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The Role of Tourism Destinations
within the Online Presence of Fashion Weeks

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ABSTRACT

Special events, if well organized, assist a tourism destination to improve its image and attract new visitors. Though there is an emerging research on the connection between tourism destinations and fashion events, little is known about how online presence of tourism destinations is framed with the help of established fashion events. The purpose of this research is to study four primary destinations holding major fashion weeks: New York and "New York Fashion Week", London and "London Fashion Week", Milan and "Milan Fashion Week", Paris and "Paris Fashion Week".

This research identifies the role of tourism destinations in the online presence of the four primary "fashion weeks". To do so, two converging analyzes are done: on one hand the websites and online presence of the fashion weeks are analyzed, assessing tourism related content; on the other hand, the websites of Destination Management Organizations at the city level are inspected with the main aim of assessing the presence and relevance they provide to fashion weeks.

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Keywords: Destination Branding; Tourism Marketing; Fashion Weeks; Event Management; Website Design; Digital Fashion

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Introduction

Events represent an important catalyst for attracting tourists to a specific destination, as they offer an opportunity to experience the destination in an unusual way (Janiskee, 1996). Nowadays, a considering amount of destinations are adding special events to their offer because they see it as an occasion to attract more tourists in lower seasons (Connell, Page & Meyer, 2015). Events also help to create the occasion for tourists and local communities to meet and share experiences. Furthermore, they create an opportunity to increase new temporal jobs, and enhance local infrastructure.

In the last decades, high interest regarding the investigation of events was shown by scholars globally. Over the time, the areas of research have changed and the need of more specific analyses and researches have been stressed by several authors. However, it was not until the 1980´s when the studies about the relationship between events and the tourism industry took place (Getz, 2008). The concept of patterns of attendees to repeated annual events (Lee, Sok Jee, Funk, Jordan, 2014) and the economic impacts of sporting events (Burgan & Mules, 1992) was developed followed by the investigation of the economic importance of meetings and conferences (Jones & Li, 2015). Different segments of tourists and their motivations to assist events have been subjects of investigations by authors like Green and Chalip (1998) and Crompton and McKay (1997). According to Moscardo (2007), most of the existing researches on tourism and events address the following topics: economic impacts, audience profile and characteristics, management of events, and event impacts from the residents' point of view. On the other hand, Getz (2008) recognizes that primary research topics are those related to business, sports, festivals and other cultural celebrations.

Despite the potential interest for Destination Management Organizations, tourism boards and other decision makers in the field of tourism, there is still a lack of knowledge on the relationship between tourism and fashion event. This identified gap arises the interest to investigate the cases of the four most popular destinations holding the primary fashion week events – namely: Milan, Paris, London and New York (Brown, 2016; Dhar, 2012; Heyman, 2014), and their relationships with respective tourism destinations. In particular, online communication domains of both tourism destinations and main fashion events will be investigated; specifically their possible intersection will be analyzed.

The objective of this research is to find out if the destinations hosting the primary Fashion Week events are taking advantage of these well-known events in order to promote the destination online, as well as to assess the importance given to the events in the destination website as part of their tourism offer.

Therefore, in order to reach this objective, two research questions have been formulated, the second one subdivided into two sub-questions:

RQ1. Are tourism-related websites and tourism information about the four destinations hosting the primary fashion weeks in Milan, Paris, London and New York present online when the users are looking for these events?

RQ2a. Are these destinations taking advantage of their fashion weeks to promote the event as part of their tourism offer?

RQ2b. What is the level of importance given to fashion week events in the city's tourism websites of Milan, Paris, London and New York?

Literature review

There are multiple objectives for destinations to plan, organize, and promote multiple types of events (Getz, 2008) such as to bring tourists in low seasons (Connell, Page & Meyer, 2015; Getz, 2008), influence the creation of new infrastructure (Palmer & Bejou, 1995), add tourism capacity, promote a positive destination image, serve as marketing tool, and renew specific areas or attractions at the destination (Getz, 2008). Both at the national and city levels public administrations are focusing on the MICE industry to foster growth, as the travelers in this sector have higher expenditure rates (Jones & Li, 2015).

Now more than ever tourists are looking for destinations, which can provide the uniqueness to their travel; this means unequaled experiences, singular places to visit, and the opportunity to meet locals and share cultures. With the great amount of destinations to visit, and considering the argument by Long & Morpeth (2016), according to which several tourism products and destinations can be substituted, DMOs must aim for creativity.

Creativity and tourism have been taken as a research area by several scholars (Getz, 2008; Richards, 2011). They mention a shift in the consumption of tourism products to "creative tourism" which, focuses on tourism experiences that are difficult to imitate. Richards (2011) mentioned that 'creative destinations' are taking over, due to the importance they place on creative resources to mark themselves as unique, and with this compete for the first positions on the tourists' imaginary/dreams. Furthermore, tourism together with film, fashion and design have been catalogued as the creative industries most used by the destinations to create a change in the traditional cultural tourism, switching from tangible heritage to intangible experiences (Richards, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2007).

According to Bada (2013) fashion tourism is another segment of tourism, where visitors request a destination that accomplishes their demands regarding the latest trends in clothes and accessories, shopping desires and the participation in the destination's reflection of culture by its creativity.

In the fashion and design sector, the promotional events like the catwalks, fashion weeks, showcases and trade fairs are crucial for the companies to reach buyers and

end consumers. These shows represent the first broadcast for the latest trends; they function as branding strategies and are the place where big sales and contracts are arranged (Jansson & Power, 2010).

Fashion events, are usually hosted in cities that are recognized as `Fashion cities´, which Capone and Lazzeretti (2016, p. 2) described as "… characterized by broad range of business, financial, entertainment, cultural and leisure activities and are internationally recognized as having strong and unique identities". A year later, Lazzeretti, Capone, and Casadei (2017) defined, according to the creative economy approach, a 'fashion city' as:

"A type of creative city characterized by a high concentration of creative industries, such as fashion industries, as well as by a large number of designers, public and private cultural institutions, and a fashion cluster that may appeal to tourists" (p. 208)

The definitions mainly differ in the fact that the second description of what is a `fashion city´ is focused on creativity and the fashion industry. Nevertheless, both of them mentioned the fact of being attractive for tourists.

Capone and Lazzeretti (2016) explain this phenomenon as follows: on one hand, the destination´s image as a fashion city (partially built by well-known fashion brands) helps to attract more visitors and fashion consumers; on the other hand, the firms get brand image advantages from being established in the fashion city and from shopping activities.

Local governments and local institutions started to be aware of the essential role of fashion as an identity creator and as a strategic advantage. Shopping tourism is one of the most used tools to sell a destination and a fashionable city will attract tourists. Everyone, fashion conscious or not, would want to visit one of the world's fashion capital someday.

Visitors are increasingly choosing shopping as a way to experience local culture through an engagement with local products and local craftspeople, and some destinations provide special tourist shopping activities for tourists to shop for goods.

