

REFERENCES ON THE CONSTRUCTION AND PROMOTION OF THE TÂRGU - JIU LOCALITY BRAND ONLINE

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Abstract: *This paper aims to address a topical issue given that the virus COVID-19 outbreak has had a devastating impact on the global economy and jobs, and the tourism industry has been hit hard by measures to be taken to counter the pandemic. being unlikely to return to normal in the near future. The paper aims to provide a model for applying the principles of place branding together with public relations techniques in the online environment. The role and advantages offered by online communication tools, especially through social networks, will be presented, the characteristics to be taken into account in the strategic management of the brand of a place in the online environment, exemplifying ways of building, communication and virtual environment of Târgu Municipality brand. - Jiu, Gorj County. It is necessary to think and implement a coherent and integrated communication project that has a major impact and contributes to achieving concrete objectives. Thus, the virtual communication with potential tourists through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WordPress blog, has as main objective the increase of notoriety and the improvement of the image of the locality after a long period in which it had been forgotten.*

Keywords: *brand, crisis, digitalization, social media, tourism, travel.*

INTRODUCTION

Even after the gradual lifting of containment measures, HERECA companies surviving the crisis will continue to struggle during a phase of recovery that promises to be slow.

The crisis strongly affects certain segments of market services (tourism, hotels, restaurants, cultural services), but also industry, construction and public services. Also, conjunctural social effects may occur (increase in birth rate, increase in crime and social conflicts, etc.).

It is absolutely necessary to develop a set of measures in this regard, which is seriously affected by the fact that at present it is not known with certainty how much the epidemic will spread neither in time nor in space.

The coronavirus pandemic threatens up to 75 million jobs in the global tourism and travel sector (Economic Impact from COVID-19, April 2020), and its global impact is more than five times the effects of the 2008 crisis.

The effects of COVID-19 (both for medical and economic reasons) have led to a number of constraints, opportunities and costs on the labor market. Optimistically calculating the opportunities, we can say that one of them is the rethinking of business strategies in order to address more national needs, supporting innovation, especially in areas of national interest: agriculture, food industry, tourism, IT.

The crisis has accelerated digitalisation and highlighted the consequences of the digital divide for certain segments of society, especially women. Independent vocational training and digital literacy are needed for those working in the tourism sector, especially for women and young people, to increase their ability to use digital tools and online resources to streamline their operations and provide flexibility over time. preparing for the future of work.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT IN PROMOTING A DESTINATION

Roig et al. (2010, pp.121-122) argues that the formation of tourists' perceptions of a locality / destination can be influenced through the virtual environment as much as through well-known communication methods.

The online tourism market in Romania has exploded recently, with travel agencies starting to explore the virtual space in order to present offers.

The interaction with the public of the local authorities involved in brand management has intensified, in the conditions of the pandemic crisis, especially in the online environment, using with priority the tools offered by social networks in parallel with the creation and maintenance of websites and publishing content in the media. classics.

As Govers (2015, p.74) states, places are “virtual phenomena” and most place brands remain virtual for most (except locals and tourists who have come to experience them in physical form).

It is quite difficult to find in the literature a unitary definition of what social media means, but they are based on and can be assimilated with web 2.0 technologies (blogs, wikis, mashups, RSS, podcasts, vlogs and website social networks).

Digital space through secondary channels such as blogs, social media platforms, search engines and mobile platforms, the latter having a

very important potential for promoting the locality, providing information adapted to the user's location: facilities and services, information about transport local, guided tours, events, restaurants and shopping malls.

Also, given that direct communication has always been an important agent in shaping / influencing the image, social networks are the ideal communication medium for places that offer the outside world experiential products and services (tourism, work, research, learning, health services, etc).

The website is a means of presentation and a tool to increase the notoriety of the place, to transmit the identity at a visual level (name, logo, colors, images), to promote services / products and contact details for the interested public. It is also a source of information for the media, so the texts must be designed in accordance with the rules of writing, and the information must be formulated carefully because they can be taken as such and disseminated. Their content can be developed for different categories of audiences. To be competitive, a website must provide structured and up-to-date information to the key audience, providing practical and useful information, being an operational tool with an essential representation function.

Of all the tools of virtual space, Facebook is the most popular social network. Hootsuite and WeAreSocial published an interesting report on the use of telephones, the Internet and social media in early 2020. According to them, 4.5 billion people use the Internet, while 3.8 billion use social networks. It stated on its own profile the mission that is "to give people the power to build communities and make a world closer and more interconnected."

