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Tourism and Websites: A content analysis

Master in International Business
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Rafael José Rodríguez Úbeda

Supervisor: Dr. David Jiménez Castillo

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Por la presente hago constar que he dirigido y supervisado el trabajo titulado *Tourism and Websites: A content analysis* y cuyo autor es Rafael José Rodríguez Úbeda. Considero que el trabajo cumple los requisitos estipulados en la normativa del Máster in International Business Administration and Modern Languages para ser presentado y defendido.



Fdo. D. David Jiménez Castillo

Abstract

Nowadays there is a strong competition between the major cities of the world for tourism. Cities are starting to use their websites as a marketing tool with the aim of achieving positioning in the market. Positioning is vital in order to compete in markets in a more and more globalised world, so managers are conscious of the importance of managing their on line marketing strategies to achieve competitive advantages. This issue is mainly relevant in the tourism sector.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the websites of the twenty world cities with the highest level of tourism; also analyses the websites of the five most visited cities of Spain. Conducting a content analysis on the English version of each city's website will help me identify their strengths and weaknesses. I also make some recommendations to managers in order to improve web marketing strategies directed to global consumers. If these changes are implemented the websites standing within the world scale will likely be elevated.

Hoy en día existe una fuerte competencia entre las principales ciudades del mundo por el turismo. Las ciudades están comenzando a utilizar sus sitios web como herramientas de marketing con el objetivo de lograr posicionamiento en el mercado. El posicionamiento es fundamental para competir en los mercados en un mundo cada vez más globalizado, los directivos son conscientes de la importancia de la gestión de sus estrategias de marketing para alcanzar ventajas competitivas. Este objetivo es especialmente relevante en el sector turístico.

Este estudio analiza los sitios web de las 20 ciudades del mundo que más número de turistas que reciben cada año. La realización de un análisis del contenido de la versión en Inglés de la página web de cada ciudad, las fortalezas y debilidades son identificadas. También hago algunas recomendaciones a los directivos con el fin de mejorar las estrategias de marketing en la web dirigidas a los consumidores globales.

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Introduction

Tourism is a service to which a marketing mix can be applied. Tourism encompasses the activities of people commuting to and residing in places outside their normal comfort zone only once in a year, for business, leisure, or other purposes. The tourism industry has changed a lot recently and is becoming very challenging and competitive. The international market has never been so busy because of the how easy it has become to travel and seek out exciting new destinations.

During the latter half of the 20th century tourism has evolved greatly from a marginal and local activity where people would very seldom leave their own country. It has become a massive international market that sees people jet-setting from one side of the world to the other at the drop of a hat. It is now that easy. The tourism industry has been credited as being a lynchpin of global economics and generates tens of billions of dollars annually. It is also widely considered to be massively important in regards to the environment, and a phenomenon on a socio-cultural level.

The internet has developed exponentially in the past twenty years and has led to the globalization of the world's economies. If we accept this we can take advantage of the situation, using the World Wide Web as a marketing tool in order to market our cities to the world, in this study I am going to view the cities and see how they are using their web sites in order to appeal to the world market.

Cities are now becoming products which are becoming more evident to us, they are trying to sell themselves, have placed more importance on their brand and image and are pursuing marketing activities, to create a viable product. A city has to accept that website marketing is the fastest growing and possibly most important form of marketing there is.

Cities are using actions which are more at home with marketing departments; these actions are known as city marketing. City marketing can be defined in different ways.

City marketing is the strategic and tactical promotion of a city or a smaller district within that city, with the goal of encouraging certain activities to take place in that area (Smith, 1994, p. 2).

In order to attract tourism and a migration of residents city marketing is used to affect the perceptions of the outside world , meaning they are using the website to show every positive side the city has to offer and how it can serve the interested viewers (Smith, 1994, p. 3).

City marketing has now become an established practice in the field of urban management and has caused many academic commentators from various disciplines to take an interest in it resulting in a flurry of publications on the wider process of city marketing (Kotler *et al.* 1999).

Unfortunately, marketing has recently gained a tarnished reputation, primarily because it is a common perception that its main objective is to extract money from unsuspecting consumers, and that it is very close to being fraud, hence, illegal. "Pure marketing" is a term that is best used to describe something that looks pretty, yet has very little content, a term coined by many politicians (ironically, enough).

This idea emanates from the consumer's tendency to put marketing, publicity and sales in the same category. The sales approach is a belief that consumers have to purchase your product and if you use publicity and the sales approach often enough you will eventually wear down their resistance, the aim is to convince them they need to buy something that is not needed and not really wanted. Using these methods the consumer will leave the supermarket with unplanned items or pulled into a trance by the television, purchasing a stomach muscle toner that will sit in the cupboard for the rest of the year. Don't forget the salesperson whose job it is to tell you what you (do not) need.

That is not modern marketing. It is not the goal of marketing execs to sell products at whatever cost necessary, but instead to place the products at the centre of their competitive strategy with the highest importance placed on accuracy, the goal is to target small segments of the public with differing needs and not aim for an indiscriminant global market, the way to achieve this is by using ad hoc marketing strategies.

Problems can arise because mistakes can often occur. City administrators have concluded that city marketing entails only one thing; promoting their cities, which in turn means making brochures, videos, and webpages, because they have come to believe that these are the only things of importance in city marketing.

In short, they put all plants in the same group so to speak: city marketing has simply become the promotion of cities.

City marketing was once an esteemed urban management philosophy, but now it has become nothing more than a tool to advertise small points of a city, instead of working in unity with the people. It has become an unpleasant word. Any responsible city council should see internet marketing as a positive step for the future.

Millions of people can access useful information thanks to the internet, and city administrators have to use the internet and websites to help achieve their strategic marketing goals. They have to take into consideration just how important it is to have the right strategy.

On the internet site of any given city, a number of elements can be found, including:

- Tourism information; all information relating tourism in the city e.g. sights to see
- Online shopping; a detailed explanation of where in the city has shopping online, this can be useful with small shops that are unique to that city.
- Investors or citizens; Information that can be of use to citizens and potential out of city investors e.g. local events, entertainment, investment opportunities

Over the years it has been observed that the marketing has been integrated into city management slowly. (Marketing is usually based on the realization of advertising).

My study intends to develop a better understanding of the online marketing strategy developed by cities. This will be achieved by focusing on how the world's capitals use the web to enhance their development and to construct a favorable image of the cities they represent. This papers other objective is to identify and evaluate beginning methods for improving world city marketing strategies by using the internet. The study seeks to improve management decision of city marketing and therefore raises some recommendations.

Marketing Cities on the Internet

Applying marketing theory to a city is not a simple task, the appropriate methods must be applied in order to achieve the objectives that city managers have set themselves.

The objectives can of course be varied, from attracting tourists to keeping residents happy to procuring investments or attracting new inhabitants.

There are a number of different targets:

- Residents
- Non-residents
- Companies
- Tourists
- Investors
- Institutions

For this reason the strategies must take into account the particulars of each segment, because of this it can be very difficult create a smooth image for the city.

A city wants to be different from others and will use different strategies. One strategy can be with the city's tangible aspects, such as infrastructure, design; the other strategy is through intangible aspects, these include citizens' values, knowledge, or the links the city has to the outside world. The target market is identified and the brand image of the city is built with this selection of attributes.

