



Evaluation of the Usability and Accessibility of the Ireland Travel Website

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Abstract

Ireland is a country in western Europe, located in the North Atlantic. Due to its northerly geography and Atlantic influence, winters are mild, and summers are cool. Much of Ireland is woodland, which makes it also known as “the Emerald Isle”. The beautiful natural sceneries have made the country locations for many TV series and movies. More and more people are looking to Ireland as their ideal travel destination. The Ireland Travel website (<https://www.ireland.com/en-gb/>) is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of Ireland for tourists who want to travel to Ireland. Its target audience is travellers intending to come to Ireland. The website provides a large number of pictures and descriptions of attractions, and they can browse the website to learn more about the stunning landscapes all over the country, which saves travelers time searching for information. Although the site provides convenience for tourists, there are still some areas that need to be improved. Therefore, the purpose of this report is to evaluate websites in terms of usability and accessibility, optimizing for areas that can be improved.

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1. Introduction

The World Wide Web Consortium defines accessibility as an “equivalent user experience for people with disabilities, including people with age-related impairments”, while usability is defined as the “design of products to be effective, efficient and satisfying” for end users.

Usability and accessibility are two of the most important metrics when building a website. Usability emphasizes the user-centered design of the website, which is related to the quality of user experience when interacting with the website, the efficiency of completing tasks, and the user's satisfaction, while accessibility emphasizes the technical aspects of the website. Although the emphasis between the two is different, and sometimes one is optimized and the other is lost, both standards are equally important for web development.

2. Assessment

2.1 Usability

The usability of a website refers to how easy it is for the average person to use a website for a specific purpose. It mainly consists of learnability, memorability, efficiency, satisfaction and errors. Learnability refers to how easy it is for a new user to complete a task the first time they visit your website. Memorability is how easy it is for someone to use your website again after a period of inactivity. Efficiency is how quickly users can complete tasks once they become familiar with using your website. Satisfaction refers to whether users like the design of your website, and errors are the number of mistakes users make while using your website, the severity of the mistakes, and how easy it is to recover from them. In this report, it evaluates usability of website (<https://www.ireland.com/en-gb/>) based on Shneiderman's Golden Rules.

2.1.1 Consistency

According to Shneiderman's Golden Rules, consistent sequence of actions should be required in similar situations. The site does a great job of operating consistently. In addition, it uses green, the representative color of Ireland, as well as white and black as the main colors, and the overall style is fresh and natural. For example, the display of all pages on the website is switched by clicking. But the page layout is a little cluttered and cumbersome. Take the home page as an example (Figure 1.), which provides too much

content and information. And when scrolling, the title of each section is fixed, whereas the related picture content display is slidable. This layout is creative, but a staggered layout can dazzle users at the same time.

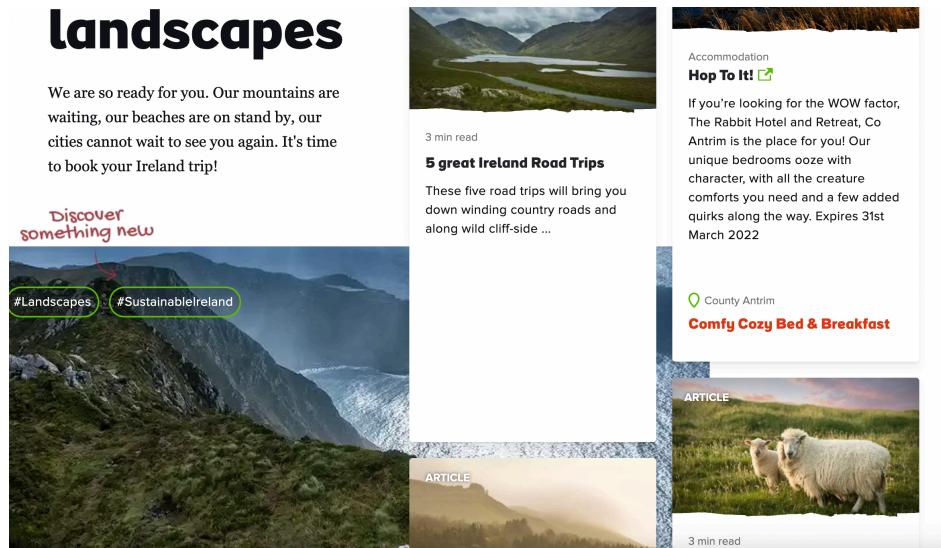


Figure 1.

