relationship services, have a key role in determining the quality of a website.

Gullikson et al. (1999) maintained that navigation and information are important for evaluation of a website and the evaluation process must be conducted according to these features. Djajadikerta and Trireksani (2006) applied the features of technical adequacy; information quality; service ability; and web appearance, to website assessment. Iwaarden, Wiele, Ball, and Millen (2004) used Servqual analysis to measure the quality of websites and developed a 50-item evaluation form. Marquis (2002) refers to short download time; ease of navigation; minimal menu options; ease of use/structure; and multiple links to pages, as desirable website features. Marsico and Leviardi (2004) determined the point at which travel agency websites stand in the categorisation by classifying the websites and assessing the sites with questionnaires. A total number of 30 sub-criteria were used under appearance; navigation; ease of search; clarity-soundness-timeliness; and satisfaction, in the evaluation. McGillis and Toms (2001) drew the conclusion in their study on university students that library websites can be evaluated according to the criteria of satisfying, easy and clear. Mummalani (2005) studied the effect of website features on clients' attitudes toward purchases. According to the findings, the quality of design; ambience; pleasure; arousal;

satisfaction; and intended loyalty, influences the customers' attitude to buy. Furthermore, Frew, McCarthy, and Horan (2002) researched the performance of websites that advertise destinations.

Through researching the literature and students' expectations, we can illustrate the characteristics that websites of universities providing tourism education should contain (see Table 1).

Website features category	Website features elements
Independence	Independent URL, Independent Websites For The Departments
Globalisation	Foreign Language Options
Customization	Add to Favorites, Make Homepage, Copying, Personal Themes
Functionality	Update Info, Visitor Counter, Announcements, Forum, Site Map, Get Info, Search in the site, RSS support, Quick Links, Visitors Log, Links to Institutions, Connected Links, Activities
General Publicity	Academic Staff, Managerial Staff, Curriculum Vitae of Academic Staff, Management Information About Departments, Information related to departments, Information of Master and Doctoral Programs, Publicity Film/ Brochure, Local Information
Students intended	Information of Graduated Students, Student Affairs, Academic Calendar, FAQ, Regulations, Lesson Registration Form, Transcripts, Lesson Programs, Lesson Plans, Lesson Contents, Library Links, Student Representation, Announcing Job Adds
Communication	E-mail Addresses, Telephone Numbers of Staff, Communication Form

Table 1: Categories of websites features and elements

Methods

The study was confined to advanced vocational schools and universities offering tourism education in Turkey in 2006. 102 advanced vocational schools and 30 university websites were evaluated. The study is restricted to institutions providing tourism education. Schools that did not run programmes or have departments related to tourism were therefore excluded. Thus the websites of 132 educational institutions were accessed. The website evaluation form given in Appendix 1 was used in data gathering. Results from the website evaluation form are shown in Appendix 2.

During the preparation of the website evaluation form, similar studies from the literature were examined. No study relating to educational institutions was found. The form was constructed by examining the websites of 30 institutions offering tourism education in Turkey and abroad, interviewing students and asking what they expected of the websites. After the evaluation form was created, attempts were made to locate the domain names of the higher education institutions (HEIs) through several search engines, but there was no result for most of them. The schools were therefore reached through their respective universities.

The data gathered from the websites of the HEIs were entered into the website evaluation form and a database was created on the computer. The data were loaded onto the computer and the analysis was performed in accordance with the aim of the study. All the statistical processes during the preparation of the database and the analysis were conducted with the aid of statistical programmes.

Findings and discussion

In this part of the paper, the results from the compilation of the data on general institutional features and quotas for the departments/programmes and the findings from the evaluation of the institutions' websites are presented.

		N	%
Higher education institutions	State	113	85.6
	Private	19	14.4
	<i>Total</i>	132	100
Institution place	Centre	66	50.0
	County	66	50.0
	<i>Total</i>	132	100
Advanced vocational schools university programs	Advanced vocational school programmes	102	77.3
	University programmes	30	22.7
	<i>Total</i>	132	100

Table 2: General features of higher education institutions offering tourism education

In Table 2, the general features of HEIs providing courses in tourism are illustrated. State schools constitute 85.6 per cent of the 132 HEIs. It can therefore be said that state universities play an important role in tourism education. In examining advanced vocational schools and university tourism programmes, it can be seen that advanced vocational school programmes are more intense than those offered at universities.

