

# MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN THE RIVER CRUISE INDUSTRY

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## ABSTRACT

River cruising represents one of the fastest growing segments of tourism with a tendency of further accelerated growth. At the same time, in the midst of market competition growth, the contents, boats, organization, business philosophy and strategies of all involved in river cruises are gradually changing, and there is a need for use of the marketing concept as well as a thoughtful management of the marketing program. In recent years, riverboat operators have increased their marketing budgets multiple times, leading to increased exposure of their products to potential consumers, i.e. increased visibility of products and has indirectly influenced a sustained increase in river cruise sales. The aim of this paper is to examine and determine the basic characteristics of the marketing communications in the river cruise market that are communicated by the key holders and creators of river cruises, i.e. riverboat operators who use different media for transmission of their messages such as newspapers, radio and telephone as a traditional media and Internet as a new media that allows direct connection with consumers, creating interactions and relationships with them. For the purpose of collecting primary data, analysis of documentation method was used, including the analysis of websites of the largest riverboat operators. The contribution of the work will be expressed by identifying the key determinants of the application of marketing communications to achieve the business goals of riverboat operators in the conditions of strong market competition and challenging demand which is under the influence of new technologies, with a strong need for an adventure travel and a discovery of the new and the unknown.

**KEY WORDS:** cruise industry, river cruise, riverboat operators, marketing communication.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the conditions of an increasingly competitive market, there is a growing imperative for the use of marketing concept and marketing programme management of all stakeholders included in riverboat cruises business, particularly riverboat operators as one of key holders and creators of riverboat cruise offer. The marketing concept assumes that achieving the goals of an organization depends on identifying the needs and desires of the targeted markets and on delivering the desired satisfactions to more efficient and more effective ways than the competition does<sup>1</sup>. Given that there has been a continued rapid growth in demand for river cruising in the last few years, among other issues, a question is posed as to which the key determinants of communication mix of riverboat operators are, in the conditions of very strong competition and heavy demand for acquiring unforgettable experiences?

## 2. RIVER CRUISING: KEY FEATURES AND TRENDS

River cruising is a “highly developed form of tourism, and the cruiser companies and crew provide all the comfort and entertainment aboard the cruiser during the voyage and organize excursions to elite and high quality destinations”.<sup>2</sup>

In comparison to maritime cruises, river cruises have certain specific qualities that arise from the features of the means of transport i.e. the ship, the characteristics of the voyage’s route, the amenities on board and the voyage program itself. The ships for river cruising are considerably smaller than the ships that are used for cruising on sea due to the limited depth of river flows, which significantly affects the ship’s offer, i.e. the facilities and other services offered to passengers on board for the purpose of rest, entertainment and fun during their voyage. The offer on river cruisers is poorer in volume and structure, the voyage

<sup>1</sup> Kotler, Ph., Bowen, J. T., Makens, J. C. (2010.) Marketing u ugostiteljstvu, hotelijerstvu i turizmu. Zagreb: MATE, pp. 30

<sup>2</sup> Gržetić, Z., Luković, T., Božić, K. (2013.) Nautical Tourism Market Suppliers in Continental Europe and Black Sea, in: T. Luković, (Ed.): Nautical Tourism (2013.) CABI, Oxford, pp.149

to predetermined destinations itself (ports, cities, natural sites and beauties) is more emphasized<sup>3</sup> and passengers on river cruises can see attractive riverside sites (cities, national parks ...) from the comfort of the ship, which is particularly appealing to the older passengers who are the main market segment for river cruising.<sup>4</sup>

The supply of river cruises, i.e. the supply of boats' capacities, is mainly related to a particular river and its tributaries and it is widespread on all continents. In the river cruise market the main role is played by large companies, specialized riverboat operators (shipping companies) and tour operators.<sup>5</sup> Back in the 1980s, most riverboat companies were small, family-run firms (some still are) but as consumers have become more demanding (due to having been 'weaned' on ocean cruises) larger, more efficiently run companies have appeared on the scene. The management teams that run them often have years of experience in the ocean-cruise industry and their expertise has transformed the rivercruise experience<sup>6</sup>

