

INTERNET MARKETING COMMUNICATION OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS: REVIEW OF DMO WEBSITES IN EUROPE*

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This study focuses on content analyses of internet marketing communication tools and techniques used by Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) on their official websites. The population of the study includes two regional DMOs of six European countries each, situated by the sea,

as well as all Croatian regional DMOs also by the sea. The results show that DMOs are not fully applying internet marketing tools and techniques on their official websites in their communication with the market and public.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Internet is today an indispensable medium of distribution of information, communication and an increasingly important transactional medium in destination marketing. The characteristics of tourism product, such as intangibility, on one hand, and the possibility of multimedia presentation of information, on the other hand, have made it a very convenient and popular means of communication with the tourism market.

Having a website is the basic requirement in internet marketing. For most companies internet marketing communication strategies include three key steps after launching a website (Chaffey et al., 2006, 133): gaining visitors to their websites, keeping them online with the purpose of goals achievement through the website (e.g. increase of bookings, enquiries etc.) and retaining them.

In the light of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) legal and functional transition, especially regarding e-commerce adoption and having in mind technology progress, internet marketing communication of DMOs was explored. Especially on a mezo level DMOs are prone to adopt e-commerce; therefore this study focuses on regional DMOs.

The purpose of this study was to research e-communication tools and techniques used by regional DMOs in Croatia and its competing countries.

This article is composed of five parts. Part two "Theoretical Framework", gives an insight in the internet marketing communication mix applicable to destination marketing websites. Part three deals with research methodology through the following sections: "Population and sample definition", "Data collection" and "Limitations". In the fourth part research results are presented, while the fifth provides an insight into recommendation for practitioners. The sixth and last part is the conclusion.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Most authors apply the old five instruments communication mix to online communication, although, some strategies, like SEO (Search Engine Optimization), may not fit into this division. Anyway, in this review of literature the five instruments communication mix concept will be used. The focus on most tools and techniques reviewed in this study is on those that could be analyzed by observing websites.

Under advertising as one of the five instruments of marketing communication, only one tool was investigated in this study: outgoing links. It should be noted that it was not investigated whether DMOs charged or not for posting links. It is most likely that links were added at no additional charge, unlike classic advertising which implies the sale of advertising space.

Among PR tools and techniques, the following were investigated (Ružić et al., 2009, 233 – 237 and Nothnagel, 2006, 110 – 115):

- Blog - Inexpensive, until the advent of social networks very popular and unconventional, blog stands for weblog and indicates a personal online diary. May be published on own websites or blog services.

- Links to social media websites and web 2.0. services - Social media marketing uses web 2.0 platforms as well as one own, to create virtual communities. Web 2.0 is "the second generation of web communities and hosted services that enable the cooperation and content exchange among web users of such services" (Carnet, 2009.). Social networks (like Facebook and Myspace) have become synonyms for social media. There are several web 2.0. services that allow upload of content (e.g. press releases, multimedia). One such service is WordPress and among best known

to a wider audience there are YouTube (video sharing website) and Flickr (photo sharing website). Other web 2.0 websites worth mentioning include social rating services, where users upload news contents e.g. articles, while other members vote for them. Social bookmarking websites are web services that allow consumers to access their choice of your favourite pages (bookmarks or favourites in the language of Microsoft) from any device to access the internet. Users of these services can view which pages are most popular among other users of such services.

- Electronic newsletter / subscription to newsletter – It uses the identical technology of e-mail. A newsletter is typically longer than an e-mail and contains news and contents related to an organization. Typically, the electronic newsletter is focused on a specific topic, usually combines non-promotional and promotional messages sent to a mailing list. Usually there is an online version of an electronic newsletter to which a link in the newsletter itself refers to. Every newsletter subscriber should be able to unsubscribe from the mailing list, which is one of the basic principles newsletters are based on - permission marketing.

- RSS - is a pull technology. Unlike with a newsletter (received when sent by an organization), users of RSS choose on their own when to read their feeds. Some authors classify RSS as part of public relations, some as part of direct marketing. Where it should be classified depends on the content being distributed. Having in mind the broader coverage of PR, RSS will, in this paper, fall under public relations.

- News - like RSS, the same goes for news content that may be relevant to a wider audience (eg. acquisition, certification), or the end customer (eg. submission of a new product or service, special offers).

