

## The Use of Websites and Facebook in Greek and French Breweries

S. Karetos<sup>1</sup>, A. Troumpoulou<sup>1</sup>, F. Ntalianis<sup>2</sup>, M. Ntaliani<sup>1</sup>, C. Costopoulou<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Informatics Laboratory, Department of Agricultural Economics and Development,  
Agricultural University of Athens, Greece*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Business Administration,  
University of Piraeus, Greece*

*Corresponding Author: S. Karetos*

**ABSTRACT:** During the COVID-19 epidemic many countries experienced severe market restrictions which forced traditional businesses to shift their activities to the online environment, resulting in increased competition in this domain. Given these conditions, marketing in the online environment or digital marketing turned out to be a core strategic choice for businesses. In the European Union the number of breweries has increased significantly in recent years and created an important value chain incorporating various stakeholders (e.g. farmers, wholesalers, and retailers). Breweries of different sizes and with a different history are market competitors and can benefit from digital marketing practices and strategies. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the corporate websites and investigate the use of Facebook in Greek and French breweries. To this end, brewery websites are initially evaluated using Website Grader and brewery Facebook pages using the Likealyzer tool. The results suggest that the use of websites and social media can be further improved so that breweries from both countries can maximize their benefits from digital marketing.

**KEYWORDS** Digital Marketing, Websites, Facebook, Breweries.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Businesses of all sizes and different business sectors are trying to benefit from the opportunities offered by the constantly evolving digital environment. The advantages incorporate both customers who want to be well informed about the products and the services they use, as well as businesses which are trying to attract new customers and therefore increase their market value [1]. Digital marketing has become the core marketing strategy for all modern businesses as a promotion tool and to connect with potential customers. This includes not only email, social media, and web-based advertising, but also text and multimedia messages, which are interconnected [2].

Usually, the company website promotes or even sells the products and services offered, provides information on its history, location, profile etc. It is also connected with the corresponding social media pages and vice versa. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and others have led to increased efficiency in the rapidly evolving field of digital marketing [3, 4]. Businesses and organizations can reach large numbers of customers in a more focused way. Moreover, the ability to offer direct links from their websites and social media pages allows businesses to promote brand names and support the creation of specific brand communities [4, 5, 6].

The advantages concern all stakeholders. On the one hand, the digital environment enables customers to access a wide variety of goods and services from different suppliers and provides an easy way to search for, compare, select, and buy products and services [7]. On the other hand, businesses have the opportunity to enter new markets, offer new products and services, interact with the public in new ways, develop new skills, and use these new tools to improve competitiveness [8]. In the context of these developments, the key question is not

whether internet technologies will be further developed, but whether companies can adopt them to reap the benefits.

The current COVID-19 epidemic has caused lockdowns and shutting down of traditional commerce in many countries. In response, many traditional businesses tried to move their activities online using e-commerce platforms and the implementation of digital marketing strategies through social media increased as a unique solution to compete online [9, 10]. The food sector is at the forefront of innovation in the interactive marketing arena: companies operating in this sector have been working with advertising agencies and high-tech specialists to design campaigns that will encourage people to engage with social networks, mobile phones, and virtual worlds [11].

Beer is the most popular alcoholic beverage worldwide, and the third most popular drink overall after water and tea. The brewing industry has flourished in recent years in the European Union (EU) and despite modest levels of beer production compared to China (China was the leading producer of beer in terms of production volume in 2019 and produced around 376.53 million HL) [12], many of the most famous and widely appreciated types of beer have their origins in Europe. In addition to the significant beer production, the industry is also innovating by producing an increasingly wide variety of beers. Moreover, the growing number of breweries is a sign of the confidence that European consumers have in the industry, their desire for diversity, and the high quality of the product.

This study focuses on two EU countries with different levels of beer production, namely France and Greece. France was ranked as the 7<sup>th</sup> largest EU producer in 2019 and since 2010 the number of breweries on French territory has exploded, making France the country with the most active breweries. Greece was ranked as the 19<sup>th</sup> largest EU producer in 2019 and is among the smaller beer producers. This paper aims to evaluate the corporate websites and Facebook pages of Greek and French breweries. Regarding social media, this research focuses on digital marketing using Facebook as this is most popular among businesses. According to the literature review, there are no studies on how breweries adopt or use websites and social media for promotion or digital marketing. To this end, brewery sites are initially evaluated using Website Grader, an online tool [13]. The activity of the breweries is then studied on their Facebook pages using the Likealyzer tool. It is noted that Likealyzer was available online for free until November 2019. More specifically, the paper examines the following questions:

- What is the degree of website use by Greek and French breweries?
- What is the degree of Facebook use by Greek and French breweries?