Web 2.0 technologies can be defined as an "interconnected platform that gives the user control in creating, designing, improvising and disseminating content and other services", one of their basic features being "collective intelligence", according to Sobaci (2016, p .5).

In the case of local branding, social media offers real opportunities for communication both between the brand and the target audience, as well as between individual users interested in a place.

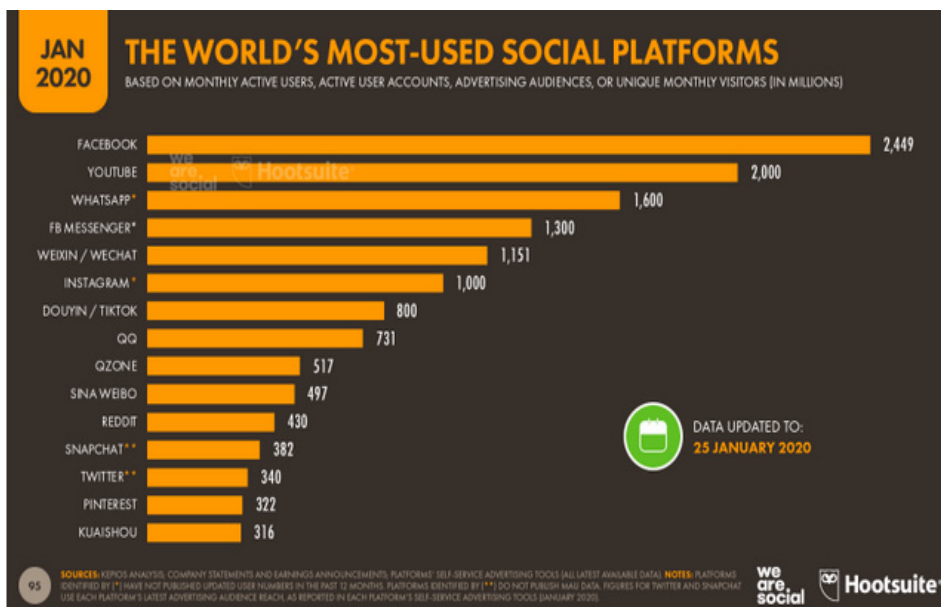


Figure 1. The most used platforms worldwide

Source: <https://digitaltreemarketing.eu/2020/03/04/digital-2020-report-despre-utilizare-internetului-si-social-media/>

BUILDING THE LOCAL BRAND IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

The favorable image of a region has a direct impact on trade, investment and tourism throughout the country.

In order to reiterate and support the idea that the country brand includes under its umbrella the brands of regions, to identify to what extent the perceptions of residents in different regions of Romania regarding each region helps to build its identity and image, and to develop strategy marketing of the destination, between June and September 2020, was applied in three existing tourist information centers in the Oltenia area (Călimănești, Horezu and Târgu-Jiu), a perception questionnaire. The sample was 594 questionnaires, of which 548 were valid. We eliminated the questionnaires in which the socio-demographic data were not completed. Tourists had the opportunity to complete the questionnaires at various accommodation units and near the tourist attractions.

The research aimed to restore the importance of the Brancusi brand, as a well-defined image and identity in the city of Gorj, trying after the analysis and questionnaire applied in conducting research on the three tourist information centers in the area to draw with other specialists in

branding and branding. a strong image of the Brâncuși brand that cannot be built only on images transmitted externally but needs to incorporate the direct experience supported by infrastructure, projects, events, initiatives for the aggressive promotion of the Brâncuși sculptural ensemble in parallel with the development of the place in order to to build an original, sustainable image of the brand under investigation.

Data processing and analysis was performed in the IBM SPSS Statistics Subscription program.

When asked about the source of information that tourists turned to in order to choose their travel destination, it was found that they have the greatest confidence in the information found on the Internet and on various sites (63% of respondents). The results also show that 21% of tourists participating in the study, place great trust in the recommendations received from friends living in the area.

Table 1. Source of information

Question You have chosen to make this journey:	Total sample	Târgu- Jiu	Horezu	Călimănești
Alone, with the information you found on the internet and on various sites	63% N°=359	72% N°=183	47% N°=32	63,6% N°=144
You have used the services of a travel agency	12% N°=51	5% N°=13	18% N°=12	11,4% N°=26
You came through an association	-	-	-	-
You came on a pilgrimage	-	-	-	-
You appealed to family / friends living in the area.	21% N°=138	23% N°=58	35% N°=24	25% N°=56

To the question regarding the online information sources that the people participating in this study used to obtain information about the holiday destination, we were given the opportunity to choose from 5 answers: social networks, blogs, websites, forums, tourism fairs.