2.1.2 Feedback and Visibility

For every user action, there should be system feedback. As the Figure 2. shown, when the user types “cork” in the search box, it will display there are 128 results returned for “cork”. This is the process of visualizing the object of interest to the user, and then showing the result of the action.

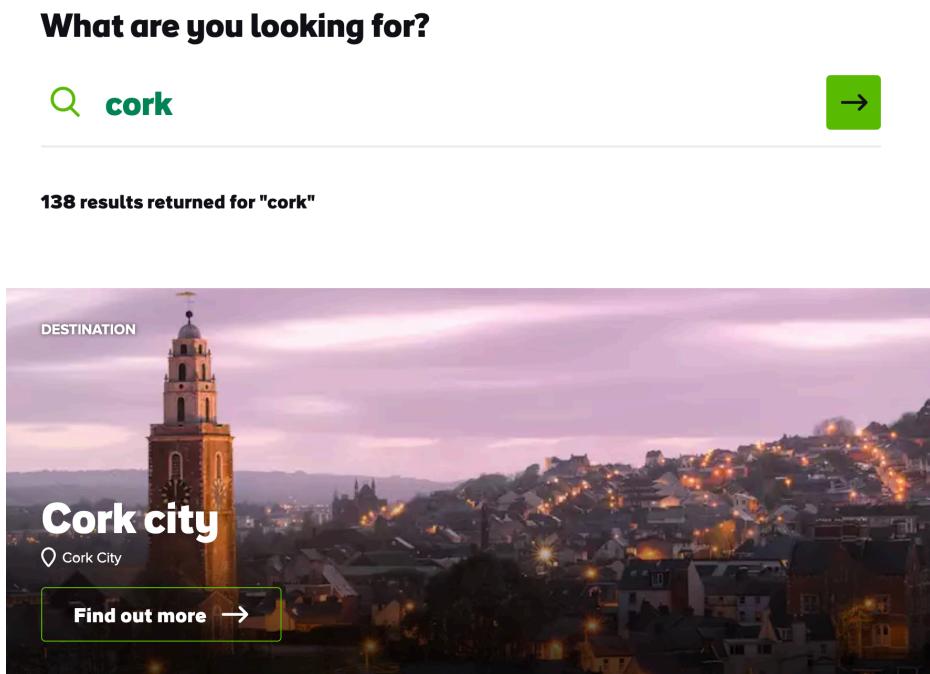


Figure 2.

2.1.3 Short-term Memory

Human short-term memory can hold 7 ± 2 'chunks' of information, so to reduce short-term memory load is necessary. As I mentioned, the home page contains too much information, which goes against the principle of keeping the display simple. In Figure 3., it's difficult to remember the location of information in a dynamic layout.

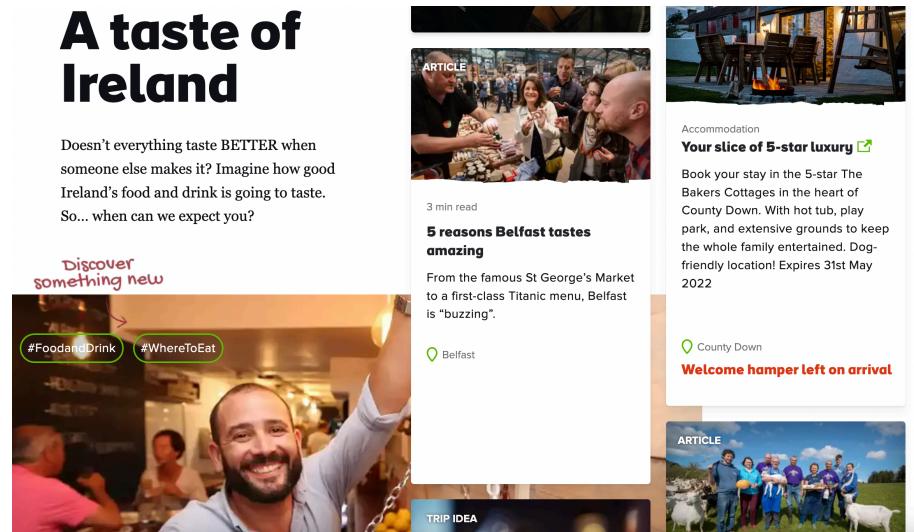


Figure 3.