Some destinations globally have already understood this tendency and have started leveraging their marketing strategies on this. They are consciously pushing fashion week trade events into the public eye to raise their city's fashionable credentials and encourage visitors to consider travel to their city. This happened and has been documented by researchers in the case of Antwerp, Belgium (Martinez, 2017), Jember, Indonesia (Denissa, et al., 2015), and Florence, Italy (Lazzeretti, et al., 2017). Even the city of Lagos, Nigeria (Bada, 2013) has recently commissioned the Central University of Applied Sciences to prepare a report titled 'The Emerging Role of Fashion Tourism and The Need for a Development Strategy' so that they could assess the advantages fashion could bring to their local and regional economy. Other destinations started creating shopping festivals (Dubai, Hong Kong) so to cater for the different needs of the tourist

shoppers from different parts of the world. Seoul is currently running two fashion weeks, and riding on the reputation of these, the city now has a vast complex of shopping malls and wholesale retailers that attract more than two million visitors per year, including just about half of all the tourists who come to Seoul (Bae, 2012). Singapore also has a fashion week and the Singapore Tourism Board includes fashion as one of the high profile component for enhancing the city's destination attractiveness (Singapore Tourism Board, 2013).

The "Big Four" fashion week events were created and launched in different years and by different institutions. The first one to be created was New York Fashion Week in 1943 by Eleanor Lamber a fashion publicist; followed by Paris Fashion Week in 1945 created by French "Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture"; in 1958 Milan Fashion Week started under the organization of the "National Chamber for Italian Fashion"; leaving London Fashion Week as the most recent of all, created in 1984 by the "British Fashion Council" (Fashion Week Online, n.d.) However, the same source acknowledges that the first fashion events performed seasonally where held at the "Enrich Brothers" department store in New York City in 1903. Prior to this, fashion events were held privately by high fashion houses in Paris in the 1800´s.

Today, the "Big Four" make their appearance with fall/winter collections from February on to March and spring/summer collections from September to October always following the same order of presentations: New York, London, Milan and Paris (Fashion Week Online, n.d.).

Fashion Weeks have been recognized as a crucial way to place a tourism destination on the global tourist map and serve as a mean to attract high number of visitors (Hall, 1989). It is also an opportunity to bring economic benefits directly and indirectly to the hosting destinations (Weller, 2008).

For instance, the city of New York, generated the highest income for hosting New York Fashion Week in 2016, while earning 513.5 million, which is more than the US Open and the NYC Marathon are able to generate (FashionUnited, 2016). New York Fashion Week brings in approximately 150,000 unique visitors per season, with the average spend per visitor at 2,226 euros. This creates economic opportunities for tourism players as well as the city itself, through the income on tourism, food and service tax.
According to the same report, New York Fashion Week is followed by London, whose bi-annual fashion week generates 322.1 million euros and Berlin Fashion Week, with a modest income of 73.3 million euros - which is more than its more famous fashion hub counterparts, namely Paris and Milan.

Fashion Week events last approximately one week in each destination (Soo Hoo, 2015). Moreover, one of their main purposes is to show the designers or fashion brand's latest collections (Weller, 2008; Soo Hoo, 2015). However, it is much more than just the designer's shows. Plenty of parties are held in the city during Fashion Week events, attendees take the opportunity to navigate the streets with their best apparel making the streets a living parade all day and night long, creating a unique ambience filled with

excitement for those who love fashion. According to T Magazine (2017) there were 521 fashion events and presentations in 2017, eight of them are "The Big Four" semi-annual Fashion Week events, the others are other shows and presentations, out of this 521 fashion events New York hosts 279, Paris 93, London 81, and Milan the left 68. T Magazine (2017) describes the attendants to these events, mentioning that most of them are editors and press accounting for 54% of attendees, 30% buyers, 13% friends of the company or corporate guests, and only 3% are celebrities. General public is not included in the numbers because these events are by invitation-only (Soo Hoo, 2015).

As it can be seen from the literature review presented above, the relationship between tourism and fashion events could be of a great importance for destinations and decision-makers within both sectors. This area of research has been approached by very few scholars. Furthermore, academic literature remains limited regarding the way in which tourism destinations, more specifically Destination Management Organizations, are taking advantage of the fashion events in their online marketing activities. It is also not clear how fashion events are taking advantage of the tourism offer in the destinations they are held, and if and how such an offer is represented online.

Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, related data was collected between April and July 2017. The analysis was divided into two phases: the first one (Phase A) comprised a content analysis of the websites, which resulted from the search on the first three pages of the Search Engine google.com. The second phase (Phase B) included a content analysis of the city's destination websites of Milan, Paris, London, and New York.

Phase (A) consisted of an online descriptive analysis of the current websites that offer relevant present content related to the four most established fashion weeks in order to understand and assess the role of the related tourism content in these websites. Furthermore, the analysis if destinations are taking advantage of the fashion weeks in order to promote the destination online was performed.

A content analysis of a selection of a 162 websites was undertaken. The websites were gathered from the first three pages of the Search Engine google.com. This analysis was performed from Mexico and took into consideration all the websites available in English.

With the intention of having specific and homogeneous results for each destination, the following search terms were used to retrieve information: Milan Fashion Week, Paris Fashion Week, London Fashion Week, New York Fashion Week. During the analyses, there was no distinction was made from organic and paid results. From the 162 analyzed websites, 50 websites were related to Paris Fashion Week, 41 websites for New York Fashion Week, 37 covered Milan Fashion Week, and remaining 34 websites were presenting London Fashion Week. Furthermore, out of these 162

websites, 25 websites were repeated in the Search Engine results, thus they were not taken into consideration in the analysis.

Once the list of websites was finalized, content and functionalities present on the landing page were examined.

The following categories for the analysis were identified:
• *Type of website.* Five different types of websites were identified:
  - newspaper;
  - personal blog;
  - traditional website, a website where the user can find related content about fashion week events;
  - commercial website, a website with the main purpose of selling different items or services;
  - other, which are all the other types of websites that did not fit in the before-mentioned sub categories.

• *Fashion week related information.* Here the analysis was done on the kind of information present on the selected websites.

• *Tourism related content.* As the main purpose of this research is to evaluate if destinations are taking advantage of fashion weeks to promote the destination and let tourists know what the destination has to offer and if they actually mention fashion weeks as a part of their tourism offer. Here tourism related content such as transportation and accommodation was examined.

• *Multimedia.* This category analyzes the use of videos, photos and other multimedia elements on the web pages.

• *Social Media.* This category analyzes if social media platforms are mentioned on the websites.

Phase (B) included content analysis of the four websites of the DMOs at the city level – Milan: www.turismo.milano.it, Paris www.en.parisinfo.com, London www.visitlondon.com, and New York www.nycgo.com. The analysis was done in June 2017. English versions of the websites were investigated. It is crucial to mention that during the analysis in three of four studied destinations (Milan, London and Paris) Fashion Weeks for men were taking place.

This research phase allowed assessing main tourism-related information given to the users about a fashion week while they are planning a visit to the destination. It has also analyzed if fashion week events are promoted among the tourism offer on the website of a DMO.

The following categories and subcategories were identified in the content analysis:
• *Presence of the websites in multiple languages*

- *Information architecture*
- *Fashion week events over time, with the analysis of the presence of current, past, and future events*
- *Fashion week promoted in a special banner*
- *Mentioning of other fashion events in the city*
- *Fashion events venues*
- *Fashion week specific information for current or future events (e.g. calendar, activities, locations)*
- *Social Media presence.*

Results

In this paragraph, the results of the research are presented, starting with the content analysis of the websites found from the research on Google for the following keywords "Milan Fashion Week", "Paris Fashion Week", "London Fashion Week", and "New York Fashion Week". Then the content analysis of the official DMO´s tourism websites of the cities of Milan, Paris, London and New York is followed.