It is found that most of the tourists participating in the study (39%, n = 214) place great trust in the information acquired through websites, and 31% (n = 170), are based on recommendations obtained through social networks. Forums are among the preferences of respondents in a percentage

of 21% ($n = 115$), and 7% ($n = 38$), of tourists said that blogs are an important source of information about the holiday destination. A small percentage, 2% ($n = 11$), of the people participating in this study, is based on the recommendations obtained through tourism fairs.

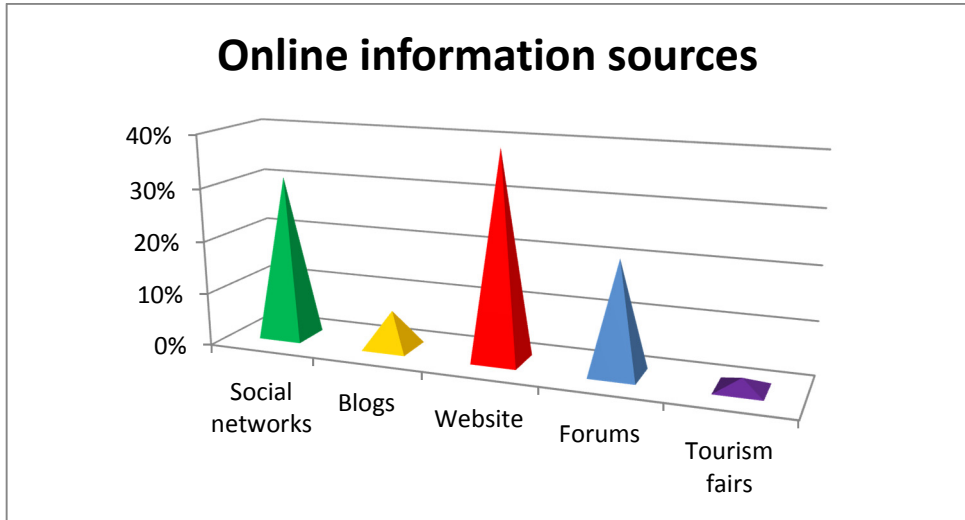


Figure 3. Online sources of tourist information

To the question regarding the website that the tourists turned to in order to obtain information and suggestions for visiting the tourist objectives, we offered the possibility to choose between 5 answer options: trivago.com, tripadvisor.com, infoturism.ro, booking.com, via-romania.ro, to which is added the possibility to exemplify another source of web information.

Following the centralization of the data, it is concluded that the greatest confidence in the information acquired after consulting the websites by the surveyed tourists is given to the site booking.com, not less than 41% ($n = 225$) of the participants in the study they showed their affinity for it. Also, among the respondents' preferences, 38% ($n = 208$) is the tripadvisor.com website, a world-renowned site that provides visitors with information such as suggestions for visits, but also for denouncing incorrect practices, becoming a symbol of quality for units that receive positive reviews and display this symbol as a guarantee of customer satisfaction. On the third place in the preferences of tourists is the website trivago.com with 13% ($n = 71$) of the answers, followed by two Romanian websites, infoturism.ro with 4% ($n = 22$) of the answers and via-romania.ro with 3% ($n = 17$) of the answers. 5 tourists, 1% of the respondents chose another source of web information.

