

**ALTERNATIVES OF REDUCING COSTS OF PROMOTION ACTIVITY IN THE TOURISM FIELD**

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**Abstract**

*The touristic industry was seriously affected by the economic crisis. It started to be clear from the end of 2008, and from the beginning of 2009 the indicators of touristic demand showed considerable discounts.*

*The present work treats aspects related to the manner in which Internet led to the modification of the method of developing the commercial and marketing relations in the tertiary sector, generally, and, especially, referring to the touristic sector.*

**Key words:** *promotion, Content Management System, website, social networks, marketing information communication*

**JEL Classification:** *L83, M37*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Every time in the history of humanity, the transgression of a crisis situation was made by a radical change of the rules which were governing the social and economic life until that moment. So, in the case of the crisis that we are having now, it is necessary for the experts in communication and marketing to be more creative and assume additional risks when choosing their communication means with their potential customers.

Analysing the dates offered by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania, the ponderability of the households having access to Internet in Romania has increased from 20,5% in 2007 to 43,33% in 2011, also, the number of Romanian people with ages between 16-74 who used the Internet grew from 4.909.502 in 2007 to 7.680.775 in 2011 (The National Institute of Statistics, www.insse.ro).

**Table 1 The ponderability of the households having access to Internet at home, on residence environs, overall households from each environment of residence (%)**

Residence environs	Years				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total	20,5	27,3	35,1	38,9	43,3
Urban	33,6	42,5	50,8	54,3	59,3
Rural	3	7,6	13,5	17,8	21,8

*Source: (The National Institute of Statistics of Romania, www.insse.ro)*

There is still a low rate of the households in the rural environment which have access to Internet, but it can be observed that the evolution follows an ascendant trend in this case, too.

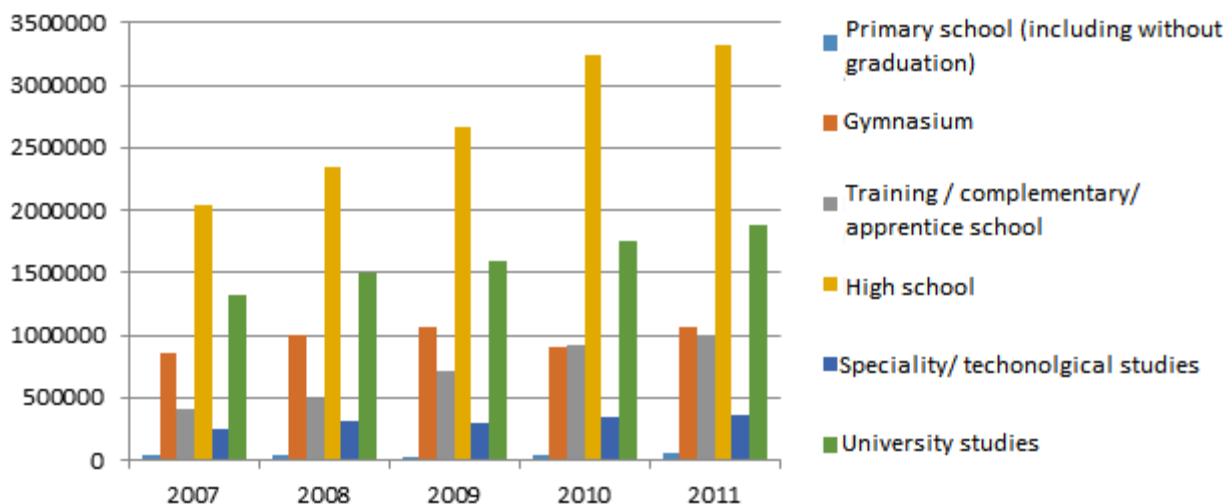


Figure 1 – The number of people between 16-74 years old who have ever accessed the Internet on levels of training

The eloquent ponderability of people who access the Internet can be found in front of those who have at least graduated the high school.

Table 2 - The ponderability of people between 16-74 years old who ordered/bought journeys/holidays/accommodation using the Internet

Professional statute	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011
Total	14,3	19,4	34,2	28,6	40,5
Employee	18,2	23,1	39,6	33	43,1
Employer	22,8	35,7	34,1	50,1	87,1
On his own worker	26,4	7,5	65,3	41,9	33,7
Unemployed	:	:	70,6	:	53,5
Retired	:	35,5	:	31,2	:
Pupil, student	4,9	9,1	17,5	12,6	27,3
Other inactive people	:	:	24,1	26,1	3

Source: (The National Institute of Statistics of Romania, [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro))

The most important aspect to highlight is the fact that more and more Romanian people use the online methods to acquire goods and services and, especially, we are accentuating the orders and the purchase of journeys, holidays, accommodation by Internet. The ascendant trend can be highlighted on the whole, but also considering professional statute level of the population.