The structure of the work is as follows: the next chapter presents concepts and definitions relating to digital marketing. In the third section, the brewing industry in Greece and France is analyzed. The fourth section presents the methodology followed for the evaluation of use of websites and Facebook pages by the Greek and French breweries. The fifth section presents and discusses the results. Finally, the conclusions are presented in the sixth section.

## II. DIGITAL MARKETING

Since the development of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, an increasing number of companies started using the internet as a new marketing channel. Nowadays, the term digital marketing is widely used and denotes the achievement of an organization's marketing goals with the implementation of digital technologies [14, 15]. Digital marketing is defined as marketing using new technologies, and more particularly information technology and the internet [16, 17, 18]. There are various categories of digital marketing, such as marketing using websites, email marketing, search engine marketing, social media marketing, and mobile advertising [15, 18]. This study focuses on two categories of digital marketing, namely website marketing and social media marketing.

Typically, businesses using websites for marketing purposes promote products and services in order to attract potential customers [19]. Increased visits to a website represent more opportunities to convert visitors to customers. Therefore, the website needs to have a clear structure and strategy and the business owner determines what content is published and how it is promoted through search engines, email messages etc. In any case, it is the internet user or the visitor who decides which sites to visit and revisit based on the content [19, 20].

A business can retrieve very useful information from its website using analytics software. More specifically, it is possible to see the exact number of visitors who have viewed the website's homepage in real time or for a certain period, as well as how many pages they visited, how much time they spend on each one, what device they were using, where they came from, and whether they have visited the page in the past. This information is very helpful to prioritize which promotion channels to choose for the website, based on the number of people those channels are driving to the website [21, 22].

As regards social media, the term refers to media where people interact with others in virtual communities and networks [23]. Five main categories of social media are distinguished: collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), content communities (e.g. YouTube, Pinterest, Flickr), weblogs (e.g. Blogger, Tumblr, Twitter), social networking

sites (Facebook) and virtual worlds [24]. Social media marketing is defined in [25] as a cross-functional and interoperable concept that uses social media (often in conjunction with other media) to achieve business goals by creating value for the parties involved, while in [27] it is defined as the use of social media technologies (e.g. Web 2.0), and software for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging bids that are of value to business owners.

Social media marketing is adopted by a business, as several goals can be achieved through the readability and visibility of social networking sites [27], such as attracting new customers, improving customer service, improving communication channels for better customer relationships, creating a market share, creating a reputable brand, boosting business revenue from sales of goods and services, improving marketing investment performance, consumer awareness and participation in charitable or political activities, and raising awareness on specific issues.

As the general public uses social media tools primarily to develop social contacts rather than for shopping, the success of social marketing is based on a more indirect approach, where instead of offering products for sale, it encourages members of a community to talk about the use and benefits of these products [28]. With this in mind, several actions have been undertaken by businesses to take into account the views of consumers, expressed through social media by involving them in product design choices [29].

### III. THE BREWING INDUSTRY IN GREECE AND FRANCE

According to [30] the EU hosts 11,048 breweries, produces 401,948,000 HL, exports 88,203,000 HL, and offers 134,732 direct jobs. Greece is a very small beer producer and hosts 57 breweries, produces 4,075,000 HL, exports 441,000 HL, and offers 2,100 direct jobs. The country holds the 19th position in the production of beer among the EU Member States. In Greece the first brewery was created in 1864. Today, many beer brands in Greece are manufactured by either Greek or foreign companies. In recent years, there has been a particular flourishing of local micro-breweries which produce a small number of beers, typically with local agricultural production (barley, wheat, hops etc.) flavored with the agroclimatic conditions of the specific area, giving the consumer more choices.

Generally, the beer market is based on two pillars: the hot and the cold market. The term "hot market" refers to beer sales in retail (supermarkets, cellars, etc.), while the term "cold market" refers to final outlets (restaurants, taverns, bars, cafes etc.). In Greece, the cold market was dominant before 2010, representing 60-65% of total consumption. Nowadays, events such as the economic crisis and the COVID-19 epidemic have restricted the consumer from frequent outflows, resulting in a tendency to balance and/or increase the hot market. However, beer is a favorite choice for the Greeks, giving stability to the domestic product market.

