

Article

Reviewing the Content of European Countries' Official Tourism Websites: A Neo/Post-Fordist Perspective

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Abstract: The content of the EU28 Destination Management Organisations' (DMOs') official tourism websites is studied to understand how each country is promoting its online position and image, and whether this is compatible with the new forms of neo/post-Fordism consumption. The research incorporates critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method to analyse the content of the websites for tourism promotion. Today, destinations struggle to portray a unique image in terms of their natural, historical and cultural characteristics and to be ahead of the competition. This paper aims to bring together the 27 EU member states and the United Kingdom's (EU28) DMOs' official tourism websites and review their content. The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with the aim of identifying the EU member states' written web communication with potential visitors and to understand how each country is represented on the web in relation to neo/post-Fordism. The results of the study suggest that the EU28 are positioned online with website content to urge travellers to visit their country and gain constructive experiences within the remits of neo/post-Fordist characteristics. The paper follows an original approach in using CDA of EU28 official website online content in relation to neo/post-Fordist remits of production.

Keywords: EU28; critical discourse analysis; official tourism websites; online content; neo/post-Fordism



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1. Introduction

Currently, official national tourism bodies such as Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) must create a unique image, constructed with various characteristics, in order to differentiate a country from other destinations [1]. These characteristics are presented to postulate a pre-imagined image during pre-travelling in the way that a destination can be experienced during travelling [2]. Dann's (1996) [3] argument is that, before visiting a destination, travellers construct the experience in their imaginations according to what they know and what they have seen from various sources (magazines, brochures, TV). Thus, the perceived or the pre-travel imagined visualisation of experience is the most important criterion by which to determine tourism movement and of course the choice of destination [4,5].

At present, tourism content is retrieved with information and images through the internet, with national websites offering the first impression for the potential visitors [6–8]. Official tourism governmental organisations' websites have entered into the market dynamically and have been established as destination management systems (DMS) [9] that act as retailers in selling the destination [10–12]. Consumers are engaging in new technologies with enthusiasm in order to make their tourism experiences more dynamic [13,14]. The tourism process via the web involves browsing and booking holidays, retrieving information, watching travel videos, posting comments, reviews and photographs [15] travel websites constitute an important source of information with frequent visits by potential travellers [16–18].

It is generally believed, with ample evidence, that there has been a change in demographics and people's behaviour [19]. The change of demographics has been described as a

shift to a postmodern society with a flexible form of production and consumption, characterised as the neo/post-Fordist era [5]. This paper aims to review through critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) the content of the official national websites of the 27 European member states plus the United Kingdom (hereafter the EU28) in order to identify whether through the online promotion and positioning as a tool of communication in terms of the words, texts and information presented can meet the needs the post/neo-Fordism tourists. In particular, the EU28's DMO websites are studied, to understand each one's online positioning by reviewing the content. The following questions will be answered:

- (1) How is each country promoting its online tourism image and niche position through its written content (words, texts, sentences, slogans) on their official websites?
- (2) How does the written content align with the post/neo-Fordism spectrum of production and consumption?

The content analysis is based on the characteristics of neo/post-Fordist consumption patterns. The next section discusses how tourism is produced and consumed and is followed by a section on the evolution of tourists' behaviour, with an emphasis on the notion of neo/post-Fordist tourists. The two sections form the theoretical backdrop of the study.

2. Literature Review

Tourism development and planning are evidently guided by tourist behaviour; therefore, a thorough examination is needed to understand and decode that behaviour [20]. Prominent researchers [21–24] have studied tourism consumption and provided a rich literature with useful conclusions. Urry, in his seminal works (1990, 1992, 1995) [25–27], argued that tourism consumption is directly related to changes in society. Additionally, many notable researchers have depicted society's changes and the way life is consumed [25,28–31]. Classification of tourism lifestyles, beliefs and norms is essential for the tourism domain because of the heterogeneous and multidimensional position of tourism destinations in relation to the variety of human perceptions relating to the tourism experience [32,33]. Over recent years there has been a significant switch in consumer behaviour and consumption patterns within the tourism context [34]. New products have emerged to satisfy the emotional, social and natural needs of the current customers. Thus, new tourism packages are developed to address and satisfy the well-educated, independent and high self-esteem tourists of the twenty-first century.

Boorstin (1964) [28] cleverly discussed life consumption through 'pseudo-events', in the sense of media publicity and advertising exaggerations. Ritzer (1983) [35] added to Boorstin's (1964) [28] theory about the 'McDonaldisation' and 'Disneyfication' of society, meaning that we all consume the same products with a lack of human identity. Mass tourism is associated with the notion of 'Disneyfication', with all tourists spending their holidays in the same way and acquiring the same or similar experiences [36]. Urry (1990, 1992, 1995) [25–27] defined 'the tourist gaze' as the way tourism is experienced in the different phases of tourism development, with the consumer wanting to escape from similar consumption and become more experienced [37].

According to Tung and Brent (2011) [38], an important aspect of tourism consumption that is circumscribed in neo/post Fordism is the construction of tourism experiences as memories and recollections of the time spent in a destination. In 1999, Pine and Gilmore [39] argued that the 'experience' is the core characteristic of holidaymaking. An experience can be gauged against human behaviour, beliefs, socioeconomic status and cultural characteristics [40–45]. Storytelling is a way of expressing experiences which are dynamic and memorable [38]. This is further supported by Larsen (2007: 16) [46], who positions experiences as a 'psychological approach . . . underlining expectations, events and memories'. Additionally, experiences are subjective constructions where tourism policy makers develop destinations through customised activities that are dynamic and fulfilling [40]. This provides an interacting and participatory approach that is akin to the characteristics

of the neo/post-Fordism tourists [45]. Thus, the nucleus point of experience is to create transferable memories in terms of remembering the destination favourably [38].