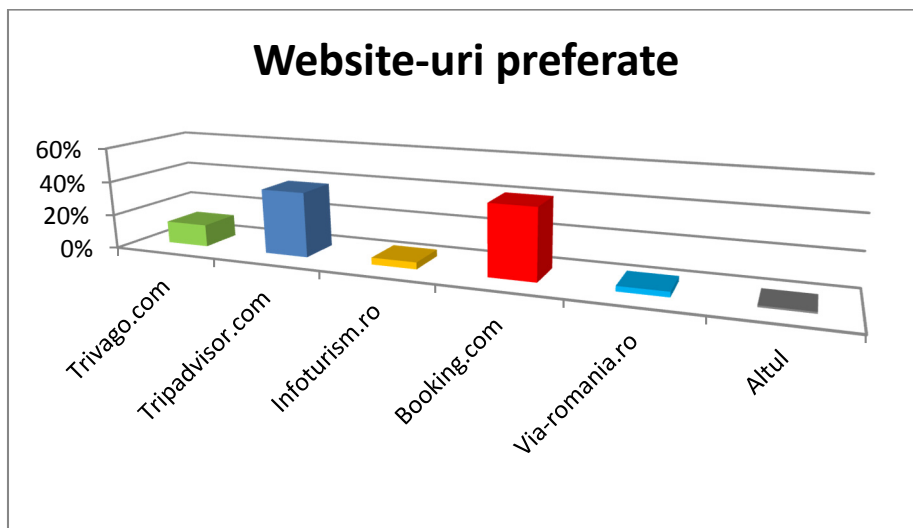


Figure 4. Web sources of tourist information

TOOLS FOR ONLINE PROMOTION OF TÂRGU - JIU

A place's reputation can be a crucial factor in attracting and retaining resources. Just like a trademark, the brand of a place needs to be managed professionally. If it is neglected, it can be distorted or damaged by the information that is transmitted through the communication channels.

The virtual image of the city is a positive one, lately the tourism promotion activities have become more and more intense. The public authority thus recognizes both the need to make concrete investments and to promote local tourism. The most well-known web sources for promoting the city: <https://www.booking.com>, <https://www.tripadvisor.com/>, <https://www.directbooking.ro>, <https://www.trivago.ro>, <https://travelminit.ro/>, <https://www.turistinfo.ro>, <https://www.123travel.ro>, <https://www.infotravel-romania.ro>, <https://www.descoperimromania.ro>.

TripAdvisor is a sharing site based on the desire of users to share their experience with others, providing other visitors with information such as suggestions for visits, but also to report misconduct. Due to its notoriety and the large community involved, it has become a symbol of quality for units that receive positive reviews and display this symbol as a guarantee of customer satisfaction.

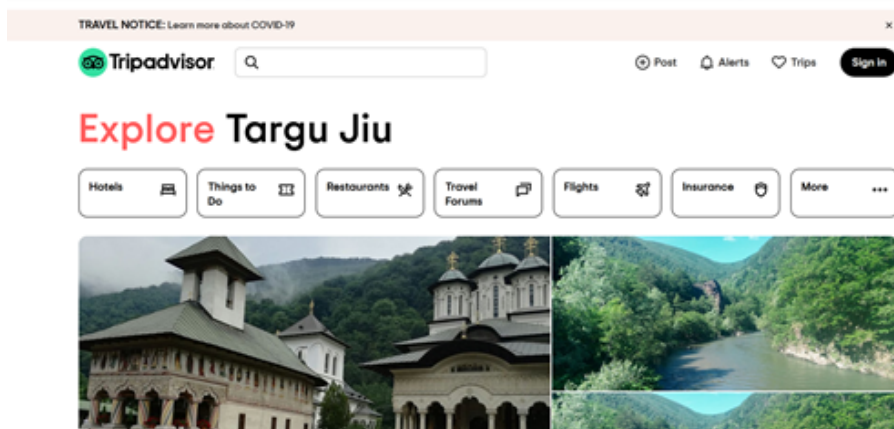


Figure 5. Tarad Jiu Tripadvisor-Explore web source

Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g1598788-Targu_Jiu_Gorj_County_Southwest_Romania-Vacations.html

In the age of the Internet, tourism sites and blogs, video-sharing channels (youtube) and social networks, public reviews have a very important impact in defining the brand image. The rating of Târgu - Jiu on the tourism website www.booking.com was 8.15 (good). Visitors who gave high marks (10-8) mention the strengths: the beauty of the natural setting, the special attractiveness of Constantin Brâncuși's works, the city center, museums and art galleries, very good food at the Restaurant "La Boeru", it is recommended walking, fresh air and relaxation. Critical comments with low grades (7-6) referred to: the neglected appearance of the city, dilapidated buildings, reduced opportunities for spending time, entertainment and leisure and the lack of general promotion of the city's attractions.

The YouTube channels created refer to all the important aspects that make up the brand of the city of Oltenia. Approaching topics known to the general public, but which did not receive enough attention (eg Constantin Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble). Created in 2011, the YouTube channel "TARGU JIU - The city of Constantin Brancusi", today reached 10,004 views and 1.79 K subscribers. At the same time, the "Images from Targu Jiu" channel, created in 2009, today has 14,458 views and 1.26 K subscribers. Both create a strong image, originating from the local brand, the Brâncuși brand being the soul of the city of Târgu - Jiu, the one that becomes our landmark in the national and world tourist space.