Phase (A) - **Content Analysis of the results from the Search Engine**
During this phase, the content analysis of all the websites shown in the first three pages of the Search Engine google.com are presented.

A total of 162 websites were collected, however, due to repetitions only 137 unique websites were analyzed. Out of these sites, 111 came from organic results and the rest 51 came from paid results. Regarding paid results, the search terms with the highest popularity were "Paris Fashion Week" and "New York Fashion Week", followed by "Milan Fashion Week" and "London Fashion Week". In Table 1. below, specific results for each search term regarding the total number of websites, the number of organic and paid results, repeated websites and the total number of analyzed websites can be seen.

Table 1. Summary of the results from the Search Engine

	MILAN	PARIS	LONDON	NEW YORK	TOTAL
Total no. of websites	37	50	34	41	162
Organic results	29	29	27	26	111
Paid results	8	21	7	15	51
Repeated websites	4	10	6	5	25
Total no. of analyzed unique websites	33	40	28	36	137

Source: Elaborated by authors

Type of websites

The types of websites were investigated to evaluate which types were mostly providing relevant content regarding each search term.

In the following figure (**Figure 1**), the typology of the websites is presented for all four destinations.
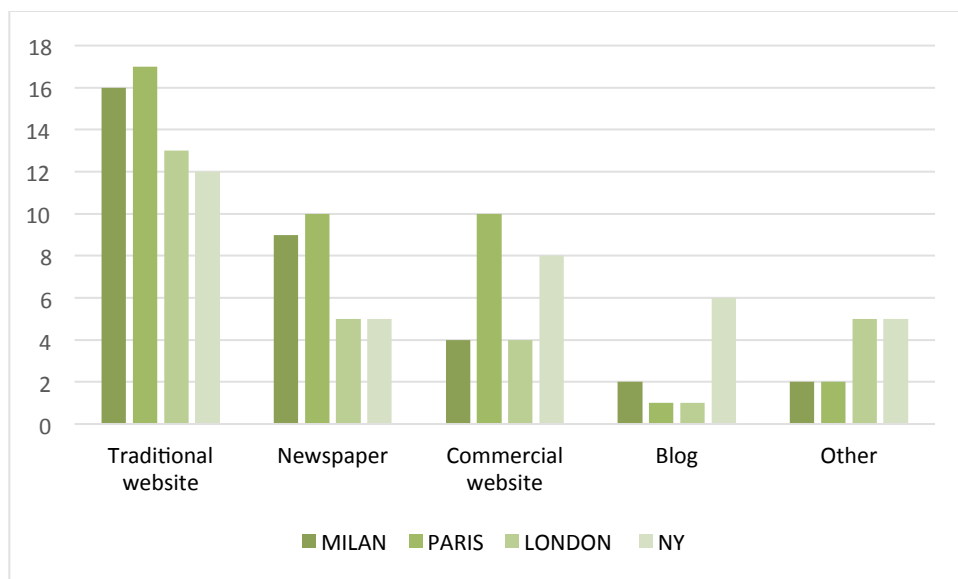

Figure 1: Type of websites for all destinations
Source: Elaborated by authors

The majority of websites shown in the first three pages of results on *google.com* for all the search terms were "traditional websites", which were those with the purpose of informing the users without being the website of a newspaper, nor a commercial website, nor an affiliate.

In the specific case of *"Milan Fashion Week"*, the second most popular type of the website was "newspaper" with 9 results, followed by commercial websites (4) and lastly with equal results of two personal blogs and two other types of websites. For this search term, not a single DMO or tourism related website was retrieved in the first three result pages on Google.

As for the *"Paris Fashion Week"*, the websites occupying the second place are newspapers and commercial websites with 10 items both. The third type of websites that appeared the most was "other" with two sites, followed by a personal blog. In case of Paris, one of the specific websites related to tourism appearing in the results was the official DMO website of the city of Paris and *Tours por Paris* a website dedicated to the guided tours that appeared in the paid results.

When searching *"London Fashion Week"*, after 13 traditional websites, newspaper websites and other types of websites appeared (5 each), followed by commercial websites (4) and a personal blog. DMO websites were not part of the results when looking for *"London Fashion Week"* but other two tourism related websites were part of the results, one organic and one paid. The websites were *Time Out,* an entertainment and travel inspirational business site and *Last Minute,* an Online Travel Agency.

The last investigated search term was *"New York Fashion Week",* leading to 12 traditional websites. The second most popular websites were commercial ones with eight results, followed by six blogs, and finally five social media accounts, as well as five newspaper websites. In this case, similar to the cases of Milan and London the website of the DMO didn't appear in the first three result pages; however, one paid result of a travel blog *NuevaYork.com* and *Time Out* as organic result appeared under the searched term.

Fashion week information

The following section presents the results for the available information regarding fashion week events in the selected websites (**Figure 2**)
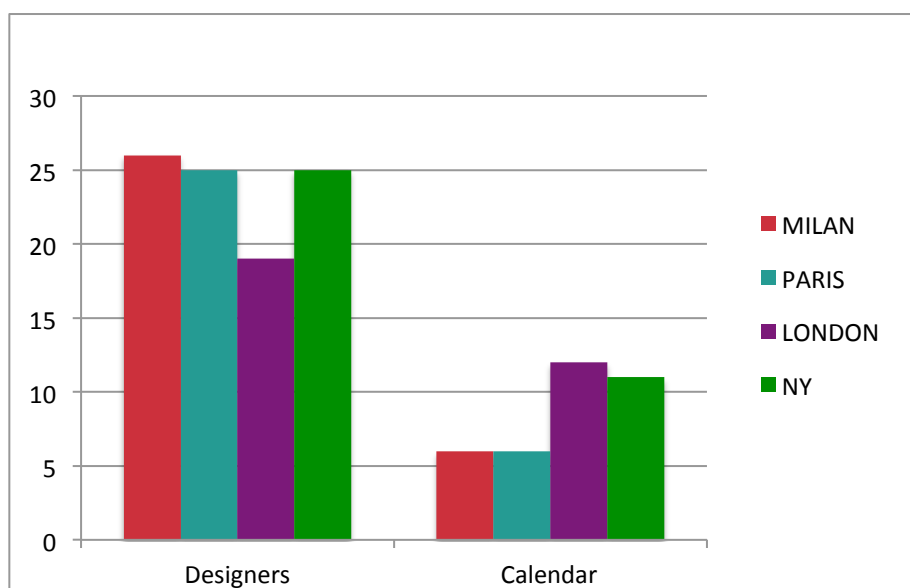

Figure 2: Fashion week information
Source: Elaborated by authors

In case of Milan 26 out of 33 websites mentioned the designers and only six presented the calendar; in case of Paris out of 40 selected for the analysis 25 websites mentioned the designers and six did have the calendar.

In the results of London and New York it can be seen that the calendar had more popularity than in the other two destinations, with 12 mentions out of 28 in case of

London and 11 out of 36 in case of New York. As for the mentions of the designers they were included 19 times for London and 25 times for New York. To a certain degree, the results of the frequency with which the designers were mentioned were as expected since they play a critical role in such events.