Features of functionality	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Update info	16	12.12	116	87.88
Visitor counter	21	15.91	111	84.09
Announcements	88	66.67	44	33.33
Site map	8	6.06	124	93.94
Activities	42	31.82	90	68.18
Forum	4	3.03	128	96.97
Get info	4	3.03	128	96.97
Search in the site	14	10.61	118	89.39
RSS support	0	0	132	100
Quick links	2	1.52	130	98.48
Visitors log	4	3.03	128	96.97
Links to institutions connected	56	42.42	76	57.58
Links	37	28.03	95	71.97

Table 3: Features of functionality of websites at universities offering tourism education, N=132

The features in Table 3 relate to the functionality of the websites of the universities included in the study. According to this table, the category of 'announcements' is the most common feature found related to functionality. The categories 'links to related institutions' and 'activities' are the next most common features. It is observed that there is no RSS support, which provides users with updated information on the site, on any of the educational institutions' websites. Features such as 'quick links', 'visitors' log', 'get info' and 'forum' were found on quite a small number of websites. Of the most important features, 'site map' and 'search the site' are featured on very few websites. It can thus be concluded that the websites belonging to these universities do not contain functionality features to a great extent. Sandvig and Bajwa (2004), describing a similar result, found that the websites of nine

universities were poorly designed and difficult to use. Yet the success of any department or university on the web is greatly dependent on appropriate website design, including functionality, interactivity, navigation efficiency and marketing/customer focus.

Features of independence	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Independent url	102	77.27	30	22.73
Independent websites for the departments	8	6.06	124	93.94

Table 4: Independence of the websites at universities offering tourism education, N=132

Table 4 shows that 77.27 per cent of HEIs providing tourism education have their own websites; 22.23 per cent do not have an independent URL. The schools with no independent websites are private universities. Only eight universities have independent URLs. Also, the URLs of the HEIs providing tourism education are extensions of their respective universities' URLs. No information could be found for some of the HEIs. The study shows that HEIs without an independent URL are publicised by their respective universities. The reason that HEIs belonging to private universities do not have their own URLs is because their departments are not yet autonomous. In these cases there appears to be a prevailing sense of centralisation.

Features of globalisation	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Foreign language options	40	30.30	92	69.70

Table 5: globalisation features of the websites of universities offering tourism education, N=132

Table 5 shows the websites published in a foreign language. Only 30.30 per cent of the websites of the universities included in the study are published in foreign languages. English is used on all websites that offer services in a foreign language, except one. Only parts of the websites are designed in a foreign language – for example, basic pages such as lesson plans, contents, etc. Similar findings can be seen in the results of other studies (Leung and Ivy, 2003; Mateos et al., 2001; Sandvig and Bajwa, 2004) in which foreign language options (usually apart from English) are not available. Yet English pages as well as Turkish ones, and links for these pages, must be available so that users from outside Turkey can access and utilise them. As Thelwall, Tang and Price (2003) found, English is a major web language for international linking between universities throughout Europe. Therefore, it is necessary to create a positive image of Turkish universities and attract the attention of the international arena by providing websites in English.

Features of customisation	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Add to favourites	3	2.27	129	97.73
Make homepage	2	1.52	130	98.48
Copying	111	84.09	21	15.91
Personal themes	1	0.76	131	99.24

Table 6: Features of website personalisation at universities offering tourism education, N=132

An important feature for web users is the ability to receive responses to personal requests and expectations from the web page administrators and operators (Table 6). Those websites able to meet the demands of users are visited more, and consequently user satisfaction rises. In relation to the websites included in the study, there is no indication that users can copy information. However, the results of the study show that users are often able to copy information. The websites that don't allow users to copy information do not have independent web addresses. It can be concluded, therefore, that the majority of the universities are very poor at personal/customer focus, one of the determinants of successful website design noted by Gehrke and Turban (1999).

Feature of general publicity	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Academic staff	98	74.24	34	25.76
Managerial staff	75	56.82	57	43.18
Curriculum vitae of academic staff	67	50.76	65	49.24
Management	92	69.70	40	30.30
Information about departments	78	59.09	54	40.91
Information related to departments	2	1.52	130	98.48
Information of Master and Doctoral Programs	3	2.27	129	97.73
Publicity film/brochure	13	9.85	119	90.15
Local information	28	21.21	104	78.79

Table 7: Features of general publicity at universities offering tourism education

Table 7 shows web services publicised through the university's web pages. It can be seen that universities' websites focus on information on academic and administrative staff and on publicising academic departments and university administration. In particular, advanced vocational schools heavily advertise the towns where they are based. Thirteen universities have made advertisements, such as video clips or brochures, for publicity purposes.