In Greece, demand for beer is affected by a number of factors. The most important factor is the seasonality of the drink. Greater demand for beer occurs in early March, usually due to weather conditions, and continues until September to early October. As the weather tends to be warm for most of this time, there is a peak in demand and usually a prolongation of consumption. Tourism is the second affecting factor. As beer is a popular drink all over the world, it is expected that demand and consumption will rise during the tourist season. Finally, apart from seasonality and tourism, another important factor is its price compared to other alcoholic choices. The price of beer is one of the lowest in the market, making it the easiest and most economical choice, while beer has a low alcohol content compared to other beverages, so it can be consumed in larger quantities [31].

Approximately 445 beer labels are sold in the Greek market on a fixed or seasonal basis. Most of these are produced by microbreweries created after 2000, and most of them after 2010. Usually, these breweries are located in the region of their selling activity. However, there are also big breweries that have been active in the industry for more than fifty years, with an intensive exports profile. Three of them belong to groups of multinational corporations and are considered to be big breweries, while the rest are treated as micro-breweries. Statistically, large breweries account for approximately 7% of the market and small breweries for 93%. Small breweries have gained an important share in market preferences and are located in different parts of the country. Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of breweries. 25% are located on the Aegean islands, with Attica – the capital city and major business center – holding joint second place with the Peloponnese and Macedonia with 12%, followed by Crete with 10%, Central Greece with 7%, Thrace with 7% and Thessaly, the Ionian Islands and Epirus with 5%.

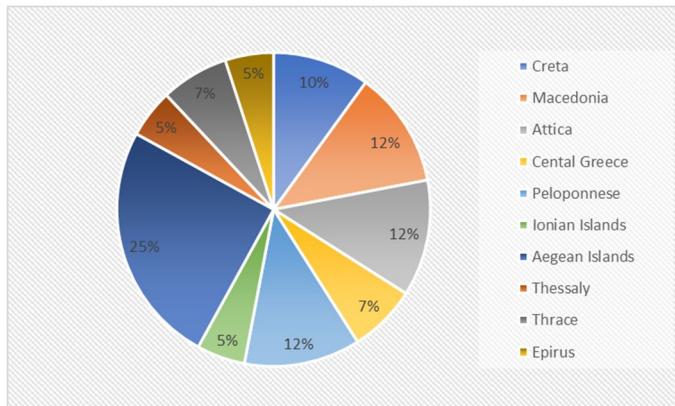


Fig. 1: Greek breweries by region

France holds the 7th position in beer production among EU Member States. Statistics available online [30] suggest that France hosts 2,200 breweries, produces 22,300,000 HL, exports 6,768,000 HL, and offers 7,700 direct jobs. In France, prior to industrialization, most beers were produced in small provincial breweries which met the demands of the inhabitants at local level. At the beginning of the 20th century, the population of rural areas was considerably reduced, and as a result some of these breweries shut down and traditional beer production and local labels disappeared. However, in recent decades, interest in local production has flourished again, resulting in the appearance of microbreweries; however, the main proportion of beer comes from mass production by multinational companies. For the years 2012-2019, analytical data are available for Greece and France in relation to the number of breweries (Table 1) and beer production (Table 2) [30].

Number of breweries								
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>France</b>	503	580	663	793	950	1100	1600	2200
<b>Greece</b>	18	20	20	28	43	43	46	57
<b>EU28</b>	5,087	5,8196	6,528	7,397	8,501	9,449	10,285	11,048

Table 1: Number of breweries in Greece and France

Beer production in 1.000 HL								
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>France</b>	17,600	18,300	19,850	20,300	20,650	21,000	22,000	22,300
<b>Greece</b>	3,745	3,750	3,700	3,820	3,827	3,800	3,933	4,075
<b>EU28</b>	389,456	386,364	387,142	393,205	394,592	396,529	405,938	401,948

Table 2: Beer production in Greece, France and EU28

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodology and tools used to evaluate the corporate websites and Facebook pages of Greek and French breweries. To analyze the quality of breweries' corporate websites, Website Grader, a web-based application, was used [32, 13]. The application is available for free on the internet. It should be noted that the evaluation is comparative, that is, the tool evaluates a brewery's website based on a standard rating (from 0 to 100) or in relation to other websites. However, the rating indicates whether the website works well and helps the business to improve the quality of the website data. Specifically, the website characteristics that the application evaluates are [13]:

*Performance:* This feature evaluates the overall appearance of a website, the size of webpages, and its download speed when requested by a visitor. It is probably one of the most important features as it constitutes the visitor's first impression and experience of the website. It can help increase the visibility and impact of the business. The value of this feature ranges from 0 to 30.