Tourism related content

This section illustrates the results for the tourism related content with an emphasis on the three most mentioned categories for each destination. In the following figure an overview of the results for all destinations is presented followed by the specific results for each destination.
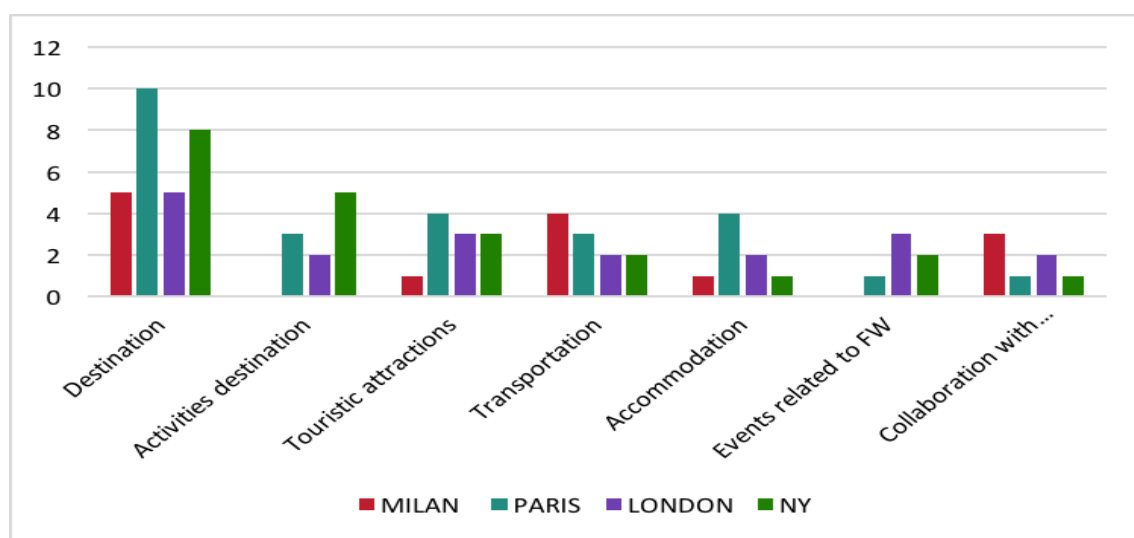

Figure 3: Tourism related content
Source: Elaborated by authors

33 websites were found with the search term *"Milan Fashion Week".* The results show that few of them mention tourism related content. Only five sites mentioned the destination, four transportation related information, and three sites indicated collaboration with DMO or the city council (i.e. Comune di Milano as institutional partner).

In case of Paris among 40 investigated websites only 10 mentioned the destination Paris. Touristic attractions and accommodation-related information were present four times, followed by activities to do at the destination and transportation with three mentions.

In case of London, all the sub-categories were mentioned at least twice throughout the 28 websites considered for the content analysis.

The results regarding *"New York Fashion Week"* are the following: subcategory with more mentions was "destination" (8 websites out of 36), followed by the activities to

do (5 mentions), which were rather specific (see **Figure 4** as an example for this). Then touristic attractions were mentioned three times.
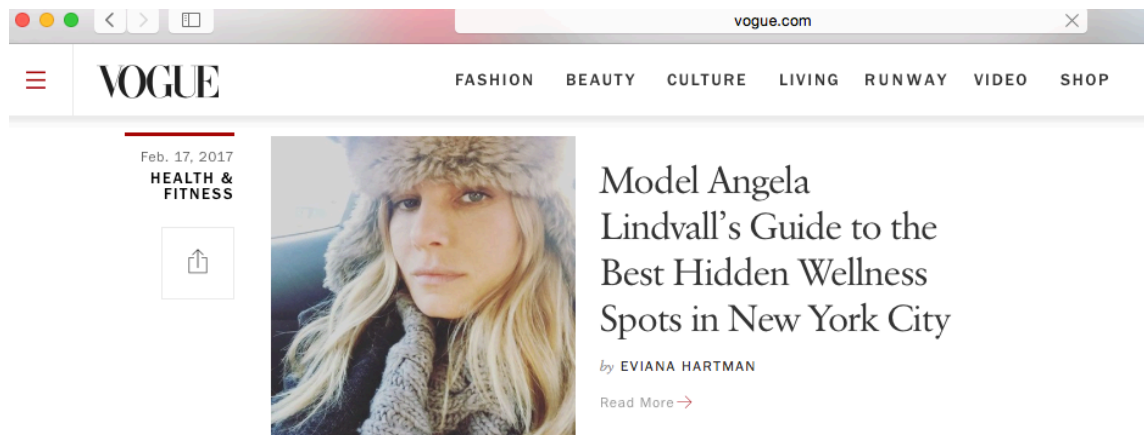

Figure 4: Screenshot taken from vogue.com
Source: vogue.com

Multimedia

In case of fashion, communication visual elements are extensively used, as their users need to see what the new fashion trends are, what elements make a designer different, and so on. In the analyzed websites, the appearance of multimedia elements were also extensively present. Almost all of them have photos as part of their online content (see **Figure 5**). Only one webpage mentioning *Milan Fashion Week* did not feature any photo content, the same can be said about two pages mentioning *London Fashion Week*, three ones mentioning *Paris Fashion Week*, and five pages mentioning *New York Fashion Week*. On the other hand, the presence of videos was less relevant: among 33 pages for Milan only 10 had video content, 8 out of 40 in the case of Paris, 12 out of 28 for London, and 14 among 36 for New York.
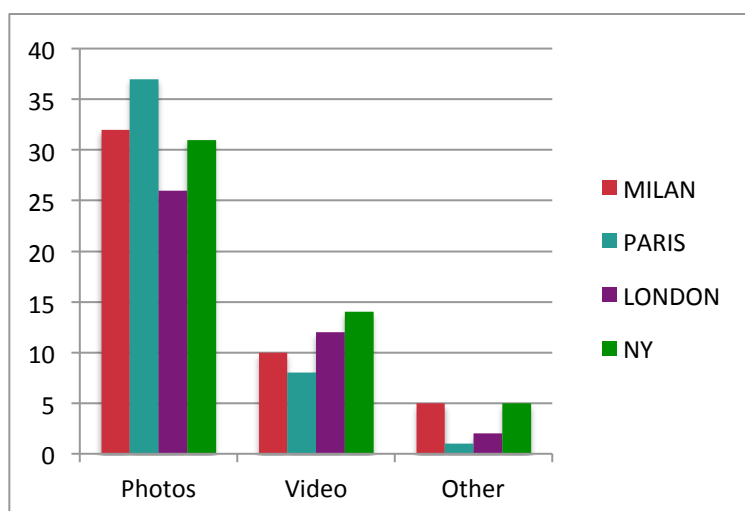