- Forum / chat / online support - customer relations, including post sales support, could fall under public relations or direct marketing. This category includes other forms of support to customers, such as audio or video support, etc.

- Frequent asked questions or FAQ - is a simple way of providing customer support. This is a list of common questions and answers. In compiling such a list, it is good to include a call centre and / or sales department.

- Parts of websites designed for specific audiences (eg. Press centre) – specific sections of websites can be on the same domain or on a new one, or on a subdomain. One of the most prominent examples of separate sections within public relations is the press centre, intended for media. Photo gallery (preferably in high resolution) and press releases are the two basic components of this section. Given that some websites may have these two tools not classified under press centre, these two components will be analysed also separately.

- Online magazine - can be an online edition of a traditional magazine published online or an online-only edition. They are often in .pdf format or interactive technology that allows scrolling them as offline.

- "Send a friend" – A "send to a friend" link encourages e-mail communication and dissemination of contents of visited websites.

- Sending e-postcards - is another form of encouraging users to interact via e-mail. Recipients of e-cards, usually via a link in an e-mail, access the postcard on which an organization may set its name, logo, etc.

E-coupons, discounts and special offers, contests and sweepstakes, gifts and free stuff as well as games - are among tools and techniques of sales promotion included in this study (Nothnagel, 2006, 110 – 115). They are explained below:

- E-coupons, discounts and special offers - E-coupons are certificates that allow the use of a discount on a purchase. E-coupon websites are specialized websites where users may download and print e-coupons. Discounts and special offers are the traditional form of encouraging purchase in tourism. Discounts are price-focused deals, while special offers usually contain a package of products/services added to the primary product being sold. Destination cards, usually providing many discounts or even free entrances to attractions, are a specific destination marketing tool that also falls into this category.

- Contests and sweepstakes - Contests are based on specific abilities of users (eg. a photographic competition) and the prize is received based on an assessment of a jury. Sweepstakes contain an element of luck. Typical prizes in travel include stays, packages, tickets etc. As is the case of sharing free stuff, contests and sweepstakes are also techniques that are used to attract visitors to the website and the occasional use of such activities can contribute to gaining returning website visitors (Sweeney, 2006, 365).

- Sharing of gifts and free stuff - This category differs from the above because users are given something for free without having to take part in contests or any game of chance. Tourist guides, culinary recipes, e-books etc. may be donated. The trigger word online is “free”.

- Games - those are recently become increasingly popular communication tools especially when addressing a younger audience. Their primary function is to entertain visitors, of course, the side effect is stimulating interest and loyalty to particular brands (Schimp, 2003, 576). Numerous applications on social networks are games, tests, etc. Games placed on websites are good bait for gaining returning visitors.

- Loyalty programs - a system of rewarding loyal customers of particular products or service companies. It usually has predefined criteria that classify buyers as loyal customers. In hospitality often the criteria are arrivals. Some loyalty programs are based on collecting points, where consumption is converted into points which are then replaced into gifts, benefits or discounts. Given that the internet is often used during the process of gathering information, it is important to emphasize the benefits offered to loyal customers.

Personal selling has no application online. However, online booking systems may be considered its counterpart online.

The essential element of direct marketing is having a database of (potential) customers. Also the following aspects of direct marketing, such as the possibility of contacting an organization and other related to customers, will be investigated in this study (B. L. Nothnagel, 2006, 135 - 150):

- Providing offline contact information – It is essential to provide users with the option of contacting the company with traditional communication means (phone, fax, physical address). Disclosure of such information doesn't contribute to the credibility of websites.

- E-mail/form - E-mail is one of the most obvious tools of direct marketing. The difference between e-mail marketing and newsletters has been explained above under PR. By answering e-mails with questions and suggestions of users, enterprises achieve a one to one communication. In a contact form users type in their message and e-mail - these two pieces of information are required.

- Brochures - Brochure occurrence is in connection with the birth of direct marketing. Brochures are also used as a tool of public relations (eg. image brochures), personal selling and advertising.

The same applies to other forms such as interactive CDs, DVDs etc. It should be noted that websites, in their first stage of appearance commonly used to be only brochures transferred online. Some of the components below are related specifically to that aspect of the website as an e-brochure and capabilities that surpass those of printed brochures.