*Mobile readiness:* This feature is about viewing the website on any mobile device such as a smart phone or tablet in terms of response and viewer settings. As a large portion of the purchasing community makes extensive use of the internet and social media through their mobile devices, the flexibility of a site to work efficiently on these devices is important. Its value ranges from 0 to 30.

*Search Engine Optimization (SEO):* This feature is about positioning the website among those searched by search engine users. The short title of a website, short descriptions, and keywords can help improve the rankings. Its value ranges from 0 to 30.

*Security:* This feature checks the existence of a security certificate as a way of proving to visitors that the website is authentic and secure for information submissions. A well-known security certificate used on websites is SSL, but it is not the only one, and each site must have one. The value of this feature ranges from 0 to 10.

The Likealyzer application was then used to evaluate the breweries' pages on Facebook. This application is available for free on the internet, enabling the user to control some important parameters related to the presence and resonance of a Facebook page. The parameters assessed are [13]:

*Frontpage:* This parameter refers to the first impression the visitor gains from the page. It refers to information about the business, such as profile image, page information, options the visitor can have through the available buttons, and a unique username to make it easier to find the page.

*About:* This parameter refers to more detailed business information such as business history, contact information, location, hours of operation, products, and the number of users following that page.

*Activity:* This parameter refers to the activity of the page and how often it occurs. It evaluates the number of posts on a daily basis, the size of the posts, the average of the posts, and more specifically videos, as well as what other pages the particular page follows.

*Response:* This parameter refers to the response of the page to its visitors either with comments on posts or with personal messages. It evaluates response time as well as whether visitors can post by themselves on the business page.

*Engagement:* This parameter is about how active visitors are on the page and can only be used by the page creator. It is not used in this research.

## V. RESULTS

### Corporate Website Evaluation

Fifty-seven (57) Greek breweries were evaluated in total. However, only thirty-nine (39) of these have a website. The results of the evaluation showed that the first characteristic, *performance*, was satisfactory with a value of 19.54 out of 30. The second characteristic, *mobile readiness*, was rated 22.69 out of 30 and may be considered highly satisfactory; this is indicative of the attitude of the breweries towards the customer's device choices. The *SEO* characteristic scored 16.67 out of 30, which is considered moderate to low. This indicates a need to change the content of the websites to make them more searchable, so that they are more prominent and appear more quickly in search engine results. The fourth characteristic, *security*, is scored 5.9 out of 10, which shows that the websites are not particularly secure for visitors and further improvement is needed. Finally, the average evaluation score of all Website Grader characteristics for the websites of the Greek breweries is 64.79%. Although the percentage is not low, it suggests that there is much room for further improvement for Greek brewery websites.

A total of thirty (30) French breweries were selected for evaluation. Two of these businesses do not have a website. The results obtained from the use of the Website Grader application to analyze the websites of French breweries are presented below. For the first characteristic, *performance*, the value of 24.04 out of 30 shows a very good response of the websites when accessed by visitors. With regard to the second characteristic, *mobile readiness*, the value of 21.43 out of 30 is characterised as satisfactory. The third characteristic, *SEO*, has scored 19.82 out of 30, which can be improved. The value of the fourth characteristic, *security*, is 5.71 out of 10, which indicates that they are not particularly safe and can be significantly improved. Finally, the average of all the characteristics of Website Grader is 70.11%. This denotes the need for further improvement of the businesses' websites. Table 3 summarizes the results of Greek and French breweries.

Characteristic	Greek	French
Performance	19.54/30	24.04/30
Mobile readiness	22.69/30	21.43/30
SEO	16.67/30	19.82/30
Security	5.9/10	5.71/10
<b>Total</b>	<b>64.79%</b>	<b>70.11%</b>

Table 3: Website evaluation results of Greek and French breweries using Website Grader

Comparing the Greek and French websites, it becomes apparent that the *performance* of the French breweries' websites seems to be at a better level than those of the Greek breweries as the score is five points higher. However, as regards *mobile readiness*, Greek websites are positioned slightly higher with 22.69 out of 30

compared to 21.43 out of 30 for French websites. Regarding *SEO*, the French websites present a better level at 19.82, in contrast to the Greek score of 16.67 out of 30; however, both need further improvement. Likewise, in terms of *security*, both the Greek and French websites can be improved, as their values remain at low levels. Finally, the general picture of the total scores of all the characteristics present slightly higher values for the French breweries (70.11%) in comparison to the Greek breweries (64.79%).