Features intended for students	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Information of graduated students	32	24.24	100	75.76
Student affairs	48	36.36	84	63.64
Academic calendar	58	43.94	74	56.06
FAQ	13	9.85	119	90.15
Regulations	43	32.58	89	67.42
Lesson registration form	17	12.88	115	87.12
Transcripts	23	17.42	109	82.58
Lesson programs	34	25.76	98	74.24
Lesson plans	73	55.30	59	44.70
Lesson contents	43	32.58	89	67.42
Library links	2	1.52	130	98.48
Student representation	0	0.00	132	100.00
Announcing job adds	1	0.76	131	99.24

Table 8: Features of web based student services at universities offering tourism education, N=132

Table 8 illustrates the student services provided by these universities. Services provided for students through websites consisted of 'lesson plans, academic calendars, student affairs, regulations, [and] lesson content'. The important task of publishing job announcements on the website was carried out at only one university. Furthermore, this study observed that FAQ (frequently asked questions), one of the most important components of websites for general publicity, was not offered or considered by the universities. No universities included a 'student representation' feature on their websites. Only two institutions allowed online access to the library. Information such as library links, library research tools and career/employment announcements were found on very few websites. This finding contrasts with other studies (Mateos et al., 2001; Sandvig & Bajwa, 2004).

Features of Communication	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
E-mail addresses	67	50.76	65	49.24
Telephone numbers of staff	14	10.61	118	89.39
Communication form	12	9.09	120	90.91

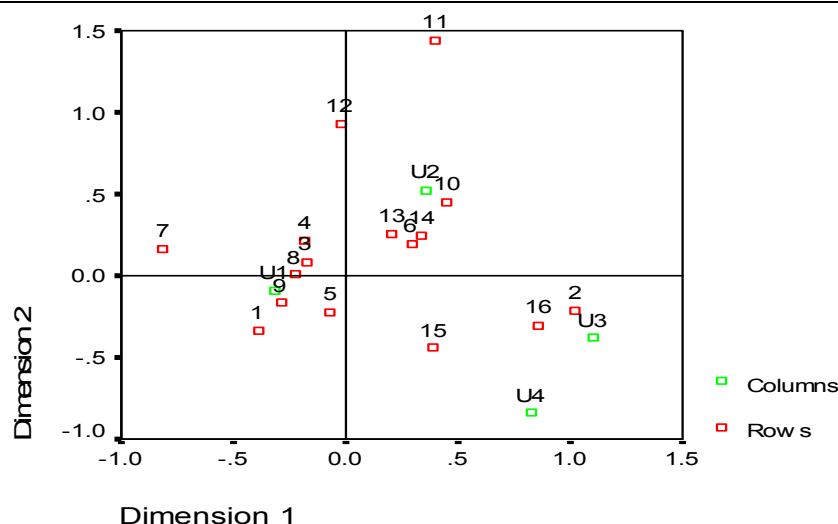
Table 9: Web based communication features at universities offering tourism education, N=132

It was observed that 49.24 per cent of the HEIs providing services over the internet did not have general email addresses. This is seen as a serious deficiency. Furthermore, it is indicated in Table 9 that telephone extension numbers are often not given. Twelve universities provide a contact form allowing users without email addresses to send messages. It can therefore be concluded that HEIs providing tourism education are not efficient at providing contact services through their websites.

This study used chi-square analysis to identify the similarities and differences in site design and functioning-related items across four university types. Of the 45 items, significantly, 16 were at 0.05 level. These items were then arranged in a multi-way matrix form, rows being 16 items and columns being the four university types, as an input matrix for MCA. The perceptual map and attributes are shown in Figure 1. A two-dimensional solution was found to be more appropriate, as it explained 84.8 per cent of the variance. The first dimension explained 62.1 per cent of the variance, while the second dimension explained 22.7 per cent of the variance.

As shown in Figure 1, the most frequently used features in the state universities' websites are: student representation; personal themes; add to favourites; master and doctoral programme information; publicity film/brochure; and telephone numbers. Their sites also included FAQ for users. Common features on private universities' websites included: forum, visitor counter, information for alumni, and foreign language options. Interestingly, advanced vocational school programmes were found to offer more RSS support than university programmes. Their sites also frequently provided information on regulations. The websites of most of the universities did not include transcripts, local information and activities.

Most of the assessment criteria applied in the study are also used by many researchers for website evaluation. Most of the research related to website evaluation (Leung & Ivy, 2003; Sandvig & Bajwa, 2004; Thelwall, Vaughan, Cothey, Xuemei & Alastair, 2003) has been done to determine either the current status of websites or the effects of design features on user satisfaction. This study differs from others owing to the observation form applied, which was prepared by determining students' expectations. Most of the criteria in the observation form are supported by the related literature. The criteria determined through interviews with students were also included in the study.