D’Urso et al. (2016: 298) [47] argued that current production parameters deal with consumers who ‘enjoy multiple experiences embracing different, sometimes contrasting, life values’. Consumers’ characteristics in tourism have been described according to the post-Fordist and neo-Fordist spectrum [48], with consumers becoming the new (neo) tourists as defined by Poon (1993) [49]. Tourists are critical, experienced and educated, looking for immersive and active tourism experiences [50]. MacCannell’s [23,51] argument around authenticity is related to the new way of tourism consumption, with authenticity setting the first barrier to mass tourism, referring to living the reality and being engaged in authentic tourism activities. Other researchers have drawn attention to the importance of sustainable tourism, underpinning the concept of ethical tourism production and consumption as an important priority in tourism development [52]. The alteration in tourism behaviour towards a more ‘tangible’ tourism experience has had a great impact on the tourism package. The next section considers the Fordist paradigm in tourism.

In considering the evolution of tourists’ behaviour, scholars have borrowed the concept of the Fordist spectrum of production and consumption, adapting it to the tourism industry [37,53–56]. Fordist tourists are mass tourists [49,57–60] who are described as people looking for the same tourism activities in popular destinations [61]. In particular, the Fordist era instigates:

mass production—a system based on the production of long runs of standardized commodities for stable ‘mass’ markets and involving the progressive erosion of craft skills and the growing demand for unskilled or semi-skilled operatives (Tomaney 1994: 159) [61].

In contrast, the realm of post-Fordism refers to a transition and a transfer to a new period, which is characterised by high involvement of technological advances and the creation of customised goods and services that focus on human needs [53,62]. Post-Fordism is characterised by a trend of differentiation and a focus on specific markets that converge to the same human preference to move away from mass amorphous production [61,63]. Changing human needs and the new era of ‘post-modernism’ or ‘post-Fordism’, and many other buzzwords with the addition of the prefixes ‘post’ [5,63,64] depict the reform that characterises the transition of a new pace of life and a new dimension of influence of the contemporary world that declares ‘the emerging age of new capitalism’ (Amin 1994: 1) [64]. This is further elaborated by Piore and Charles (1984: 206) [65] argument that the new pace of production has an enterprising ‘flexible specialisation’ in the sense that there is still specialisation in certain products and goods, but the emergence of flexibility in production is referred to as tailor-made to ‘meet the needs of particular consumer groups’. Neo-Fordism provides a slight focus on ‘individualization’ with each consumer to have specific needs that lead to flexible specialization, niche market segmentation and mass customization [56]. However, there is no essential difference among neo- and post-Fordism, and for the purpose of this paper the terms are used interchangeably. Table 1 illustrates the main changes of society under the Fordist classification, and the way tourism is evolving.

Table 1. The evolution of Fordism Spectrum of tourist production and consumption.

Fordist Tourism	Post-Fordist Tourism	Neo-Fordist Tourism
Mass Tourism	Specialized/Individualized/ Customized Niche Markets Tourism	Niche Market Mass Tourism
Inflexible/Rigidity	Specialized/Individualized/ Customized Niche tourism activities	Flexible Specialization
Spatially Concentrated	Shorter Product Life Cycle	Experience something new

Table 1. *Cont.*

Fordist Tourism	Post-Fordist Tourism	Neo-Fordist Tourism
Undifferentiated Products	Product Differentiation	Product Differentiation
Small Number of Producers		Continuity of Fordism Structures/Institutions
Discounted Product		
Economies of Scale	Small Scale or ‘Small Batch’	Mass Customization
Large number of consumers	Consumer Controlled	Consumer Choice
Collective Consumption	‘Better Tourists’	
Seasonally Polarized		
Demand Western Amenities	Rapidly changing consumer choice	
Staged Authenticity	Desire Authenticity	Desire Reality While Revelling in Kitsch
Environmental Pressures	‘Green Tourism’	
‘McDonaldization’ or ‘Disneyfication’	‘De McDonaldization’	Flexible/Specialized ‘McDonaldized Product’

(Source: Adapted from Torres 2002:90) [56].

Thus, the difference between the transformation period and past economic approaches is the alteration in the fragmentation of the business management behaviour, with new strategies, driven by contemporary technological forces that are adjustable and focus on specific market segments, satisfying specific human needs [66]. The new age of the ‘neo/post’ prefixes are extended to all aspects of the economic and social domain by revealing an alteration in production and consumption patterns to include the diffusion of information and the enriched perceptions and preferences of the consumers, ‘including aesthetics, art, leisure, recreation and pleasure’ (Amin 1994: 2) [65]. In tourism, the neo/post-Fordisms co-exist and reveal the need for individual consumption of tourism. Travellers are looking for authentic activities associated with culture and nature as core parameters of a destination authenticity that characterised postmodern society [67]. Additionally, cultural characteristics consist of a priority in the strand of neo/post Fordism examination of their preferences (Everett 2019 [68]), along with the seeking of nature-related tourism and activities that are niche and individualised. The journey of contemporary travellers is characterised as digital, where all information is retrieved online [69].