However, the website has a search function, which allows user to search for information with only the key words in mind. For instance (Figure 4.), user is looking for a beach, but he does not the exact name of beach. So when he search for "beach", it will display all locations associated with beach. The user identifies and selects by browsing all the beach-related places screened for him by the website. But the downside is that it would be better if the keyword part of the search results could be highlighted.

What are you looking for?

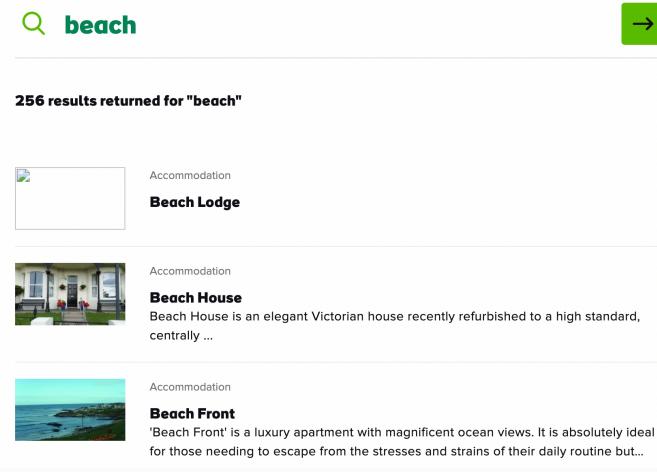


Figure 4.

2.1.4 Interactive Styles

Interactive design has become a popular trend in current website design, they usually have some interactive and animated elements to attract users to visit and engage with the site contents. There are a variety of interactive styles in this website, such as hover states, video media and so on. As the Figure 5. shown, when user clicks on the site's URL for the first time, the video on the homepage helps retain the user and arouses the user's interest to continue exploring other content. “Press the Green Button” can guide user to interact with the website to engage with the content.

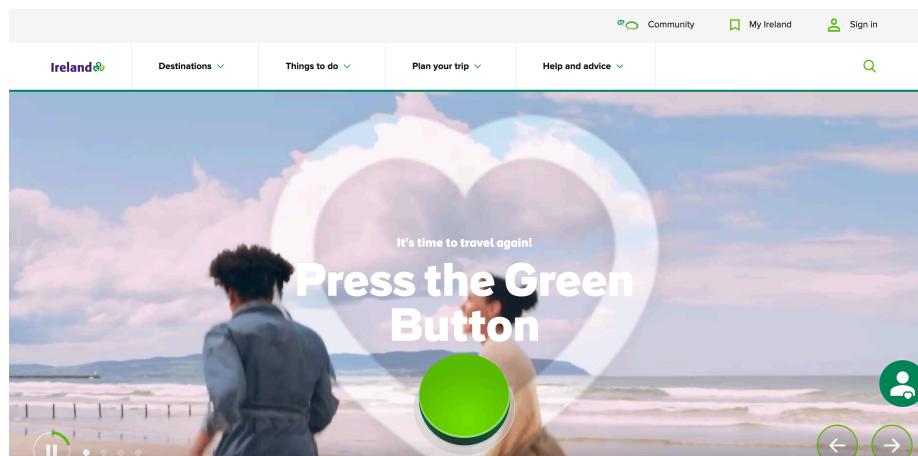


Figure 5.

In addition, user won't read lengthy passages from a screen, so to minimize the amount of text and make it as readable as possible is helpful. In this website, most of the content are presented in the form of pictures and text, which can display information very directly for a travel website. Take the Figure 6. as an example, the picture, title, brief introduction and location information constitute a very useful information box for the tourist who is searching for information, so as to know clearly whether the information is what user needs. If user want to learn more, just click to check it out.

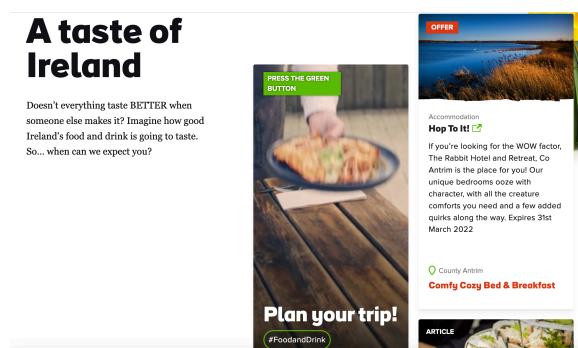


Figure 6.

