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Moisescu, Ovidiu-Ioan

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# A Website-Based Analysis Regarding CSR Practices of the Top Romanian Travel Agencies

Ovidiu I. Moisescu

*Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

[ovidiu.moisescu@econ.ubbcluj.ro](mailto:ovidiu.moisescu@econ.ubbcluj.ro); [ovidiu.moisescu@gmail.com](mailto:ovidiu.moisescu@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT:** The paper investigates the extent to which the largest Romanian travel agencies, in terms of net turnover and profitability, adopt and communicate CSR practices, as reflected by the contents of their websites. The analyzed data regards a number of twenty Romanian travel agencies, which during the last five years have been present at least once in an annual top 10 of the highest net turnover and/or most profitable such specialized businesses. The website of each company was analyzed considering several variables related to the adoption and communication of CSR practices: the existence of a website section dedicated to CSR, the presence of CSR aspects within the section dedicated to the company's mission, vision, values etc., mentions of relevant stakeholder groups, CSR domains, actual CSR activities etc. Although the literature regarding the impact of perceived CSR in the tourism industry suggests a significant level of influence on corporate reputation and, indirectly, on consumers' behavior, trust, loyalty and other important commercial aspects, the results of the current research show a relatively low engagement of the top Romanian travel agencies in CSR activities, at least considering the extent to which they communicate these aspects through their websites.

**Keywords:** CSR; website-analysis; tourism; travel agencies; Romania.

**JEL classification:** M14; M31; L83

## 1. Introduction

The importance of CSR in the tourism industry has risen in recent years along with the environmental issues of degradation, climate change, and depletion of natural resources, human rights issues, and fair trade (Sheldon & Park, 2011). However, despite this internationally increasing emphasis on CSR in the tourism industry, little is known about how local Romanian industry members adopt and communicate CSR, especially in the tourism distribution sub-sector.

Communicating CSR is of strategic importance for any company. Thus, through concerted CSR communications companies can *“establish an industry leadership position, launch a brand, leapfrog competitors, penetrate a new market, profile a new product, engender customer loyalty, generate employee commitment, and ultimately transform a company's reputation”* (Ogilvy, 2010, p.11). By clearly communicating commitment to CSR, organizations can *“represent their approach, motivations and commitments to CSR, so that their path of progress is defined and expectations are strategically managed, embed corporate values across the organization, connect and engage with stakeholders, manage their corporate reputation, and map CSR performance”* (Ogilvy, 2010, p.13). Moreover, the European Commission (2009, p.4) suggests that communicating about a company's responsible entrepreneurship can generate *“new business opportunities”*, as well as *“higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty, improved company, brand and product reputation, more motivated and productive employees, better relations with the local community and public authorities, and increased cost savings”*.

However, many enterprises, especially the smaller ones, do not significantly communicate about their CSR (European Commission, 2009). The reasons may comprise one or more of

the followings: some companies don't want to be perceived as self-praising or as using CSR in a cynical commercial way, others don't consider themselves big enough to enter the large corporation category often associated to CSR, while others don't understand or realize the multiple positive significant effects of CSR communication and the perceived CSR by customers, employees and other stakeholders on their commercial or financial success.

The European Commission (2009, p.4) suggests several practical means or methods to be used by companies in conveying their CSR messages to employees, customers, community, or other stakeholders: company value statements, posters and banners, intranets, company brochures, mailing lists, product labels and packaging, events, advertisements, newsletters, company reports, press releases, interviews, and last, but not least, websites. Via their websites companies could and should let visitors know about their commitment to CSR, websites being *“extremely useful for this because they offer information to every target audience, and because they can be easily and cheaply updated”* (European Commission, 2009, p.14).

Moreover, according to Google's Consumer Barometer, in 2014, 55% of Romanians who bought travel services, and, more particularly, 96% of Romanians who purchased package holidays, did online research before the actual buying decision. Therefore, the information provided by travel agencies' websites is extremely important both because it is part of the information gathering stage – one of the most important stages in the consumer decision process (Kotler & Keller, 2006), but also because it can convey certain long-term consumer attitudes or levels of consumer trust, preference etc.

