

# CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE E-TOURISM PERFORMANCE IN CLISURA DUNARII DESTINATION

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**Abstract:** : Considering the unprecedented development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), we acknowledge dramatic changes for the internal and international tourists which makes it necessary for the tourism organizations to adapt to the emerging tourism environment in order to efficiently use their resources and to increase the added value within their supply chain. The present research paper offers a comprehensive description of the transformation process generated by Internet in the promotional strategy and distribution channels of the Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTEs) which activate within the tourism destination Clisura Dunarii. The study relies on the semi-structured analysis of the SMTEs' websites in this region. The results of the research show that there is no correlation between the size of the tourism organizations or the price strategy and the integration level of the specific E-tourism instruments in their business strategy. From this point of view, considering the price as the indicator of the confort level offered to customers, we can conclude that the SMTEs in the region do not succeed in offering added value to their customers through their websites, in their customer service strategy the online component being completely neglected. These conclusions of the current research demonstrate the need to improve the digital competitiveness of the tourist destination by implementing an integrated strategy for E-tourism development in Clisura Dunarii.

**JEL classification:** M15, M31

Key words: E-tourism, Digital competitiveness, Tourism destination, Tourism websites

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The XXIst century, known as the information society century, is appreciated by most specialists as being the century of digital commerce or of the internet economy, with a decisive impact on the knowledge based economy. Tourism is an industry based on information, with a specific characteristic of offering intangible services and products directly to the customer, at the moment of purchase.

Supplying complex and relevant information concerning the tourism offer is the best opportunity to reduce the perceived risk of tourists in the decision making process. Thus, ICT becomes essential in the tourism industry by offering efficient

instruments and communication channels and by creating a new business environment. In a fast changing international tourism landscape it is necessary for tourism organizations to be in a permanent alert, to relate and to adapt in order to optimize their resources and to increase the added value of their own value chains.

Because the new technologies have revolutionized the global tourism industry, many academic researches have emerged in the developed countries, analysing the impact of ICT and especially the Internet on the business environment. But, despite the enormous potential of the tourism industry and the rapid growth of the ICT infrastructure in Romania, the E-tourism subject has been approached only by a limited number of researchers.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of our current research is to create a complex informational foundation which will enable specialists to elaborate efficient development strategies for E-tourism in general, starting from the example of the tourism destination Clisura Dunarii. In this respect, the scope of the research is to understand the implications of the transformation process generated by ICT on the promotion strategy and distribution channels used by the SMTEs in the region.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The present research paper targets the independent small and medium sized accommodation units with less than 250 employees and which are not part of an international accommodation chain.

In order to construct the research sample we have identified the target population, which is formed of all the economic agents that meet the following requirements: They operate in one of the following localities: Moldova Nouă, Socol, Pojejena, Coronini, Garnic, Sichevita, Berzeasca from Caras-Severin County, as well as Orșova, Șvinița, Dubova, Eșelnița, Ilovița and Breznița-Ocol from Mehedinti County; They have less than 250 employees; They have as main object of activity at least one of the following CAEN Codes: 551 – Hotels and other similar accommodation facilities, 552 – Accommodation facilities for holidays and short time periods, 559 – Other accommodation services.

The empiric research is based on three research hypothesis which refer to the size of the SMTEs, the nightly tariffs and the integration degree of ICT in the business strategy. The three research hypothesis issued for validation are:

I1. If the SMTEs in Clisura Dunarii destination have a more efficient personal online distribution channel, then they will also have a higher online visibility on search engines;

I2. There is a linear correlation between the size of the tourism organizations in Clisura Dunarii and the integration degree of specific E-tourism instruments in the business strategy;

I3. There is a linear correlation between the nightly rates of SMTEs in Clisura Dunarii and the integration degree of specific E-tourism instruments in the business strategy.

The instrument used in the validation process is the “Structured analysis of SMTEs’ websites”, which we have developed after the detailed literature research and

review. The analysis of SMTEs' websites includes aspects such as interactivity, trust issues, informational content, the characteristics that offer added value to users, the website design, technical aspects, marketing and customer relationship.

The criteria which were chosen for the analysis of the websites are: "Visibility on search engines (score 0-5 points)", "Website design and content (score 0-12 points)", "Functionality, accesibility, interactivity (score 0-11 points)", "Technology (score 0-6 points)", "Customer Relationship Management (score 0-12 points), "Trust (score 0-4 points)".

Each criterion has been divided in tasks and graded according to its importance. According to the specific characteristics analysed, we have created the following evaluation grid: Score between 0-2 points (0 points in case the task is impossible to be completed, 1 or 2 points in case the task can be completed, according to the associated relative importance of the task); Score between 0-3 points (0 points-absence, 1 point- medium presence, 2 points- advanced presence, 3 points- total presence); Score between 0-5 points according to the visibility of the website on the search engine [www.google.ro](http://www.google.ro) based on a series of relevant keywords.