### Evaluation of Facebook Pages

This section presents the results of the evaluation of the Facebook pages of Greek and French breweries using the Likealyzer application. It must be noted that usually the name of the brewery business and the products are different and this applies for both Greek and French businesses. Therefore, the breweries mostly present their flagship products on their Facebook pages. The average values in the parameters analyzed concern thirty-seven (37) Greek breweries because three belong to multinational groups, sixteen (16) do not have a Facebook page, and one was not open/accessible for the Likealyzer application even though the page existed [33].

The *frontpage* parameter of the 37 breweries resulted in an average score of 94.46%. This high proportion is due to the fact that the pages mostly have the necessary profile pictures, include sufficient information to satisfy the visitor at first glance, and provide the ability to search and communicate with the page quickly. Regarding the *about* parameter, the average value is 81% because some pages provide insufficient or too general information, with no time reports, or the related field was empty.

The evaluation of the *activity* parameter presents low scores – 32.95% – and indicates low levels of product promotion by the company and limited exploitation of the Facebook page for the company's benefit. As the abovementioned value is the average of 37 breweries, it must be noted that many of them present particularly low scores due to the low frequency of posts and advertisements, or even an absence of posts. There are long intervals between posts or these are limited to one type, consisting of either photographs or text.

In the *response* parameter, the average score was 89.19%. This value shows the time taken for the company to respond to comments or messages by visitors. The majority of breweries respond within one hour on working days and within a few hours at the weekend, in the evening, and on public holidays. This is satisfactory and greatly improves the page and makes it more interesting for the customer.

The same evaluation process was followed for the 30 selected French breweries. Of the selected breweries, only one does not have a Facebook page. Therefore, 29 pages were evaluated and the following results were obtained. For the *frontpage* parameter, the average is 90.41%, which is slightly lower than the corresponding Greek pages. The *about* parameter average is 68.97%, which is a low average for business information appearing on Facebook. The average for the *activity* parameter is 52.28%, which is considered a low score but is higher than that of Greek breweries. This indicates that there is moderate activity on the pages. The *response* parameter reaches an average of 88.52%. This value is particularly satisfying, showing that the businesses react in a timely way to visitors' comments and messages. A fairly fast response time indicates an interest in customer needs. Table 4 summarises the Facebook pages evaluation results.

Parameter	Greek	French
Frontpage	94.46%	90.41%
About	81%	68.97%
Activity	32.95%	52.28%
Response	89.19%	88.52%

Table 4: Evaluation of Facebook breweries pages using the Likealyzer

### VI. CONCLUSION

In the rapidly evolving field of digital marketing, websites in combination with social media tools are used for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings which have value for a business and its stakeholders. The COVID-19 epidemic commerce restrictions resulted in increased efforts by businesses to exploit this new strategy to promote their products and services, increase sales, establish trust relationships with customers, and create a competitive advantage. Therefore, the first research question that this study tried to investigate was: what is the degree of website use by Greek and French breweries? The evaluation has shown that the selected French breweries have websites of higher quality than the Greek breweries. More specifically, the French websites are better in *SEO*, while the Greek websites score more highly in *mobile readiness* and *security*. However, both French and Greek breweries need to make efforts to improve on all four characteristics, taking into account the importance of the digital marketing of the business, as well as the impact that a business website has on the consumer.

The second research question that this study tried to investigate was: what is the degree of Facebook use by Greek and French breweries? It is clear that the breweries studied are particularly interested in their Facebook presence. The visitor's first impression is very positive, the information on the operation of the company is sufficient, and Greek breweries respond immediately to users' comments and messages. However, posts should be made more often to increase public interest. Regarding the selected French breweries, the user's first impression of the Facebook page is considered to be at a very good level, but the average available information for each business is at a moderate level. The average number of posts on the page as well as *mobile readiness* are also moderate and can be further improved. The French breweries respond to visitors' requests and/or messages immediately.

The aforementioned results are also in line with statistical data on the use of social media in the EU by businesses [34], where for Greece the proportion was 28% in 2013 and reached 53% in 2019, while for France it was 17% in 2013 and 49% in 2019. Nevertheless, website and social media use can be further improved in order for businesses from both countries to benefit from digital marketing.

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