With the internet now in play, intangible aspects can be improved; information, data and content can be promoted a lot easier. Using a variety of communication methods differentiation can be broadcast. In the context of city marketing the internet is the fastest growing method of communication and utilizing a website is an important factor in this.

The use of the internet and webpages are resourceful tools for promoting people and images, and building lasting kinships with the target demographic.

The advantages a city has that can contribute to achieving its marketing goals are:

- The audience has a lot more control over what they want to see compared to traditional media.
- People can choose only the content which is of interest to them
- Access to information is realized dynamically and actively
- Huge amounts of information can be transferred at minimal cost
- Internet makes it easier to reach target markets
- Information is available and accessible 24/7

Achieving a respectable position is easier with the help of internet, most people and most companies which are interested in a city look for information for first time on the internet and particularly on the web sites of the city in which we can find various tools such as video and e-mail etc., these are all important when targeting an audience.

Usually marketing in a city is restricted to city promotions so if in fact cities are taking advantage of internet, their web sites should be able to take into account what they offer in terms of features, resources and content.

Quality, Quantity and Interactive Features

Quality

Utilizing a website is extremely advantageous and has a high potential when marketing a city. It allows the company to reach not only the locals but a large global audience. This medium will not just aim for what the city can offer its residents but also what it is able to offer non-residents in terms of attractions and tours.

Everything on website is presented as content. Data is usually in the form of text and visual media e.g. pictures/videos, which are more pleasing to the eye in comparison to books because of quality of graphics and ease of navigation.

Content is vital to determine if a website is successful in the online community (Pollach, 2005). The web is inherently stronger than traditional media because it can convey more detailed and greater quantities of information that the people can digest at their own leisure (Macias and Lewis, 2003).

It is not only what the World city has to offer that would result in being noticed but how it is presented through high quality information of the webpage and it is important it is user friendly. If a city is able to get noticed, read about, and recommended to others it would likely be in a leading position on the World Wide Web, a position other cities strive for.

Among the content to be evaluated are timeliness, relevance, scope, reliability, and usefulness.

A web surfer may visit a city website through an initial interest in what it offers and would then crave more information that seems relevant to stay on the website and carry on reading and searching for more enticing posts. Regular updates, current relevant news stories and other exciting features are being updated by city website managers on a regular basis to provide reliable, informative content.

The readers have a higher IQ than you may think. Upon knowing the webpage is cared for by city, they can judge the effectiveness and coverage of the webpage's content and then decide for themselves if it is worth returning to the site.

Positive statistics of a webpage's frequency of visits and the likelihood of return visits show that website is working out properly and the city is gaining popularity in global tourism.

Quantity

Quantity of information is obviously very important on a website and set you apart from the competition. A website with a great amount of information and date gives the internet surfer an air of confidence that the website knows what it is talking about. Perhaps, more importantly it keeps the customer on your website. If you don't have the information they need they are likely to go somewhere else to find it. You can never have too many subjects and information as long as it is correctly organized.

Interactive Features

An effective website requires interactivity (Macias and Lewis, 2003). Obviously, the more interactive features the better. It can be a simple thing like the weather in the area or access to your social networking site. These little things make people feel welcome and it offers functionality. If a person has the option to buy a ticket for a museum using online banking they will be happy.

A virtual city tour can convince prospective visitors that the city is the place to be.

Interactivity can be defined in different ways:

- Interactivity helps organizations to communicate with consumers irrespective of the time or their location (Blattberg and Deighton 1991).
- Interactivity has two main features: the ability to reach out to a person and to remember their response (Deighton 1996).
- Interactivity is "the extent to which users can participate in modifying the format and content of a mediated environment in real time." (Steuer 1992, p. 84)

These different definitions when being looked at closely can be categorized by whether they concentrate on, human-computer interaction, human-human interaction, or human-message interaction (Cho and Leckenby 1997). Human-computer interaction is what early definitions of interactivity focused on, in which, emphasis was placed on humans interacting with computers. In order to be interactive, a computer must be able to respond to users' actions. Human-computer interaction is a key component of interactivity.

In a successful website, users are able to interact with the medium and this interaction allows consumers to dictate what information is available to them and for how long that information remains there (Steuer, 1992).

The non-linear data using hyperlinks encourages consumers to view all information in pre-set order. The level of interactivity provided can determine the categorization of the website (Coyle and Thorson, 2001). Interactive websites increases the communication between customer and company. Interactive tools are a necessity because through them we now have consumers participating in the process of communication. Companies are taking a new approach and learning more about their customers in order to have a better dialogue with them.

The interactive features, quality and quantity are vital components to understanding how cities are using the web to communicate with their target markets.

Research Questions

It can be of great importance and interest how cities apply marketing theory, trying to increase urban management targets, cities all over the world are increasingly utilizing the ideas and methods of product branding to be used within their marketing strategy.

Generally speaking, organizations from the public sector have been criticized for not being able to fully exploit the opportunities presented by new mediums (Schultz, 1999), especially in the marketing field (Matson, 1994). The majority of the emphasis up to this point has been on the advertising of cities as tourist destinations hotspots (Wöber, 2003). It is one of the main reasons why certain researchers claim that a lot of city managers use marketing as a means to an end; for promotional activity as opposed to a philosophy that identifies and satisfies customer needs (Warnaby and Davies, 1997). If this also applies to the internet, city manager's may not be harnessing the full power of the internet.

Therefore, their internet tactics may be lacking, as an example, using your website as a promotional method with tourists without any interactive features. Because of this certain doubts concerning the city's ability to run a website arise. If a city fails to fully harness the interactive potential of the internet they may miss their strategic objectives.

The main goal of this research is to identify how the 20 cities most visited by tourists use their websites to please their targets. This study will analyse the data offered by each website and interactivity it offers, so we can make comparisons between different countries. From this analysis we can make presumptions about world cities current strategies and offer possible alternative strategies to improve upon their internet marketing performance. That being said, the next four research questions become important:

Research question 1: Of the 20 most visited cities of the world which are the most successful in using their website as a marketing tool?

Research question 2: Of the 5 most visited cities of Spain which are most successful in using their website as a marketing tool?

Research question 3: Of the world's 20 most visited cities how can they improve their utilization of their website as a marketing tool?

Research question 4: Of Spain's 5 most visited cities how can they improve their utilization of their website as a marketing tool?

Research Method

For this research a web content analysis procedure was used. In order to examine the interactive features of websites an analysis of the web content was employed, this determines how the city use their website to acknowledge their target markets.

Sample selection and data collection: It is very time consuming to perform a detailed Content analysis and this presents a limit on the size of the sample (Harris and Attour, 2003).

Therefore, it was felt there was a need to focus on the world's 20 most (tourist) popular cities; so, the sample was drawn from the official websites of these cities. The official webpages of World City capitals were found using "Wikipedia".

Procedure: The analysis of information which defines the unit of analysis for a cross-section of webpages is hard, because individual pages are interconnected, the presence of hyperlinks that have no relevant information can be confusing and some data may be redundant.

I only used English websites for my study.

Coding Scheme: Nine categories of different information were created, based on a pre-test to 3 scholars and 4 students, they are: administration, business, culture, education, health, history, housing, job and tourism.

The first objective was to find and then code the presence of the categories of each webpage. Depending on whether or not the category was present or absent, website values of "1" or "0" were then assigned.