The allocation of the evaluation grids for each criterion is further presented. The maximum score which can be achieved by a website is 50 points and the structured analysis each website has been classified, thus allowing us to identify the good practice examples as well as the main challenges. Through this process the integration degree of specific E-tourism instruments in the business model has been identified and an analysis of the informational content and the E-marketing strategy has been conducted.

With the scope of evaluating the results three categories of websites have been created, according to the scores obtained after the structured analysis. The first category includes tourism websites with scores between 0-25 points, meaning that the websites do not meet the minimal standards, thus the organizations do not exploit the strategic potential of an online presence. The second category includes websites with a score between 25-40 points, which means the organization can further improve its online performance. The third category includes websites that can actually respond to the needs of the travellers from the "Digital Era", with scores between 40-50 points.

The research sample includes websites of accommodation units which appear in the first 7 pages on the research engine [www.google.ro](http://www.google.ro) according to the following keywords: "Accommodation Clisura Dunarii", "Tourism Clisura Dunarii", "Guest house Clisura Dunarii".

The analysis implied the use of descriptive statistics techniques, the scores obtained through the structured analysis of the websites were elaborated by the aid of the SPSS16 software. We have calculated frequencies, averages and standard deviations and afterwards a crossover centralization was performed.

#### 4. ANALYSES

A number of 26 websites were analyzed, the only ones that obtained a cumulative score greater than 5, which is 10% of the maximum score. The criteria considered relevant in the present research for the degree to which the personal website is used as a direct promotional tool for the tourism products and services are further analyzed:

- Criterion 1: Visibility on search engines (score 0-5 points)

For the evaluation of websites' visibility we have chosen as the most relevant search engine [www.google.ro](http://www.google.ro). The scores were assigned in dependance to the position of the websites in the search results, according to the above mentioned keywords (table 1):

**Table 1** The score assigned to tourism websites according to their visibility on [www.google.ro](http://www.google.ro)

Criterion: the position according to the keywords	Scor
The website-ul appears as a search result on the first page	5 points
The website-ul appears as a search result on the second page	4 points
The website-ul appears as a search result on the third page	3 points
The website-ul appears as a search result on the fourth page	2 points
The website-ul appears as a search result on the fifth page	1 points
The website-ul does not appear as a search result on the first five pages	0 points
Maximum score	5 points

On the first page only four accomodation units appear as search results ( the Guest House Melba, the Guest House Aprilie, the Guest House Danubia and the Guest House Flying Fish), whose websites have the highest visitor numbers. Most of the search results according to the mentioned keywords are E-Intermediaries' websites, which demonstrates their efforts to permantly index their websites on the research engines. Most of the accomodation units' personal websites only reach the second or third page of results, which shows they do not show much interest in this respect, and they continue to rely on E-intermediaries in order to increase thier visibility. Only one accomodation unit that was not present in the first five pages of results according to the keywords had a cummulative score greater then 5 points. This fact can indicate a strong relationship between the websites online visibility and its complexity. In figure 1 is presented the websites' distribution according to thier online visibility. On the horizontal axis the score is represented and on the vertical axis the number of accomodation units.

- Criterion 2: Technology- Score 0-6 points

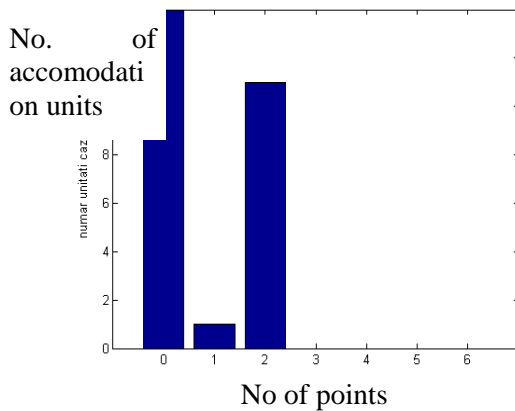
The technological aspects have great success among young tourists and business tourists, two valuable target groups. The main tasks analyzed within this criterion and their assigned scores are represented in table 2.

Most of the analyzed websites do not offer the posibility of online booking a room, only 11 out of the 26 analyzed websites offer this option to users. None of the analyzed websites offer the posibility to pay online. This finding should be correlated to the fact that they target only Romanian speaking tourists, as they do not offer bilingual versions of the websites. The scientific literature shows that Romanians have a low degree of trust in online payment facilities and they are still reluctant to reveal their personal accounts information.