These facts offer the premise of a massive assimilation of the Internet as the main mean of information and goods and services transaction for the next duration.

## II. PARTICIPANTS' ORIENTATIONS FROM THE TOURISTIC MARKET IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

A big advantage of the Internet is the fact that it offers the possibility to the user to be able to express himself without any constraint. This fact led to the appearance of thousands of online communities on different subjects becoming a very large phenomenon in a short period of time. So, through the virtual communities, like Twitter, Barack Obama-the president of USA won his popularity among his electors. His example was followed by some celebrities, but also by some economic organizations on the purpose to attract the most sympathisers

possible in order to expand the information from one user to another, assigning to the source of expanding power and credibility.

The tourism industry can be lent to the adoption of informatics technologies (IT) and to the Internet because:

- It mainly depends on the marketing information communication and it is tagged by the need of improving the change of information except the production and distribution chain. The IT systems are used in many aspects of the tourism and touristic products, from the bookings of flying companies and hotels to the multimedia products realized to advertise the touristic destinations. The informatics technology helps to manage the information flux in a more efficient manner;

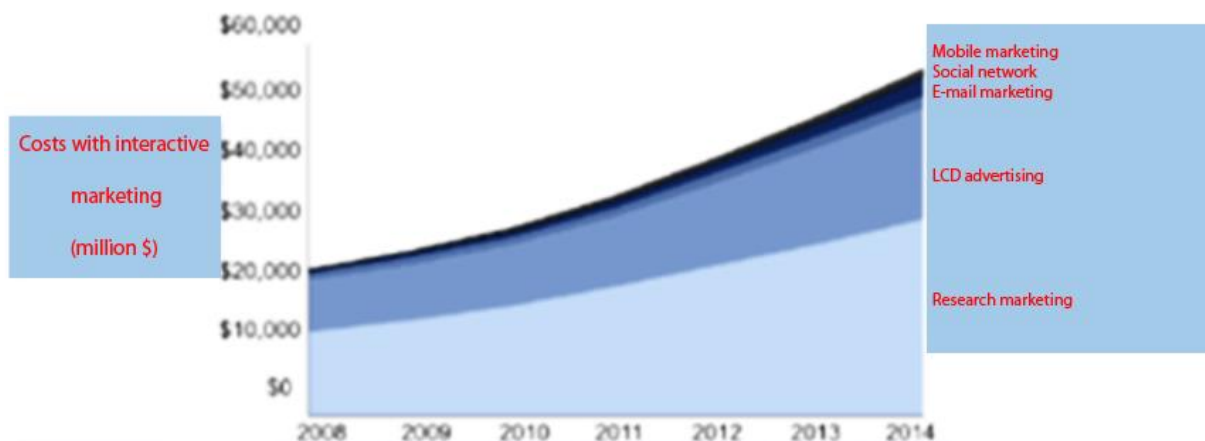
- The perception of the touristic services depends on the given information. The touristic services are offered to be commercialized before their effective use and they exclusively depend on the presentation made by the tourism agent. So, the communication and the information transmission are compulsory for the tourism agent. The accuracy of information and the relevance compared to the customer’s needs represent the key of satisfying his demands.

- The technology ameliorates the information flux between the seller and the customer. The informatic systems represent a key point regarding the success of this sector, where the quality of information depends on the clear and efficient manner of its transmission to the customers.

A report realized in 2009, by the marketing research company Forrester, reveals the considerable increase of the online advertising. From this study it comes out the first positions held by the mobile marketing followed by the virtual communities and then by the e-mail marketing. (Căutoriu I., 2009)

**Table 3 - Estimative costs with the interactive advertising for USA (Căutoriu I., 2009)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Mobile marketing	232	391	561	748	950	1131	1274
Social network	456	716	935	1217	1649	2254	3113
E-mail marketing	1170	1248	1366	1504	1678	1867	2061
Display advertising	7699	7829	8396	9846	11732	14339	16900
Marketing research	13516	15393	17765	20763	24299	27786	31568
Total	23073	25577	29023	34078	40308	47377	54916
Costs of advertising (%)	9%	10%	11%	13%	15%	17%	19%



**Figure 2 Estimative costs with the interactive advertising for USA (Căutoriu I., 2009)**

The main goal in the actual economic situation is “the sustainability and not the profitability”. In other terms, everybody involved in the touristic industry tries to sell at the lowest price that will bring the sustainability to the business.