The second step was to assess the data within each category assigning values from one to nine in order to rank the information depending how much information is contained in each part of the webpage. A nine point semantic differential scale was used to measure the amount of information. A guide of the most readily available information contents can be found in appendix two.

The third step is analyzing the interactivity of each webpage because interactive features can entice consumers to use the site and interact with it. I examined three types of interactivity; search engines, e-mail communication and virtual tours.

- Search engines: are websites that allows the consumer to find information they desire quickly.
- E-mail: is very helpful in helping the city and its audience establish a method of communicating cheaply and quickly.
- A virtual tour allows the audience to feel like they are in the city without physically being there.

The English version website of each city values of "0" or "1" were given depending on whether interactive features were absent or present.

Results

Quality and quantity of contents: Do websites of the worlds most visited cities have sustenance?

World Cities

The purpose of this study was to see if the official websites of the 20 most visited cities provided enough data for their target demographics. These target demographics were: administration, business, culture, education, health, history, housing, job and tourism. Each website was reviewed to decide if information for the corresponding target demographic was included, and if it was how much of the information offered.

Table 1 offers summaries of the results for the amount and the variety of content. The websites of London, Hong Kong, Macau, New York, Dubai, Singapore, Barcelona, Beijing and Los Angeles offer sufficient data in all categories. Meaning a person who is in the target demographic could view these websites and find relevant information, these are the websites with the strongest content.

The websites of Istanbul, Shanghai and Las Vegas contain all categories; however, some of the sites lacked depth and content on certain pages. At the other end of the spectrum, Miami, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Paris, Antalya, and Rome had websites that were lacking in terms of content; they did not meet the standards a city's official website should aspire to. For these cities, they mainly contained tourism related information and basic pop culture information.

Mecca and Cairo have yet to build an English site; they only have Arabic sites which makes it impossible to conduct the study on their webpages. It is noteworthy that despite Rome being the one of the most visited world cities it does not have an English website.

City	Adminis- -tration	Busi- -Ness	Culture	Edu- -cation	Health	History	Housing	Job	Tourism	Variety/ Amount
Hong Kong	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9
Singapore	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9
London	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9
Macau	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9
Bangkok	1/1	1/1	1/4	1/3	1/3	1/3	0/-	0/-	1/5	7/2.9
Antalya	1/1	1/1	1/5	1/2	0/-	1/6	0/-	0/-	1/6	6/3.5
Kuala Lumpur	0/-	1/5	1/4	1/4	1/8	1/3	1/7	0/-	1/4	7/5
New York City	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9
Paris	1/1	1/1	1/9	1/5	0/-	1/9	1/3	1/2	1/9	8/4.9
Istanbul	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/5	1/7	1/7	1/7	1/7	1/9	9/7.6
Dubai	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9
Mecca	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Miami	1/9	1/9	1/5	1/3	1/3	1/4	0/-	0/-	1/9	7/6
Rome*	0/-	1/1	1/7	1/1	1/3	1/9	0/-	0/-	1/9	6/5
Shanghai	1/7	1/9	1/7	1/9	1/5	1/3	1/9	1/7	1/9	9/7.2
Barcelona	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9
Las Vegas	1/9	1/9	1/7	1/5	1/7	1/9	1/9	1/6	1/9	9/7.7
Cairo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beijing	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9
Los Angeles	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	9/9

Table 1: Variety and Useful Content (World Cities)

Note: The first number shows whether the category is included or not (0-included, 1-excluded) and the second number refers to the amount of information (1 meaning very low to 9 meaning very high).

*Was analyzed on the Italian language website

Spanish Cities

The same study was used to find the 5 most visited cities in Spain with the aim of comparing its websites with the websites of the most visited cities in the world. The analysis was made in Almeria as well, because I thought it might be interesting to see how the city could improve its website in order to attract more tourism and target groups within the public.

Only one of the six cities cover all the categories, Alicante meets the acceptable mark in all of the categories, the problem is, it meets the mark at the lowest possible point and still has problems. Alicante has five categories that excel and go above and beyond

what is generally recommended which are administration, business, culture, housing, and tourism. It is however, let down because education, health and employment information; all of these sections have virtually no useful information. These sections need to be updated immediately.

Alicante is a perfect example of a website in limbo, it has a lot of good qualities but they are deemed useless because the other sections fall well below par. A few tweaks to the website and it will shoot up the world rankings.

There are four cities which have eight of nine categories but some of the categories lacked depth of information. These cities are Madrid, Málaga, Gerona and Sevilla. Madrid has a decent amount of information in the culture, employment and tourism sections but lacks useful information in housing, administration and business and have enough information on the city's history.

It is quite telling that the only category that all cities achieve a good result is in tourism, this indicates that the primary target of Spanish cities is tourists; this is understandable as Spain has a massive tourism industry. If they compounded this excellence with the same in other sections their websites would be of a very high caliber.

The website of Almería loses points in four categories, there is no information about health, history, housing, and job, there is good, reliable information in the business section but this isn't enough, the city needs to improve the administration and tourism sections and make more effort in the culture and education sections. At the very least Almeria should be better in its tourism section to gain an equal footing with competing cities.

City	Adminis- -tration	Busi- -Ness	Culture	Edu- -cation	Health	History	Housing	Job	Tourism	Variety/ Amount
Madrid	1/6	1/6	1/9	1/7	1/7	0/-	1/5	1/9	1/9	8/7.25
Málaga	1/8	1/5	1/7	1/7	0/-	1/9	1/9	1/5	1/9	8/7.37
Gerona	1/7	0/-	1/7	1/7	1/9	1/8	1/9	1/1	1/9	8/7.12
Alicante	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/3	1/2	1/6	1/9	1/2	1/9	9/6.44
Sevilla	1/9	0/-	1/9	1/9	1/4	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	8/8.37
Almería	1/7	1/9	1/5	1/5	0/-	0/-	0/-	0/-	1/7	5/6.6

Table 2: Variety and Useful Content (Spanish Cities)

Interactive features: Are the websites utilizing interactive features?

World Cities

The second objective of my study was to discover the extent the cities were using the three interactive features. Surprisingly, overall, the use of interactivity on websites was low. Table three demonstrates this; only seven cities (Hong Kong London, New York City, Singapore, Istanbul and Dubai) include all three features: e-mail, search engine and virtual tours of the city. Sixteen cities had a search engine, seventeen included an e-mail and seven offered access to a virtual city, these were all on the English website version. It was a little surprising that, in 2012, Rome was once again found to be lacking as they did not provide any contact information and this is a key feature for a city website to build a relationship with its customers (Macias and Lewis, 2003). Kuala Lumpur and Miami have for some reason decided not to include a search engine in their website.

City	Search engine	E-mail contact	Virtual tour of the city	Total
Hong Kong	1	1	1	3
Singapore	1	1	1	3
London	1	1	1	3
Macau	1	1	0	2
Bangkok	1	1	0	2
Antalya	1	1	0	2
Kuala Lumpur	0	1	0	1
New York City	1	1	1	3
Paris	1	1	0	2
Istanbul	1	1	1	3
Dubai	1	1	1	3
Mecca	-	-	-	-
Miami	0	1	0	1
Rome	1	0	0	1
Shanghai	1	1	0	2
Barcelona	1	1	1	3
Las Vegas	1	1	0	2
Cairo	-	-	-	-
Beijing	1	1	0	2
Los Angeles	1	1	0	2
Total	16	17	7	-

Table 3: Interactive Features (World Cities)

Spanish Cities

Three of the six cities I have analysed have managed to retain the interactive features on their websites. This in itself is an interesting statistic telling us that only 50% of Spanish cities are making full use of the potentially money making website interaction tool.