U1	State university	7	FAQ
U2	Private university	8	Publicity film/brochure
U3	Advanced vocational school programmes	9	Telephone numbers
U4	University programs	10	Visitors counter
1	Student representation	11	Transcripts
2	Rss support	12	Local information
3	Personal themes	13	Information of graduated students
4	Add to favourites	14	Foreign language options
5	Information of Master/Doctoral programmes	15	Activities
6	Forum	16	Regulations

Figure 1: The correspondence analysis joint map

From the results, it can be seen that the websites of universities providing tourism education are below a satisfactory level of functionality. As with Sandvig and Bajwa (2004)'s findings, the deficiency in functionality and obstacles in gaining access to the information directly lead to the perception that the website is not effective. Marsico and Leviardi (2004) argue that websites should be evaluated through categorisation. It is a reasonable suggestion that websites should be assessed using different criteria depending on the type of organisation to which the website belongs. The model which Middleton proposed (1999) by reviewing McConnell and Davidson's model is compatible with ours. Nevertheless, the website features in our study lack content, accessibility and currency. Thelwall, Vaughan, et al. (2003) examined websites from different fields and countries and showed that a website's effectiveness can vary by country. According to this study, academic websites in Taiwan, a country comparable to Turkey as a developing country, are worse than those of hi-tech company websites. Turkey is possibly in a similar situation.

When the literature is looked at closely, it can be seen, that website evaluation is done using different scales and that it yields different results. Determining ideal content for websites following the assessment is closely linked to whether users' expectations are met. The findings of the study by Sandvig and Bajwa (2004) support this view. However, in terms of customisation, the findings of this study are not satisfactory.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study was designed to analyse the content of websites belonging to academic units at universities offering tourism education. These websites were classified according to 'type of institution' (state or private university), 'programme type' (advanced vocational school or a

university degree programme) and 'location of institution' (city centre or town). An attempt was then made to find out whether differences existed between the websites with regard to the features mentioned above. Based on the findings, the following conclusions and recommendations are made:

- the functionality of the websites differs between state and private universities. The websites of private universities are designed on a more centralised system and their academic units do not generally have their own URLs
- the websites of private universities appear to place a focus on informing potential students. This issue is ignored on state university websites
- updated information is not generally given on university websites. Information concerning events from the previous year was found on some sites, which indicates that the website is not being used for institutional dissemination purposes
- the websites are designed and updated by academics who are enthusiasts. The functionality of the websites is greater or lesser depending on the time the academics have and their level of knowledge. There is also a lack of co-ordination within universities. In other words, there may be a great many differences in functionality between two units belonging to the same university
- the following information is available on the websites: 'contact', 'announcements', 'copy files', 'staff and administration info', 'lesson plans and content'
- it can be seen that the information concerning HEI departments is superficial; no information is given about the departments' activities. Most departments do not have their own URLs
- contact forms, which facilitate communication through the internet, are only used by 14 universities
- many institutions with websites use contact forms instead of email addresses
- it is noteworthy that almost none of the websites offer functional elements such as 'set as home page', 'add to favourites', 'search the site', 'site map' and 'quick links'. All of these increase the rating of the website and make it more functional for the user
- it was found that most of the universities in the study do not have a RSS feed, a recent and significant feature
- university websites do not generally provide their services in a foreign language. Most of the websites with a foreign language option are part of an undergraduate school
- publicity information is found on the websites, but a system enabling interaction does not exist
- audio-visual features, which are essential for commercial organisations' websites, are not valid for university websites

The significant differences between the content of state and private university websites suggest that they have differing perspectives. Private universities see themselves as businesses and their potential students as customers. On the other hand, state universities do not advertise sufficiently on their sites, since there is no competition for students and their students do not provide extra financial resources. Private universities need to perceive their websites as one of most important tools for communication between the university and students. They must therefore design their websites to enable a more interactive channel of communication. State universities have a social role to give their potential students good information. They must act effectively to inform students. Universities need to change their views on web users for the reasons mentioned above. Some suggestions and implications for tourism departments and their websites are proposed:

- universities and related units must have their own URLs
- a professional team should be created within universities in order to design web pages. The careful design of websites enables them to be more accessible, effective and useful for users.