Apart from that, some hover states can improve the user's interactive experience. For example (Figure 7. and Figure 8.), when mouse hover, it will show different styles, like a green underline or a grey shadow.

The essentials

- › [Privacy Centre and policies](#)
- › [About Tourism Ireland](#)

Got questions?



Ask our Community

Select a country



Find your country

Our other sites

- Corporate
- Industry Opportunities
- Business tourism
- Press Centre

Connect with Ireland



Figure 7.

The essentials

- › [Privacy Centre and policies](#)
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Connect with Ireland



Figure 8.

2.1.5 Prevent Errors

Website design should guide users as much as possible and prevent users from making mistakes. As the Figure 9. shown, the button that is grayed out and is in disabled states until the form is completed. It also has a friendly prompt message to guide the user to fill it out.

The form is titled "Ireland in your inbox". It contains the following fields and elements:

- First name
- Surname (highlighted with a green border)
- Email address
- A checkbox labeled "I agree to the [privacy terms](#)".
- A "Sign me up!" button with a right-pointing arrow.
- A link to "Visit our [Privacy Centre](#) to see how we handle your personal data."
- A descriptive text on the right: "We will use your email address to send you personalised content straight to your inbox based on how you interact with this website and our advertisements on other websites."

Figure 9.

2.2 Accessibility

Web accessibility means that websites, tools, and technologies are designed and developed so that people with disabilities can use them. More specifically, people can: perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the website.

2.2.1 Perceiving

Websites should be available to everyone, with or without technical expertise or disabled. Structured content allows browsers and users to understand the context of information in an HTML document. All content of the site is marked up with HTML tags, such as <header>, <footer>, <article> and so on, which is convenient for blind users. Including alternate (Alt) text allows screen readers and other assistive technology to provide information about images embedded in HTML pages. For example (Figure 10.), in the case of adding alt information to the tag, screen reading software can easily read the alt information, which enables blind people to obtain picture information by listening.

```
<a href="/en-gb/" class="navigation__logo-link">
  
</a>
```

Figure 10.

2.2.2 Understanding

Understanding a website can be regarded to learn how to use it. In fact, we should assess how the website is easy to earn to use. As you can see in Figure 11., the site supports multilingual switching, making it more readable for users around the world.

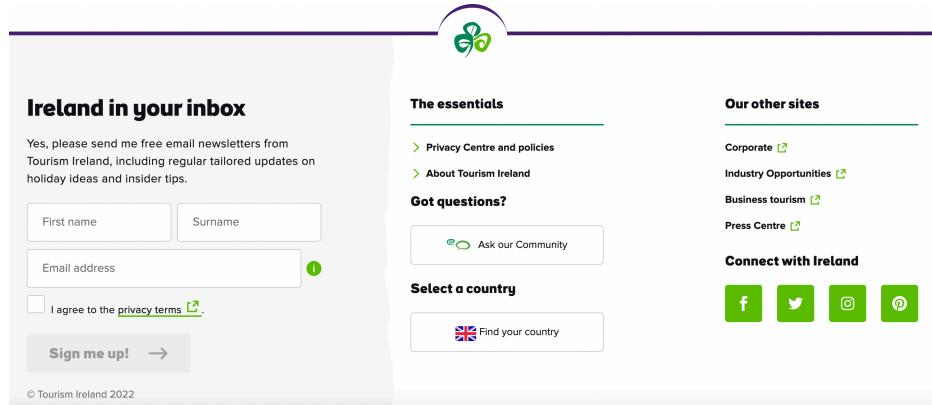


Figure 11.

However, this feature seems to be poorly thought out in the design. When user click “Find your country”, it will jump to the page shown in Figure 12. There are many countries that use the same language, so there is no need to waste a lot of effort setting each country's language individually. For example, there are many countries using English and Spanish, and Chinese is the most spoken language in the world, then these three most commonly used languages can be set as options of the multi-language switching function.