Málaga, Sevilla and surprisingly Almeria all have search engines which is very useful to have as it allows users to find information they are interested in super quickly. It is not surprising they all have e-mail contact and Virtual tours of their cities as these are fundamental parts of any website using internet marketing. Madrid and Gerona only have search engine and e-mail contact, this is disappointing because as stated above virtual tours are very easy to get and simple to add to the website. Alicante has set the bar very low and showed the world how not to operate an internet marketing campaign, they have only a search engine

City	Search Engine	E-mail Contact	Virtual Tour Of The City	Total
Madrid	1	1	0	2
Málaga	1	1	1	3
Gerona	1	1	0	2
Alicante	1	0	0	1
Sevilla	1	1	1	3
Almería	1	1	1	3

Table 4: Interactive Features (Spanish Cities)

Strengths and weaknesses of cities most visited

I am going to assess the strengths and weaknesses and then I'm going to suggest ways the website can be improved.

Table five shows each city's website and the strengths and weaknesses that website has. Some of the more important issues; Rome does not have the option of viewing the whole website in English. Only after clicking the hyperlink "*Roma turismo*" in their Italian version is limited English language content available, this is the same with certain other languages as well. This shows that the city is clearly targeting tourists.

Likewise, Paris, which is considered by many as one of the most beautiful and important World Capitals for historical, cultural, and economic reasons, has a relatively poor website and many feel it needs to be improved. Only content has been fully developed.

City	Strengths	Weaknesses
Hong Kong	Lots on information directed to all demographics	Appears a little cluttered
Singapore	Great information	A little bland
London	The most complete section is tourism.	Room for improvement in other sections
Macau	All content is easily accessible.	No tour of a virtual city
Bangkok	Tourists will find a lot of relevant info	Other sections are a bit bare.
Antalya	Tourism and culture and key components.	No health section. Lacking information in the rest of the sections.
Kuala Lumpur	Good information in health and housing	Lacking quality information in the rest of the sections.
New York City	There is a lot of content.	Doesn't utilize all the screen space.
Paris	Has an expansive section for tourists and exchange students.	Important information is missing in many of website's sections.
Istanbul	Strong sections on tourism, admin, business and culture	Education section does not go into detail.
Dubai	Every section provides a lot of information.	Home page is a little congested.
Mecca	-----	-----
Miami	Complete sections on tourism, administration and business	Relevant information seem to have been forgotten
Rome	Specialized in tourism. It also contains historical and cultural information.	There is no English translation on the website. English is only available in the tourism section
Shanghai	Business, education, housing and tourism are well developed	Lacking information in history
Barcelona	Very good information in all sections	A little slow to download the homepage
Las Vegas	Good information in general	Lacking information in education
Cairo	-----	-----
Beijing	Complete contents	Lacking a virtual tour
Los Angeles	Very good sections	Lacking a virtual tour

Table 5: Strengths and weaknesses of the world cities websites

City	Strengths	Weaknesses
Madrid	Straightforward interface	Information is not easily accessible when not on the main page
Málaga	A lot of data	No English translation
Gerona	Easy to use website, a lot of information.	Google translate must be used to view in English
Alicante	Very easy to use, English translation available, interactive	Important information seems to be missing
Sevilla	Very good virtual tour	Hard to access information when not on the home page
Almería	Very easy to use interface, information is available at all times	There is no option to translate the page into English

Table 6: Strengths and weaknesses of the Spanish city's websites

Implications for city management

City managers must have the flexibility to be able to adapt, if changes in the environment take place and they need to make sure their internet strategy is considered. Particularly, in the form the websites belonging to the city.

Different websites provide different services to their target markets. If information content and quality is absent from the website it will lead to the users searching elsewhere for the required information (e.g. internet, magazines), which of course wastes times and effort. The city's image could suffer if the target market cannot find information they are looking for.

To conclude my study, I analysed some design aspects (images and photos, size of the pages, ease of navigation, text size and font colour). After studying these design aspects, added with the previously researched content analysis, careful advice for improving websites with the most internet traffic can be given.

Table seven offers some ideas that city management should consider in order to improve their website. If city managers implement these ideas they can potentially increase their website's effectiveness in catering to their target markets.

City	Suggestions
Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move e-mail to a more prominent position so it is more visible
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make certain sections more aesthetically pleasing
London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make all content easily accessible • Tourism information should be very simple to access.
Macau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a virtual tour
Bangkok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a work and housing section • Develop information for the rest of sections
Antalya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go straight into the website, not through a splash screen • Add health, housing and work sections
Kuala Lumpur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the information in business, culture, education, history and tourism sections • Add administration and job sections
New York City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the webpage utilizes all possible screen space
Paris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A health section should be included. • Admin, business, work, and education sections need to be updated • Remove duplicated link and Make sure all content is available in English
Istanbul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add more information to the education section
Dubai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure links are not duplicated.
Mecca	_____
Miami	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include work and housing sections • Improve the culture, education, Health and history sections
Rome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the website is available in English or at the very least make sure key sections (culture, health and history) are translated.
Shanghai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to the history and health sections
Barcelona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the E-mail at the bottom of the page and locate it more prominently
Las Vegas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to the education section
Cairo	_____
Beijing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a virtual tour • Translate into different languages
Los Angeles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a virtual tour • Enhance the pictures throughout the website.

Table 7: Suggestion for website improvements (World Cities)

Limitations

World Cities

This study has a number of limitations that ought to be considered. Content analysis has limitations also. The study is limited to the content quality and the interaction that the website offers. The fast pace changing environment of the internet also limit the findings of the study because websites change daily and may be different to when the study took place.

Only the English version of the website was studied; so subconsciously we are paying a higher amount of attention to out-of-city market targets in non-English speaking countries, such as foreign investors, tourists and potential new residents. It is not yet known how effective these results are when being extrapolated to other languages. It's more than likely that websites are first created in their native language and translated to another language at a later date. This means my analysis could be more homogeneous than first believed. However, the research could be advantageous to English speaking countries.

Spanish Cities

I performed the analysis of the Spanish city websites in Spanish; I did this because some of the websites were only available in Spanish.

Madrid: has an English page but it is only available in the tourism section, the rest of the site is in Spanish.

Málaga: The whole website is in English, as in the previous case if you click on tourism you can change the language which suggests that this city is only interested in foreign tourists and not in foreign investors for example.

Gerona: The main website is in Catalan, you can't change this language, that option is not available. There is a translate tool (Google translate) installed on the website which translates the content into different languages but there is not an English version for the website but again you find the English version in the tourism link.

Alicante: On this website you can choose an English version, however this is not brilliant; only the main links on the page e.g. home, contact appear in English all other content remains in the native Spanish. The tourism section can be translated but this is the only one, once again this suggests the city is targeting tourists.

Sevilla: There is a link that takes you to the official website of Tourism of Seville in which you can choose the language but on the official site of Seville all content is in Spanish.