- websites are also important for the scholars who use them and for the web educators who need to identify best practice as discussed by Thelwall and Harries (2004)
- websites should be prepared using programming languages such as php, joomla, at al, which can facilitate updating. Staff responsible for updating the sites should be employed and trained
- if activities are announced to groups, motivation will increase. Events held by the related unit must be advertised either through audio or visual channels
- to maintain efficient communication, there must be a contact form in addition to email addresses on the websites
- the websites must include features such as a site map or search engine to achieve effective communication with users
- websites must be designed so as to include different language options
- audio and visual features must be increased and the content of the websites must be made more attractive
- the websites must support an RSS feed
- tourism departments of universities should make use of their web pages, and provide online application forms that can be accessed quickly and easily by potential students
- websites and other technology can be used effectively in the marketing of departments and universities
- it is crucial for tourism departments to establish strong and ongoing relationships with the tourism and hospitality industry as well as with graduates through the internet and web
- as proposed by Inui, Wheeler & Lankford (2006), tourism education should be considered with employability as a primary goal. Therefore, job and career opportunities for graduates should be provided on university websites.

This study is based on the data in the given evaluation form, which were obtained by gathering students' opinions about websites and examining award-winning university websites. In general, students are considered to be the web users. However, the fact that other users' views are not included constrains the study when examining whether the results can be generalised to different website users.

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Appendix 1

Features of websites (N=132)

Features		Yes		No	
		N	%	N	%
1	Student representation	0	0,00	132	100,00
2	Rss support	0	0.00	132	100.00
3	Personalization	1	0.76	131	99.24
4	Announcing job adds	1	0.76	131	99.24
5	Making homepage	2	1.52	130	98.48
6	Information related to departments	2	1.52	130	98.48
7	Library links	2	1.52	130	98.48
8	Quick links	2	1.52	130	98.48
9	Add to Favorites	3	2.27	129	97.73
10	Information of Master/Doctoral Programs	3	2.27	129	97.73
11	Forum	4	3.03	128	96.97
12	Information link	4	3.03	128	96.97
13	Visitors log	4	3.03	128	96.97
14	Site map	8	6.06	124	93.94
15	Independent URL of Departments	8	6.06	124	93.94
16	Communication form	12	9.09	120	90.91
17	Faq	13	9.85	119	90.15
18	Publicity film/brochure	13	9.85	119	90.15
19	Telephone numbers	14	10.61	118	89.39
20	Search in Site	14	10.61	118	89.39
21	Update info	16	12.12	116	87.88
22	Lesson registration form	17	12.88	115	87.12
23	Visitors counter	21	15.91	111	84.09
24	Transcripts	23	17.42	109	82.58
25	Local information	28	21.21	104	78.79
26	Information of Graduated Students	32	24.24	100	75.76
27	Lesson programs	34	25.76	98	74.24
28	Related links	37	28.03	95	71.97
29	Foreign language options	40	30.30	92	69.70
30	Activities	42	31.82	90	68.18
31	Regulations	43	32.58	89	67.42
32	Lesson contents	43	32.58	89	67.42
33	Student affairs	48	36.36	84	63.64
34	Links to Institutions Connected	56	42.42	76	57.58
35	Academic calendar	58	43.94	74	56.06
36	E-mail Addresses	67	50.76	65	49.24
37	Curriculum Vitae of Academic Staff	67	50.76	65	49.24
38	Lesson plans	73	55.30	59	44.70
39	Managerial staff	75	56.82	57	43.18
40	Information of Departments	78	59.09	54	40.91
41	Announcements	88	66.67	44	33.33
42	Management	92	69.70	40	30.30
43	Academic staff	98	74.24	34	25.76
44	Independent url	102	77.27	30	22.73
45	Copying	111	84.09	21	15.91

Appendix 2

Web site evaluation form

	State University		Private university
	University degree		Advanced vocational school
	Center		County
1	Student Representation	Yes	No
2	Rss Support		
3	Personal Themes		
4	Announcing Job Adds		
5	Making Homepage		
6	Information related to departments		
7	Library Links		
8	Quick Links		
9	Add to Favorites		
10	Information of Master / Doctoral Programs		
11	Forum		
12	Information Link		
13	Visitors Log		
14	Site Map		
15	Independent URL of Departments		
16	Communication Form		
17	FAQ		
18	Publicity Film / Brochure		
19	Telephone Numbers		
20	Search in Site		
21	Update Info		
22	Lesson Registration Form		
23	Visitors Counter		
24	Transcripts		
25	Local Information		
26	Information of Graduated Students		
27	Lesson Programs		
28	Related Links		
29	Foreign Language Options		
30	Activities		
31	Regulations		
32	Lesson Contents		
33	Student Affairs		
34	Links to Institutions Connected		
35	Academic Calendar		
36	E-mail Addresses		
37	Curriculum Vitae of Academic Staff		
38	Lesson Plans		
39	Managerial Staff		
40	Information of Departments		
41	Announcements		
42	Management		
43	Academic Staff		
44	Independent Url		
45	Copying		