### **III.FREE WEB INSTRUMENTS THAT CAN BE ADOPTED FOR PROMOTING THE TOURISTIC SERVICES**

#### **3.1 The blog**

One of the main rules in the services domain, generally, but, especially, in the domain of tourism, is that if the customers are pleased, they will transmit it, personally or online. On the other hand, the negative experiences presentation will have a really powerful impact among the Internet users.

The blog is another mean of expanding the information, if the specialist in the communication domain of the tourism company will deal with it. Adding a blog on the site of the company and the presentation of the business, of the special promotions, of the city, or of any other subject that can bring visitors, will be transformed step by step into incomes. (L. Cernusca, 2010).

An efficient modality of attracting visitors and traffic is the organization of contests where the participants have to offer links towards the content of the organizer company. Maybe it is not the most ethic modality, but certainly this kind of marketing activities led to the notoriety increase of the company.

According to the facts presented by Căutoriu I., 91% of the customers, who are members of at least one single virtual community, make decisions after consulting the blog information, the video postings or the customers' comments.

#### **3.2 The website**

While at the international level, Internet has always played an important role in bookings, Romania finally joins this tendency. From the moment when the online bookings have an increasing trend, even if the industry also registered periods of drastic decline of the incomes, every hotel, tourism agency, hostel and every business which is related to tourism should have its own website. The potential tourists search for online information and if you are not present on the Internet it means that...you don't exist!

In addition, every entity from the touristic sector should have its promotions listed in the big systems of online bookings. This kind of directress allows the users from all over the world to make bookings using a credit/debit card.

The most important aspects that the administrators of a touristic unity owning a website should take into consideration are:

- ✓ The site must be as easy as possible to use for the user;
- ✓ It must allow the users to register themselves to a newsletter and to the promotional offers;
- ✓ Allowing to post comments;
- ✓ Offering a proper cadre for the tourist to want to come back and share his positive experience had at the respective hotel, hostel or pension;

Among the big number of open-source applications available now, from the using possibilities perspectives in the field of promoting touristic services, the most advantages are offered by the management systems of the content. These systems can include, in their turn, many other applications, for example: photo galleries, forums, blog capabilities etc.

Content Management System represents a system of operating and presenting the web information, projected in a modular way meant to cover a large gamma of demands (Epure C., 2008). Even if it we talk about a simple presentation site of the company or a complex virtual shop, a system of management can be personalized so it can offer specific facilities for different activity domains. It's a soft used to create, to edit and publish content in an organized manner. It is frequently used for stocking, controlling, keeping the content versions, the publication of documents like news, portfolios and other specific categories of some activity domains. The content can include folders, images, electronic documents and web content.

Such a soft can be adopted by a tourism agency for presenting the offer of its touristic packages or its individual touristic unities in order to give details regarding the accommodation, eating and recreation facilities made available for the tourists.

The open-source phenomenon becoming popular lately, at the present there are available 130 CMS open-source solutions, generally developed with the support of PHP and MySQL. So, the choice of a proper solution could need a certain period of time for documentation. However, there are possibilities of testing these solutions before making a decision about the right technological solution. The site *opensourcecms.com* makes available for the users to test versions for 128 CMS solutions.

#### **Functions fulfilled by the Web Content Management System**

A Web Content Management System is a software system used to control a dynamic collection of web material and it presents the following functions:

- *Templates generate* – create standard templates (usually HTML and XML) that can be automatically applied to the new and the existent content, enabling that its appearance be changed from one centralized place;

- *The easy editing* - when the content is cut off the web presentation, its editing becomes much easier regarding the manipulation. The most part of these systems include WYSIWYG editors allowing the users without technical knowledge to add and modify the content;

- *Adding modules* – allows adding new work instruments that respect a given standard, therefore being very easy to install;

- *Updatings* – in proportion as the technology advances, this system can be updated in order to respect the new rules of World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) or to remove the security problems that were found, usually by the community that adopted such instruments;

- *The flux control* – is a process by which sequential cycles are created and also the parallel tasks that must be fulfilled. For example, while an image or a folder is loading, documents can be edited or a client can receive the confirmation only if the administrator considers the conditions fulfilled;

- *Documents control* – the lifetime of a document can be observed since it was created, then revised and, finally, destroyed;

- *The content virtuality* – each user can work with a copy of the website, so every modification can become virtual, can be tested and implemented before the final loading.