Almeria: There is no content in English in any part of the website, if you click on tourism you find some information in Spanish. This one is particularly weak, if you click on a tourism link it suggests you are not a national of that country and hence do not speak the local tongue. It should be obvious this needs to be translatable.

Further Research

When conducting further research it should be performed so that it will examine other aspects of the internet, such as menu organization, amount and quality of information, ease of access to desired information. These are all important aspects which contribute to internet marketing sustainability. Meaning these elements aren't of a high quality they will decrease from the city websites effectiveness. This study takes into account differences between the websites regarding these aspects, but hasn't accounted for them.

All cities should be analysed so better conclusions can be obtained in reference to the most visited cities methods of communication.

Conclusions

World Cities

My study served its purpose in examining communication strategies that today's world cities are projecting via the internet.

What we learned:

Companies recognize the importance of the internet; they have finally begun to realize they are not just advertising to people in the country they reside, they are targeting a set of people throughout the world. These people can be reached using the tools that we have discussed in this paper.

There is still room for improvement; Even though these city websites are making strides into becoming leaders in internet marketing techniques, they are far from perfect. They should all try to reach a standard where they accomplish the aforementioned goals all have quality content, a solid quantity of content and interactive features.

Wise Up; Certain cities are being left behind; they are not treating internet marketing like it is a necessity. This is a mistake and they will inevitably get left behind by the other cities, this means their tourism industry will suffer and their city will fall down the rankings in the world arena.

What can website administration do?

Embrace internet marketing; It is here to stay, so don't be afraid. Utilize the tools of the internet (many of which are free).

Have a clear strategy; the city should know exactly what it is wants to achieve with its strategy and should stick with it e.g. who they are targeting, if a strategy loses its coherency it will become unviable and useless.

Be active; the website should be maintained consistently and thoroughly, consumers like to feel they are important to you.

How to improve a city's website:

As mentioned earlier some websites have really embraced internet marketing and are very proficient there are certain cities that are infinitely lacking, for example Cairo.

English; It is absolutely essential that the website at the very least can be translated to English, although it should have its own stand alone English website. It is one of the most used languages in the world after all.

Content; The importance of content cannot be stressed enough; content should never be neglected as it is probably the driving force of your site. If you can tell people what they need to know they have no reason to leave.

Interactive options; These can be fun and educational, so you want your users to be able to use anything from a virtual tour to social media access to PayPal options. Applications can be a nice touch because your customers will associate your website and therefore your city with fun and useful features.

Navigation and functionality; It must be simple to move around the website and ideally you should be able to get to any piece of information wherever you are on the website within a couple of clicks of the mouse.

Think of the public/consumers; you should always try and imagine you are a customer when adding information to your site. Making sure it is insightful, informative and relevant. You should also ask yourself there any information missing that could be useful, if there is add it! The website's priority is satisfying them.

Following these guidelines and advice can ensure a city has a great website that is successful on the internet.

Spanish Cities

Spanish cities seem reluctant to fully commit to internet marketing and in particular the English translation aspect that it entails. As stated earlier internet marketing requires the co-existence of customer and world website, so it seems a little lazy and misinformed to refrain from having English translations.

None of the cities has a dedicated English page which is a bit confusing considering how popular these cities are with the British and Americans, also many people in the world speak English.

The cities are some of the most well-known tourist destinations; it should be a priority to give as much information to as many people as possible in the world, hopefully persuading them that it is the city to visit. In order to do this my advice would be to use four languages English, Spanish, French and Portuguese, that way a huge amount of people can be reached. It would be advisable for city administrators to take this into consideration to bolster their internet marketing campaigns.

Despite these concerns the Spanish websites are excellent in their content and the information they supply. There is plenty of data informing the user of all the local news and local events taking place. You can also read a history of the city on most of the websites which is a clever way to get people curious for more information.

The cities of Spain seem more than competent when it comes to the layout of their websites, they are all very clear and intuitive for the user and allow the interested party to navigate the website freely and easily. Users can get any piece of information with a few clicks of the mouse from any point on the website.

It is just unfortunate, you have to be Spanish to read it!

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Other complementary sources

- Euromonitor
- National Statistics Institute
- Own research
- Tourspain
- Wikipedia

APPENDIX ONE

TOP WORLD CITY DESTINATION RANKINGS AND THEIR OFFICIAL WEBSITES

WORLD CITIES

RANKING	COUNTRY	CITY	NUMBER OF TOURISTS	WEBSITE
1	China	Hong Kong	19,973.000	http://www.gov.hk
2	Singapore	Singapore	18,297.000	http://www.gov.sg
3	United Kingdom	London	14,706.000	http://www.london.gov.uk
4	China	Macau	13,098.000	http://portal.gov.mo
5	Thailand	Bangkok	10,984.000	http://www.bangkok.go.th
6	Turkey	Antalya	10,641.000	http://www.antalya.bel.tr
7	Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	10,351.000	http://www.dbkl.gov.my
8	United States	New York City	8,961.000	http://www.nyc.gov
9	France	Paris	8,176.000	http://www.paris.fr
10	Turkey	Istanbul	8,124.000	http://www.ibb.gov.tr
11	U. Arab Emirates	Dubai	7,752.000	http://www.dubai.ae
12	Saudi Arabia	Mecca	6,122.000	http://www.holymakkah.gov.sa
13	United States	Miami	6,003.000	http://www.miamigov.com
14	Italy	Rome	5,620.000	http://www.comune.roma.it
15	China	Shanghai	5,397.000	http://www.shanghai.gov.cn
16	Spain	Barcelona	5,160.000	http://www.bcn.cat
17	United States	Las Vegas	5,130.000	http://www.lasvegasnevada.gov
18	Egypt	Cairo	4,998.000	http://www.cairo.gov.eg
19	China	Beijing	4,901.000	http://www.ebeijing.gov.cn
20	United States	Los Angeles	4,550.000	http://www.lacity.org

Source: Euromonitor.

Top City Destinations Ranking 2010. (Published: January 10, 2012)

APPENDIX TWO

TOP CITY DESTINATION RANKING AND THEIR OFICIAL WEBSITES

SPANISH CITIES

RANKING	CITY	NUMBER OF TOURISTS	WEBSITE
1	Madrid	4,303.233	http://www.madrid.es
2	Málaga	2,023.915	http://www.malaga.eu
3	Gerona	1,809.658	http://www2.girona.cat
4	Alicante	1,209.073	http://www.alicante.es
5	Sevilla	1,072.282	http://www.sevilla.org
6	Almería	150.849	http://www.aytoalmeria.es

Source: National Statistic Institute (Arrivals in 2010)

**APPENDIX THREE
INFORMATION CATEGORIES AND COMMON CONTENTS INCLUDED**

Administration	Administrative structure Mayor City councilors The city administration Projects
Business	Information for invest Facts and Figures Necessary's documents for citizens Convention Bureau
Culture	Museums Theatre Events Tickets online Other information
Education	Child-care centers Public school University Directions of interest Other information
Health	Health insurance List of Doctors List of Hospitals List of emergency telephones. Other information
History	Past History Contemporaneous History
Housing	Right of residence Assistance to find a house con Directions of interest Other information
Job	work permissions where to find a job information for citizens Other information
Tourism	Sightseeing Accommodation Recommendations Photos Other information