Regarding the Internet presence of Târgu - Jiu City Hall, it has a new website, rebuilt in 2010 [www. http://www.targujiu.ro](http://www.targujiu.ro), with a complex

structure, attractive graphics and which addresses all aspects of information of local interest, projects, investments, tourism.

In 2019, the City Hall of Târgu Jiu, through the Department of Tourism and Cultural Events and the National Center for Tourist Information and Promotion "Constantin Brâncuși" launched a useful application for mobile devices.

Târgu Jiu CityApp, works on Android and IOS platforms and was created by one of the largest companies in the international arena - Schubert & Franzke, being selected options in two languages (Romanian, English) that can be changed from the application menu, and its installation is free.

The application is useful both for locals who want to get information about hotels and guesthouses within the city, sights, restaurants, bars and other catering establishments, institutions, shops, local public transport, and tourists who intend to visit the city of Târgu - Jiu. Also, all points of interest contain details such as: images, text, address, phone / mobile phone with direct dialing, email address with the ability to send messages using the phone's email function, website, schedule, location on Google Maps and navigation options. Filtering options can be used, depending on the type of point of interest.



Figure 6. Web source targujiu.info.ro- Tourist attractions in Târgu Jiu
Source: <https://www.targujiu.info.ro/attractii-turistice/obiective-turistice/>

The mayor's office uses social media, there is also a facebook page, @primariatarguiju, created in 2015 and which presents information on the activity of the mayor's office, informs and dialogues online with locals and visitors, with 11,391 people who appreciate it and 11,606 people who follow her.

The most popular facebook pages to promote the city: @ targu.jiu.1 (created in 2016, with 35,819 people following it), @ TarguJiu.Ro (created in 2017, with 4760 people following it), @ cenaclul.columna .tgjiu (created in 2013, with 1774 people following it), @ galeria.deartatgjiu (created in 2015, with 1239 people following it), @ Targu-Jiu-Odinioara (created in 2018, with 16,335 people following it) .

As for other local actors, they have recently intensified their tourism promotion activities, which are becoming more intense by promoting on their own channels through a new website and social media pages. Eloquent in this sense are the websites of the accommodation units, each with its own logo, presentation pages on the site but also on Facebook where it posts offers, images, videos from events or promotions: Hotel Ymy 3 *, <http://hotelymy.ro/>, Hotel Anna 3 *, <http://hotelanna.ro/>, Hotel Europa 3 *, <http://www.hotelrestauranteuropa.ro/>, Hotel Brâncuși 3 *, <http://www.hotelbrancusi.ro/>, Hotel Rais 3 *, <http://www.hotelrais.ro/> and facebook page, @raissrestaurantballroom, Hotel Aqua 3 *, <http://aquahotel.ro/>.

The pensions also have an online presence: Casa Cartianu, <https://casacartianu.ro/>, Jiul Central, <https://jiulcentral.business.site>, Antique, <http://pensiuneaantique.ro/>, Art Boutique Central, <http://artboutiquecentral.ro>.

Among the food units, some also have an online presence: Rebecca Restaurant, <https://www.restaurantrebecca.ro/>, Anna Delivery Restaurant, <https://www.anna-delivery.ro/>, Bliss Confectionery, Restaurant Ambassador, <https://www.ambasadorelite.ro/>.

The activities of the local brand management in the online environment must take into account the changes in the real environment and the fact that improving the reputation of a place needs time, but also a concrete basis. Branding on social networks is a dynamic activity that involves sharing information about the local brand and continuous interaction with the public which develops the relationship with it.

CONCLUSIONS

The brand of a place in the information age, which uses social networks, has both benefits and and challenges in terms of the ability to control the image it projects on the outside.

In addition to the promotional tools of the local administration (books, leaflets, views, posters, souvenirs), the existence of websites, Facebook pages of accommodation, food and leisure units, is important because it multiplies the presence of the city's brand in the online environment.

The brand of a place in the information age, which uses social networks, has both benefits and and challenges in terms of the ability to control the image it projects on the outside.

Online communication channels that have special features compared to traditional branding (brochures, flyers, posters, mock-ups in the press, street advertising, etc.) being interactive, accessible and widely available that integrates marketing communication with commercial transactions and services.

This creates special relationships with individuals and organizations that are stakeholders in a place, their interest focuses on attracting, cultivating and empowering community members who are loyal to the place, provide constructive feedback and become true spokespersons. of the local brand.

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