- Navigation – It is a key mode of browsing websites and is an integral part of websites. Due to this, navigation will not be included in the study. Many links within websites link users from one page to another, and for convenience, as a navigational support, it is good to have a site map and internal search (also known as search box). A sitemap is essentially a table of contents in the form of links. Internal search is usually a rectangular box placed on all web pages in which users can type a search term. After pressing the search button (or a magnifier icon) it directs users to search results.

- Virtual tour / panoramic photography - Interactive and multimedia content is extremely suitable for the presentation of tourist offer. A panoramic photograph consists of a number of photographs that make users experience the space from the centre and around 360 degrees. A virtual tour allows users to virtually move in space and view the panoramic photos of specific locations within a virtual space. Advanced virtual tours are based on geo-location technology.

- Events calendar - The web is a medium in which this kind of information, very prone to changes, is more suitable for publication rather than printed materials (easiness of updating, costs, availability etc.)

- Weather forecast – all the above said about the events calendar is true for weather information. Setting this information is appropriate for tourism. To those guests, who are planning an imminent arrival at the destination, this may be a reason to revisit a website.

- Map - Maps of location can be static or interactive, taken from a service or tailor made.

- Trip planner - This functionality allows users to plan their activities on holidays. It is characteristic for DMOs websites and some social media websites whose communities are engaged in tourism topics where users can share and even create in teams their travel itineraries. Simpler trip planners offer only the possibility of creating personal sets of selected web pages within the DMO website.

- Language availability - Speaking the language of customers is vital, especially for specific markets such as France or Russia, which rarely use English.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative study, its goal is to determine which internet marketing communication tools and techniques are used by DMOs at a regional level in Croatia and its competing European countries. In regard to the purpose and objectives, this study is also descriptive. The research method was observation and in one case induction (defining the presence of a consumer database). The research instrument was a predefined Excel table, compiled according to literature review of instruments of internet marketing communication mix. The research was conducted once and provides an insight into communication strategy of DMOs at a certain point in time.

The rapid development of internet and opportunities it provides for communication with the market is the main reason why during a replication of this research it will be necessary to supplement the current internet marketing communication instruments with new tools and

techniques. Therefore, this study and research and data it collected are of short term validity (they may be already considered obsolete).

A. Population and sample definition

The population includes two regional DMOs of six European countries each, situated by the sea, as well as all Croatian regional DMOs also by the sea. The first stratum of the population includes foreign DMOs and is system determined: Lisboa and Madeira (Portugal), Catalonia and Balearic islands (Spain), Provence-Alps-French Riviera and Languedoc-Roussillon (France), Tuscany and Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy), Peloponnese and Attica (Greece), Istanbul and Antalya (Turkey). The DMOs of all Croatian counties on the sea form the second stratum: Istarska, Primorsko-goranska, Ličko senjska, Zadarska, Šibensko-kninska, Splitsko-dalmatinska and Dubrovačko-neretvanska.

It was established that the region of Peloponnese didn't have an official DMO at a regional level; this narrowed the population to 18DMOs. Furthermore, the DMO of Antalya was available only in Turkish. Therefore, it was not included in the research. The population counted only 17 DMOs in total.

TABLE 1. SELECTED DMOS AND THEIR CORRESPONDING WEBSITES

Country	Region	Domain
Croatia	Istarska county	www.istra.hr (main) and www.istra.com (secondary, not included in the research)
	Primorsko–goranska county	www.kvarner.hr
	Ličko-senjska county	http://www.lickosenjska.com/
	Zadarska county	http://www.zadar.hr/
	Šibensko-kninska county	http://www.sibenikregion.com/
	Splitsko-dalmatinska county	www.dalmatia.hr
	Dubrovačko-neretvanska county	http://visitdubrovnik.hr/
Portugal	Lisbon region	http://www.visitlisboa.com/
	Madeira	http://www.madeiraislands.travel
Spain	Catalonia	http://www.gencat.cat/
	Balearic islands	http://www.illesbalears.es
Provence	Provence-Alps-French Riviera (PACA)	www.decouverte-paca.fr
	Languedoc-Roussillon	http://en.sunfrance.com
Italy	Tuscany	http://www.turismo.intoscana.it/
	Friuli Venezia Giulia	http://www.turismofvg.it/

	(FVG)	
Turkey	Istanbul	http://www1.ibb.gov.tr/en-us/kentebakis
	Antalya	(only in turkish)
Greece	Athens - Attica	http://www.breathtakingathens.com
	Peloponnese	-
UKUPNO	17 (without Peloponnese and Antalia)	

Source: Authors calculation

Out of total selected 19 DMOs, 17 were included in the research.