APPENDIX FOUR
WEBSITES OF THE MOST VISITED CITIES

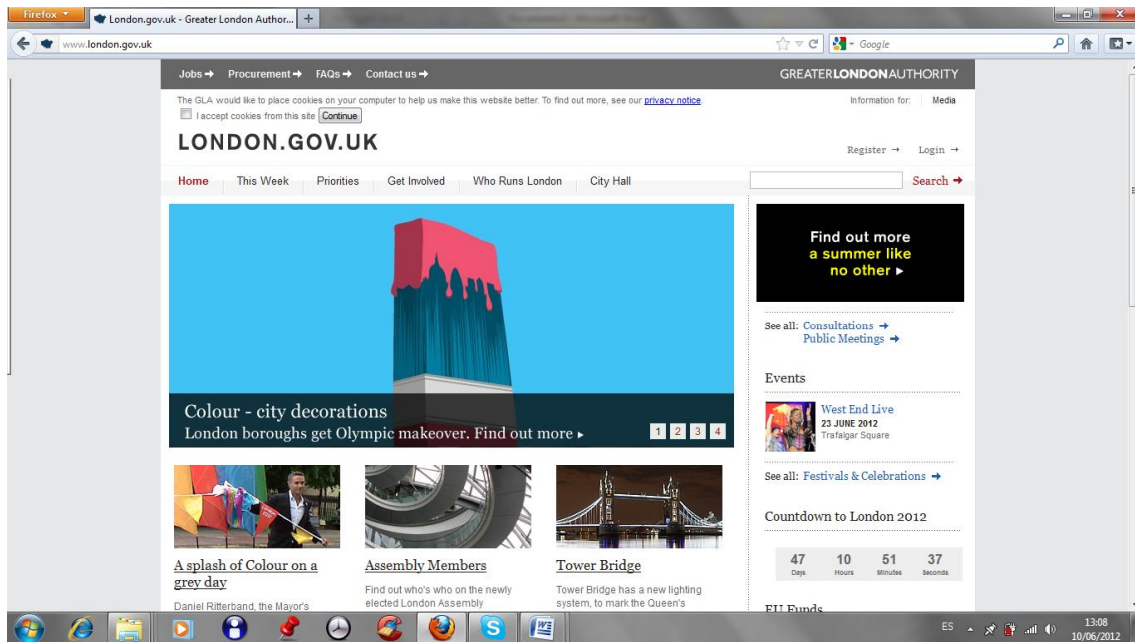
WORLD CITIES
Hong Kong (China)



Singapore (Singapore)



London (United Kingdom)



Macau (China)



Bankok (Thailand)



Antalya (Turkey)



Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)



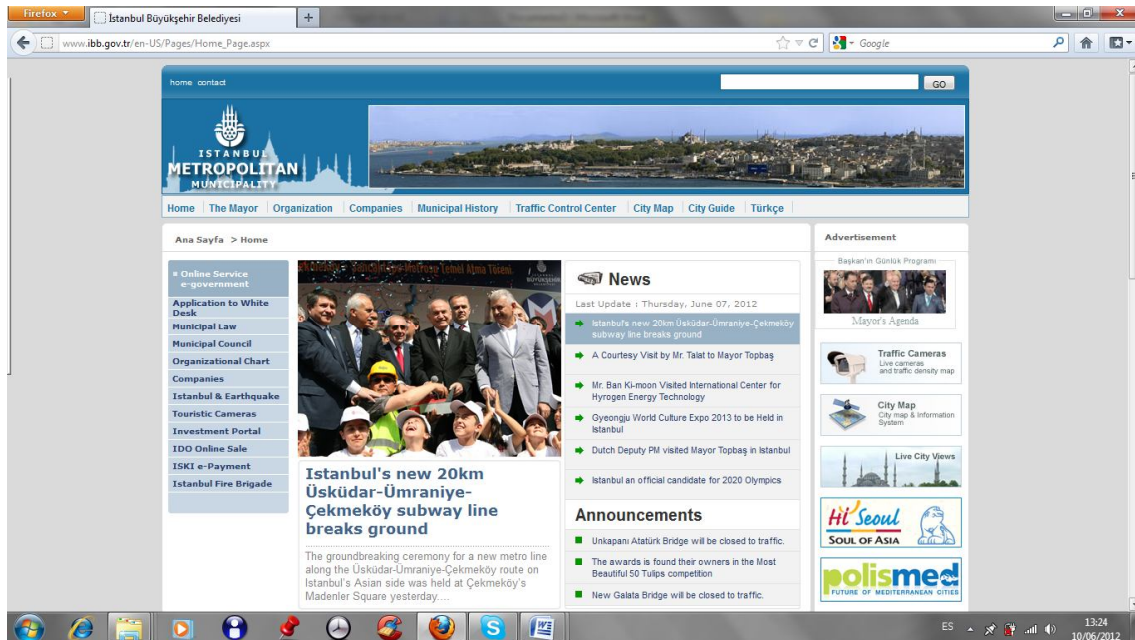
New York City (United States)



Paris (France)



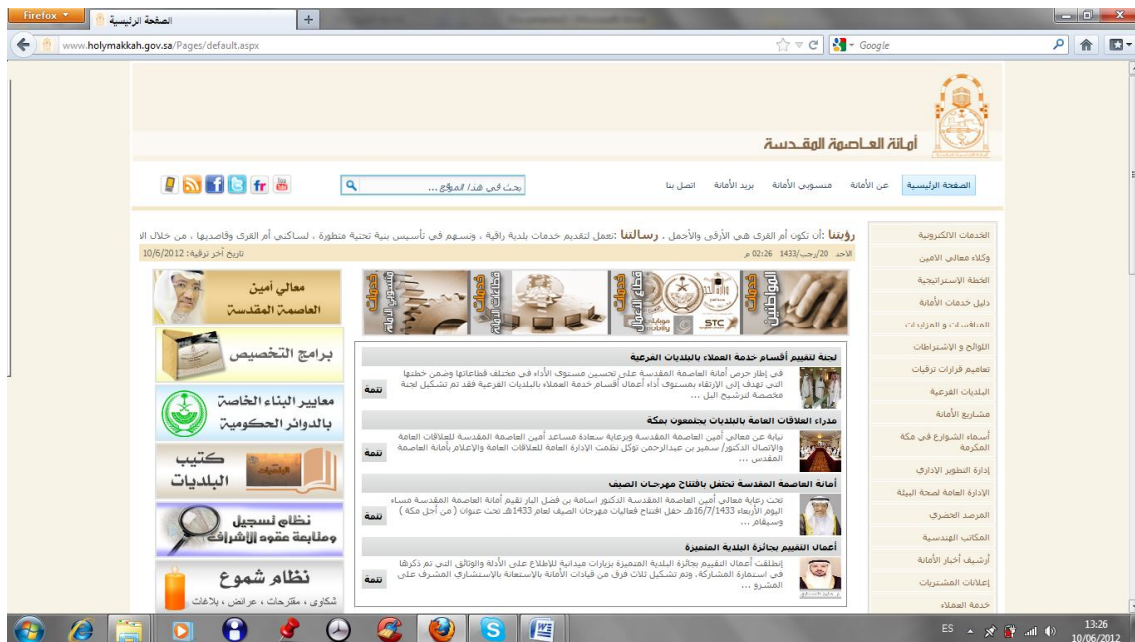
Istanbul (Turkey)