(for example companies such as *Viking River Cruise* and *AmaWaterways*). Currently, there are several major operators dominating the riverboat market (*Viking River Cruises*, *Avalon Waterways*, *Ama Waterways Uniworld*, *Grand Circle*, ...) and a number of smaller ones, which are struggling for survival and for which a gradual disappearance is being predicted in the future, i.e. merging with bigger operators.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Mintel research<sup>8</sup>, some of the leading companies in the European market are French *CroisiEurope*, German *Nicko Tours GmbH* and Russian *Vodohod*. In the United States of America (the USA) market, among the companies that have been organising cruises outside America, the leading roles belong to *Viking River Cruises* (currently the largest river cruise company in the world), *Avalon Waterways* and *Ama Waterways*, while the leading company that organises river cruises on the territory of North America is *American Cruise Line* (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Leading riverboat operators on European and American markets

Riverboat Operators	Headquarters	Riverboat Fleets (2017)	Cruise Offer By Region
<b>CroisiEurope</b>	Strasbourg	44	European rivers (the Danube, the Rhine, the Main, the Moselle, the Douro, the Guadalquivir, the Guadiana, the Po, the Elbe, the Volga.), French rivers (the Seine, the Garonne, the Loire, the Rhône, the Saône), the channels and the river Mekong (Vietnam and Cambodia)
<b>Nicko Tours GmbH</b>	Stuttgart	19 <sup>9</sup>	European rivers (the Danube, the Rhine, the Rhône, the Saône, the Volga, the Neva, the Odra, the Elba, the Vlatava, the Seine), Asian rivers (the Yangtze, the Mekong, the Irrawaddy) and the Nile (Egypt)
<b>Vodohod</b>	Moscow	12	Russian waterways (the Volga, the Neva, the Moscow canal, the Svir river, The Sheksna, the Volga-Baltic Waterway)
<b>Viking River Cruises</b>	Los Angeles	59	European rivers (the Danube, the Rhine, the Main, the Elba, the Rhône, the Saône, the Seine, the Douro), Belgium and Dutch waterways, Russian rivers (the Volga, the Neva, the Svir), the Dnieper River, Asian rivers (the Yangtze, the Mekong, the Irrawaddy) and the Nile (Egypt)
<b>Avalon Waterways</b>	Littleton, Colorado	24	European rivers (the Danube, the Rhine, the Main, the Moselle, the Rhône, the Saône, the Seine), Asian rivers (the Mekong, the Irrawaddy) and the Amazon (Sout America)
<b>Ama Waterways</b>	Chatsworth, California	22	European rivers (the Rhône, the Seine, the Danube, the Main, the Rhine, the Moselle, the Douro, the Dordogne, the Garonne), Dutch and Belgium waterways, the Mekong (Asia), the river Chobe (Africa)
<b>American Cruise Line</b>	Guilford, Connecticut	10	North American rivers (the Mississippi, the Columbia, the Snake, the Hudson)

Source:Mintel, River Cruising - Travel & Tourism Analyst, no. 4, March, 2015, pg. 30-33; CroisiEurope, <http://www.croisiEurope.travel/en-gb>; Nicko Cruises, <https://www.nicko-cruises.de/en/>; Vodohod, <http://www.bestussiancruises.com/cruises/>; Viking River Cruise, <http://www.vikingrivercruises.com/>; Avalon Waterways, <http://www.avalonwaterways.com/>; Ama Waterways, <http://www.amawaterways.com/> (accessed 15.07.2017.)

<sup>3</sup> Ban, I. (1998.) Krstarenje rijekama. Ekonomska misao i praksa, 7(2), pp.252

<sup>4</sup> Goeldner, Ch. R., Brent Ritchie J.R. (2009.) Tourism: Principles, Practices, Phylosophies. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., pp. 147

<sup>5</sup> Ban, I. (1998.) Krstarenje rijekama. Ekonomska misao i praksa, 7(2), pp.263

<sup>6</sup> Mintel (2015.) River Cruising - Travel & Tourism Analyst, No. 4, March 2015, Mintel Group Ltd, London., pp. 30

<sup>7</sup> Horak. S., Sever, I., Marušić, Z. (2013.) Međunarodna krstarenja Dunavom: Trendovi, faktori uspjeha i benchmark, Institut za turizam, Zagreb. pp. 14

<sup>8</sup> Mintel (2015.) River Cruising - Travel & Tourism Analyst, No. 4, March 2015, Mintel Group Ltd, London.