B. Data collection

The research was carried out in two days, during the end of June 2011.

The objective of content analyses of websites was to determine whether or not the revised tools and techniques of internet marketing communication were present. A simple coding system was applied: the presence of a specific tools or technique was recorded with "1" and the lack of it, with "0". For entering and processing data, Microsoft Excel 2003 was used. In data analyses frequency distributions and percentages or relative frequencies were most commonly used.

This empirical research was conducted by observing Croatian website version for local DMOs and by observing the English version of foreign DMOs.

Tools and techniques of internet marketing communication are classified into five categories, according to the instruments of the communication mix; noting that this is only one possible way of classification (eg. RSS, depending on the content of what it sums, may be considered a tool of public relations or sales promotion).

C. Limitations

The sample size of only 17 DMOs (out of 19 DMOs selected) is too small to allow generalization of results to be applied to all regional DMOs by sea in Europe. But still, the research gives an insight into the usage of internet marketing tools and techniques. Application of random sampling is likely to contribute to improve accuracy of data. The study investigated only the supply side; it didn't investigate the demand side.

The base of categorization of internet marketing communication tools and techniques was the communication mix, therefore, the evolution dimension of websites as a whole was not perceived.

Only the authors participated in the analysis of websites, it is therefore possible that errors could have occurred during observation or data encoding and thus in analysis.

Furthermore, to determine the effectiveness of communications, it has to be correlated with physical and financial performance indicators, which was not investigated.

IV. RESULTS

The application of researched tools and techniques of internet marketing communication on DMOs websites, expressed in shares, is classified according to the following scale:

- 75-100% - very often
- 50-74% - often
- 25-49% - sometimes
- 0-24% - rarely.

TABLE 2. USE OF INTERNET MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES ON OFFICIAL WEBSITES OF DMOS IN EUROPE AND CROATIA

Communication mix instruments	Internet marketing communication tools and techniques of correspondent instruments	Frequency of use of tools and techniques (n=17)	Relative frequency (in %) (n=17)	Value on scale
Advertising	Outgoing links	17	100	Very often
Public relations	Frequently asked questions (FAQ)	4	23,53	Rarely
	Press centre	10	58,82	Often
	Press releases	9	52,94	Often
	Photo gallery (in high resolution)	9	52,94	Often
	Newsletter sign in	7	41,18	Sometimes
	Forum /chat/ online support	1	5,88	Rarely
	RSS	3	17,65	Rarely
	News	14	82,35	Very often
	Blog	2	11,77	Rarely
	Online magazine	2	11,77	Rarely
	„Send to a friend“ link	8	47,06	Sometimes
	E-cards	3	17,65	Rarely
	Links to social media websites and other web 2.0. services	10	58,82	Often

continue

End of Table 2.

Sales promotion	E-coupons, discounts and special offers	5	29,41	Sometimes
	Free stuff	10	58,82	Often
	Loyalty programs	0	0	Rarely
	Contests and sweepstakes	1	5,88	Rarely
	Games	0	0	Rarely
Personal selling	Online booking	5	29,41	Sometimes
Direct marketing	Database of (potential) customers - through newsletter sign in, website login and the database of customers of online booking system	8	47,06	Sometimes
	Offline contacts	17	100	Very often
	E-mail/form	17	100	Very often
	Brochures	12	70,59	Often
	Site map /internal search	14	82,35	Very often
	Virtual tours / panoramic photographs	3	17,65	Rarely
	Calendar of events	14	82,35	Very often
	Weather forecast	13	76,47	Very often
	Map	15	88,24	Very often
	Trip planner	3	17,65	Rarely
Language availability	17	100	Very often	

Source: Author calculation

Within photo galleries, only those with downloadable high resolution photographs were taken into account. The tool "virtual tours" was supplemented with "panoramic photographs" because no DMOs provided such an advanced functionality, but instead an easier one – 360 degrees photograph, but without the possibility of walking in a virtual space and browsing more panoramic photographs. Language availability was coded "1" if a website provided additional languages besides its official.

RSS was used in a variety of ways, summing up content like articles, video, events, special offers and announcements, and as such could be classified as tool of sales promotion. The collocation of news was also interesting. Besides being listed as a separate item, somewhere they were located with events and elsewhere separately within each website section.