Figure 5: Multimedia

Source: Elaborated by authors

Other types of multimedia found in the research results were live streaming and fashion shows in virtual reality (**Figure 6**).
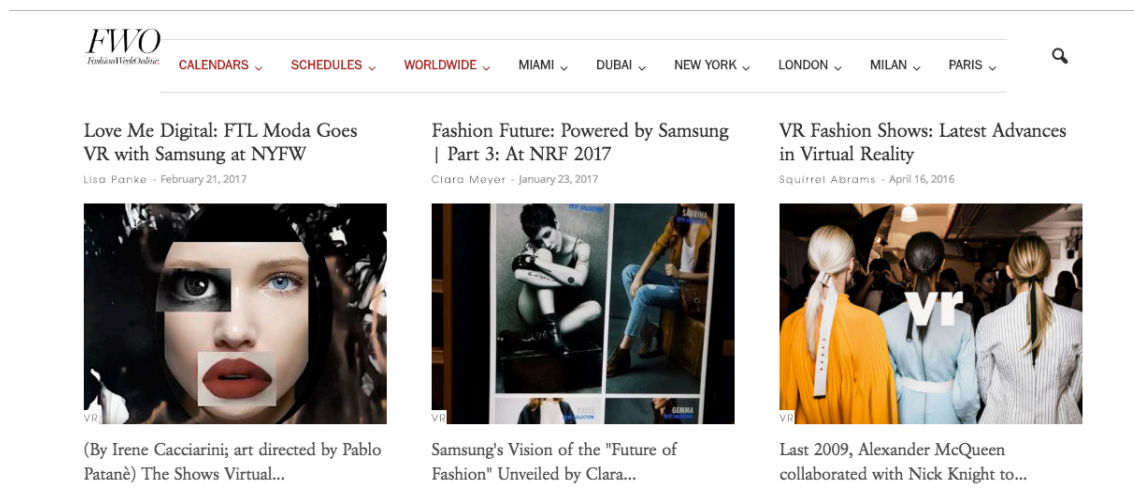

Figure 6: Screenshot from fashionweekonline.com
Source: fashionweekonline.com

Social Media

As expected, social media platforms were found to play an important role as part of the search results for the fashion weeks related keywords. In all cases, the most relevant social media platforms were Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Also Pinterest does play an important role (**Figure 7**).
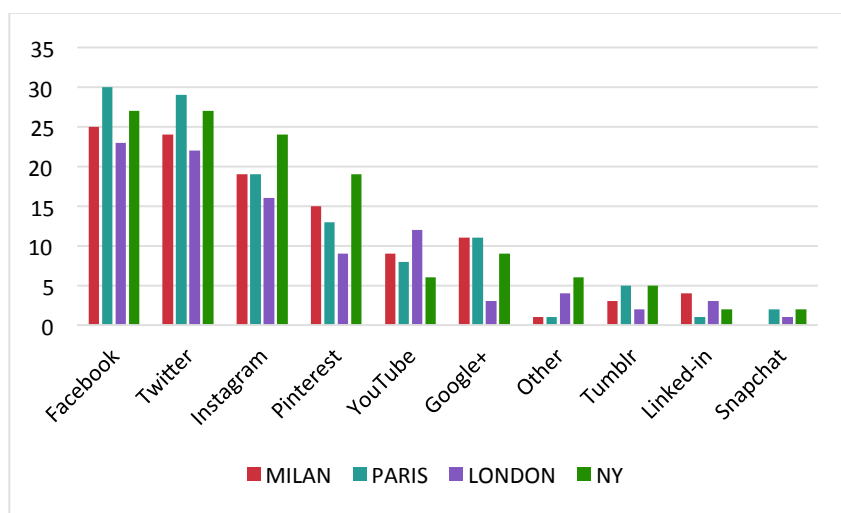

Figure 7: Social Media
Source: Elaborated by authors

***Phase (B) -* Content Analysis of the cities' destination websites**

The results from the content analysis of the four official destination websites are present in the following pages, with the aim of determining the degree of importance that DMOs place in communicating and promoting *fashion weeks* as part of their official tourism offer, and how they are taking advantage (if so) of these worldwide famous events.

These results are presented individually starting with Milan, followed by Paris, London, and concluding with New York.

Milan – www.turismo.milano.it

Overall the communication of the *fashion week* events in Milan DMO´s website is specific and easy to find. The website developers place importance on these events and on the tradition of holding them in the city. For instance, they write:

"Once again, as is customary, the Lombard capital will host the top brands which will showcase their spring/summer 2018 collections with stylish fashion shows, presentations and prestigious events." ("Milano Moda Uomo", 2017)

The results for each category of the analysis of Milan´s tourism destination website are presented below.

Languages: Users can find eight different languages available on the website: English, Italian, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Chinese.

Information architecture:
The website´s architecture is simple and specific. Regarding the fashion-related content, information about Milan fashion week was placed in the second level menu, under the category "Events in Milan". In the very center of the page there is an introduction to the event "Men's Fashion Week" (see **Figure 8**) with an appealing image and a link to a dedicated page, followed by various events taking place in the destination in the month of June 2017.
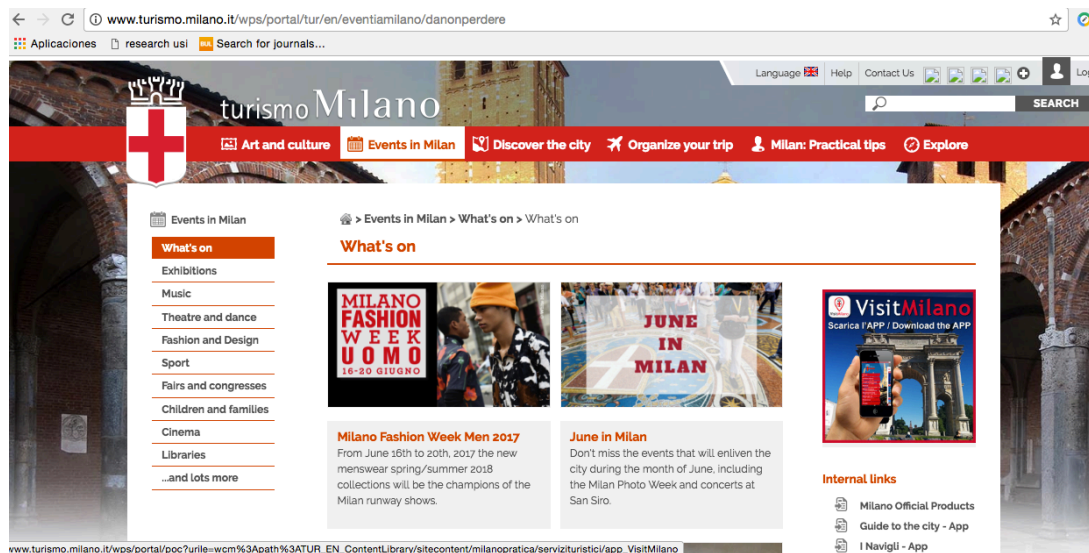
Figure 8: Screenshot from www.turismo.milano.it second level menu *Events in Milan*
Source: www.turismo.milano.it

Fashion week events over time

In this section the objective was to identify whether past *fashion week* events were mentioned, together with current and future events. The search tool was used within the website and it was found that one *fashion week* event is present in two parts of the website:

1. Women's wear Milan fashion week 2017 → mentioned in the second level menu: *"Events in Milan"*
2. Women's wear Milan fashion week 2017 → mentioned in the second level menu of: *"Themed itineraries in Milan",* which then redirected to *"Events in Milan".*

No information about future *fashion week* events was present in the website.