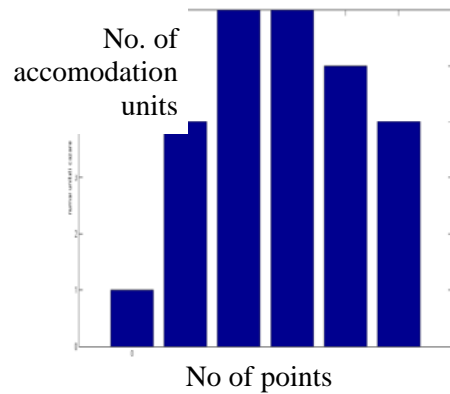
**Table 2.** Scores assigned to the criterion „Technology”

Evaluated task	Score
• The possibility to make online bookings	2 points

• The possibility to make online payments	2 points
• The short time to download documents	0-2 points
<b>Maximum score</b>	<b>6 points</b>



**Figure 1.** Clisura Dunării Websites' distribution according to their online visibility



**Figure 2.** Clisura Dunării Websites' distribution according to the technology used

Figure 2, which shows the distribution of websites according to the technological performance, shows that 50% of the websites are purely informative and useless when a tourist wants to check availability of rooms or to make an online booking or payment. The absence of such facilities can represent a threat for SMTEs as many tourists choos to make reservations through intermediaries which implies additional costs for the tourism organizations.

For analyzing this criterion we have evaluated several aspects which impact the consumer, mentioned in table 3.

The score given to each task was assigned according to its relative importance. The main conclusion of the analysis is that the criterion „Website design and content” represents the strength of the websites that were analyzed, even though none of them reached the maximum score of 12 points.

The distribution of the cummulative score obtained by all the accomodation units is presented in figure 3, where the sub-criteria are numbered from 1 to 11.

Out of the maximum score of 40 points for the first sub-criterion, 35 points were obtained, which proves that most of the analyzed websites have a pleasant visual aspect. The smallest scores were obtained for:

- criterion 7 (none of the websites provide information for disabled tourists);

- criterion 10 (only 8 websites have bilingual versions (all of them provide an English version of the website), which limits the target group of users that could benefit from the online presence;

- *Criterion 3: Website design and content (score 0-12 points)*

- criterion 6 (the content of the tourism websites is not updated regularly as the results of the results show that only 10 out of 26 websites provide users with new, interesting and dynamic information);

- criterion 4 (the websites are generally static, and audio or video content is available for only 11 out of the 26 websites analyzed).

**Table 3** The score assigned for „Website design and content“ criterion

Evaluated sub-criteria	Score
1. Elegant and profesional design, the website has a pleasant visual aspect	0-2 points
2. Readable fonts	1 point
3. Easy to use maps and itineraries (printable and downladable formats)	1 point
4. Audio content (ex. Interviews with owners, tourists, etc), flash animations, other media	1 point
5. Information about company	1 point
6. The content is new, dynamic, interesting, easy to read and updated	1 point
7. Specific information for tourists with special needs	1 point
8. Information or links to complemntary service suppliers	1 point
9. Detailed information on products and services	1 point
10. Multilingual content	1 point
11. Existance of specific brand identity elements	1 point
<b>Maximum score</b>	<b>12 points</b>

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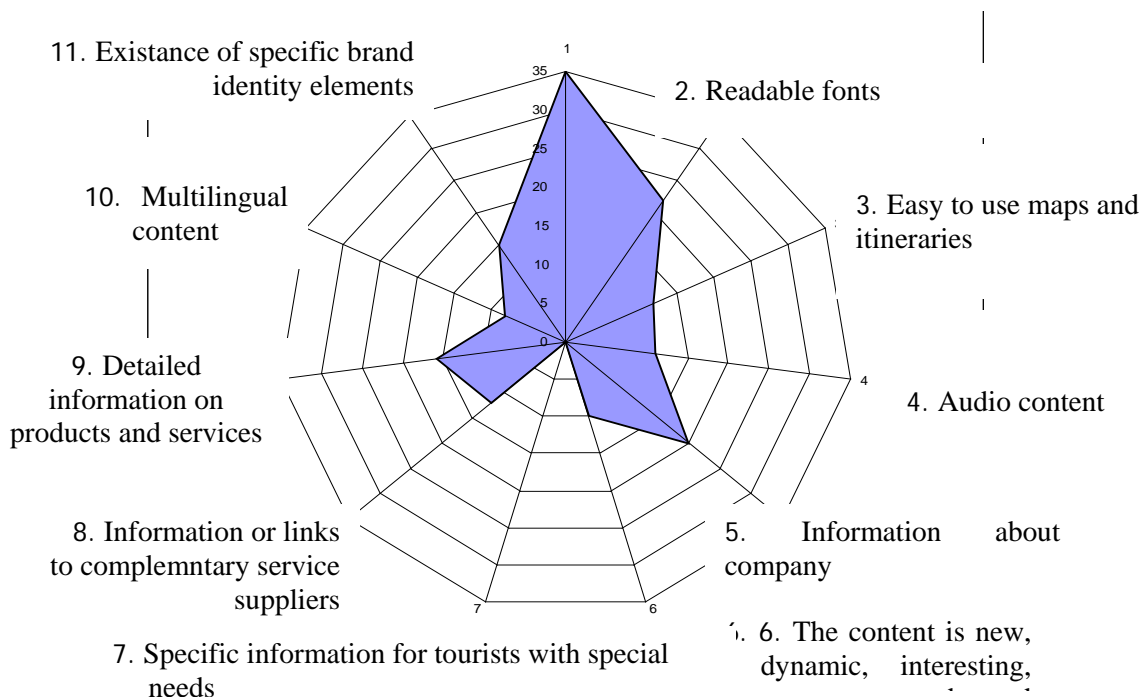
- criterion 10 (only 8 websites have bilingual versions (all of them provide an English version of the website), which limits the target group of users that could benefit from the online presence;