Considering all the above aspects, a website-based analysis regarding CSR practices of the top Romanian travel agencies can be seen as a welcomed addition to the existing CSR specialized literature, as well as to the actual knowledge regarding CSR practices in Romania. The objective of the paper was to investigate the extent to which the largest Romanian travel agencies, in terms of net turnover and profitability, adopt and communicate CSR practices, as reflected by the contents of their websites. The analyzed data regarded a number of twenty Romanian travel agencies, which during the last five years have been present at least once in an annual top of the highest net turnover and/or most profitable such specialized businesses in Romania, according to publicly available reports published in the specialized Romanian mainstream media. The website of each company was analyzed considering several variables related to the adoption and communication of CSR practices.

## **2. Brief literature review**

Doing business according to sustainability principles is nowadays an important issue for most companies and their stakeholders all over the world. Ethical and responsible business practices that take into consideration society's well-being are usually comprised within the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which, simply stated, implies that companies consider and manage their impact on consumers, employees, the environment, the society, and other stakeholders.

One of the most influential approaches of the concept of CSR comes from Carroll (1991), who presents a four-part conceptualization of CSR, structured as a pyramid, including economic, legal, ethical, and, respectively, discretionary (philanthropic) responsibilities. For a business, the economic responsibilities refer to being profitable, the legal responsibilities imply that the business complies with the set of rules regarding what is right and wrong

imposed by the society in which it operates, the ethical responsibilities require that the business avoids harming and manages to do what is right, just and fair, while, eventually, the philanthropic responsibilities refer to the business contributing resources to the improvement of the quality of life of the community in which it operates. According to Carroll, none of the four responsibilities are optional if the firm wants to be involved in long-term relationships with its stakeholders in order to create value. Aras & Crowther (2008), considering that *“to be a socially responsible corporation, a company must be more than legal and ethical”*, suggest that CSR is built on top of concepts related to corporate behavior, legal and ethical issues. A similar approach is developed by Mandl & Dorr (2007), who consider that CSR means that companies *“integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with business relevant groups on a voluntary basis”*, the main fields of CSR activities covering four main directions: employees, society/community, environment, and, the market (customers and business partners included).

The importance of CSR in the tourism industry has risen in recent years along with the environmental issues of degradation, climate change, and depletion of natural resources, human rights issues, and fair trade (Sheldon & Park, 2011). Especially at international level, CSR has become an essential part of corporate strategies in the tourism industry, covering aspects such as environmental protection, fair working conditions, or contributing to the welfare of local communities. The “European Cities Marketing” organization states: *“Tourism businesses have strong relationships to the local communities in which they are operating; therefore, they also have a strong influence on the socio-economic development of these regions. For customers as well as for employees, the integration of CSR strategies is becoming more and more important. To operate successfully in the future it will be necessary for tourism businesses to continuously implement and successfully establish CSR strategies in the long term”*.

Business organizations, especially those with global operations, seek to institutionalize CSR through development and adoption of corporate policy and strategy, the tourism sector being no exception, with many organizations now highlighting their global CSR programs on their websites (Smith & Ong, 2014).

The tourism distribution sector, alongside with other tourism industry sectors such as airlines and ground transportation, face environmental issues more critically than do others such as accommodation providers or restaurants (Sheldon & Park, 2011). Moreover, tour-operators have a critical role in destination sustainability, due to their influence on destinations development and, respectively, on tourists’ choice of destinations (Van Wijk & Persoon, 2006). Despite their important role in the tourism sector, tour-operators show a lower engagement in CSR activities as compared to other tourism industry sectors members (Van Wijk & Persoon, 2006; Tepelus, 2005).

### **3. Methodology**

The objective of the paper was to investigate the extent to which the largest Romanian travel agencies, in terms of net turnover and profitability, adopt and communicate CSR practices, as reflected by the contents of their websites. In order to accomplish this objective, a database of the top Romanian travel agencies was built, considering mainly their net turnover, but also their profitability. More specifically, the analyzed data regards a number of twenty Romanian travel agencies, which during the last five years have been present at least once in an annual top of the highest net turnover and/or most profitable such specialized businesses in Romania,

according to publicly available reports published in the financial/commercial/economic specialized Romanian mainstream media (e.g. wall-street.ro, zf.ro, dailybusiness.ro etc.). Official data regarding the net turnover was mainly extracted from the public database provided by the Romanian government (mfinante.ro). The list of the twenty investigated travel agencies, along with data regarding their net turnover during the last five years, and, respectively, their website addresses, is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Investigated top Romanian travel agencies