Europe	Americas
België / Belgique FR NL	Argentina ES
Danmark DK	Brazil PT
Deutschland DE	Canada EN FR
France FR	Chile ES
España ES	Colombia ES
Great Britain EN	México ES
Italia IT	Perú ES
Nederland NL	United States EN

Figure 12.

2.2.3 Navigating

In this site, navigation and search bars are present on every page, which makes it easy for users to switch pages to find information. At the same time, all the interaction widgets clearly labelled. Take the search bar as an example (Figure 13.), the “for” attribute specifies which form element a label is bound to. But the navbar is not always fixed to the top. When users browse to the bottom of the page and want to switch pages or search for content, they also need to go back to the top of the page to find the navigation bar, which is very troublesome.

```
<div class="search-bar">
  <div class="grid-container">
    <div class="grid-x grid-padding-x">
      <div class="cell medium-8 medium-offset-2">
        <h3 class="search-bar__title">What are you looking for?</h3>
        <form class="search-bar__form js-search-form" action="https://www.ireland.com/en-gb/search/" method="GET">
          <label for="navigation" class="search-bar__search-label">What are you looking for?</label>
          <input type="text" name="term" id="navigation" class="search-bar__search-term js-search-input"
            autocomplete="off" placeholder="Search"
            data-autocomplete-url="/api/ui/customapi/searchautocomplete?text={0}&sc_lang=en-gb" value="" />
          <button class="button-p1 button-p1--icon-only search-bar__search-button js-search-button" />
        </form>
      </div>
    </div>
  </div>
  <div class="search-bar__autocomplete-wrapper">
    <div class="search-bar__autocomplete-overlay js-autocomplete-overlay"></div>
  </div>
</div>
```

Figure 13.

2.2.4 Interacting

Assistive technology users typically utilize a keyboard to navigate pages. they can test for keyboard accessibility by using the keyboard and “tab” and “shift + tab keys” keys to navigate through all of the links on the site. Use the “enter” key to activate controls and links while ensuring that all page functions are accessible using a keyboard only. This technology makes it possible for the blind to interact with the website. As you can see in Figure 14., blind people can use "Tab" and "Shift + Tab" to control the screen reading software to read information in different positions without using the mouse to move the cursor position to make selections. When the image is selected, the screen reader software will read the "alt" message. During the reading process, the <a> tag will be recognized, and the user can realize the jump function by pressing the designated button. This is enough to say that the design of the site can be adapted to anyone's operational needs.

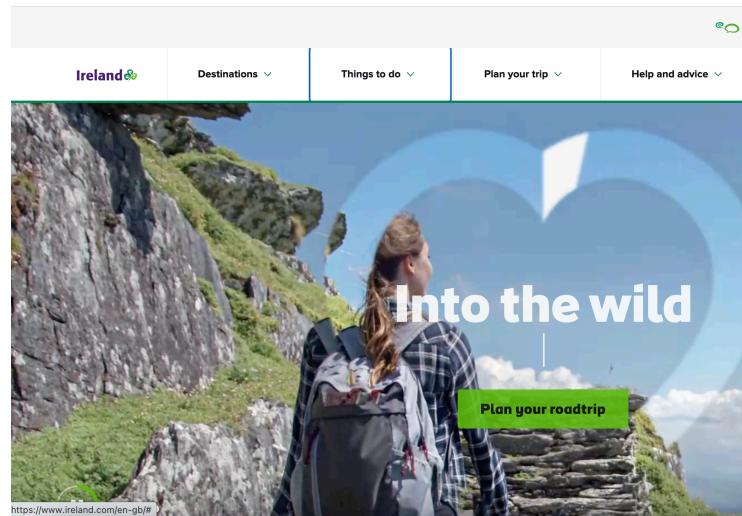


Figure 14.

3. Improvement

Based on the above assessment of the usability and accessibility of the Ireland Travel website, I made adjustments to the navigation bar, the footer section and multilingual version.

3.1 Navigation Bar

The site's navigation bar scrolls as the page scrolls. When the user browses to the lower part of the page, at this time, if they want to switch pages or search for the content, they must scroll the page to the top again to see the navigation bar. This process is cumbersome and time-consuming. Therefore, I changed the style of the navbar to fixed, which can ensure that the navigation bar stays fixed at the top of the page and does not change as the page scrolls. The improved effect is shown in Figure 15.