Information is diffused and business transactions are completed via ICT [7]. ICT adequately fulfils the needs of the neo/post-Fordist tourists because they can basically tailor their holidays and compose travel itineraries on their own [8]. The main challenge is for travel websites to provide this facility, with the most important aspect being the way destinations are promoted in order to attract the interests of travellers. Web communication is an easy and fast way of reaching potential travellers, thus the content must be attractive to catch their interest that will leading in booking their holidays in the destination. Additionally, proffering online information for particular destinations and activities, travellers take the role of the producer with the development of their customised travel itineraries [67]. This is the first study that considers the content of the European tourism websites and examine the content based on neo/post-Fordism tourists characteristics. In particular, studies on website examinations are using more technical methods to identify optimization tools [70]. Other studies concentrate on website evaluation of tourism suppliers (airlines, car rentals) to increase sales [71]. There are also studies that examine the content of regional and national tourism websites in relation to authenticity [72,73]. The next section considers tourism in the EU28.

3. Conceptual Framework: Profile of the EU28 in Tourism

Historically, Europe was a distinctive continent for tourism [74] with the period of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries being the era of the Grand Tour. The end of World War II (WWII) transformed Europe from a battlefield into an important tourism destination. On November 1, 1993, the European Union was established through the Maastricht Treaty. Since the early beginnings of the foundation of the European Union, tourism has become an important aspect of development that aims to bring together all the countries and ensure economic viability and social stability. Today in the European Union, tourism represents an important economic sector that sets the base for further advancement of the member states [75,76]. The 28 (i.e., including the United Kingdom) countries of the EU present a mosaic of rich history, along with the natural beauty of each country.

In 2019, the European continent received 710 million tourists (51 percent of the total), with tourism receipts reaching US\$ 451 bn (36 per cent of the total) [77]. Tourism is an important priority for the member countries of the European Union, with growth from 153 million tourist arrivals in 1980 to 433 million in 2013 [78]. The EU acknowledges tourism's contribution as the third largest economic activity. European countries have a rich cultural and historical heritage, a plethora of natural assets and diversity of scenery, with quality services [79]. Additionally, there is a good connectivity transportation network (rail, road, airports). France received 89.4 million tourists, followed by Spain at 82.8 million, then Italy at 45.8 million, Germany at 38.9, the UK at 36.3, Austria at 30.8 and Greece at 30.1 million [77].

The importance of tourism was highlighted in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) and subsequently fully incorporated into the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) (Estol and Font 2016: 231) [7]. The unified body of the European Union concerning tourism is the European Travel Commission (ETC), which was created in 1948 (ETC 2017 [76]). The aim of the ETC is:

to promote Europe as a tourist destination to the long-haul markets outside of Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 32 member NTOs, including eight from outside the European Union [76]

The main pillars of development were set against economic decline and unemployment. However, the full potential of tourism has not been exploited because of the number of challenges that EU members face. The recent strategy takes into consideration the link between China and the EU and sets strategies for promoting tourism. In June 2010, the European Commission agreed on the aim to establish Europe as the world's number-one tourist destination in its 'New political framework for tourism in Europe' and introduced a communication paper [79]. The aims of the communication paper are: (a) to stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector; (b) to promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism; (c) to consolidate Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high quality tourism destinations; and (d) to maximise the potential of EU financial policies for developing tourism.

Postmodern tourism instigates new trends in tourism consumption, with alternative forms of activity that are increasingly specific to the human and natural characteristics of the particular country. According to Hall (2004: 41) [80], 'the conjunction of European economic and political convergence, and the leisure search for new experiences and products, provides a potentially wide range of contexts for the interweaving of national imaginary and the promotion of tourism'. Thus, it can be argued that the EU vision of a unified approach with the free movement of people facilitates the new trend in tourism, with tourists seeking uniqueness in exploring various destinations. The proximity of the EU countries offers the opportunity of experiencing various cultures and sceneries with ease.

Assorted studies present European tourism with several themes—for instance, tourism development [81–85], policy and sustainability [86,87], electronic tourism [12]. The theme of this particular research is a review of the online content as retrieved from the 28 EU

member states' DMOs' websites. Electronic tourism has gained notable acceptance among the EU member states, and EU citizens trust information on official travel websites [87]. Each EU country has a separate official tourism website (Table 2). The next section presents the study methodology, presenting CDA as the method used for the fulfilment of the aim of the study.

Table 2. The EU 28 Official DMOs websites.

EU Member State (Year of Entry)	Official Tourism Website
Austria (1995)	http://www.austriatourism.at
Belgium (1958)	http://www.belgium-tourism.be/
Bulgaria (2007)	http://www.bulgariatravel.org
Croatia (2013)	http://www.croatia.hr
Cyprus (2004)	http://www.visitcyprus.com
Czech Republic (2004)	http://www.czechtourism.com
Denmark (1973)	http://www.visitdenmark.com
Estonia (2004)	http://www.visitestonia.com
Finland (1995)	http://www.visitfinland.com
France (1958)	http://in.france.fr/
Germany (1958)	http://www.germany.travel
Greece (1981)	http://www.visitgreece.gr
Hungary (2004)	https://wowhungary.com/en
Ireland (1973)	http://www.ireland.com/
Italy (1958)	http://www.italiantourism.com/
Latvia (2004)	http://www.latvia.travel
Lithuania (2004)	http://www.lithuania.travel
Luxembourg (1958)	http://www.visitluxembourg.com
Malta (2004)	http://www.visitmalta.com
Netherlands (1958)	http://www.holland.com
Poland (2004)	http://www.poland.travel
Portugal (1986)	http://www.visitportugal.com
Romania (2007)	http://www.romaniatourism.com
Slovakia (2004)	http://www.slovakia.travel
Slovenia (2004)	http://www.slovenia.info
Spain (1986)	http://www.spain.info
Sweden (1995)	http://www.visitsweden.com
United Kingdom (1973)	http://www.visitbritain.com