Fashion week promoted in a special banner
The results were negative regarding the promotion of these events in a special banner within the website, while giving more importance and visibility to the important event happening in the city.

Other fashion week events in the city
The types and total number of events for the *Fall/winter 2017/2018* collections taking place in the destination were mentioned on the website of the destination: 70 fashion shows, 88 presentations, 4 appointment-only presentations, 37 events, 174 collections. These numbers help users to know that Milan is one of the global fashion capitals.

Fashion Events Venues
Five venues used for fashion events were mentioned on the website, specifically: Palazzo Morando, Armani/Silos Exhibition Space, Sala delle Cariatidi (Palazzo Reale),

Spazio Cavallerizze (National Museum of Science and Technology) and lastly the Pavillion (Piazza Gae Aulenti).

Fashion week specific info. for current or future events
For the fashion events shown in the second level menu of *Fashion and design*, the full calendar, activities, ticketing, organizers' names and contacts were available. However, no information about location of the events and maps were found with the specific indication of the event location.

Social Media for instant info/news about fashion week
Certainly Milan's DMO uses different social media and all its social media channels are mentioned in the website. However, what was intended in this part was to find out which Social Media platforms were mentioned so users could find instant information and news regarding *fashion week* at the destination. We have found out that Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and Pinterest accounts were mentioned on the website, as well as other types of media such as livestreaming and mega screens at Via Croce Rossa and Piazza Gae Aulenti so to inform the users about what is happening around this event.

Paris – www.en.parisinfo.com

In general, when something about fashion is mentioned on the website of Paris, the DMO mostly refers to shopping rather than fashion events. There is plenty of information on the website about personal shopping assistants if prospects would like to visit the best of stores and fashion elements in Paris and surrounding area (**Figure 9**).
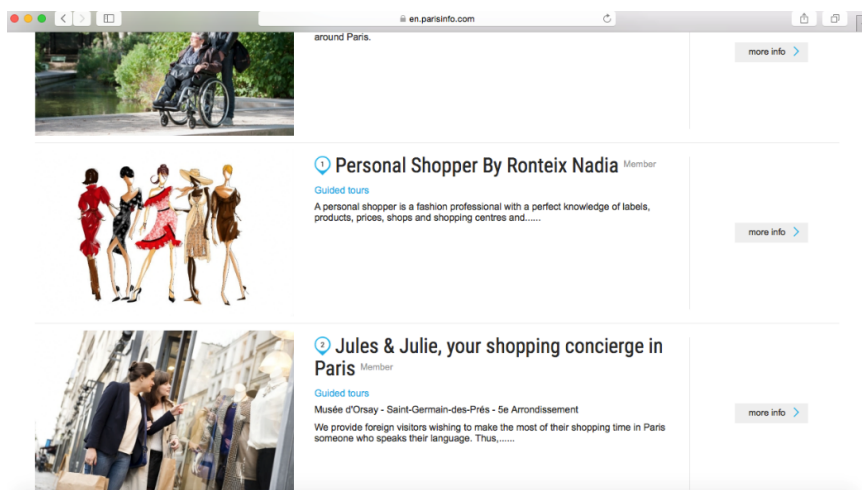

Figure 9: Screenshot from www.en.parisinfo.com "*Shopping assistant*"
Source: www.parisinfo.com

The findings for Paris' tourism destination website are presented by categories as follows.

Languages
Paris destination website is available in 11 different languages: English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.

Information architecture
The information flow on the website is not as easy to follow as on Milan's website, due
to the information overload. On the other hand, Paris DMO's website is extensively
presenting multimedia materials, where the users can see what the destination has to
offer.

The website had seven categories in the first level menu: Explore, What to see, Going
out, Shopping, Eating out, Where to stay, and Practical Paris.

Under the category *Explore,* a subcategory *"Major Events"* is available so that users can
plan their activities while visiting the city. In this category, a division of the calendar by
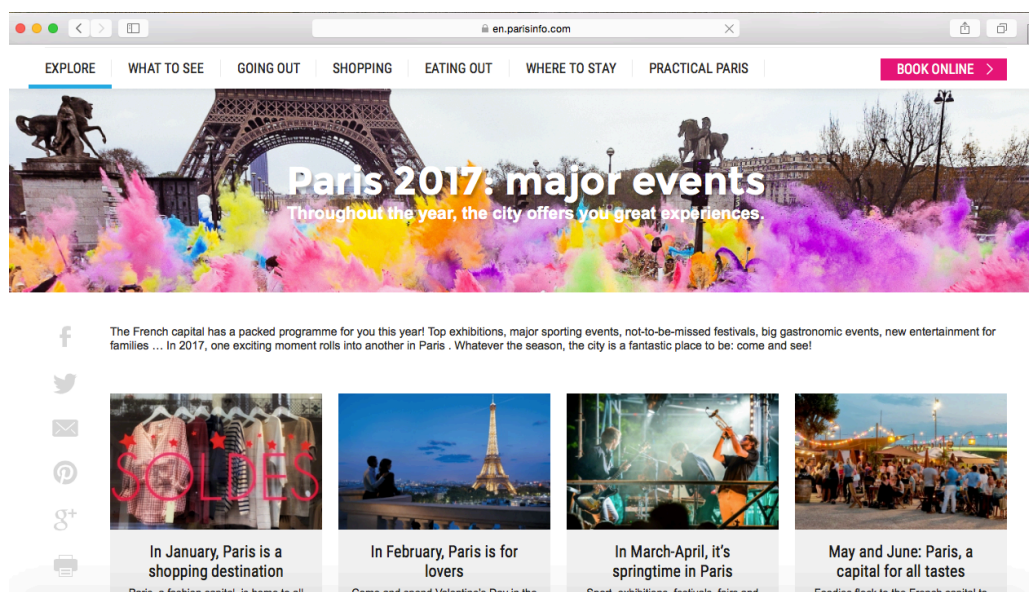months was found, and it can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 10: Screenshot from www.en.parisinfo.com *"Major Events"*
Source: www.parisinfo.com

When clicking on the first month (January), it was found that a greater importance was
given to winter sales than to the *fashion week* taking place that same month.
Furthermore, the representatives of the DMO to refer to Paris as a "shopping
destination", "a genuine shopping mecca" rather than as a "fashion destination" or a
"fashion capital".

In the window of "September: A focus on culture", three lines are dedicated to
mention the dates when the city is hosting *"Paris Design Week"*, but nothing is there
about the dates of *"Paris Fashion Week"*, which is also taking place this month. In the
same time wardrobe exhibitions are constantly promoted in the page. For instance,
"Dalida", which features the wardrobe of the famous singer Dalida, Jean-Paul Gautier
collection of corsets, futuristic costumes, and accessories are featured on the website.
Moreover, a collection of clothes that caused scandals was mentioned, but once again,

nothing specifically about *fashion week* events or exhibitions could be found on the webpage.

Fashion week events over time
It was mentioned on the website that the destination hosted *Paris Fashion Week* in the past but none of the previous specific editions were indicated. Furthermore it was not specified how many events are performed in the city under the umbrella of the present and future *fashion week.*

Fashion week promoted in a special banner
Despite the fact of having a large number of images on the website no banners with *fashion week* promotion was found.

Fashion week events in the city
Nothing was mentioned regarding the type or number of *fashion week* events taking place in the city of Paris either.

