

WEB PRESENCE OF TRAVEL AGENCIES FROM TRANSYLVANIA-ROMANIA AND HUNGARY

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Abstract: Tourism develops in all countries because it is a good source of income and, sometimes, a better solution than to work elsewhere. But in a global economy, a travel agent cannot promote tourism products and services only in a limited area. Wherever they go to or come from, tourists want to be well informed. As a consequence, it is a good starting point to visit and observe websites belonging to travel agencies from different regions/countries and find out how the Web service of the Internet helps these processes. Surprises may appear. *Copyright © 2005 Faculty of Business.*

Keywords: comparative study, travel agency, website, webpage, spreadsheet, chart, hypotesys testing.

Comparative study objectives: conduct research in order to find out the developing stage of 50 websites belonging to travel agencies from Transylvania-Romania and compare results with the developing stage of 50 websites belonging to travel agencies from Hungary.

Comparative study methods: visit Romanian and Hungarian travel agencies websites and use specialized spreadsheet software to analyze data for each zone. Establish similarities and differences among the sites/elements on the whole, by using diagrams and statistical analysis. There were taken into consideration the professional aspect of each site from the IT point of view and the complexity of the site by number and quality of services. The target number of visited websites was not met – in fact were visited and analyzed 49 Romanian and 48 Hungarian websites belonging to travel agencies. This does not significantly affect the comparative study.

NOTE: to conduct research in a reasonable period of time it was used only one browser (Internet Explorer) and only a specialized spreadsheet software (Microsoft Excel). Statistical analysis was made with

Statgraphics software package. In order to obtain better results, one can increase the number of visitors who evaluate sites, can increase the number of visited sites for each zone and can use several browsers (e.g. Opera, Mozilla, Konqueror, Netscape, FireFox, Hot Java Browser etc.) under different operating systems (eg. Windows, Linux, Solaris etc.).

1.Finding websites to be analyzed

In order to find websites belonging to travel agencies from Transylvania-Romania there were used the keywords "*turism în Ardeal*" (tourism in Transylvania¹) and the search engine from *www.google.ro*. One of the results was the hyperlink to *http://www.transilvania.info*. In this site one can find a section called "*Voiaj şi turism*" (Voyage and tourism) where are hyperlinks to travel agencies from Transylvania-Romania grouped by counties.

In a similar way, to find websites belonging to travel agencies from Hungary is was used the search engine

¹ Romanians use sometimes the name of Ardeal instead of Transylvania

from www.google.hu. The keyword were "utazási irodák" (travel agencies). Among results it was selected the site from <http://www.nu.hu> where one can find a relevant list to this comparative study.