NB. United Kingdom exited EU on the 31st of January 2020, Source: The 28 EU official tourism websites. Access Date August 2019–February 2020

4. Methodology

In 1960, discourse analysis (DA) first appeared with the aim of framing the analysis of both verbal and written context [48,88,89]. DA evolved into CDA as a special approach to 'examine patterns of access and control over context, genres, text and talk, their properties, as well as discursive conditions, components and consequences of power abuse by dominant (elite) groups and institutions' (Van Dijk 1993: 24) [90]. Many studies use CDA, [91,92] which can be defined as a qualitative approach used to study talk and text in

social life. In relation to tourism research, DA, and eventually CDA, was implemented for ‘critically investigating representations of tourism experiences, destinations, motivations and practices’ (Hannam and Knox 2005: 23) [93]. A number of studies in tourism suggest the popularity of CDA as the method to analyse and discuss various topics of a qualitative nature [94–99].

Text production conveys meanings for interpretation and understanding, and this is embedded within the wider context of social theory and Foucault’s ‘power/knowledge’ notion (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000: 459) [97]. As put forth by Fairclough (2001:25) [98] ‘CDA sees texts and interactions as part of the material processes of social life, or as materialities which social life is ongoingly produced, reproduced and changed’. Bacchi and Bonhan (2014: 173) [99] state that ‘discursive practices’, as developed by Foucault, refer to the practices (or operations) of discourses, meaning knowledge formations, not linguistic practices or language use. In this study, CDA is used to examine the content presented on the official tourism websites, considered as part of the ‘knowledge society’, and can shed light on the way tourism is developed [89]. Thus, analysing texts is directly linked to social practices or discursive practices as developed by Foucault to represent how knowledge is produced and disseminated [100]. The words used convey various messages that need to be interpreted and provide a new understanding on the social practices [101] that reflect tourism development for each country.

The countries, via their DMOs’ websites, are presented as unique and ideal for holiday making, with this instigating a powerful tool of promotion [5]. According to Hallett and Kaplan-Weinger (2010:7) [101] official tourism websites ‘construct and promote for their communities an identity as a welcoming, soothing, (divinely) poignant setting for spiritual, intellectual and cultural fulfilment’. The above suggests that tourism discourse as part of the communication of the destination with the travellers deals with experiences and activities that can advance a human being. Furthermore, tourism development in a destination as part of the discourse presented in a website, are developed in alignment with consumers’ needs by providing the essence of ‘being different’ [64].

Analysing web content is very common in tourism research and is done with the help of various methods, according to the judgement of the researcher/s [11,12,102,103]. CDA can be applied in analysing website’s content as part of the evolution of communication is depicted by the availability of information through the World Wide Web (WWW) [104,105]. The WWW provides an advertising tool that facilitates the dispersion of information, aiming to ‘influence the “minds” of readers and hearers: [it] convey[s] knowledge and can affect opinions or change attitudes’ (Van Dijk 1993: 22) [90]. More specifically, the WWW in the tourism context is a means to disseminate information favourably for a tourism destination and to facilitate booking arrangements, which is the final goal.

Data Analysis: The Content of Tourism Websites

The study sets two basic questions in terms of the 28 EU websites’ review. The questions are:

- (1) How is each country promoting its online tourism image and niche position through its written content (words, texts, sentences, slogans) on their official websites?
- (2) How does the written content align with the post/neo-Fordism spectrum of production and consumption?

To answer each question, the following approaches of CDA were followed:

1. Textual analysis—slogan of each country and search of indicative words used related to [nature] [culture] [authentic] [unique] [experiences] according to the needs of neo/post-Fordism.
2. Discursive practice—how words are combined to reflect tourism development.

The review of websites’ content took place from August 2019 to February 2020 through NVivo (12). NVivo (12) is software that enables qualitative content to be categorized and analysed and for the content to be interlinked with the characteristics of neo/post-Fordist

tourists. The analysis involved uploading the website content in NVivo; this was achieved through Ncapture (website content is automatically converted to PDF) (Table 3).

Table 3. Ncapture File names in NVivo 12.

1.	Holidays in Austria > Your Official Travel Guide
2.	Belgian Tourist Office Wallonia—Wallonia Belgium Tourism
3.	Official Tourism Portal of Bulgaria
4.	This is the Croatia Tourism website!
5.	Czech Republic—the official travel site
6.	Visit Cyprus—Deputy Ministry of Tourism
7.	The Official Travel Guide to Denmark—Visit Denmark
8.	The Official Travel Guide of Finland— VisitFinland.com
9.	France.fr —the official website of tourism in France
10.	Tourism in Germany—travel, breaks, holidays
11.	Visit Greece—The Official website of the Greek Tourism Organisation
12.	WoW Hungary
13.	Ireland—Holidays in Ireland—Official Holiday Website of Tourism Ireland— Ireland.com
14.	Italian Tourism Official Website
15.	Latvia Travel—Official Latvian Tourism Portal
16.	Visit Estonia—Official travel guide to Estonia
17.	Tourism Lithuania—Lithuania Travel
18.	The Official Travel Guide of Luxembourg—Visit Luxembourg
19.	Visit Malta—The Official Tourism Site for Malta, Gozo and Comino
20.	Visit the Netherlands—Destinations, tips and inspiration— Holland.com
21.	Poland.travel—Comprehensive tourist travel guide through beautiful places in Poland
22.	Homepage— www.visitportugal.com
23.	Holidays in Sweden—Visit Sweden
24.	ROMANIA—Travel and Tourism Information
25.	Slovakia.travel
26.	Slovenia.info —I feel Slovenia
27.	Tourism in Spain –Tourist information about Spain— spain.info in English
28.	VisitBritain—The Official Tourism Website of Great Britain

Sources: EU 28 official tourism websites.