<sup>9</sup> Considering the fact that the ships of *Nicko Tours GmbH* are mostly in leasing, their nuber and their destinations vary every year

In line with the general trends in the tourist market that point to the transition towards the economy of experience and diversification of tourist products, in the supply of river cruises there is also a trend of improving the tourist travel experience in cooperation with a series of destinations on land. The river cruise market is currently mostly determined by the trend of looking for new destinations and new forms of vacation caused by tourist demand, which contributes to the development of the river cruise supply market in terms of increasing the number of boats, diversification of offer on boats (from big luxurious ships of capacity to 570 passengers to those smaller ones for 20 persons, and also traditional vessels characteristic for individual rivers), the growth of quality of amenities and services on boats, the expansion of cruising offers to new, lesser known rivers and the development of thematic cruises tailored to the special interests of tourists, which will enable them to acquire new experiences as well as combine cruises with other activities (e.g. cycling and trekking) in the destinations which are being passed through.

On the other hand, in the last few years there has been a continuous rapid growth in demand for river cruises, especially on European rivers. Demand for river cruises in the world and Europe, viewed individually by the countries of origin of passengers, is largely generated by Germany, and followed by passengers from the United States, Great Britain, France and Australia while passengers from other countries make a significantly smaller share.<sup>10</sup> Also, there is a growing demand for adventurism on the voyages and for discovering new and unfamiliar. During the voyages tourists strive to experience new adventures and gain unforgettable experience, and in this context, the demand for thematic cruises tailored to the special interests of travellers will grow.

### 3. COMMUNICATION MIX OF RIVERBOAT OPERATORS

In recent years riverboat operators have repeatedly increased their budgets for marketing activities, which has led to increased exposure of their products to the potential consumers, i.e. to the increased visibility and to an indirect increase in sales of the river cruises. Generally, marketing communication represents "a process of transferring information, ideas and emotions from the sender to the recipient through media with the purpose of achieving certain effects".<sup>11</sup> Organizations use different media to convey their messages; from newspapers, radio, telephones as traditional media to the Internet as a new medium that allows business entities a direct connection with the consumers, thus creating interaction and relationships with them.

### 3.1. Research Methodology

The basic objective of the subject research is to investigate and identify the basic characteristics of marketing communication and advertising mix in the river cruise market communicated by riverboat operators, who are the key holders and the creators of the river cruise supply. For the purpose of collecting primary data, the method of analysis of documentation was used, including the analysis of website content of the largest cruiser companies. Also, a part of the primary data is an integral part of the author's primary research within the PhD thesis on Marketing of River Tourism conducted in the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 September 2015. The research was carried out on a sample of 5 cruiser companies which had the largest number of ships (a fleet) in 2017, i.e. on the following companies: *Viking River Cruise*, *Avalon Waterways*, *Ama Waterways* and *CroisiEurope*.

### 3.2. Results of research and discussion

#### 3.2.1. Advertising of cruiser companies

Advertising is "a means to meet the market with the adequate goods and services and their properties,"<sup>12</sup> i.e. "any activity that informs consumers (buyers) about certain products and services with the help of visual, auditory and combined messages and influences them to freely choose and buy these products (or use the services) to start, increase or continue their sales, and to make the business as successful as possible."<sup>13</sup>

For the transmission of messages riverboat operators use various journals specialized in travel, newspapers, jumbo posters, radio and television, internet, social media and the like as an advertising media. Riverboat operators give special attention to the creation of brochures published in a printed edition as well as online on their web pages. The brochures actually represent a catalog of cruiser companies and they include information on the supply of all the itineraries offered by the company including the following: description of departure ports, ports of call, duration of cruise, cruises' departure dates, prices, ship data (ship and cabin categories), facilities offered on board, gastronomic offer on board, the description of planned activities for each day during the cruise, offers of optional trips outside the boat with a detailed description of destination and the trip's itinerary, booking and payment conditions, information on transfer to the port of call as well as additional advice for passengers and information on the protection of passengers during travel. In addition, in the brochures companies highlight the reasons why you should visit a particular destination, what special experiences tourists can experience on the travels organized by their companies, they highlight the specifics of their boats and itineraries and they represent cruises

<sup>10</sup> Grammerstorf, H.H. (2013.) *European River Cruising*, The European River Cruise Association, Hamburg, [http://www.ccr-zkr.org/files/documents/workshops/wrshp081013/6\\_HGrammerstorf\\_en.pdf](http://www.ccr-zkr.org/files/documents/workshops/wrshp081013/6_HGrammerstorf_en.pdf) (accessed 15.07.2017.)