Most DMOs had a classic “send a friend” link (opens a form to send an e-mail with a link of the selected page) along the print friendly website version. Others had this functionality within a service that allows users to share content on different platforms like “add this” links, or within simpler trip planners where it was necessary to save pages of choice page first in a personal “basket” and only then send the selected link by e-mail.

Sending e-cards was recorded in a foreign DMO not as a standard functionality, but as part of a sweepstakes that is no longer active.

For “links to social media websites and other web 2.0. services”, two DMOs used addthis.com service that connects users with a large number of such websites. The most frequently used social media and web 2.0. direct links were those pointing to Facebook, You Tube and Twitter.

In the category of “e-coupons, discounts and special offers” destination cards were used by three DMOs. Within this category, no DMO used e-coupons.

DMOs offered maps and travel guides for free, although, one offered also a downloadable MP3 audio travel guide.

Two DMOs had an active contest. When evaluating the application of this tool, a one-time research like this one, is not enough because competitions are not organized that frequently. Therefore, this information should be processed with caution.

Eight DMOs in total had some form of collection of personal data, which is the basic requirement for setting up a customer database. Only one domestic DMO did not provide a physical address, although it provided a landline telephone and fax number, and thus was coded as “1”. From a total of fourteen DMOs that offered an internal search or sitemap, half of them had no sitemap. Just in a few cases, DMOs linked to meteorological institutes to provide weather information. Maps have largely been static or taken from services like Google maps. One DMO offered only partial maps of the region, in different sections related to special interests and was coded as having a map.

Table 3. sums up the results presented in table 2., by grouping tools and techniques data into instruments according their affiliation to instruments of the internet marketing communication mix.

TABLE 3. USE OF INTERNET MARKETING COMMUNICATION INSTRUMENTS ON OFFICIAL WEBSITES OD DMOS IN EUROPE AND CROATIA

Marketing communication instrument	Frequency	Maximum frequency	Relative frequency (in %)	Value on scale
Advertising	17	17	100%	Very often
PR	82	221	37,10%	Sometimes
Sales promotion	16	85	18,82%	Rarely
Personal selling	5	17	20,41%	Rarely
Direct marketing	133	187	71,12%	Often
TOTAL	253	527	48,01%	Sometimes

Source: Authors calculation

Within advertising only outgoing links were investigated. All investigated DMOs use this communication instrument on their websites very often. Direct marketing, which included eleven tools and techniques, is the second instrument most frequently used. The average use of PR tools and techniques in the observed population is 37%, making PR the third most frequently used internet marketing communication instrument of stated DMOs websites. Sales promotion and personal selling are rarely used.

Ranks of tools and techniques disregarding their affiliation to marketing communication instruments are represented in table 5.

TABLE 4. RANK OF INTERNET MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED ON OFFICIAL WEBSITES OF DMOS IN EUROPE AND CROATIA

Rank	Internet marketing communication tools and techniques	Frequency of use of tools and techniques (n=17)
1	Outgoing links	17
1	Offline contacts	17
1	E-mail/form	17
1	Language availability	17
2	Map	15
3	News	14
3	Site map /internal search	14
3	Calendar of events	14
4	Weather forecast	13
5	Brochures	12
6	Press centre	10
6	Links to social media websites and other web 2.0. services	10
6	Free stuff	10
7	Press releases	9
7	Photo gallery (in high resolution)	9
8	„Send to a friend“ link	8
8	Database of (potential) customers - through newsletter sign in, website login and the database of customers of online booking system	8
9	Newsletter sign in	7
10	E-coupons, discounts and special offers	5

continue

End of Table 3.

10	Online booking	5
11	Frequently asked questions (FAQ)	4
12	RSS	3
12	E-cards	3
12	Virtual tours / panoramic photographs	3
12	Trip planner	3
13	Blog	2
13	Online magazine	2
14	Forum /chat/ online support	1
14	Contests and sweepstakes	1
15	Loyalty programs	0
15	Games	0

Source: Authors calculation

Only games and loyalty programs were the only tools not used at all.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the review of literature the importance of each tool and techniques has been explained in the context of its importance in terms of DMOs communication goals achievement. Therefore, the general recommendation to DMOs is to include in their websites the tools and techniques covered in this empirical research.