In NVivo, the content was manually searched by selecting specific ‘keywords’ that fulfil the profile of the neo/post Fordism travellers—for instance, [nature], [culture], [authentic] [unique] [experiences]. Those words were selected because they meet the needs of the neo/post-Fordist traveller. Thus, searching for those words can shed light on the way each national website used the words with the aim to attract the interest of the website lookers. The words were examined to identify how they are combined in the promotional context of the websites. Then, the main phrases used as slogans were identified, along with the phrases used that meet the needs of the neo/post-Fordist travellers. Based on that, the analysis was conducted against four themes, namely country (as the destination), tourism products (production), tourism activities (production) and experiences/memories (consumption).

The results of the study will enable researchers to draw various conclusions in terms of the competitiveness of the EU in relation to tourism, along with how European member states are promoted in order to stimulate the interest of neo/post-Fordist tourists [20]. The results of the research are indicative and are presented below.

5. Results and Discussion

This part of the study considers the analysis of the CDA based on the official European tourism websites. Retrieving information related to the textual analysis of the websites’ content, the main aspect is that DMOs’ websites disseminate information that provides the current status of the destination’s development [64] and sustainability [103]. Website discourse as part of the communication in tourism provides an opportunity to establish

the ideal identity of the country and stimulate the interest of travellers. The content of each country's website provides a direction on 'what is about the destination in terms of tourism?'. Thus, four themes were developed related to the websites textual/content portrayal of the countries. The analysis was based on online content concerning the country (regions and cities), products promoted, activities and experiences (Figure 1).

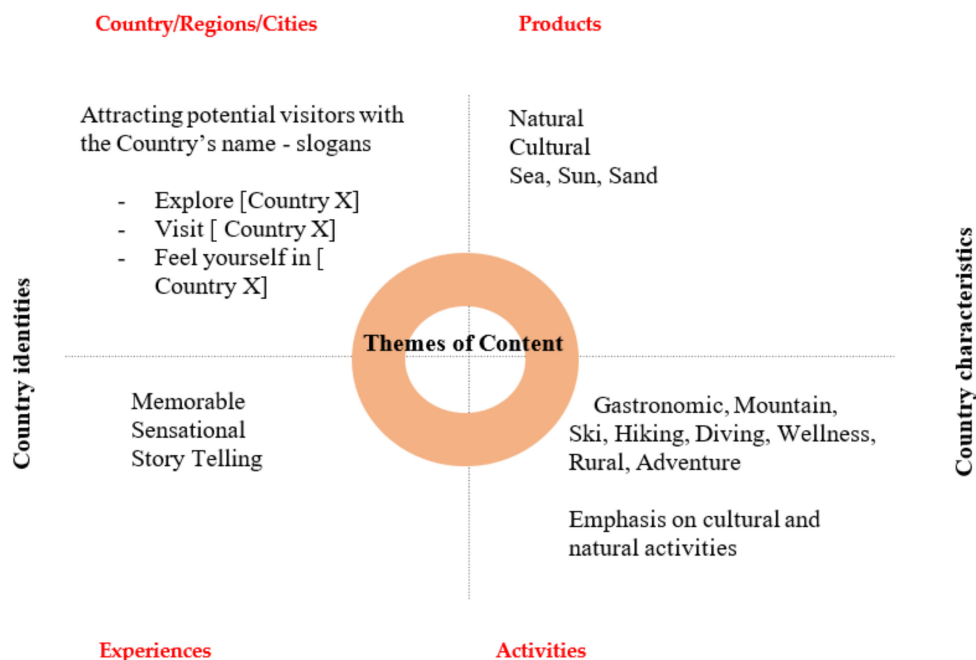


Figure 1. Thematic analysis—28EU websites.

The slogans of each country, presented in Table 4, encapsulate the tourism image of each country. The results show that each country portrays itself by using specific phrases that represent exactly the needs of neo/post-Fordist travellers. In particular, the destination's proclaimed discourse is centred around giving a new perspective on life, by choosing activities and places for holidays [34]. This adds to Urry's (1990, 1992, 1995) [25–27] arguments that changes in society have a direct impact on destination management and promotion that become more complex and result in the search to find unique aspects that can satisfy the new travellers.

Table 4. Promotional discourse: tourism slogans—front page.

Country	Slogan—Websites' First Page
Austria	Arrive and Revive Winter tales Austria is a real-life storybook
Belgium	Discover our surprising regions But above all, Belgium is a place of fun
Bulgaria	The unknown Bulgaria
Croatia	Full of Life—Paddle into the wild Discover your story Don't fill your life with days, fill your days with life
Cyprus	Cyprus in your heart
Czech Republic	Spiritual Czech Republic—meditation and contemplation

Table 4. Cont.