- criterion 6 (the content of the tourism websites is not updated regularly as the results of the results show that only 10 out of 26 websites provide users with new, interesting and dynamic information);

- criterion 4 (the websites are generally static, and audio or video content is available for only 11 out of the 26 websites analyzed).

The distribution of accomodation units according to the obtained scores for this criterion is presented in figure 4. The websites with an average content and design are concentrated around the score of 8 points, while many websites have only reached a score of 4 points.

Elegant and profesional design, the website has a pleasent visual



**Figure 3.** The distribution of scores obtained by the tourism websites from Clisura Dunarii at the sub-criteria „Design and content”

Out of the maximum score of 40 points for the first sub-criterion, 35 points were obtained, which proves that most of the analyzed websites have a pleasant visual aspect. The smallest scores were obtained for:

- criterion 7 (none of the websites provide information for disabled tourists);
- criterion 10 (only 8 websites have bilingual versions (all of them provide an English version of the website), which limits the target group of users that could benefit from the online presence;
- criterion 6 (the content of the tourism websites is not updated regularly as the results of the results show that only 10 out of 26 websites provide users with new, interesting and dynamic information);
- criterion 4 (the websites are generally static, and audio or video content is available for only 11 out of the 26 websites analyzed).

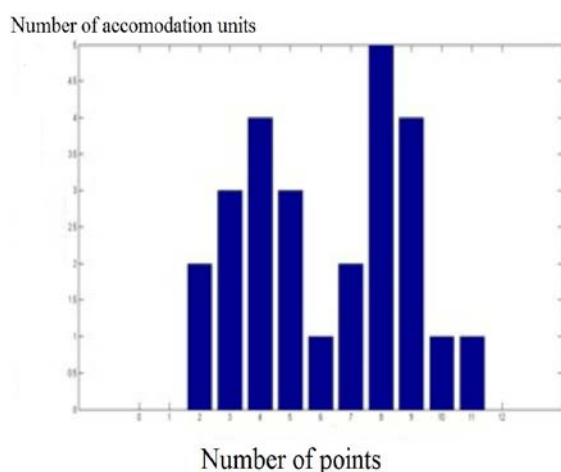
The distribution of accomodation units according to the obtained scores for this criterion is presented in figure 4. The websites with an average content and design are concentrated around the score of 8 points, while many websites have only reached a score of 4 points.

- **Criterion 4: „Functionality, accessibility and interactivity” (score 0-11 points)**

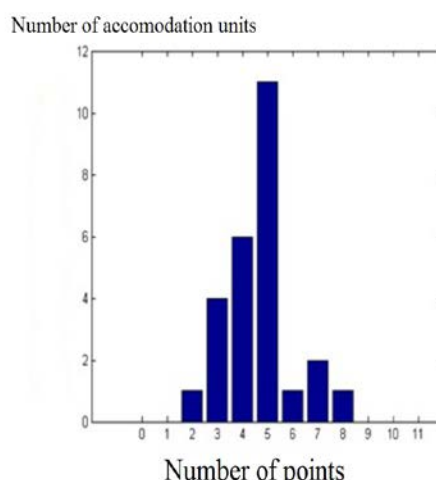
Functionality is a very important element for the modern tourist and represents the website’s interface, its dynamic connection with the users. The criterion has been divided in several sub-tasks, presented in table 4.