### **The advantages of using Content Management System applications**

- *Reduced costs* – the open-source CMS is already created and it is for free, while the development of a own CMS costs a lot and it needs a lot of time;

- *Permanent improving* – open-source CMS are used by people from all over the world, so the potential errors and functioning problems are corrected, after receiving the feed-backs from the whole online community, while the own CMS is tested only by the developing company and the employees of the beneficiary company;

- *Flexible design* – there are many templates offered for free, which, can also be customized. The revitalisation of the web page, the design change can be made in a short period of time;

- *Easy maintenance* – the site administration based on the CMS is simple and doesn't need advanced web programming knowledge. Through a friendly administration interface, every person having only primary knowledge in HTML and the ability of working in a text processor, is able to actualize the site;

- *Extensibility* – the functions of a CMS web site can be easily expanded by installing new modules (photo gallery, news module, blog etc.).

### **3.3 Social networks**

Tourism is a networking industry by excellence, maybe even more than other fields of the economy of a country. A study realized on 1500 companies from all the economic sectors from Australia highlighted that the networks are dominant in the services sectors, and the biggest number of business networks from the services sector was registered in tourism. The tourism has always been considered a system where the interdependence is essential, and the collaboration and cooperation between different organizations within a touristic destination create the touristic product. (Căutoriu I., 2009)

More and more agents in the unities of touristic accommodation choose to send messages using the social networks Facebook or Twitter. On the created pages, the agents report the events that take place within the unities and answer the questions asked by the potential customers, in other terms, they "communicate" in real time.

The online communities are "cleaned" by the companies that want to promote its products more efficiently. The strategy used is a pull strategy that implies marketing activities directed towards the user and ment to determine him to ask information about the promoted products because, finally, the buying decision can be manifested.

The brand ambassador of the boutique luxury hotel Carol Parc-Bucuresti, Cristina Turnagi, was affirming in an interview given to the Financial Newspaper (Tiron M., 2010) that "I didn't neglect the power of the social networks, given the fact that the hotel has many projects which are addressed to the target public of the social networks. The online presence is very important, and the communication through social networks is increasing. We know exactly how many fans our hotel has in the social networks. We follow constantly the activity on the Internet. The advantage of this promotion is that everything is for free. Even if we are an exclusivist hotel, we are careful to the communication tendencies and we are maintaining the online community."

Many social network websites were created in the tourism industry offering the possibility to tourists to interact on the basis of their common interests. We can mention: tripmates.com, gusto.com, triporama.com, triphub.com, traveltogether.com and wayn.com. The tourists are invited to log in on the site by creating a personal count and to detail their journey experiences and their interests, to communicate to the other people their journey advice, trips and stories, and even to organize new journeys along with the other users of the network. Consequently, at the present, the social network websites have a huge impact on the manner in which the tourists create, organize and benefit by the touristic experiences.

Often, the tourists prefer to obtain reassurances from the other users of the network that the trip, the organizing company, the destination and/or the track that they scheduled fit their preferences and their tastes. Such a network, specifically, amfostacolo.ro became very popular in the online Romanian space.

Many tourists, also, want to use the Internet for collaborating in organizing a group trip with their friends. Websites like everytrail.com, tripup.com, traveltogether.com and travelpost.com allow the tourists to create tracks and send them by e-mail and the online collaboration with other people, who, can also edit, modify and improve the content. These contents can be public, so, other users can add extra comments/give ratings. So, if somebody wants to make an online group booking, this network facilitates to obtain a consensus on a trip organization.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The most important aspect highlighted is the fact that more and more Romanian people use the online space to acquire goods and services and, particularly, it is highlighted the increase of the number of journey, holiday, accommodation orders and purchasing on the Internet.

By using the new technology and the promoting touristic services applications on the Internet, the companies can find patterns of customers' behaviour and they can make this information useful in marketing.

At the present, the communication development using the Internet led to the appearance of online communities on different subjects, becoming a very ample event in a short period of time. The online communities are the most "chased" by the companies that want to promote their products and services more efficiently.

Many social networks have been created in the tourism industry giving the tourists the possibility to interact on the basis of their common interests. Consequently, at the present, the social networks have a huge impact on the manner in which the tourists create, organize and benefit by their touristic experiences.

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