Country	Slogan—Websites' First Page
Denmark	The big question to start . . . what do you travel for? To find hygge To discover wonders To meet the locals To eat, drink and be merry The wonder in the small things in life
Estonia	Estonia is a place for independent minds It's your turn to live the #estonianway
Finland	Become inspired to travel in Finland . . . extraordinary accommodation
France	Inspiring travel ideas for your holiday in France
Germany	Germany—simply inspiring Welcome to the travel destination Germany
Greece	#GreeceAlwaysInSeason
Hungary	WoW Hungary Wellspring of Wonders
Ireland	Feel your heart with Ireland, wherever you are in the world . . .
Italy	Italy is fun, Italy is love, Italy is food
Latvia	Full of adventures Discover Latvia—see and do
Lithuania	Lithuania real is beautiful What's your cup of tea? Choose a category that interests you the most to learn more!
Luxembourg	Luxemburg Do it your way Live memories #VISITLUXEMBOURG
Malta	Malta is a great place to visit for sea, sun and culture
Netherlands	Discover the cities, attractions and events in every season.
Poland	Travel Inspirations
Portugal	Explore Portugal #FromHome
Romania	Natural and cultural
Slovakia	Travel in Slovakia Good idea Slovakia
Slovenia	I feel Slovenia. Slovenia is waiting for you to explore it. In your way soon.
Spain	Spain is part of you . . .
Sweden	Explore Sweden's vibrant, colourful cities and beautiful landscapes with your own tailored vacation package. Get ready to see majestic royal castles, picture-perfect views of the Baltic Sea and rugged national parks.
United Kingdom	I travel for . . . Afternoon tea . . . Story telling . . .

Source: Content retrieved from the 28 EU official tourism websites.

Websites' written content, along with the visual representations of various places, plays a pivotal role in tourism promotion. Travellers are invited to learn about the destinations' 'stories' and 'tales', and in turn to create their 'own stories and tales' as part of their 'lived' experience of the destination [6]. This reflects the profile of the new travellers, as discussed above, that goes beyond the usual and mundane in tourism experience and looks for dynamic activities that epitomize the unique identity and niche position of the destination. Destinations' slogans which appear on the front page of each website

use catchphrases/phraseology declaring that destinations are becoming an important component of the travellers' life. The textual analysis documents the new way tourism destinations use website content by emphasizing the urge of discovery in the country and its regions, through the use of promotional slogans such as [Cyprus in your heart] (Cyprus official Tourism Website 2020), [Feel your heart with Ireland] (Ireland official Tourism Website 2020), [Discover Latvia] (Latvia official Tourism Website 2020), or [Discover you Stories-Croatia] (Croatia official Tourism Website 2010). Visitors are becoming inspired through common words that allude to the involvement and active engagement of the new traveller in a destination.

The main discourse of the description in the web content focuses, as mentioned repeatedly, on products and activities. Tourism is becoming a more specialised activity, moving away from mass tourism, with travellers wanting authenticity and uniqueness [33,47,73]. Even destinations which are traditionally associated with mass tourism (most Mediterranean EU countries) are incorporating more activities to present their cultural and natural characteristics (Tables 5 and 6). The nature of the content of the 28EU official tourism websites support existing literature that each country develops products/activities which are considered niche and authentic, inspired by idiosyncratic cultural (gastronomy, people, traditions, attractions) and natural characteristics [67]. In particular, the websites emphasise niche products such as cultural tourism, ecological tourism, mountain and ski tourism, wellness tourism, rural tourism, conference tourism and adventure tourism.

Table 5. Words and phrases on [culture].

Art and culture, culinary delights, music and folklore
Heritage and culture Festivals and events
Gastronomy Culture & Heritage
Bit of Inspiration Cities and Culture
top tips to experience culture and nature through digital technology
Restaurants and food culture
Art and Culture Gastronomy
Italy: all roads lead to culture
Arts and culture.
Parma 2020—Italian Capital of Culture
History Culture and Entertainment
Soul of Romania, where peasant culture remains a strong force
Historical monuments to rich folk culture and modern entertainment
splendid natural scenery, rich history, culture, and traditions. Simply discover Slovakia
Nature and the countryside Culture
Learning about Slovenian culture, cuisine and nature. Explore Slovenian
JOURNEY INTO FINNISH ARTS AND CULTURE
Spain's World Heritage Cities Art, culture, tradition
The icons of art and culture in Spain.
World Heritage Festivals Popular culture and traditions you'll enjoy.
Explore Greece by interest: Culture Touring Activities Meetings UNESCO World
Holland Unique accommodations Rotterdam Arts & Culture Castles & Country Houses
Plenty of cheese, art and culture.
Immerse yourself in Dutch culture in the modern metropolises

Table 5. *Cont.*

Arts & Culture: a variety of places.
An island rich in history and culture, and full of wonderful experiences
Culture & Religion Thematic Routes Explore Cyprus
Budapest Baths and Spas Culture Nightlife
From natural treasures and historical monuments to rich folk culture
museums, cultural routes, wine routes, monuments
Heritage and culture

Source: Content retrieved from the 28 EU official tourism websites.

Table 6. Words and phrases on [nature].

... culinary delights, music and folklore, nature and flora, walks and hikes
I love Nature in Wallonia Wallonia
... to experience Austria's culture and nature through digital technology
Discover Austrian Nature
Nature Romance Health and Well-being
Experience the Swedish nature
Dublin Northern Ireland: Surprising by nature
Nature: The Sea and The Mountains Lakes
Nature and the countryside
MY WAY OF EMBRACING NATURE
where can you simply enjoy nature in its unspoiled form
enjoying the unspoiled nature
IN HARMONY WITH NATURE: DISCOVER LUXEMBOURG BY BIKE
Nature and sports lovers
Éislek (Luxembourg's Ardennes) and its Nature Parks Mullerthal Region
The Nature Park
Danish nature waking up to spring
Discover your story: Full of nature
How does nature heal stress?
Top 10 EDEN nature tourism destinations in Estonia
Natural Romania
Explore its splendid natural scenery
Spain's 13 geoparks with extraordinary natural beauty

Source: Content retrieved from the 28 EU official tourism websites.