**Table 4 Score for the criterion „Functionality, accessibility and interactivity”**

Tasks evaluated	Score
1. The products and services are easy to find	0-3 points
2. Obvious navigation menu on the website	0-3 points
3. Each category can be accessed from the homepage	1 point
4. Images are rapidly uploaded and are not missing	1 point
5. The aspect of the website does not change if it is accessed from various browsers	1 point
6. The website offers the possibility to customize products (creating service packages according to preferences, arrival and departure dates, availability, etc)	1 point
7. The website offers the possibility to subscribe to a newsletter	1 point
<b>MAXMUM SCORE</b>	<b>11 points</b>



**Figure 4.** The distribution of accomodation units according to the design and website content



**Figure 5** The distribution of accomodation units according to the functionality,accessibility and

In figure 5 is presented the distribution of the accomodation units according to their scores. We can notice a masive concentration around the value of 5 points – almost 50% of the maximum score, which shows that most of the websites do not succeed in fully satisfying customer needs.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of the scores obtained for each subcriterion, numbered from1 to 7. From the analysis of the data presented we notice that



some specific aspects of interactivity are not present on any of the analyzed websites:

- For criterion 6, none of the websites offer the possibility to customize the touristic products or services by the user, such as creating specific tourism packages according to the users' needs and preferences (for example 2 nights accommodation, a Danube cruise, breakfast and one dinner);

- For criterion 7, none of the accommodation units offers the possibility to subscribe to a newsletter (which is directly connected to the fact that websites are not regularly updated). The absence of newsletter on the websites shows that the SMTEs do not take advantage of the potential of direct online promotion, as communicating regularly with actual and potential clients is a very effective means of increasing customer value by loyalty programs.

The criteria 1-5, which refer to the simple navigation on the website, are satisfactory met. This fact can be however attributed to the low, static content and low complexity of the websites, which leads to the existence of a simple navigation menu, easy to find products and services, reachable categories from the homepage.

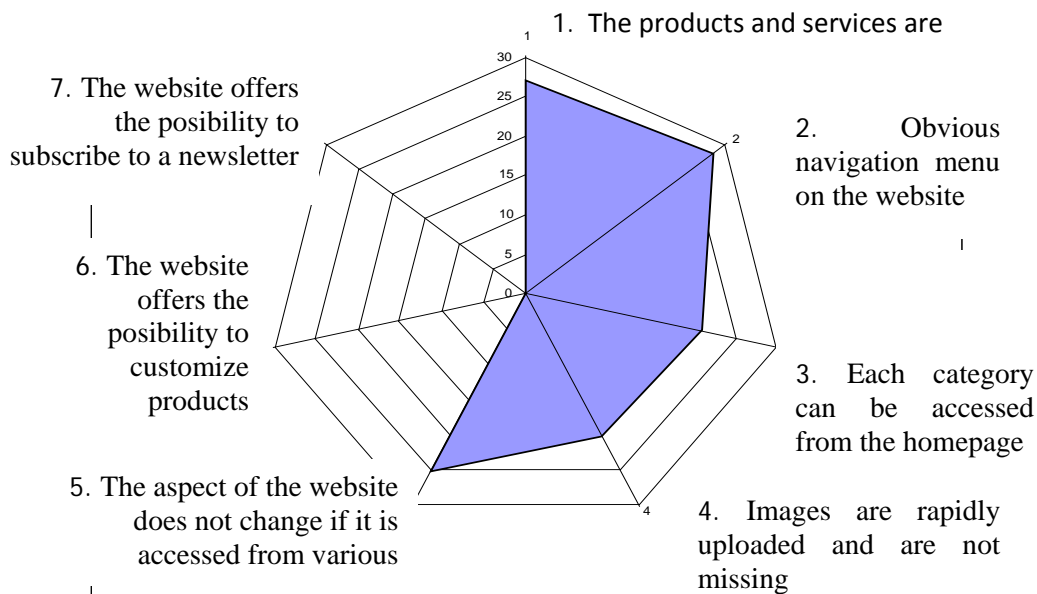


Figure 6. The distribution of websites of the accommodation units in Clisura Dunării according to the scores obtained by the criterion "Functionality, accessibility and interactivity"

-Criterion 5 „Customer Relationship Management” (Score 0-12 points)

Beneath the technical aspects, the design and the content, the websites' structured analysis also included a reaserch of the SMTEs' capacity to manage a customer database and to include relantionship marketing actions in their business plan. The criteria we have analyzed and the assigned scores are represented in table 5.