2.Travel agencies' websites pages or pages' content taken into consideration

- **Welcome** – this page is designed to introduce clients/visitors in the "atmosphere" of the agency site. It offers the links which facilitate navigation and the possibility of rapidly finding the needed information. Also, it should contain original graphics able to illustrate the main message. It was observed if this page exists and analyzed how it fits to the objectives of the travel agency.
- **About Us** – is the page which contains the travel agency overview: profile, goals, strengths and strategies. Also, it gives information about agency roots/history, its background and, very often, a message from the owner or the general manager.
- **Contact Information** – contains agency location(s), a list of main departments and a brief description of them. It is a must to include mail and e-mail addresses, fix/mobile phone and fax numbers, contact persons for each department. Photos should be included. One or more feedback forms can help the travel agency to get timely information from clients/visitors to the site.
- **Foreign languages versions** – facilitate the attraction of clients/visitors from different target markets. For countries with limited speakers of their national language – in our case Romania and Hungary – it is recommended to have website versions for widely spoken languages like English, French and German. In case of a great success of the agency, website versions in languages like Spanish, Italian and Russian can be added.
- **Sitemap** – is the page which lets your visitors view the entire site at a glance. It usually contains an image with active areas with hyperlinks to related pages.
- **Other** – it is not compulsory a page or a set of pages. Type of buttons, forms, animation and many other factors are "stealing" the attention and determine the visitor to "stay" more than initially planned. These are some of the most difficult components to be taken into consideration when analyzing websites. At this point it was quantified the site's loading speed, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), News, Feedback and Search.
- **Attractiveness** – graphics (static/animated) is a crucial aspect and attractive color palette (for page(s) elements and/or background) are determinant factors to continue visiting. Sometimes, too much graphics is disturbing and influences the loading speed. These aspects are also difficult to appreciate when analyzing websites.
- **Navigation Easiness** – this implies the appreciation of how is the organization of the entire site and how easy is to "jump" from a section to another or from an interesting topic to another. Partially, loading speed was also quantified.
- **Tourist Offer** – contains service packages offered with all detailed information. In case of many possibilities, it can be organized as a list with hyperlinks to pages with more detailed data. Nowadays, many agencies use specific filters within DataBase Management Systems (DBMS) in order to solve this aspect.
- **Special services** – this section contains special services like those for individual travel (entry visas, transit visas, reservations etc.), services for business purposes, exchange office, tourist materials (maps, catalogs, fliers etc.) and all sort of other outstanding services. It is the place where services can be promoted in order to differentiate the travel agency on the market.
- **Rates and Tariffs** – include costs for tourist products/services groped on certain criteria. This page also specifies the prices for all other services offered. Discount policies should be mentioned in a special section.
- **Online Reservations** – the travel agency should offer his clients/visitors the possibility of making a certain kind of online reservations and therefore this is probably one of the most important page of the entire website. Usually it contains one or more complex forms with many fields with validation buttons in order to be completed quickly and to avoid incomplete data. Clients/visitors can choose the way of confirmation the reservation (e-mail, phone, fax etc.).
- **Other information** – is the pages that contains any other information not found in the above mentioned sections of the website like the exchange rates, weather report, jokes etc. This can be developed according to database principles completed with hyperlinks, photos and digital video.
- **Jobs** – provides the travel agency employment policies, details of how to compose and send Resumés (CV's), positions available, deadlines for applications and contact persons. It might contain subsections designed according to database principles for information regarding job requirements. A feedback online form is highly desirable.

The pages listed above should have valuable information for all kind of clients/visitors, especially for those willing to make quick preparations for an event (domestic or international travel, holiday etc.). Briefly, after the visit of each website, all data and qualificatives (very poor, poor, good, very good and

excellent) were arranged in a table (MS Excel). Finally, for each qualitative it was given a certain number of points: 1 for very poor, 2 for poor, 3 for good, 4 for very good and 5 for excellent. If the site does not contain a specific page, the cell in the table have a "0" (zero) – fig.1 and fig.2. The results are given in tables 1, 2 and 3 for Transylvania-Romania and in tables 4, 5 and 6 for Hungary.

Nr. crt.	www <address>	Welcome	About Us	Contact Information	Foreign Languages	Sitemap	Other (FAQ, News etc.)	Attractiveness
1								
2								
3	11euro.ro	4	4	2	0	1	0	3
4	abctravel.ro	3	0	3	0	1	1	2
5	alisaturism.ro	3	4	4	2	4	4	5
6	ancona-p.ro	2	0	2	0	1	0	3
7	begaturism.ro	1	2	3	3	1	0	2
8	businessjet.ro	1	2	3	0	1	1	3
9	calbra_travel.ro	3	3	3	1	2	0	3
10	carpatours.ro	1	3	4	1	1	1	3
11	ciel-voyages.ro	2	5	3	4	2	5	4
12	corbet.ro	1	3	3	1	0	3	2
13	draculatrainsilvania.ro	5	2	3	1	3	1	5
14	emottravel.ro	5	0	2	0	1	0	4
15	estimativ.ro	1	0	3	3	3	0	4
16	eurolines.ro	3	4	4	3	1	3	4
17	extimtour.ro	1	2	2	0	1	2	2

Fig.1. Data obtained after visiting websites

Number of analyzed elements appreciated with		Attracted element				
		Welcome	About Us	Contact	Languages	Sitemap
0	5	9	0	25	10	
1	14	7	3	8	21	
2	7	9	12	6	7	
3	10	10	24	7	7	
4	9	6	7	2	2	
5	5	9	3	2	2	

Number of analyzed elements appreciated with		Attracted element				
		Other	Attractiveness	Navigation	Touristic Offer	Special Services
0	18	0	1	4	17	
1	9	3	4	9	8	
2	8	7	16	12	7	
3	9	20	20	11	10	
4	2	19	7	5	2	
5	3	7	1	8	5	