However, the discursive practice for each country involves different descriptions of the places, which are differentiated in terms of the cultural and natural characteristics. Tourism discourse uses 'words' and 'phrases' that are associated with culture as the most dynamic force of experiencing the destinations with an active involvement (Tables 5 and 6). The indigenous culture of each country is promoted to portray differentiated characteristics—for example, in relation to historic monuments, food and drink traditions, and other traditions relevant to people and places. Additionally, the picturesque scenery of the countryside provides a unique perspective (i.e., Bulgaria, Belgium). Even the modern life of urban tourism in capital cities such as London, Paris or Berlin is depicted as being a cultural metropolis incorporating unique characteristics. An interesting example is Greece, which

promotes the Olympic Games as an endemic aspect of the country's culture, and associates them with various sporting tourism activities. In particular, the following excerpt is notable:

Greece, birthplace of the Olympic Games, is ideal for participating in a sport or taking part in events or games (sports tourism).

(<http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/activities>—20 August 2019)

The countries of central Europe and Ireland place great emphasis on the natural scenery and are positioned as more active destinations based on activities such as cycling. Austria has the following statement on its website:

A 'Tour de Austria'

Whether a challenging mountain bike climb, a leisurely ride along the Danube, or a sightseeing pedal through one of Austria's cities, you can be assured of a great ride.

(<http://www.austria.info/uk/things-to-do/cycling-and-biking>—20 August 2019)

Bulgaria promotes wellbeing with balneology, spas and wellness. Balneology is defined as 'the science dealing with the therapeutic effects of baths and bathing' ([dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)).

Bulgaria's websites states:

Mineral springs located in the southern part of the country are influenced by the Mediterranean climate; other springs are found in mountain regions with coniferous vegetation and crystal springs; and still others are along the Black Sea coast.

(<http://www.bulgariatravel.org/en/Article/Details/2060/Balneology%2C%20SPA%20and%20Wellness>—20 August 2019)

Additionally, an important element of the discursive practice of the destinations is a trend in the development of green products that fit the aims of responsible tourism [26]. Another example is Holland's website with a description of 'eco-sustainable tourism: in and around Rotterdam'. The countries have special sections on sustainable, green and responsible tourism. In general, the trend of environmentally friendly tourism products meets the needs of neo/post-Fordist tourism. The destination should frame its strategies to consider any damage caused to the environment, and to make the travellers more aware of the negative impacts that might have been caused by tourism.

In terms of the experiences, they are set as a part of remembering the destinations through an active involvement during holidaymaking. Each country presents memorable activities with detailed description of tours and particular activities. For example, Cyprus's website states:

Explore Cyprus by interest

Tailor your visit to Cyprus by selecting the interests and experiences that best suit you, your preferences, and the time of year you are visiting, and even your budget!

(<http://www.visitcyprus.com/index.php/en/>—15 September 2019)

Denmark describes tourism experiences through architecture:

Copenhagen's Nordic architecture with Experience Ørestad: Experience Ørestad is a company that specializes in the Copenhagen neighbourhood Ørestad and its architecture. Ørestad is located on the connected island of Amager, and is known for its special and beautiful architecture as well as its close proximity to nature—the Amager Commons. Experience Ørestad offers city walks, bus tours, and presentations on the green neighbourhood packed with architectural gems.

(<http://www.visitdenmark.com/denmark/experience-orestad-gdk1084147>—15 September 2019)

An interesting case is the British tourism website that incorporates new trends in technology by developing a #OMGB (Oh my Great Britain) moment, which is explained below:

What is a #OMGB moment?

Standing on the very spot where Shakespeare learned to write. Guards marching past Buckingham Palace in black and red unison. Sampling craft beer in a cosy country pub. These are #OMGB moments. The ones that leave you speechless but transform you into a storyteller.

(<https://www.visitbritain.com/us/en/campaigns/omgb-us#h3SJ2RMdcLVh2cU5.99>—10 October 2019)

In the case of Estonia, it is stated:

Experience authentic Estonian culture through folk song and dance, unique language and vivid handicrafts.

(<https://www.visitestonia.com/en/why-estonia/explore-culture>—10 October 2019)

This relates to MacCannell's (1973, 1976) [23,51] 'staged authenticity' by first promoting something that can create a unique impression and strong memories.

A discursive analytic approach of the content of the 28 official EU tourism websites adds to the tourism literature by exemplifying the ways in which countries use language and discourse to position themselves on the tourism map and to promote unique and authentic characteristics. Through culture, a country can give an identity to its tourism product and stimulate the interest of the potential visitor. Admittedly, the tourism landscape in the EU28 is changing and currently Europe is arguably the most popular destination for tourism. In general, all EU28 websites follow a uniform approach and strategy with similar content based on the characteristics of each country. Online destination identities are built through urging travellers to explore the destination both culturally and naturally. The results of the study provide new insights into the ideological underpinnings of promotional website content and provide evidence to suggest that destinations understand the needs of post/neo-Fordist tourism productions and consumption parameters as presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Post/neo-Fordism tourism discourse.

	Post/Neo Fordism Tourism Discourse
Production	Cultural and natural characteristics Specific tourism products and activities Make your own itineraries Urging for more trips and experiences Same products different experiences
Consumption	Freedom to choose Plethora of urban and rural destinations Niche products—small scale Authentic experiences—culture Natural sustainable tourism products Customized holidays Creation of favorable memories

Source: Adapted from Torres 2002 [100]—readopted author.