<sup>11</sup> Kesić, T. (2006.) *Ponašanje potrošača*. Zagreb: Opinio d.o.o., pp. 434

<sup>12</sup> Rocco, F. (2000.) *Marketinško upravljanje*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga, pp. 209

as a “lifestyle” to a new “life experience”. The brochures are color-coded, with high-quality photographs showing the boat, different cabin categories and the layout of the boat (floor plans of each deck are shown), amenities on board, the gastronomic specialities that can be tasted in the boat’s restaurant and the destinations that can be visited as well as the atmosphere during cruise in general.

Big companies invest in TV advertising and they use the possibility to simultaneously address a large number of consumers on the desired market. For example, *Viking River Cruises* ([www.vikingrivercruises.com](http://www.vikingrivercruises.com)) began advertising the river cruise line at PBS TV House, where it appeared as a sponsor of the *Masterpiece* series, whose portfolio include the award-winning *Sherlock* and *Downton Abbey* series with over 10 million viewers per week. Television viewers are Americans who are well-educated and who enjoy a higher household income than the average, and this advertising contributed to the popularity of river cruises on the US market where river cruises are a relatively new form of vacation.<sup>14</sup> At the beginning and end of each TV show, Viking River Cruise ads appear in the form of informative video materials.<sup>15</sup>

In today’s overcrowded and expensive advertising space where consumers are bombarded with the most diverse advertising messages, a creative message of good quality is especially important, and it must be permanently designed, imaginative, entertaining and valuable to consumers to attract and retain their attention.<sup>16</sup> In their advertisements all riverboat operators strive to highlight the benefits of cruising in relation to other forms of vacation, to point out the specifics of the boats, the itineraries and the unique experience of river cruise as an *all-inclusive*, “*carefree journey*” with the possibility of visiting various destinations without packing and unpacking luggage several times while on the trip (which is actually a subtle way of telling to older consumers, who are also the biggest demographic group, that river cruises are a comfortable way to travel).

In addition to slogans, companies use trademarks, product brands, distinctive styles of advertising, campaigns, and the like, i.e. advertising constants that appear in a series of advertising messages or form an integral part of a river cruise product. The names of leading riverboat operators are also product trademarks in the market and represent a guarantee for a certain level of quality of service. It is precisely with the trademark, defined as “any word, symbol or label, or their mutual combination”,<sup>17</sup> that a riverboat operators try to identify their products and make them different from other similar products on the market

and point them out on their ships and work outfits of their staff on the ship. By advertising a riverboat operator introduces consumers to the new products, in particular new itineraries (destinations and rivers which they include in their offer), new ships and their key features, to the size and the name of a ship, to the new experiences they can gain while cruising and they strive to build a recognizable brand of products and differentiate it from the competitors.

### 3.2.2. Sales promotion activities

Riverboat operators direct sales promotional activities to travellers, travel agencies and their own sales staff. Examples of incentives to consumers are reflected in discounts for loyal guests, financial and other forms of awards, reduced prices (depending on booking time) and the like. On the other hand, there are examples of incentives directed at tourist agents such as increased commissions, training of agents and various bonuses or prizes for the number of sold cabins and the like. All agents who successfully complete the *Viking Travel Agent Academy* and apply for a Viking Visa card are eligible for a bonus for any booking made.<sup>18</sup> Concerning their own employees, sales promotion measures mainly relate to enabling professional development of employees through periodical or continuous education and continuous motivation of staff.

### 3.2.3. Public Relations and Publicity

Public relations include “activities that are carried out by market participants in order to build and maintain good public relations”.<sup>19</sup> The underlying task of public relations is to create a positive image of the desired subject and its activities and products, which directly promotes the improvement of the business. It is achieved by publicity which is actually an unpaid way of communicating with the public through various media, where the activity of a market subject or the product’s particularity is the subject of informing.<sup>20</sup> In 2014, CroisiEurope, in the spirit of “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” began to penetrate the North American market by hiring a public relations company based in the USA and a director of sales of river cruises exclusively for the Americans.<sup>21</sup> Public relations firms strive to create a positive attitude towards the company, their policies and products, towards river cruises in general; they try to point out the advantages of such a form of vacation; they try to establish cooperation with the media and provide them with information on new ships, new itineraries and

<sup>13</sup> Sudar, J., Keller, G. (1991.) Promocija. Zagreb: Informator, pp. 62 according to Ružić, D. (2009.) Marketing u turističkom ugostiteljstvu. Osijek: Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, pp. 287

<sup>14</sup> Mintel (2015.) River Cruising - Travel & Tourism Analyst, No. 4, March 2015, Mintel Group Ltd, London., pp. 37

<sup>15</sup> More on: <http://www.vikingrivercruises.com/video/masterpiece/index.html> (accessed 25.09.2015.)