Number of analyzed elements appreciated with		Attracted element			
		Rates and Tariffs	Online Reservations	Other Information	Jobs
0	15	34	12	45	
1	11	4	6	1	
2	6	3	11	0	
3	9	2	10	0	
4	6	2	6	0	
5	2	4	4	0	

Fig.2. Qualificatives and points for analyzed sites

3.1.Conclusions for travel agencies' websites situated in Transylvania-Romania

1. The "Welcome" pages are either well represented (excellent – 10%, very good – 16% and good – 20%) or very poor – 30%;
2. The "About Us" pages are distributed almost equally between not existing and excellent;
3. The "Contact Information" pages exist in all websites and are very well represented (excellent – 6%, very good – 14% and good – 50%);
4. More than half (52%) of analyzed websites don't have "Foreign Languages Versions" and 16% are situated in the very poor area;
5. The majority of pages hosting "Sitemap" are either very poor or like not existing;

6. "Attractiveness" is situated between poor and excellent, the majority being good (42%);
7. The "Tourist Offer" and "Navigation Easiness" pages are concentrated in good and poor area – (together) a little less than 50%;
8. The pages referring to "Special Services" and "Rates and Tariffs" are not existing or like not existing – about 66% are not existing, very poor and poor.;
9. "Online Reservations" pages are missing in 70% of the analyzed websites;
10. The pages related to "Jobs" don't exist (98%);
11. Many sites don't have updated information;
12. The hyperlinks don't function in 7% of the cases.

3.2.Conclusions for travel agencies' websites situated in Hungary

1. The "Welcome" pages are distributed between very poor (28%) and excellent (19%);
2. The "About Us" pages are excellent or very good in about (together) 44% of the cases but one forth don't have this section;
3. The "Contact Information" pages are distributed almost equally between very poor – 21% and excellent – 23%;
4. Almost three fourth (73%) of analyzed websites don't have "Foreign Languages Versions", 10% are situated in the poor area but 13% are situated in the excellent area;
5. The majority of pages hosting "Sitemap" are situated in the very poor and poor but one forth is situated in the good area;
6. "Attractiveness" is situated between poor and excellent, the majority being good (35%);
7. The pages/elements with "Tourist Offer" and "Navigation Easiness" are concentrated in good and very good area;
8. The pages referring to "Special Services" and "Rates and Tariffs" are distributed between very poor and excellent;
9. "Online Reservations" pages are missing in 66% of the analyzed websites;
10. The pages related to "Jobs" are very few – 81% are missing but 13% are excellent;
11. Many sites don't have updated information;
12. The hyperlinks don't function in 3% of the cases.

Table 1 Results for Transylvania-Romania (1)

Qualitative	Number of pages quoted with	Name of the page or its content				
		Welcome	About Us	Contact Information	Foreign Languages Versions	Sitemap
N/A	"0"	5	9	0	25	10
Very poor	"1"	14	7	3	8	21
Poor	"2"	7	9	12	5	7
Good	"3"	10	10	24	7	7
Very good	"4"	8	6	7	2	2
Excellent	"5"	5	8	3	2	2

Table 4 Results for Hungary (1)

Qualitative	Number of pages quoted with	Name of the page or its content				
		Welcome	About Us	Contact Information	Foreign Languages Versions	Sitemap
N/A	"0"	1	12	2	35	2
Very poor	"1"	14	2	10	0	16
Poor	"2"	8	3	13	5	17
Good	"3"	10	10	7	2	12
Very good	"4"	6	6	5	0	0
Excellent	"5"	9	15	11	6	1

Table 2 Results for Transylvania-Romania (2)

Qualitative	Number of pages quoted with	Name of the page or its content				
		Other	Attractiveness	Navigation Easiness	Tourist Offer	Special Services
N/A	"0"	18	0	1	4	17
Very poor	"1"	9	3	4	9	8
Poor	"2"	8	7	16	12	7
Good	"3"	9	20	20	11	10
Very good	"4"	2	12	7	5	2
Excellent	"5"	3	7	1	8	5

Table 5 Results for Hungary (2)

