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## Tourism Web Development

Does everyone need a website? Websites are everywhere and do almost everything. Jeff Atwood called this "Atwood's Law: any application that can be written in JavaScript, will eventually be written in JavaScript" (Atwood, 2017), Javascript is the main driving source for the web giving control over the front end. Javascript is so versatile that nearly anything you can do on a computer, you can do on a website. I even wrote this paper on a website, and there are whole operating systems based solely on this idea that you can do everything you need just through a browser. "JavaScript is the most popular language according to StackOverflow's annual survey, with 62.5% of respondents claiming to use it." (Petkov, 2018), JavaScript is one of the main portions of web development. It has had a constant and consistent increase in use, which is a great sign for the website building industry. Websites are global, for the most part, and open borders as they can be accessed from anywhere. With the web being more and more accessed there is an ever increasing need for these websites to be built.

While I enjoy all programming I got interested in web development at first when I was in high school. I took an Information Technology class which gave me my first real introduction to programming and then my first introduction into web development. In that class we were given a quick introduction to programming concepts with the language Basic. We then moved on to basic HTML and CSS, followed by learning MySQL through the site phpmyadmin. Lastly we used the power of the internet and the Twitter API to make a website that would generate the "Yolo of the day". We even learned the basics of team management as we split into groups,

some working on the front end and some working on the backend of the site, and all collaborating on github.

My focus on tourism in web development comes from when I was trying to research my honeymoon trip to Japan. When doing this research I learned quickly that while Japan is viewed as a very technological country there is another side in that they still use fax machines and many of the stores do not have any form of a website or even take credit cards, but that's not what we're here for. Then when I was watching an anime called Sakura Quest, a comedy show where a girl mistakenly accepts a job for a year working as the "queen" of the town's tourism board. She has to try and revitalize the dying town by trying to bring in more tourists and show that the town is worth going to and even living in ("Sakura Quest", 2017). That is where I would want to step in and help as a company or as a freelancer. I would be traveling the country building up websites for the local towns and cities in hopes of bringing life back to the countryside.

"With today's consumers researching and planning more and more of their travel online" ("Best practices for tourism websites"). This shows that there is an increasing need for websites to allow for exposure, it's hard to get people to come if they don't know that your business exists. There are 3 categories in this industry. There are local government agencies, such as: Yokohama Convention & Visitors Bureau, Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau, Visit California. Each set up websites and work with the local businesses to offer benefits and information to tourists. An example being the Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau's Osaka Amazing pass which gives you free access to the local subways and train lines around the city and 35 free tourist attractions and tons more that offer discounts or other bonuses to people who have the pass (Osaka Convention & Tourism Bureau). Not only this but they also offer suggested itineraries based around the pass

to give examples of what you can do with the pass and help point people toward popular destinations. Third party area information sites such as: Tokyo Creative, Matcha, Lonely Planet, and Tsunaga Japan. These companies visit a wide range of areas with the objective of informing people of as many locations as possible. Finally, companies that will do web development for your tourism business include: Tourism Tiger, WebLinx, and Solimar International. These businesses make websites for individual companies that are looking to attract tourists and provide information about their services.

Chris Okano, as a YouTuber and a content creator, “he founded Tokyo Creative, a digital agency aimed at connecting companies, brands and other entities with YouTube’s influential content creators.” (Michel, 2018), Tokyo Creative was originally a sister company to Odigo Travel which has since been fully absorbed into Tokyo Creative as Tokyo Creative - Travel. Now, just a year later, Tokyo Creative has 17 employees and 33 influencers across various genres and mediums. They have created a community around finding new and interesting places to visit in Japan and sharing them with the world. Tokyo Creative’s main service to companies is when they are looking to get their brand out there they contact Tokyo Creative, and they match the business up with one of the influencers and get the business out there by using the popularity and the growth of the YouTuber and social media business. Through Tokyo Creative - Travel they connect these social media influencers to their large database of travel articles. With this database they offer a large library of travel articles and the ability to create itineraries and collections of places to visit. They have a really strong reputation with their influencers as they have been growing rapidly in their first year as a business, and have been getting a lot of deals to show off locations. Recently they just got done doing a cycle across Japan with one of their

influencers Chris Broad along with other guests. With these connections to actual businesses it helps them bring a more personal touch into their website and show off interesting new places in Japan.