Travel agency	Fiscal code	NTO* 2013	NTO* 2012	NTO* 2011	NTO* 2010	NTO* 2009	Website
<b>Accent Travel &amp; Events</b>	12097170	47	72.9	71	63.4	57.5	accenttravel.ro; traveo.ro
<b>Aerotravel**</b>	9919750	150	156	120.1	122	152.5	aerotravel.ro
<b>Business Travel &amp; Turism</b>	32665	70.2	66.4	56.1	45.1	35.5	businesstravel.ro
<b>Christian Tour**</b>	9617078	195.3	155.8	110	N/A	N/A	christiantour.ro
<b>EXIMTUR</b>	3553943	160.1	157.1	135.4	115.7	113.4	eximtur.ro
<b>Filadelfia Turism</b>	3937650	44.9	41.1	26.2	18.2	11.4	filadelfiaturism.ro
<b>Happy Tour</b>	6842431	161.8	181.9	165.4	143.5	121.5	happytour.ro
<b>HotelAir</b>	13943226	81.5	74.2	57.1	48.7	31.2	hotelcon.net
<b>J'info Tours</b>	445220	46.6	44.3	37.8	33.5	42.6	jinfotours.ro
<b>Kartago Tours</b>	10143482	13.3	19.3	9.2	34	44.6	kartagotours.ro
<b>Mareea Comtur</b>	10118438	67.5	64.1	43.5	30.2	35.3	mareea.ro
<b>Marshal Turism</b>	5511863	44.1	50.5	55.2	53.5	66.1	marshal.ro
<b>Olimpic International Turism</b>	6519768	48	56.2	48	34.5	26.4	olimpic.ro
<b>Paralela 45**</b>	6505940	157	127.6	27.4	26.6	42.4	paralela45.ro
<b>Perfect Tour</b>	14241637	206.4	110	94.3	87.3	76.9	perfect-tour.ro
<b>Prestige Tours</b>	15565321	46	57.9	51	40	41.3	prestige.ro
<b>Prompt Service Travel</b>	5865038	61.9	63.9	50.8	33.8	35.3	cocktailholidays.ro
<b>SunMedair</b>	13683142	61.5	64	61.2	48.7	47.2	gotravel.ro
<b>Transilvania Travel</b>	15688146	30.1	34.8	33.9	32.5	31.4	transilvaniatravel.com
<b>Vola.ro</b>	17043146	107.5	92.8	66.5	22.9	17.4	vola.ro

\*NTO = net turnover (sales value after the deduction of commercial discounts, value added taxes, and other taxes directly related to turnover); NTO values are displayed in million RON; the annual average exchange rate RON/EUR was: 4.42 in 2013, 4.46 in 2012, 4.24 in 2011, 4.21 in 2010, and, respectively, 4.24 in 2009 (curs-valutar-bnr.ro)

\*\* NTO data is not extracted from official governmental sources (mfinante.ro), but from press releases/declarations (wall-street.ro, zf.ro & dailybusiness.ro archives), as the NTO officially declared only comprised the travel agencies commissions' value, not the actual turnover (legal choice for Romanian travel agencies financial statements)

The website of each travel agency was analyzed considering several variables related to the adoption and communication of CSR practices. The data collection was conducted between August 1 and August 15, 2014. Each travel agency's website was accessed, and information obtained was structured and/or coded. In order to identify relevant information comprised by the websites and related to CSR aspects, the data collection for each travel agency started from the website's map, with the aid of which relevant sections were identified. Most aspects linked directly or indirectly to CSR were found in website sections such as: "About us", "Our vision", "Our mission", "Our values", "Press room", and, of course, "CSR" (where such a section was included within the website).

Considering the fact that all the top Romanian travel agencies are SMEs, the CSR related information searched and extracted from the websites followed the CSR activities structure outlined by Mandl & Dorr (2007) specifically for SMEs (see Figure 1). Moreover, some other research variables were considered, such as: the existence of a dedicated CSR section, the compliance with the minimum national legal requirements for travel agencies' websites, and,

respectively, the presence of certain economical/ commercial/ financial success references, and of general statements regarding the attitude towards stakeholders.