Fashion Events Venues
In total, only three venues were mentioned: Grand Palais, Louvre Carrousel, and Palais de Tokyo.

Fashion week specific info. for current or future events
The website did not mentioned any specific information such as the full calendar, activities, organizers, tickets, location of events, and maps for current or future events.

Social Media for instant info./news about Fashion week
The website of Paris DMO has icons for the different social media they use (Facebook, Twitter, Tripadvisor, Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube) with links that redirect to the social media accounts. Nevertheless, no information was found about specific accounts or ways in which the tourists can find instant information or news regarding *Paris Fashion week.*

London – www.visitlondon.com

It is important to mention that only when using the search tool and typing *fashion week* it was possible to find information related to the topic.

Languages
The website of visit London.com has six languages: Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

Information architecture
The content of this website is organized in four main categories in the first level menu: Tickets & Offers, Things to do, Accommodation, Traveler Information.

In the home page, four grids with pictures with the themes of top attractions, things to do, day trips and tickets & offers were present (**Figure 11**).

Figure 11: Screenshot from www.visitlondon.com "*Home page*"
Source: www.visitlondon.com

In the grid of *"attractions"*, *London fashion week* did not appear as part of any attraction. Instead, movie and TV tours are available as a part of the tourism offer (e.g. Harry Potter, Doctor Who walking tour and Downton Abbey tour).

Fashion week events over time
In this category only one future *fashion week* event was mentioned and it was the *London fashion week* taking place in February 2018. However, no description, or any additional information was present.

No information was found regarding the following four categories: *fashion week promoted in a special banner; other fashion week events in the city; fashion events venues; social media for instant info./news about fashion week.*

Fashion week specific info. for current or future events
While using the search tool to find information regarding *fashion week* events, the only information found was regarding tickets. There was an option of buying tickets with special discounts (See **Figure 12**)*.*
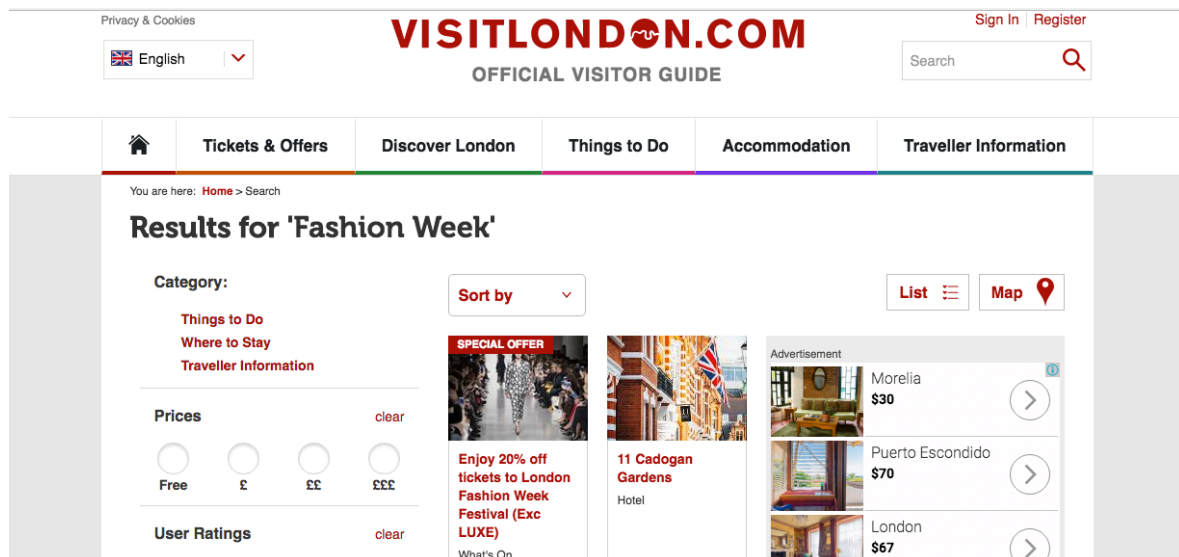
Figure 12: Special discount tickets for *London fashion week.*
Source: www.visitlondon.com

No piece of information was found for the other subcategories: full calendar, activities, organizers, contacts, locations and map for locations.

New York – www.nycgo.com

Finally, the results for the analyzed destination website of New York are presented. It is important to mention that while navigating thorugh the main menu of the website the site nothing about *fashion week* events was present. Because of this, the search tool was used for the analysis. When using the search tool and typing the words *fashion week* a variety of articles, past events, and interviews with designers were found. The interviews had special questions such as "Why New York?", "Favorite spots in the city?", "Must visit places?", which triggered the interest of tourists to visit the city.

Languages
The website was only available in one language: English.

Information architecture
Similar to the website of *parisinfo.com* this website had an important presence of multimedia with buttons to click on. In the first level menu there was a category called *"Things to do",* in which the subcategory *"events"* could be found. Out of 269 events that were listed only two had a relationship to fashion, namely: "Native Fashion Now" and "Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons: Art of the In-Between", but nothing specific about *fashion week*, even though the *Men´s fashion week* was about to be hosted in the city in less than a month.

Fashion week events over time
In this category only past events were found, specifically the *Fall/Winter fashion week 2017* edition and the *Spring/Summer fashion week 2016.*

No details were found on the official website of the destination New York for the following categories: *fashion week promoted in a special banner; fashion week events in the city; fashion week specific info. For current or future events; social media for instant info./news about fashion week; fashion events venues.*

Regarding the venues used for presentations, catwalks, or parties for *fashion week* events four venues were mentioned: Bryant Park, Lincoln Center, the bar on the 18th floor of The Standard Hotel, and Spring Studios.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this research was to identify whether destinations hosting the four most established *fashion week* events are taking advantage of them to promote the destination online. Secondly, to find out if *fashion week* events are presented by the hosting destinations as a part of the tourism offer. Finally, to assess the importance given to these events at the official destination websites of the cities of Milan, Paris, London and New York. In order to achieve this aim, the research was divided into two phases, both comprising content analyses of available online resources. Results from phase (A) allowed answering the first research question, while the results from phase (B) assisted answering the second question (RQ2a & RQ2b).

By analyzing tourism related content available online in relation with the topic of the famous events of *fashion week* and by bringing the specific cases of *Milan Fashion Week*, *Paris Fashion Week, London Fashion Week,* and *New York Fashion Week* this research contributes at filling the gap on the existing literature about the relationship between Tourism and Fashion Events. Since this topic has never been explored before, the findings on the present research contain a particular value to the research community.

Overall, it can be stated that the four investigated destinations hosting the primary *fashion week* events do not seem to acknowledge the potential they have by hosting these popular events and the positive effects these could bring to destinations if they promote *fashion week* events as part of the tourism offer. Moreover, the DMOs of the destinations of: Milan, Paris, London, and New York, seem to underestimate the impacts that the promotion and marketing activities done around *fashion week* events could have.

Destination: Milan
In the specific case of the destination of Milan results showed that the events are an important part of the destination´s tourism offer. This because the category of events was part of the first level menu on the website. Furthermore, it can be implied that the DMO consider *Fashion Week* events as part of the tourism offer since they are displayed in the subcategory *"what´s on",* and the quantity of fashion events

mentioned in the website are quite high in comparison to the other types of events available on the website. Additionally, Milan´s DMO was the only one mentioning the long tradition the city has of hosting *Fashion Week* events, and providing the information on the specific editions the city has hosted.