Dubai (U. Arab Emirates)



Mecca (Saudi Arabia)



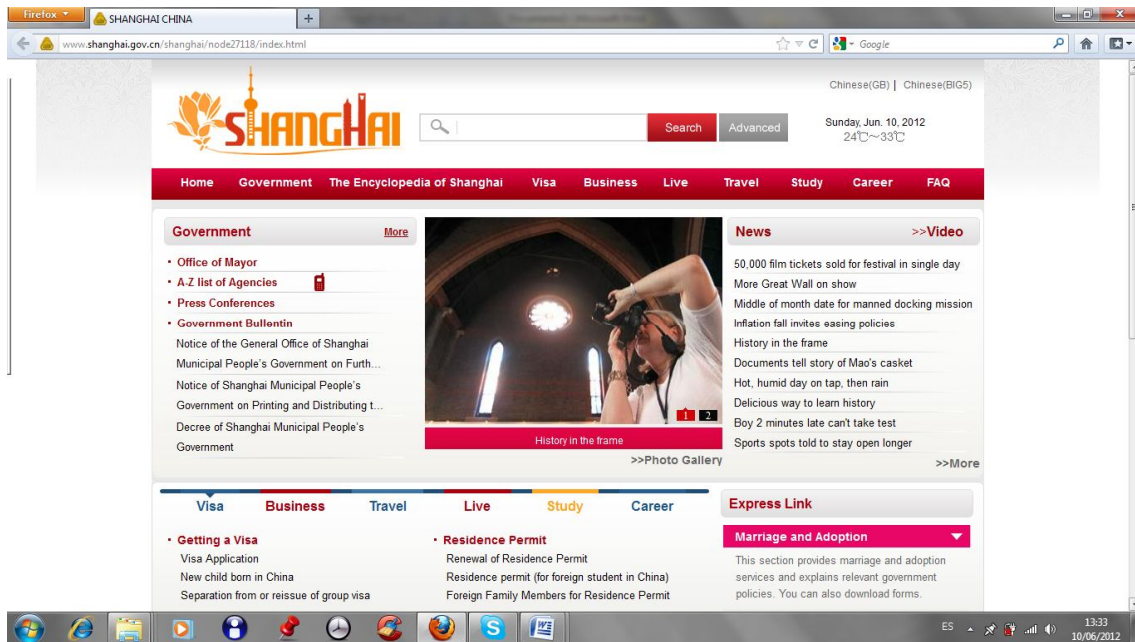
Miami (United States)



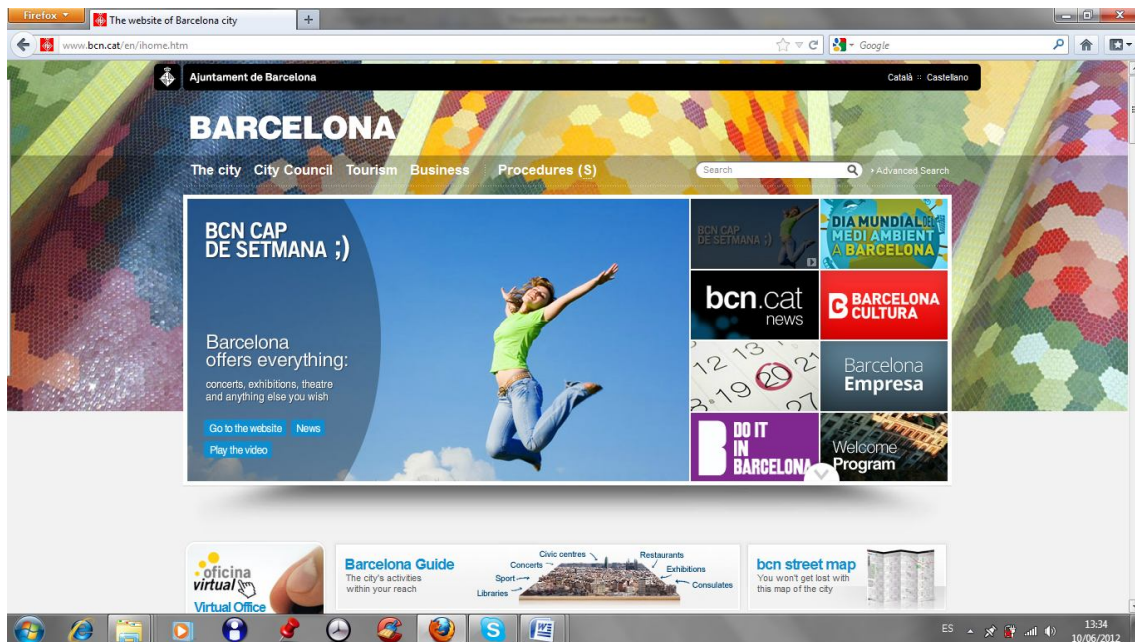
Rome (Italy)



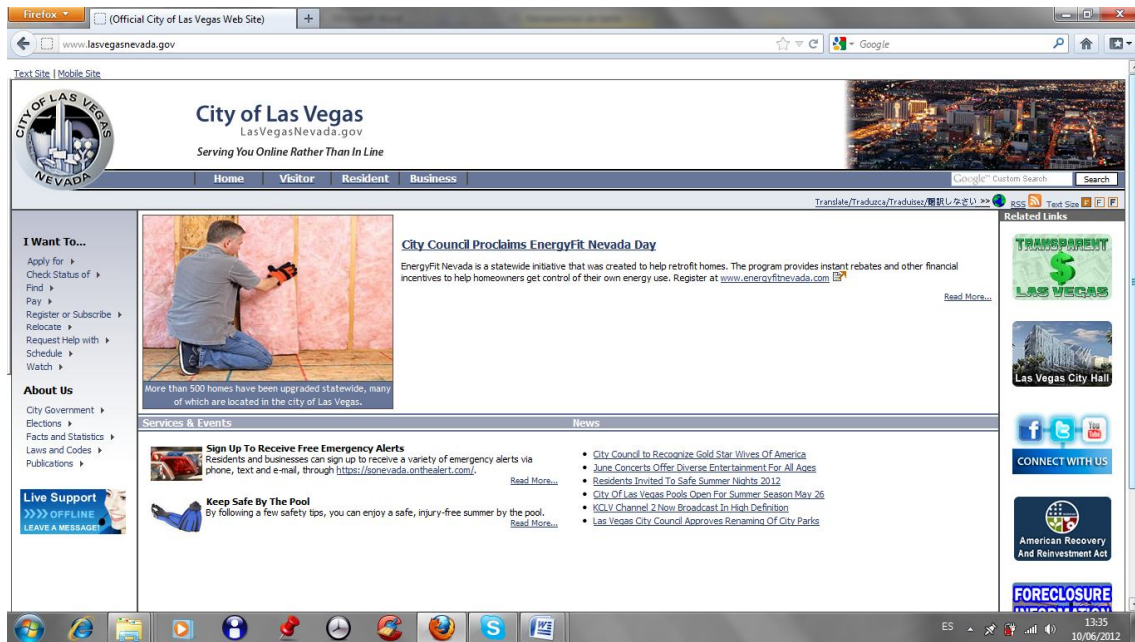
Shanghai (China)



