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## Online Marketing Communication Using Websites. A Case Study of Website Utility in Accessing European Funds in the Tourism Field Regarding Northeastern Romania

Ivona Stoica<sup>a\*</sup>, Gheorghe Orzan<sup>b</sup>, Andra Dobrescu<sup>c</sup>, Anamaria Catalina Radu<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>"Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, 176, Splaiul Unirii, District 4, Bucharest, Postal code 030134.

<sup>b</sup>Bucharest University of Economic Studies, 13-15, Mihai Eminescu Avenue, Sector 1, Bucharest, Postal code 010511.

<sup>c</sup>Bucharest University of Economic Studies, 13-15, Mihai Eminescu Avenue, Sector 1, Bucharest, Postal code 010511.

<sup>d</sup>Bucharest University of Economic Studies, 13-15, Mihai Eminescu Avenue, Sector 1, Bucharest, Postal code 010511.

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### Abstract

European funds are considered to be the most important financial instruments designed to develop and improve the work done in each Member State. Achieving a high degree of absorption as well as exploitation of results obtained from implementing various projects depends to a high degree on how each country plan and organizes their work. Thus, for proper development of the field level of this activity is necessary to implement a marketing vision to facilitate on the one hand European funds, on the other hand communication with beneficiaries. Considering all these aspects, the level of this work was a study that sought to determine how Web technologies are currently used in marketing communications from the European funds in the field of tourism. Analysis undertaken aims to determine the effectiveness of these technologies and how they could be improved to increase absorption. The research was conducted at one of the most effective operational programs in Romania, namely the Regional Operational Programme. To complete results, a quantitative study was conducted among potential beneficiaries, to identify their opinion on how you should build websites so the existing communication processes to be more effective for the involved parties.

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\* Ivona Stoica. Tel.: (+40)723615915.

E-mail address: [ivonas@ase.ro](mailto:ivonas@ase.ro).

## 1. Accessing EU funds in Romania

European funds are financial instruments that have been designed and developed at EU level to improve the business, social and cultural activities in the Member States. Their distribution is made after a thorough program that contains a series of research at the level of various markets. Thus, according to the existing problems within each State and according to their needs are allocated a number of financial resources, aimed to improving the work at the level of interest areas.

Regarding Romania, in 2013 European funds absorption levels are quite low, but since the beginning we have registered some improvements. Last year, our country has managed to attract around 34% of European funds made available by the European Union. All investment value was quite high (2.88 billion €) compared to 2007-2012 when the total amounts absorbed were 2.2 billion €. (economie.hotnews.ro)

In the first seven months of 2014, our country has managed to attract only 20% of the proposed objectives. Total investments in this period were directed to only three of the seven existing such as: Operational Sectorial Environment Programs, Operational Programme Administrative Capacity Development and Technical Assistance Operational Programme (zf.ro). Analysing the activity at the European funds level, in August was observed that it increased by about 0.46%. Thus, in July, Romania managed to absorb 36.47% of the total amount made available by the European Union; in August this rate reached 36.93% value. Looking at these percentages in terms of the amounts allocated to note that our country has managed to attract a total of 90 million €. The allocated amounts are redistributed in the two areas of particular interest in environment and transportation. In terms of activity during the first eight months of this year may notice an increase of approximately 3.46% from the previous period (666 million €) (zf.ro)

Although, the absorption of European funds has shown some growth in this period, year of 2014 is unfavorable for the Romania if we look from the perspective of the attraction of EU funds at the level 2014-2020 cohesion policy. Our country has made this period a value of 164 euro / capita. Romania can access 22.9 billion € by 2020 this value is rather small if compared to that recorded in the other countries of at the level Central and Eastern Europe such as Poland (77.6 billion €), Czech Republic (21.9 billion €) and Hungary (21.9 billion €) (zf.ro).

The results from the undertaken analysis reveal that our country has experienced over time a number of difficulties in the absorption of EU funds. Following research conducted by the European Commission in our country observed that low absorption rate in Romania is determined by a number of factors. Among the most important are: lack of strategic planning for a longer period of time, there is a faulty system that does not provide the recipients all the information they need, the lack of efficient management and control system to track the relationship between requests and reimbursements (hotnews.ro).

To improve work at this level in the activity sector it must be taken a series of measures aimed to increase the absorption degree in the country. To improve the activity at the level of accessing European funds it should be implemented a marketing vision through the use of specific strategic marketing concepts. Thus, as McDonald (1998) mentioned, at the level of any activity must be conducted an audit of the existing situation, further we have to set the specific objectives (which can be measured by absorption degree proposed) setting strategies and subsequent preparation and implementation of strategic plans according to McDonald (1998).

In addition, goals must be clearly defined, to identify the starting point and the manner of hierarchy, to determine the components of the problems identified in their formulation according to Pop (2000). Another important aspect in the existing strategic marketing refers to marketing strategy development and implementation seen by Philip Kotler as that plan of action that leads to the objectives set in the previous step according to Kotler and Keller (2005).

As mentioned before, in order to improve access to European funds in Romania requires implementation of marketing planning. In tourism this is very important concept, which is the setting and oriented effectively existing resources. To implement the marketing planning tourism when accessing European funds should be covered the main steps identified at this level. Thus: in the first stage should be set general marketing objectives, then analyze the situation, setting goals and marketing strategies, establishing marketing budget allocated to meet the targeted marketing objectives and as well as program design, monitoring, evaluation and any possible corrections by Stăncioiu (2005).

By developing and implementing marketing planning both at national level and in each development region in part, by improving marketing communications in regions as well as by implementing appropriate technologies and

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