The Search Engine optimization and marketing efforts around the website of the city of Milano DMO regarding *Milan Fashion Week* were not strong enough to appear in the first three pages of *google.com,* as a relevant website when searching for information with the keywords *Milan Fashion Week.* By being part of the first results of the Search Engine the website could have provided more visits and once the users are there, find specific information about *fashion week* in the city and tourism related information that could be helpful for their visit or trigger interest to visit Milan.

Destination: Paris
As mentioned by Maryanovska-Davitzon (2017) "Paris is rightly recognized as the world's fashion capital, and does not concede this title to London, Milan or even New York". Nevertheless, the destination Paris does not seem to take advantage of this fact, especially evaluating its online communication. Results allowed to describe this statement for the following reasons: even though the official DMO´s website appeared as one of the most relevant websites for the search term of *"Paris Fashion Week"* once on the website, the event was not mentioned as part of the tourism offer. Nor information about this event was given clearly to the users. In the content analysis of phase (B) it was found that greater importance was given to shopping activities than *fashion week* events. Additionally, it was observed that whenever the website referred to "fashion" the information about shopping malls, personal shopping assistants, special sales on stores, and tips for a better shopping was given. Nothing about *fashion week* events was specifically mentioned. Moreover, during the months when *Paris Fashion Week* takes place, bigger relevance was given to the shopping sales than to the *fashion week* events. The above-mentioned results could enhance the strategy taken by DMO to influence the motives of visiting the city, specially focused on people interested in fashion. Since the city is a fashion capital, the possibility to shop the latest trends could be of high interest to many people, could generate a good amount of visits, and consequently create economic benefit for the tourism destination.

Destination: London
It was identified during this research that the DMO of London is not taking enough online marketing efforts to appear in the relevant results of *google.com* with relevant search terms *"London Fashion Week".* On the contrary, other tourism-related companies, for instance *Time out* and *Last Minute* do appear in this relevant results in *google.com.* Also, London´s DMO does not integrate *London Fashion Week* as part of their tourism strategy, this because *fashion week* events were not found as part of the tourism offer at the official DMO´s website nor gave any relevant information about these events.

On the other hand, it seems like one of the DMO´s strategies is to focus towards movies and tv shows (i.e. Doctor Who, Harry Potter or Downton Abbey tour) since they

are mentioned as *top attractions* of the city and occupied an important place on the website where users can have a direct and easy access.

Destination: New York

The official website of the destination did not appear in the Search Engine when looking under the search term *New York Fashion Week,* but in contrast, two other websites with tourism related content were part of the results. Once in the DMOs website it was surprising to found that the official DMO website of the city was only available in one language: English, creating a barrier and unwelcoming feeling to tourists whose first language is not English.

The official website of the destination New York was the one that had the least amount (almost null) of information regarding *fashion week* events taking place in the city. Nevertheless, when using the search tool with the keyword: *"Fashion Week"* a unique concept of providing articles and interviews with designers and fashion editors where found, different from any other investigated destination in this research. The interviews included questions, the answers to which could be of interest for tourists to find inspiration to visit the destination.

This research provided the answers to the following research questions

RQ 1: Are tourism-related websites and tourism information about the four destinations hosting the primary fashion weeks in Milan, Paris, London and New York present online when the users are looking for these events?

It appears that only the destination of Paris is doing relevant Search Engine optimization efforts to be present with the official destination website when users are looking for Paris Fashion Week events in the Search Engine google.com. As for the other three destinations: Milan, London and New York, they are not doing any online marketing nor promotion efforts to be present when users are looking for Fashion Week Milan, Fashion Week London, Fashion Week New York, since their official destination websites did not appear among relevant search results.

RQ2a: Are these destinations taking advantage of the fashion weeks to promote the event as part of their tourism offer?

Partially true. Not all four destinations are taking advantage of Fashion Week events to promote these events as part of their tourism offer. The only destination offering these events in its official destination website was Milan. The destinations of Paris, London, and New York are not stressing Fashion Week events as their tourism offer online.

RQ2b. What is the level of importance given to fashion week events in the city´s tourism websites of Milan, Paris, London and New York?

The level of importance given to Fashion Week events in each DMOs website differ from destination to destination, being Milan the destination which gave a high level of importance of fashion week events in its destination website, followed by Paris,

London and New York giving a low level of importance to Fashion Week events, placing more importance to other types of events and tourism attractions.

Limitations and Future research

This research investigated four destinations hosting the "Big four" *fashion week* events. Although they are the most influential and known ones around the world, generalizations cannot be done to other destinations, especially because results showed that each destination has its own and unique mix of strategies to attract tourists. Additionally, this research was focused only on the city level, leaving out of study regional and national websites of the DMOs. The inclusion of the websites of national DMOs could have helped to have a general overview of how the national tourism board is implementing (if so) strategies by adding *fashion week* events into their websites as part of their tourism offer coupled with the level of importance given to such events.

Considering that *fashion week* events are semiannual ones, the second limitation was the reduced period in which this research was performed. The analyses of the websites were made between the months of April and July 2017, during which the *fashion week* events performed were *New York Bridal Fashion Week* (April, 2017), *London Fashion Week Men´s, Milan Fashion Week Men´s, Fashion Week Men´s* (June, 2017) and *Paris Haute Couture, New York Fashion Week Men´s* in July, 2017. Although certain editions of *fashion week* events are included in the research, the most popular editions which are women´s *fashion week* events, were not included because of the time when the investigation was done.

Future research could consider enlarging the period of the investigations and analyze if there are different strategies taken by DMO´s when women´s editions for *fashion week* events take place in the city. This might be of use, as women´s editions of *fashion week* tend to attract a bigger audience. Additionally, future researches could add more *fashion week* events to the analyses to have a greater overview, and investigate if the results could be generalized to other destinations hosting *fashion week* events regardless the city.

Moreover, investigations from the user´s perspective would be needed to determine the level of influence *fashion week* events actually have on the tourists´ decision to visit one destination hosting fashion events or not. By knowing better what visitors think, DMOs can adapt their strategies regarding this topic or create new ones.

This research has an innovative approach for tourism and fashion, reason why it could be of a high value to decision makers in these industries. On one hand, tourism boards could realize that by displaying *fashion week* related content on their websites, they could boost the promotion of the destination online. Additionally, this could engage new segments of tourists, not only for leisure tourism, but also to attract business

tourism (i.e. editors of fashion magazines, bloggers, designers, models, production companies, and other companies related to fashion). On the other hand, by offering relevant fashion and touristic information in a single place with easy access, people involved in the fashion industry could get inspired to visit the city for pleasure or to make shootings in popular, or fashionable places, or for instance host their own fashion events in particular locations of the city, and with this open up a new business segment.

It is on the hands of the tourism authorities to make improvements in their online strategies and take advantage of the famous events of *fashion week* to promote the destination online, facilitate the information gathering to tourists interested in fashion and offer *fashion week* events as part of their tourism offer. Destination managers need to consider in their current and future strategies the growing segment of *fashion lovers* and the big potential they have by being part of *"The Big Four."*

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