Barcelona (Spain)



Las Vegas (United States)



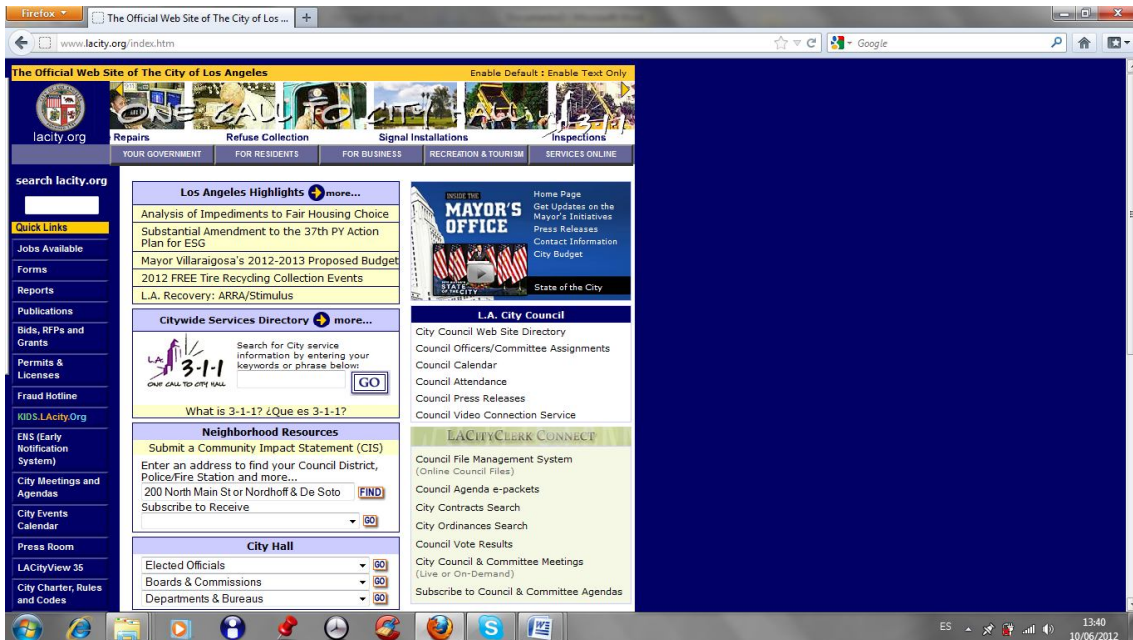
Cairo (Egypt)



Beijing (China)

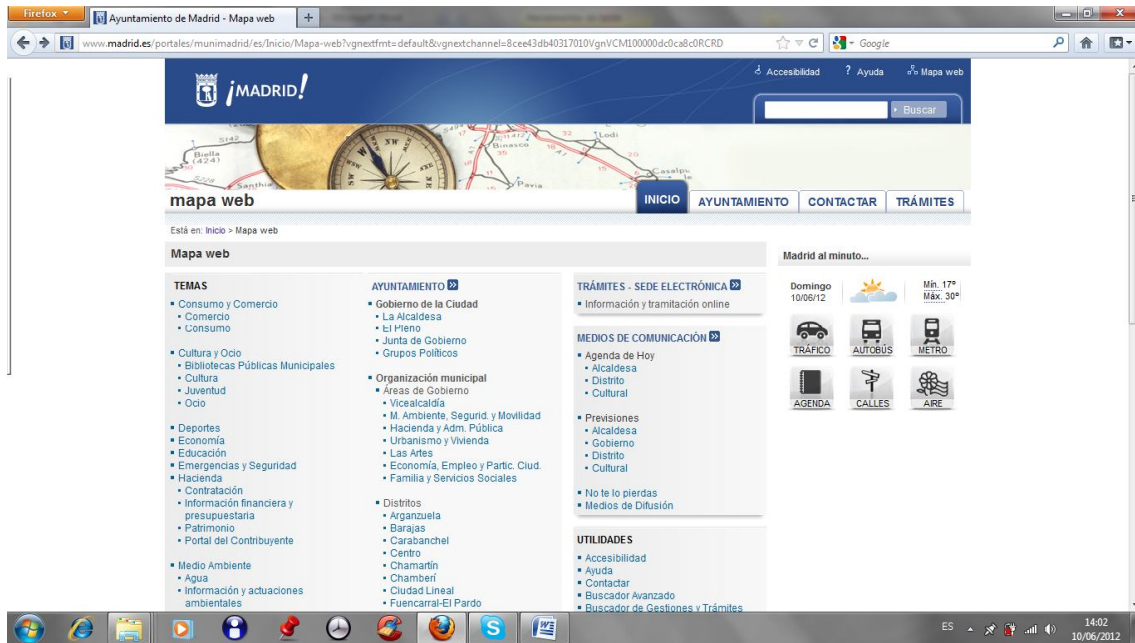


Los Angeles (United States)



SPANISH CITIES

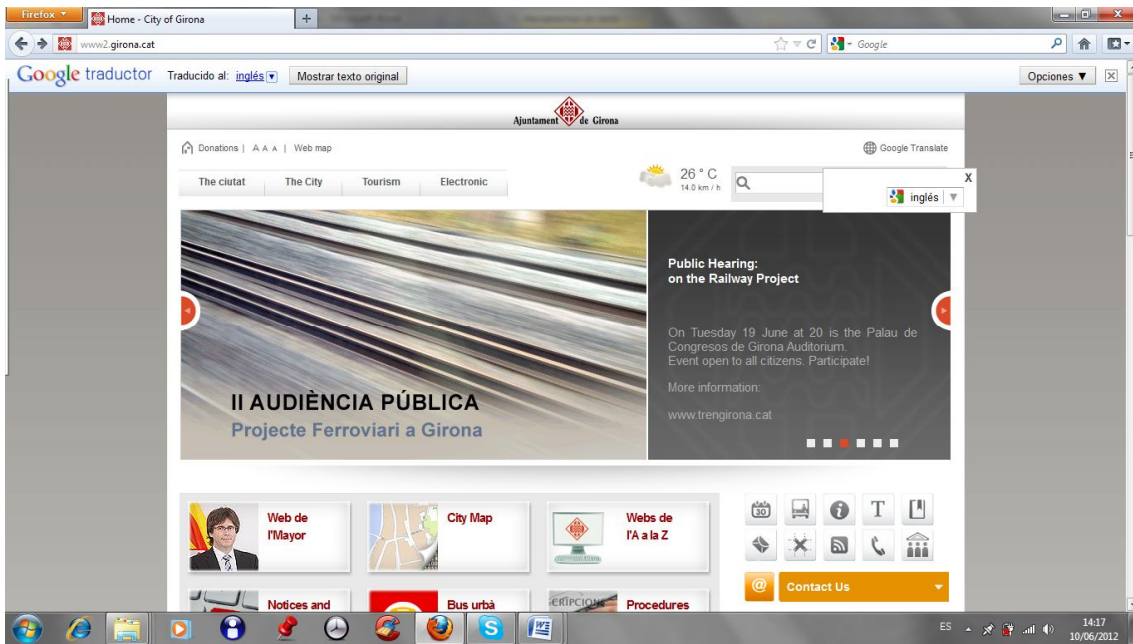
Madrid



Málaga



Gerona



Alicante



Sevilla



Almería