Recommendations arising from this content analyze DMOs websites are:

1. Recommendations regarding advertising

All DMOs are providing links to other websites. One of the main purposes of DMOs websites is to provide (official) information, so all DMOs should refer users to further sources of information relevant to visitors. Furthermore, it is recommended to regularly check outgoing links (at least annually) in order to update old ones and add new ones.

2. Recommendations regarding public relations

The use of PR tools and techniques in the population surveyed is 37%. No PR tool or technique is used "very often". DMOs use often press centre, photo gallery in high resolution, and links to social media and web 2.0. websites. DMOs should give special attention to FAQ, forum / chat / online support (used by only one DMO), RSS feed, blog and online magazine. The task of DMOs is to provide information to websites' users, act like a one stop shop for information. It is therefore crucial to provide that additional support when users need it. The tools forum / chat / online support is human related and therefore financially more complicated to achieve, but its application is recommended for those who do have resources. With the establishment of a forum DMOs should also take into account the need to censor inappropriate content and to protect forums against unwanted content or spam. Items such as RSS, online magazine and blog

represent a new value for websites. Through quality content and regular notice of its publication (RSS) their scope is to attract visitors to revisit websites.

It is especially critical the fact that a few DMOs don't have a press centre or media section with photo galleries in high resolution from which journalists may download photos for publication. These tools should act as a connection between journalists and destination's tourist portfolio. Sending an e-postcard requires a separate web module, which means an additional cost, but on the other hand, it is rarely seen on tourist websites. As regarding priorities, e-postcards are somewhere near the bottom. Even more disheartening is the poor use of newsletters and the low percentage of "Send to a friend" links (47%), which does not require any additional effort once set. Although some elements of Web 2.0. are not generally adopted, such as blogs and RSS technology, it is interesting though is that 59% of DMOs offer links to some web 2.0. services and social media websites.

3. Recommendations concerning personal selling

In terms of reservation system, DMO are in general, late adopters in comparison to other commercial travel companies. There is a lot of debate on this subject whether DMOs should sell destination's products or not. Many believe the future of the DMOs is in selling tourism products and services. In the context of marketing communication optimization in general, the implementation e-commerce means having a measurable target in relation to which, in a simple manner, it is possible to measure and therefore optimize marketing campaigns.

4. Recommendations related to sales promotion

After personal selling, sales promotion is the second component of the communication mix that is least used. DMOs don't absolutely use loyalty programs and games, and rarely even use contests and sweepstakes. DMOs are prone to giving away free stuff such as e-guides, and some of them offer discounts and special offers. The main recommendation for DMOs is to improve sales promotion in general, leaving games somewhere on the bottom of priorities (entertaining visitors becomes important once everything else is appropriately set up). Sweepstakes and contests are a category that is used only occasionally. The lack of loyalty programs is a reflection of the late adoption of sales preformed by DMOs, but special offers and discounts are present in all DMOs featuring an online booking system.

5. Recommendations in relation to direct marketing on their own platforms

Tools and techniques of direct marketing along with advertising were the most frequently applied instruments of the communication mix (71%). Out of all tool and techniques analyzed, trip planner and panoramic photos/virtual tours are the less frequently used (18%). Brochures are easily added to website, since they already exist in digital format. The lack of a physical address in case of a local DMO is absurd. Among basic information DMOs should provide are maps. Adding a static map to the website represents a lower investment than adding an interactive one. Of all the tools and techniques mentioned above, it is important to stress the importance of a trip planner, because this tool is specific to DMOs, and creating a complex trip planner is not cheap at all. To improve ease of use, sitemap / internal search as supports of website navigation, are crucial.

V. CONCLUSION

One of the first general conclusion is the fact that out of 19 DMO only 18 of them had a website (actually in a destination there is no established DMO at the regional level), and additionally, one DMO website provided only the language of their own state, which in terms of communication

with foreign markets equals as not having a website at all. Therefore, the website content analysis included only 17 websites.

Empirical research has shown that on their official websites all observed DMOs use advertising on websites, then the most common tools and techniques of direct marketing (71 %) followed by PR (32.13%), personal selling (20%), while the least used tools and techniques are those of sales promotion (19%). Only for one instrument of the communication mix, advertising it may be said that DMOs are applying it very often; therefore, it is possible to conclude that DMOs are not fully applying marketing communication tools and techniques in their communication with the market and public on their official websites.

Generally speaking DMO's have relatively late started to use information and communication technologies associated with their new, commercial role. From such a situation is derived their low use of certain tools and techniques that are associated with it.

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