6. Concluding Remarks

The results of the study elucidate existing literature by providing a pragmatic review of the Official Tourism Websites of the EU28 countries. Neo/post-Fordist calls of destinations' production [55] are illustrated in the content of the websites and call upon the new practices that destinations use to attract the interest of potential travellers. An activity-based approach is apparent in all websites that is directly related to the retrieval of dynamic experiences. The content is culturally and naturally driven, with products associated with nature, ethnic and heritage characteristics. Online positioning associates with words that give a personal touch, urging the websites' lookers to visit and explore the destinations. Nature has a prominent stance in the website content with places and activities.

Neo/post-Fordist tourists are looking to immerse themselves in the destination and ‘create their stories or tales’. The analysis of websites revealed those destinations are becoming providers of dynamic and customized holidays and promise to fulfil all expectations.

Electronic content comprises the first parameter through a communication for interacting with the destination. The 28EU countries attest that they are aware of current trends in tourism consumption that is driven by presenting unique characteristics. The words used instigate an appeal to explore, to discover, to admire and to taste each destination. Online content is a powerful weapon in tourism promotion; therefore words, phrases and slogans should be attractive to catch attention that can lead to memorable experiences. Any destination that neglects this would not be able to survive in the long run. Investment in online content acts for the benefit of the destination—especially at the present time when information is the key to the decision of travelling.

It is all about the countries’ tourism experiences and activities that offer in a personalised way for all 28EU countries, something that is requested by neo/post-Fordist tourists. This supports the argument of Pine and Gilmore (1999) [39] that tourism’s core element is the experience. Each destination provides a detailed description of tours and activities to make the experience more dynamic. MacCannell’s (1973, 1976) [23,51] ‘staged authenticity’ is by promoting a destination’s identity that can create a unique impression. The place is experienced by the visitor having as a central theme cultural and natural characteristic which indeed provide an authentic as sought by neo/post-Fordist tourists.

Information retrieval when choosing a tourism destination is vital: thus, official tourism’s electronic portals can stimulate interest and empower the traveller with knowledge. This is the current trend, with consumers ascribing to neo/post-Fordism in post-modern society and creating their own itineraries in order to engage in dynamic tourism activities. Destination competitiveness is related to an identity that makes the consumer eager to travel. Each country has eye-catching sentences that broadcast their characteristics and can attract the neo/post-Fordist tourist of Amin (1994) [64] and Torres (2002) [54] and the neo-Fordist tourist of Poon (1993) [49]. The key issue is that, even if the destinations are offering the same products, the experience is nevertheless different because of the ethic/cultural characteristics and the natural environment that affect both production and consumption (Table 8).

Table 8. EU tourism websites targeted travelers.

Post-Fordist Tourism	Neo-Fordist Tourism	28EU Tourism Websites Discourse
Specialized/Individualized/ Customized Niche Markets Tourism	Niche Market Mass Tourism	Individualized activities/products
Specialized/Individualized/ Customized Niche tourism activities	Flexible Specialization	Composing travel itineraries- multiple regional destinations—multiple activities
Shorter Product Life Cycle	Experience something new	New culture—New natural scenery—preserving culture and nature
Product Differentiation	Product Differentiation	Cultural and natural differentiation
	Continuity of Fordism Structures/Institutions	Multiple experiences
Small Scale or ‘Small Batch’	Mass Customization	Same activities -different travelers
Consumer Controlled	Consumer Choice	Freedom of choice
‘Better Tourists’		Targeting better tourists
Rapidly changing consumer choice		Adjusting to consumer choice

Table 8. Cont.

Post-Fordist Tourism	Neo-Fordist Tourism	28EU Tourism Websites Discourse
Desire Authenticity	Desire Reality While Revelling in Kitsch	Living and experiencing authenticity
‘Green Tourism’		Experience without destroying nature-appreciating tourism activities
‘De McDonaldization’	Flexible/Specialized ‘McDonalized Product’	Flexibility—individualization

(Source: Adapted from Torres 2002:90 [100]—readopted author), Source: Author.

Destination identity is the key to tourism destination management with exclusive country characteristics. ICT plays a vital role in destination promotion as the first entry point of the potential traveller before visiting a place. The more attractive and useful a website, the better it can stimulate the imagination of the neo/post-Fordist traveller and seek his/her ‘tourist gaze’. A new form of consumption in tourism is the composition of travel itineraries by collecting memories in the form of experiences as the main compensation of a tourism product. The new tourism web discourse provides a new insight into the destinations’ development with the neo/post-Fordist tourism discourse.

This study contributes to the wider context of tourism through its many managerial implications. The results are useful to help DMOs concentrate on the current needs of consumers with the aim of developing active experiences. Consumers have become very demanding and will choose those destination/s which can fulfil their needs. The future will reward those destinations that have a discrete identity and are positioned on the tourism map as unique. Additionally, the full deployment of ICT in terms of promotion is a key aspect and a prerequisite of success.

This study’s limitations can be turned into opportunities for further research. The main limitation identified is that the opinion of the traveller is missing, and the results and discussion are based solely on the judgement of the researcher, which might be biased. Another limitation is that the opinions of the potential travellers are not considered so as to understand their opinion when accessing official tourism websites and the way their content fulfil their needs. However, this limitation can be turned into a future research theme with the same aim, but using a different methodological approach. Additionally, further research can seek to access and retrieve information from key informants in the official tourism organisations of the EU28 and gather data concerning their national position on tourism and how it has changed in accordance with consumers’ requests. Additionally, another important field of research is to compare the website content through a longitudinal study examining the website content future evolution, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

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