As with most website design, the best practices are having an “Intuitive and attractive design” (“Tourism Website Development”). This is a design that people want to share. It offers great interactivity with social media, and targets a specific market. Having quick and easy access to the information is very important when trying to research where you want to travel. In particular, access information and information on some surrounding attractions are very important when trying to attract people to come to your business. Having these are a must for a site that is trying to be the people's main source of information on an area. Another important thing for any website that is important is Search Engine Optimization (SEO) . This is important because just having a website isn’t enough. There are thousands or millions of other websites in existence and people use a search engine to find the sites that they want to visit. SEO at its most basic “is the process of getting traffic from the “free,” “organic,” “editorial” or “natural search results on search engines” (“SEO Guide: Types Of Search Engine Success Factors”), or how to get your website to come up when someone searches for it. Search engines break down their ranking on relevance into a few different types, on-the-page, off-the-page to name a few. On-the-page scores are made by providing clues in your HTML as to what the user is expected to see on your web page. Off-the-page scores come from the search engine trying to determine how accurate what you are showing is to what you are actually showing on the page. A more specific best practice for this industry although plays a crucial part in general web development as well is database management. Most of these sites have a home page and a few other templates for other

pages, so when these pages are generated they use the same HTML, CSS and other code and just switch out the content such as the text and images on the page to reflect what needs to be shown for each location. Meaning more robust databases that can hold a large amount of text and make connections between the text and locations, as well as some sites connecting what is nearby on a map to the location that is being talked about on the individual page.

Interest in this topic comes from when my wife and I were trying to research for our honeymoon trip to Japan and the subsequent trips we have made since then. When researching we realized that there are not a lot of very solid resources on some of the smaller towns and countryside areas. For every one article or site about small towns there were hundreds talking about Tokyo or Kyoto. Another source that solidified my interest was found while watching anime. As mentioned above, watching *Sakura Quest* brought that idea to the top of my list of jobs that I would like to do. More recently, I saw how the Japanese have been using anime to spark tourism. A show called *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas*, a much more serious show than the title may suggest sparked, “an estimated 130,000 tourists to Hida from August 2016 to July 2018” (Lombardi, 2018). These smaller towns are now reaching out to other media as a way to boost tourism and build up infrastructure as a way to deal with the influx of new people. This comes in terms of physical and digital infrastructure. More and more are creating websites, as well as translating their ticket booths and even vending machines to multiple languages. These adjustments require an adjustment in technology. The biggest thing most of these sites need is a robust database to hold all of the data and make connections between locations and points of interest. A lot of these sites are very similar to blogs with the same template page with just different content filling the individual page.

My experience and personal exposure to the industry started when I took a class called ROP Information Technology in high school, a class which was offered by a few of the local start up companies in Santa Cruz. To get to this class I had to ride my bicycle ten miles across town to get to the class which was my first introduction to web development and first real introduction to programming. Since my first introduction I have started college and am currently working toward my Bachelors in Computer Science. I am looking to gain a stronger understanding of programming concepts, and hopefully get better with UI/UX (user interface and user experience) design. My plan for my future education plans are to finish college, learn as much Japanese as I can in the next two years, and attempt to keep as up to date as possible on web technologies and JS frameworks along with their best practices. To work toward this goal I have been building a portfolio by making as many apps as possible. This portfolio currently includes a web based RPG (Role Playing Game), a smart thermostat using a Raspberry Pi Zero and humidity sensor reporting data to a webapp. Currently learning more about database design by creating a comp title generator for writers. This generator allows a quicker search for books that are similar to what they have been writing based on keywords. Another thing I am doing is working on finding out the best way to interact and network with people in Japan, such as learning cultural norms and such. To accomplish breaking into this field I am working on finding ways to network, searching for good job posting sites and watching mentioned career posts on mentioned companies sites.

The web is everywhere, as more businesses start to take advantage of it, more people will be able to have access to the information that they need to plan their trips. That is where this industry shines. In conclusion, tourism is a growing business and the technology behind it is

always changing as the internet changes. It will be interesting to watch the growth of the business and the industry. The ever changing and evolving web development landscape and technology means that learning is going to have to be constant to keep up with what the best practices are. Websites are the next stepping stone to make the world more accessible and tie the global economy together.

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