**Table 5.** Score assigned to the criteria „Customer Relationship Management”

Evaluated criterion	Score
1. Information concerning the security of users and transactions	1 point
2. The posibility of users to express their opinions by comments, the display of comments from other tourism websites, answers to comments (at least the negative ones)	0-3 points
3. The presence on facebook.com by creating fanpages or user groups formed of customers and fans	3 points
4. The facebook page can be reached from the website	1 point
5. The existance of a youtube account with vidos of the accomadation unit, testimonials from clients,	2 points
6. The videos on youtube.com can be viewed from the website	1 point
7. The existance of a chat or forum where users can interact	1 point
<b>Maximum score</b>	<b>12 points</b>

The results of the research prove that the analyzed websites do not reach 50% of the maximum score. Moreover, 11 out of the analyzed websites have a nul score, as can be seen in figure 7, which means they do not any of the specific tools available on tourism websites from more developed regions in Romania and all developed countries.

Figure 7 shows that most of the analyzed criterion are not satisfied by any website (4 out of 7). None of the websites offer information on data security when booking online. There are no youtube accounts, nore forums and chats. It is obvious that CRM for the analyzed SMTEs is based on other specific ICT tools, such as e-mail and thelephone.

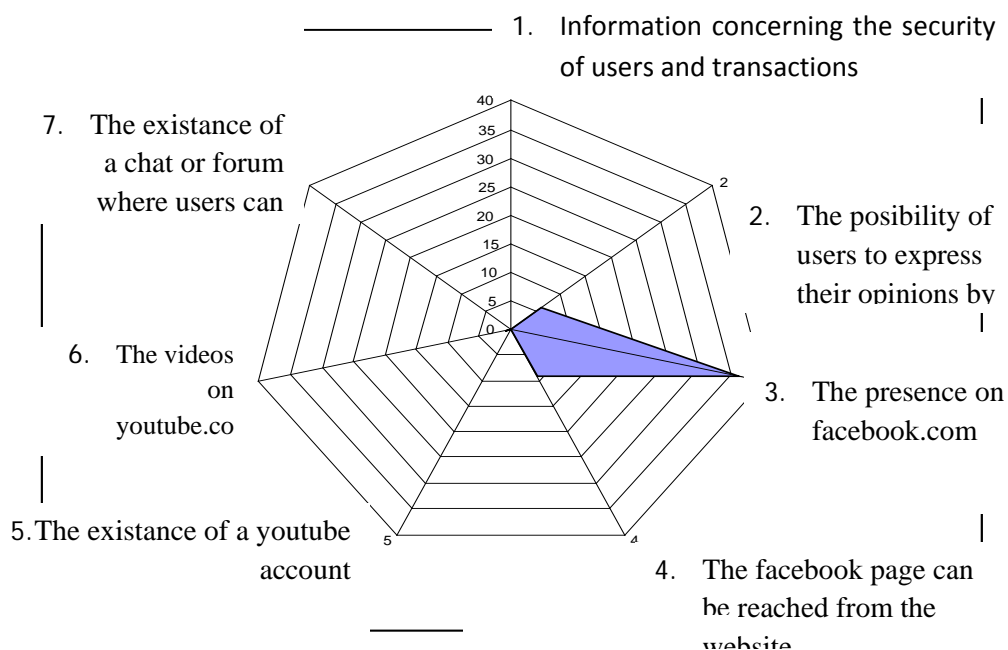


Figure 7. The distribution of websites of the accomodation units in Clisura Dunarii according to the scores obtained by the criterion "Customer Relationship Management"

- Criterion 6: Trust- 0-4 points

Creating the feeling of trust is very important, and according to the websites' evaluation grid, this can be achieved by satisfying the criteria presented in table 6. The results of the research show that there is no concern of the SMTEs for increasing tourists' trust. None of the websites have certifications or local guides, nor do they have statements of legal issues or local authorities addresses. Also none of the analyzed websites provided information on healthcare services in the region, while four of the websites did not provide any directions to reach the location.

Table 6. Score assigned to criterion „Trust“

Evaluated criteria	Score
• The existence of user guides	1 point
• The presence of certain certifications	1 point
• The statement of legal issues	1 point
• Map location, directions	1 point
Maximum score	4 points

The results of the research show that there is no concern of the SMTEs for increasing tourists' trust. None of the websites have certifications or local guides, nor do they have statements of legal issues or local authorities addresses. Also none of the

analyzed websites provided information on healthcare services in the region, while four of the websites did not provide any directions to reach the location. The results of the research on the websites' trust inducing tools show that none of the online marketing strategies are customer centric. The scores obtained by the websites on the six criteria are presented in figure 8.

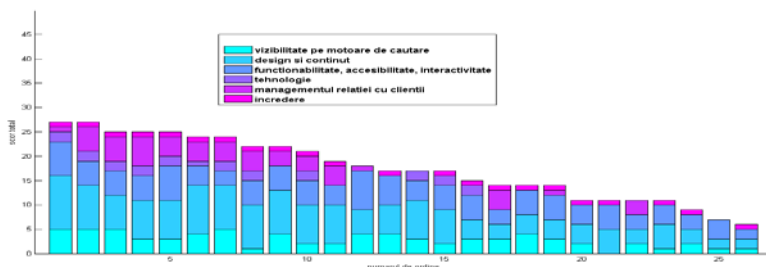


Figure 8. The Classification of websites based on their complexity

## 5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS VALIDATION

**Hypothesis 1.** „If the SMTEs from the destination Clisura Dunarii have a more developed online distribution system, then they also have a higher online visibility (on search engines)”.