Qualitative	Number of pages quoted with	Name of the page or its content				
		Other	Attractiveness	Navigation Easiness	Tourist Offer	Special Services
N/A	"0"	12	1	0	0	1
Very poor	"1"	5	2	0	3	6
Poor	"2"	9	10	10	7	11
Good	"3"	7	17	17	15	5
Very good	"4"	2	7	12	11	10
Excellent	"5"	13	11	9	12	15

Table 3 Results for Transylvania-Romania (3)

Qualitative	Number of pages quoted with	Name of the page or its content			
		Rates and Tariffs	Online Reservations	Other information	Jobs
N/A	"0"	15	34	12	48
Very poor	"1"	11	4	6	1
Poor	"2"	6	3	11	0
Good	"3"	9	2	10	0
Very good	"4"	6	2	6	0
Excellent	"5"	2	4	4	0

Table 6 Results for Hungary (3)

Qualitative	Number of pages quoted with	Name of the page or its content			
		Rates and Tariffs	Online Reservations	Other information	Jobs
N/A	"0"	3	31	10	39
Very poor	"1"	5	1	5	0
Poor	"2"	17	4	6	0
Good	"3"	13	4	15	3
Very good	"4"	5	3	5	0
Excellent	"5"	5	5	7	6

4. Similarities and differences among the websites on the whole

To find out similarities and differences among the websites from Transylvania-Romania and websites from Hungary the points were added for each type of analyzed page/element. The result is in table 7. The appropriate chart is shown in fig.3.

Table 7 The total number of points "accumulated" per analyzed page/element

Analyzed pages/elements	POINTS	
	Transylvania Romania	Hungary
Welcome	115	129
About Us	119	137
Contact Information	142	132
Foreign Languages Versions	57	46
Sitemap	74	91
Other	75	117
Attractiveness	160	156
Navigation Easiness	129	164
Tourist Offer	126	166
Special Services	85	158
Rates and Tariffs	84	123
Online Reservations	44	58
Other Information	102	117
Jobs	1	39
TOTAL (points)	1313	1633

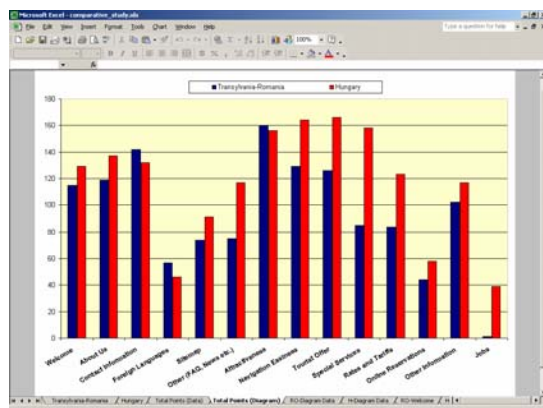


Fig.3. Similarities and differences among the travel agencies websites from Transylvania-Romania and Hungary on the whole

IMPORTANT

The Excel files containing the above data and related charts organized in several sheets – in Romanian and English – can be found in Liciniu Kovacs' personal website at www.geocities.com/liciniu/index.html in the Research section (fig.4). All files can be freely downloaded but, if used, we kindly request to quote the source and the authors.

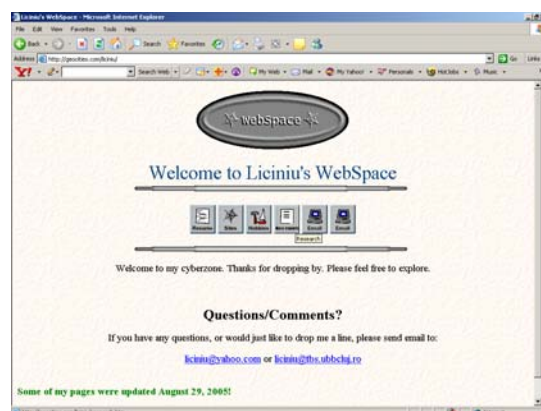


Fig.4 Liciniu-Alexandru Kovacs' personal website at <http://www.geocities.com/liciniu/index.html>. The Research section contains Microsoft Excel files with the comparative study data and related charts