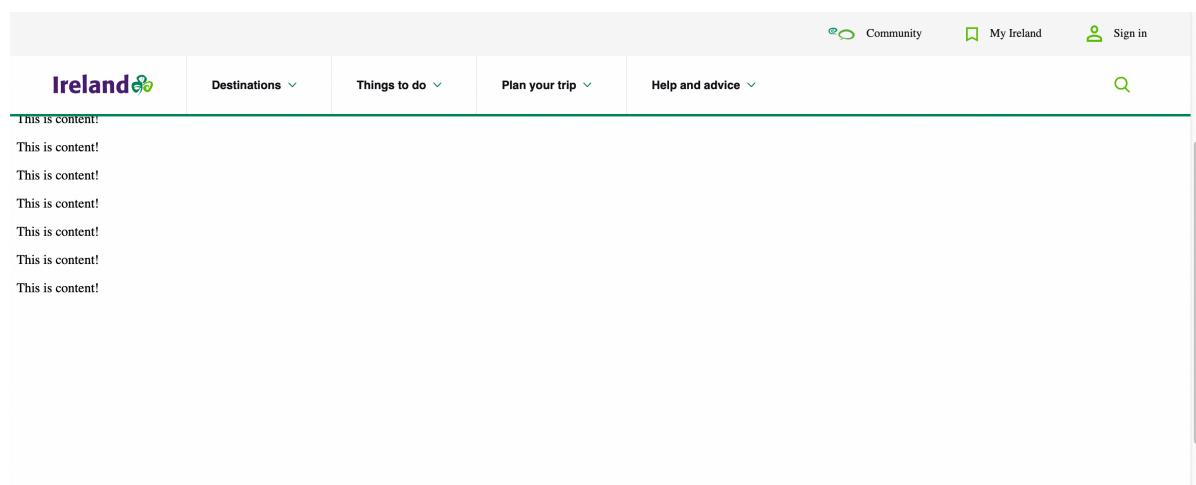


Figure 15.

3.2 Footer Layout

The footer section of the site contains too much content, especially since the sign-up form has already appeared. Duplicate content doesn't give users more functionality, so I removed and re-layout the signup form in the footer section. The improved effect is shown in Figure 16.

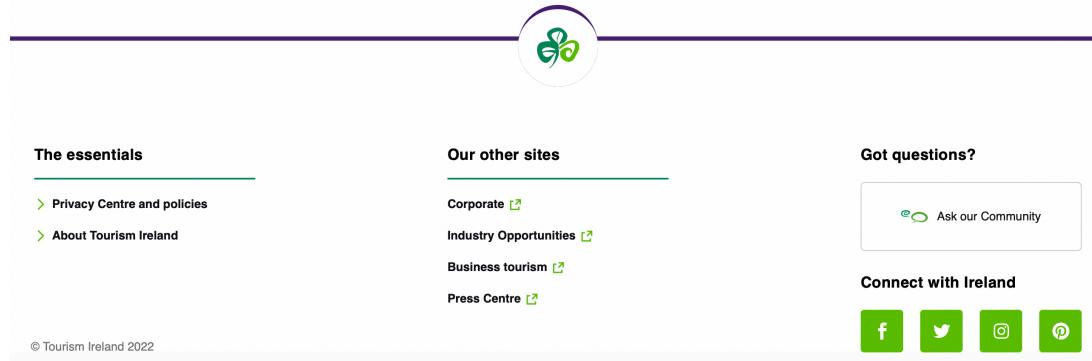


Figure 16.

3.3 Multiple Language Option

The website allows users to browse in a familiar language, but this feature is placed in the footer section, which is very unreasonable. Users entering the site should be immediately reminded that they can choose the language version. In addition, it is really unnecessary to list the corresponding languages of all countries. Therefore, I plan to include a multilingual toggle option in the navigation bar, and only provide Spanish and English, which are used by the most countries, and Chinese, which are the most used in the world, as other language versions of the site.

4. Conclusion

Usability and accessibility are two factors that must be considered in web development. The purpose of the two is slightly different, so it is difficult to achieve an extremely high standard in both. After a multi-faceted evaluation of the usability and accessibility of the Ireland Travel website, we can find out that the site can meet the needs of tourists who want to explore Ireland and provide useful information, but it may be a bit too creative in design, resulting in user can't grasp the key points when browsing, and they will feel very complicated.