We consider as representative factors for the performance of the online distribution strategy of the tourism websites the technological aspects analyzed:

- The possibility to make online bookings;
- The possibility to make online payments;
- The download time of documents.

In order to validate the research hypothesis we will select the scores of the websites for the criteria „Online visibility” and „Technology” and we will calculate the Pearson correlation coefficient with SPSS 16 software.

The value of the correlation coefficient is  $R=0,3523$ , which shows that the hypothesis is invalidated. The statistical analysis shows that higher online visibility on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), does not mean that the SMTEs have also integrated specific tools for online distribution. We can interpret that, despite the management efforts to optimize the search engines the main purpose of the websites is promotion and not direct online sales.

**Hypothesis 2.** „There is a linear correlation between the dimension of the SMTEs and the integration level of specific E-tourism instruments in their business strategy”.

For the validation process of the above hypothesis, the following aspects evaluated by the websites' structured analysis were considered representative for the E-tourism integration level:

- *Trust*- Score 0-4 points;

- *Customer Relationship Management*- Score 0-12 points;
- *Functionality, accesibility and interactivity* – Score 0-11 points;
- *Website design and content*- Score 0-12 points;
- *Technology*- Score 0-6 points;
- *Visibility on search engines*- Score 0-5 points.

For a more thorough analysis from the six characteristics analyzed, „Visibility on search engines” and „Technology” were considered specific for online distribution and were used in order to analyze the correlation between the size of the SMTEs and the performance of their online distribution strategy.

If we consider all the criteria mentioned above, we can rank the tourism websites according to their ability to respond to the needs of european tourists, as seen in table 7. The third column shows the total scores obtained by the websites for the six relevant criteria mentioned above, which are representative for the integration level of E-tourism specific instruments in the SMTEs’ business strategy. The fourth column shows the nightly rate for a double room, for each accomodation unit. The fifth column shows the accomodation capacity of the analyzed SMTEs. The last column shows the score obtained by the SMTEs’ websites for the online distribution dimension (the sum of the scores obtained for the criteria „Visibilty on search engines” and „Technology”).

We can notice there is no direct correlation between the performance of the E-tourism strategy and the dimension of the accomodation unit. *The hypothesis is invalidated*, as the Pearson correlation coefficient calculated for the size of the SMTEs and the score obtained through the website analysis is  $R3=0.1931$ . The Pearson correlation coefficient calculated for the size of the accomodation units and the online distribution score is  $R31=0.3839$ , showing that neither these dimensions are correlated. A possible explanation of this result refers to the geographic position of the accomodation units (some of them are situated near the Danube and close to the main access road), which gives them a strong competitive advantage and therefor they do not feel the pressure of improving their online distribution strategy, as they have a high degree of occupancy anyway. However, the smaller accomodation units need to overcome their weaknesses, and are more keen on developing their E-tourism strategy. However, as the competitiveness of the industry will increase, the larger accomodation units will need to improve their online capacities, in order to maximize their profits.

**Hypothesis 3.** „There is a linear correlation between the nightly rate of SMTEs in Clisura Dunarii and the E-tourism specific instruments integration level”.

In the validation process of Hypothesis 3 we have considered the nightly rate of the accomodation units and the score obtained by their websites through the structured analysis, information presented in table 7. The data was processed with SPSS 16 software in order to calculate the Pearson correlation indicator between the total score revealing the integretion level of E-tourism in their business strategies, obtained by the SMTEs (column 3) and their nightly rate (column 4). The statistical processing of data shows that *the hypothesis is invalidated*, as the corelation coefficient is  $R4=0.5209$ . Also there is no linear correlation between the nightly rate and the score obtained by the SMTEs for the online distribution criterion (column 6). Therefor, considering the nightly rate as indicator of the confort level offered to tourists, we can conclude that the SMTEs do not succeed in offering added value to their clients through their websites, *in their customer serving strategy the online component being completely neglected*.