<sup>16</sup> Ružić, D. (2009.) Marketing u turističkom ugostiteljstvu. Osijek: Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, pp. 203

<sup>17</sup> Vuković, B. (1973.) Turistička propaganda. Zagreb: Školska knjiga, pp. 50 prema Ružić, D. (2009.) Marketing u turističkom ugostiteljstvu. Osijek: Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, pp. 295

<sup>18</sup> Viking River Cruise: <http://www.vikingrivercruises.com/special-offers/travel-agent-academy-rewards.html> (accessed 27.09.2015.)

<sup>19</sup> Grbac, B. (2007.) Načela marketinga. Rijeka: Ekonomski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, pp.244

<sup>20</sup> Grbac, B. (2007.) Načela marketinga. Rijeka: Ekonomski fakultet Sveučilišta u Rijeci, pp. 231

destinations. For these activities, they mostly use press conferences and articles in various publications. In order to achieve a positive image and integrate into the life of a country / region through which river cruises are organized, companies often provide funding to educational, health, cultural and similar institutions. In this sense *AmaWaterways* sponsors an English language school in the *Ta Toum* village in Cambodia, which not only enables local children to learn English, but has also become the center of gathering of local communities of all ages. The company guides passengers on the Mekong River cruise on a school tour and they socialize with the children as well as with the local population.<sup>22</sup>

By means of publicity events can be successfully presented and a positive image of them can be created. Editors regularly receive interesting news, and with the help of the media they inform about the construction of a new ship, its launch, about the godfather or godmother of the ship, who are usually celebrities from the *show business* and about the ceremony that is organized for that occasion.<sup>23</sup> For example, the *Viking River Cruise* has been intensively using sponsorship as one of the major public relations instruments. The latest sponsorship it has made is connected to the show *The Great British Baking Show*, which, besides the UK, has also appeared on PBS stations in the United States. Apart from the *Viking's* commercials appearing at the beginning of every show's broadcasting, *Viking* will use recipes and other content from the show and incorporate them into their products. Namely, Viking passengers are often interested in internal links between food and travel, making *The Great British Baking Show* particularly good for supporting the company's current brand, its image building and for improving position in the market. Also, *Marija Berry*, the show judge and one of the leading authors of numerous cookbooks, supports the company's activities and has become a godmother of a new ship- the *Viking Longship Alsvin*.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2.5. Marketing Communication on the Internet

Online technology, especially the possibilities that *Web 2.0* provides, enables business entities to engage in numerous marketing activities. The enhancements of marketing mix under the influence of online technologies are most noticeable in promotion and sales activities (e-promotion and e-distribution) that play a crucial role in e-marketing mix of tourist entities primarily because of the fact that the tourist supply and demand are physically remote from each other and with the efficient techniques of promotion via Internet they are trying to reduce this gap and visualise

the offer as much as possible. Most *web* sites basically represent a new promotional-communication medium of a company because these sites most frequently contain information about the company and its products. Given that many companies today realize a complete marketing program via the internet, from creating products and services, through pricing, to e-distribution and e-promotion, the website can be seen as the bearer of e-marketing activities in tourism. All riverboat operators have their own multifunctional web site with the following functions:<sup>25</sup>

- a) promotion of a company and / or products / events,
- b) advertising of products / events,
- c) creating a corporate image,
- d) promotion of sales,
- e) contact with customers

*Web* pages of operators specialized in river cruising contain numerous information about the company (history, current events, prizes, future plans, river cruise industry in general), boats, cabins and amenities on boats with the possibility of a virtual boat tour, information on itineraries and the destinations that are visited, maps showing all the ports included in the itinerary and marked routes (specially marked routes for cruising and routes for travelling by plane, bus or train). They also contain photo galleries and videogalleries with travel clips and testimonies of satisfied passengers, brochures, information and advice for guests who have already booked a cruise, the possibility of online booking, electronic *check-in*, call centres and travel agents' contacts for booking and the like.