Taking data from the Microsoft Excel files, table 7 and the chart from fig.3 we can have the following conclusions about to travel agencies' websites from Transylvania-Romania and Hungary:

1. During the research, one can observe that many agencies which are located and offer tourist products/services in Transylvania-Romania have hyperlinks to centers located in Bucharest; for Hungary, the great majority of travel agencies are located in Budapest.
2. The websites from Hungary are situated at a higher developing stage. But we have to take into consideration that about 80% of the travel agencies are located in Budapest.
3. From the IT and professional point of view the analyzed websites are situated on the about the same level. A slightly higher are situated the WebPages analyzed under the sections *Other* and *Navigation Easiness* belonging to agencies from Hungary.
4. The great majority of the analyzed websites have only versions in Romanian (for Transylvania-Romania) and Hungarian (for Hungary); this is unacceptable in a global economy in general and in tourism in special.
5. One can have better tourist offer, special services and prices in websites from Hungary.
6. A negative aspect can be seen on both regions – *Online Reservations* section is missing (70% in Transylvania-Romania and 66% in Hungary). From this point of view the websites are not used with efficiency.

These conclusions are confirmed by the following statistically procedure. Having the results from two samples we made some comparisons at the level of

these two populations (meaning the total number of travel agency sites from these two regions). We used a statistic tool: **hypothesis testing**. The procedure consists in the comparison of the average number of points for each variable involved in the study. The level of confidence that we have choose is 95%. The hypotheses were the followings:

Null hypothesis: mean 1 = mean 2

Alternative hypothesis: mean 1 < mean 2,

where *mean 1* represents the average number of points obtained by the sites from Transylvania-Romania and *mean 2* represents the average number of points obtained by the sites from Hungary. The procedure was made in Statgraphics – fig.5. Results are in table 8.

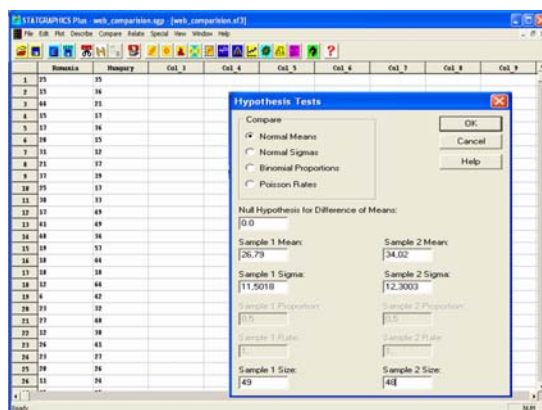


Fig.5 Procedure made in Statgraphics

Table 8 Statistical procedure results

Analyzed pages/elements	Results
Welcome	Do not reject
About Us	Do not reject
Contact Information	Do not reject
Foreign Languages Versions	Do not reject
Sitemap	Do not reject
Other	Reject
Attractiveness	Do not reject
Navigation Easiness	Reject
Tourist Offer	Reject
Special Services	Reject
Rates and Tariffs	Reject
Online Reservations	Do not reject
Other Information	Do not reject
Jobs	Reject

where:

Do not reject = Do not reject null hypothesis

Reject = Reject null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis

What do we understand from the above table?

For the pages/elements *Welcome, About Us, Contact Information, Foreign Languages Versions, Sitemap, Attractiveness, Online Reservations* and *Other Information* the result is **Do not reject the null hypothesis**. As a consequence, studied travel

agencies websites from Transylvania-Romania and Hungary **do not** differ significantly at these pages/elements and are observed by clients at about the same level.

For the pages/elements *Other, Navigation Easiness, Tourist Offer, Special Services, Rates and Tariffs* and *Jobs* the result is **Reject the null hypothesis and accept alternative hypothesis**. This mean that studied travel agencies sites from Transylvania-Romania and Hungary are significantly different at these pages/elements, with a higher level for the Hungarian sites.

Having the above results from comparing the pages/elements, a question appears. Are the sites belonging to travel agencies from Transylvania-Romania and Hungary different on the whole? Considering the average number of points (per total) Transylvanian sites have obtained 26,79 and Hungarian sites have obtained 34,02. Statistical tools show that there are statistically significant differences between the means at 95% confidence level.

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