**Table 7** Ranking of the SMTEs' websites in Clisura Dunarii based on the structured analysis, the nightly rate and the accomodation capacity

Ranking place	Webiste name	E-tourism score	Nightly rate	Number of rooms	Online distribution score
1	<a href="http://www.flyingfish.ro">www.flyingfish.ro</a>	27	160	18	7
2	<a href="http://www.pensiunea-melba.ro">www.pensiunea-melba.ro</a>	27	220	15	7
3	<a href="http://www.pensiunea-aprilie.ro">www.pensiunea-aprilie.ro</a>	25	140	7	7
4	<a href="http://www.pensiunea-wanted.ro">www.pensiunea-wanted.ro</a>	25	100	10	5
5	<a href="http://www.cazare-cazane.ro">www.cazare-cazane.ro</a>	25	220	14	5
6	<a href="http://www.pensiuneadecebal.ro">www.pensiuneadecebal.ro</a>	24	150	15	7
7	<a href="http://www.pensiuneadanubia.ro">www.pensiuneadanubia.ro</a>	24	200	20	3
8	<a href="http://www.hotelapolodor">www.hotelapolodor</a>	22	140	5	4
9	<a href="http://www.pensiunea-septembrie.ro">www.pensiunea-septembrie.ro</a>	22	160	18	4
10	<a href="http://www.pensiuneaoliver.ro">www.pensiuneaoliver.ro</a>	21	120	10	2
11	<a href="http://www.casamraco.ro">www.casamraco.ro</a>	19	100	4	4
12	<a href="http://www.ogradena.ro">www.ogradena.ro</a>	18	80	5	4
13	<a href="http://www.casaalex-mraconia.ro">www.casaalex-mraconia.ro</a>	17	80	5	3
14	<a href="http://www.complex-manea.ro">www.complex-manea.ro</a>	17	100	7	5
15	<a href="http://www.steaua-dunarii.ro">www.steaua-dunarii.ro</a>	17	120	21	4
16	<a href="http://www.cabanadelfinul.ro">www.cabanadelfinul.ro</a>	15	150	4	5
17	<a href="http://www.pensiuneayuppydu.com">www.pensiuneayuppydu.com</a>	14	90	10	3
18	<a href="http://www.pensiuneclisuradunarii.ro">www.pensiuneclisuradunarii.ro</a>	14	160	23	4
19	<a href="http://www.mirajdunare.ro">www.mirajdunare.ro</a>	14	150	10	3
20	<a href="http://www.vila-simbol.to-romania.ro">www.vila-simbol.to-romania.ro</a>	11	150	4	2
21	<a href="http://www.cabanaclisura.ro">www.cabanaclisura.ro</a>	11	120	3	0
22	<a href="http://www.pensiunea-elis.ro">www.pensiunea-elis.ro</a>	11	80	19	2
23	<a href="http://www.pensiunea-mraconia.ro">www.pensiunea-mraconia.ro</a>	11	150	10	1
24	<a href="http://www.pensiunea-isabella.ro">www.pensiunea-isabella.ro</a>	9	80	15	2
25	<a href="http://www.cabanaandreea.home.ro">www.cabanaandreea.home.ro</a>	7	80	4	1

26	<a href="http://www.pensiuneadunarea.ro">www.pensiuneadunarea.ro</a>	6	85	8	1
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## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The present research shows that the E-tourism potential in Clisura Dunarii destination is not strategically exploited as the SMTEs in this region do not have a coherent online marketing strategy. The three research hypothesis were invalidated by the analysis of the relevant data, showing an atypical situation which needs further analysis in order to identify the most effective ways to improve the the digital competitiveness of the tourism destination.

A first important conclusion is that the E-intermediaries have an essential role in the online distribution strategy of the touristic products and services, while the online presence of the SMTEs is focused on information and promotion and less on direct sales. The efforts to increase the online visibility of the tourism websites are not correlated to the performance of online booking and online payment instruments integrated by the SMTEs. This result shows the necessity to integrate an online sales component in the tourism websites analyzed, the return on this investment in the distribution strategy being ensured by the elimination of the specific distribution costs inquired by E-intermediaries.

The second important conclusion refers to the fact that the dimension of the accommodation units is not correlated to the performance of their E-tourism strategy. This shows the fact that in the marketing strategies of the SMTEs in the destination, the online component does not have an uniform weight, bus is more likely to be integrated when the occupation degree of the accommodation units is lower. This reactive action of the SMTEs which have small dimensions can bring them a competitive advantage. For a sustainable marketing strategy it is necessary for all SMTEs to integrate the online component and to develop an integrated mechanism for the online and offline promotion and distribution.

We have also proved by this research that in the customer serving strategy the online component is neglected by the SMTEs in Clisura Dunarii. The increased level of confort offered in the moment of consumption of the tourim service is not correleted to the added value offered online. This conclusion is important and shows that there are limitations in the development of an efficient online customer service strategy which needs further analysis in order to find solutions to overcome this weakness and to implement a proactive vision to obtain competitive advantage by using specific E-tourism instruments and techniques.

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