E-promotion is a "cross-functional process for planning, executing and analyzing of communication, and it is aimed at attracting, maintaining and multiplying the number of clients on the Internet."<sup>26</sup> The elements of the promotional mix on the internet are: advertising, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing.<sup>27</sup> The advantages of internet advertising, above all, lies in the fact that it is much cheaper than ordinary advertising media (newspapers, magazines, television), and the content can easily be changed and refreshed as needed so that information is always up to date. Since the *web* space is unlimited, the possibility of multimedia presentation (audio and video) is opened and it makes the product more tangible. In this regard, riverboat operators offer virtual boat tours on their websites and an interactive cruise experience through numerous videos and cruise video clips that show the atmosphere both on board and in the destinations

<sup>21</sup> Mintel (2015.) River Cruising - Travel & Tourism Analyst, No. 4, March 2015, Mintel Group Ltd, London., pp. 30

<sup>22</sup> Ama Waterways, pp. 20, [https://www.amawaterways.com/brochures/mekong/2015\\_2016\\_Mekong\\_LR.pdf](https://www.amawaterways.com/brochures/mekong/2015_2016_Mekong_LR.pdf) (accessed 30.09.2015.)

<sup>23</sup> Peručić, D. (2013.) *Cruising – turizam, razvoj strategije i ključni nositelji*. Dubrovnik: Sveučilište Dubrovnik, Odjel za ekonomiju i poslovnu ekonomiju, pp. 125

<sup>24</sup> Viking River Cruise, <http://www.vikingcruises.com/press/press-releases/great-british-baking-show-sponsorship.html> (accessed 28.09.2015.)

<sup>25</sup> Ružić, D. Biloš, A., Turkalj, D. (2009.) *e-Marketing*, drugo izmijenjeno i prošireno izdanje. Osijek: Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, pp.192

<sup>26</sup> Ružić, D. Biloš, A., Turkalj, D. (2014.) *E-marketing*, treće izmijenjeno i prošireno izdanje. Osijek: Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, pp. 515

<sup>27</sup> Ružić, D. (2003.) *E-marketing*. Osijek: Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, pp.122

included in the itinerary. Through the company's web sites you can find all the information on the itineraries, the destinations that are visited, the detailed plan of all decks with their floor plan and photos of cabins (cabins' layout is also available on some web sites) as well as the amenities offered on board. Also, all riverboat operators have electronic brochures available on their web sites that contain all the cruise information that the companies offer and they offer to send a free newsletter to the email addresses of the existing and potential new customers. Furthermore, through the web sites, consumers can interact with the company at any time and from any

location. Passengers have the opportunity to ask questions, write comments and describe their travel experience with the company. There are online forms also available on the web sites which must be completed before the cruise departures as well as forms for online checking-in, thus accelerating the embarkation process on the ship.

Together with the existing website, more and more companies use social media to communicate with consumers on forums and blogs and they make profiles on social networks such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Youtube*, *Google+* and *Pinterest* (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Application of social networks by riverboat operators

Social networks	Viking River Cruise	Avalon Waterways	Ama Waterways	CroisiEurope
Facebook	+	+	+	+
Twitter	+		+	+
Instagram	+		+	+
Youtube	+	+	+	+
Pinterest	+	+		+
Google+	+		+	+
Blog		+		

Source: CroisiEurope, <http://www.croisieurope.travel/en-gb>; Viking River Cruise, <http://www.vikingrivercruises.com/>; Avalon Waterways, <http://www.avalonwaterways.com/>; Ama Waterways, <http://www.amawaterways.com/> (accessed 15.07.2017.)

Also, some companies use the benefits of mobile marketing, which enables them to communicate with their target group via any mobile device or network. All riverboat operators included in the research have web sites adapted for mobile phones and brochures which can be downloaded to mobile devices and which contain all the information on cruise offers and destinations that are visited.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Riverboat operators still use traditional media to a large extent, such as newspapers, specialized journals, radio and television for the purposes of promotional activities, which comes from the fact that currently the most represented demographic group at the age of 50+ that goes on river cruises is still fond of using traditional media. However, all cruiser companies also intensively use the advantages of marketing communication via the internet and they make

use of web sites as promotional-communication media, especially for a multimedia presentation of the offer, informing about the company, itineraries, ships, etc., but also for an after-sales communication with the passengers. Today, a large number of people are active on the Internet, especially in developed countries, which are the main tourist- generating market for river cruises and by using it as a marketing tool companies endeavour to expand to new markets, primarily the younger population and the families with children. New technologies enable business entities to connect directly with the consumers, creating interaction and relationships with them. Interactive internet applications enable marketers to establish a dialogue with consumers and they open the possibility of two-way communication with each consumer individually and the creation of tourist products and services to individual requirements of a consumer at relatively low costs and in this sense they are more intensively used by shipping companies for the purpose of strengthening their competitiveness and achieving better business results.

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