**Figure 1: SMEs' CSR activities structure**

<b>Workforce-oriented CSR Activities</b>	<b>Society-oriented CSR Activities</b>	<b>Market-oriented CSR Activities</b>	<b>Environment-oriented CSR Activities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the improvement of working conditions</li> <li>• work/life balance</li> <li>• equal opportunities and diversity</li> <li>• training and staff development</li> <li>• communication/information of employees and participation in company decisions</li> <li>• responsible and fair remuneration or financial support of employees</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social and/or labor market integration at community level</li> <li>• improvement of the local infrastructure</li> <li>• donations to local community institutions</li> <li>• support of the society in a wider sense</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities to improve the quality or safety of products</li> <li>• fair pricing</li> <li>• ethical advertising</li> <li>• paying suppliers or business partners without delay</li> <li>• contracting local partners</li> <li>• supporting the establishment of local/regional business alliances</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• designing environmentally friendly products or production processes</li> <li>• efficient use of resources</li> <li>• reduction of waste and pollution</li> <li>• applying an "ecologic assessment" of suppliers</li> <li>• informing business partners, customers or the society on environmental issues</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>

*Source: Adapted from Mandl & Dorr (2007)*

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 CSR dedicated website sections & reporting**

Among all the top travel agencies investigated, only two (out of twenty) dedicate a section on their website to CSR: "Business Travel & Turism" and, respectively, "Paralela 45". Moreover and regrettably, none of the websites (the two with CSR sections included) contains any form of reporting regarding social responsibility, business ethics or other similar issues.

Regarding the actual content of the CSR sections, even though the two travel agencies outlined above may be commendable for including such sections within their websites, the information actually comprised in these sections is rather superficial and extremely limited. Moreover, "Paralela 45" doesn't even have a CSR section directly linked from its website homepage, the CSR section being accessible only from a separate webpage linked in the "About us" section, and dedicated to the company's history. Regarding what the section actually comprises, sadly, it only describes two rather minor philanthropic actions of the company, both of them being related to the travel agency's 20st anniversary celebrated several years ago, in 2010. On the other hand, "Business Travel & Turism", even though dedicates a section on its website to CSR, directly linked from its websites homepage, only includes in this section a formal statement of the company's CEO, of about 1000 words, as a PDF document, created two years ago, in 2012, regarding the implementation of several CSR policies focused on its employees, customers and shareholders, the local community, the society as a whole, and the environment. The document suggests that all policies were designed according to international standards (e.g. ISO 9001:2008, SA 8000:2008, OHSAS 18001:2008), even though the company does not claim that it possess any form of

certification. The document also states that all policies have been communicated to all employees and successfully implemented. On the other hand, regrettably, the CSR section does not include anything else (e.g. actual CSR actions, implementation results, CSR reports etc.).

#### **4.2 Compliance with the minimum national legal requirements for travel agencies' websites**

The Romanian tourism services distribution sector is highly regulated, several legal restrictions being applied to any company that wants to act as a travel agency within the Romanian national territory. More specifically, any travel agency (and, as a matter of fact, any of its branches) that commercially acts in Romania must request and receive a tourism license which can only be issued by the Romanian state<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, in order for the tourism license to be issued, the travel agency must comply with several legal requirements related to physical offices (area, endowments etc.), customers' protection (e.g. an insurance policy for refunding customers in case the travel agency becomes bankrupt or insolvent), personnel qualifications (e.g. the general manager of any travel agency – as well as the managers of its branches – must possess an individual tourism license or another formal and authorized certificate of qualification), communication methods, and other aspects. Last, but not least, any travel agency that commercially acts in the Romanian market must have a public and operative website which should display scanned copies of (at least) the general manager's certificate of qualification in tourism, the travel agency's tourism license and, respectively, the mandatory insurance policy.

**Table 2: Top Romanian travel agencies websites' compliance with the national legal minimum content requirements**

Travel agency	The website displays a copy of the general manager's certificate of qualification in tourism	The website displays a copy of the travel agency's tourism license	The website displays a copy of a valid insurance policy
Accent Travel & Events	NO*	NO*	NO*
Aerotravel	NO*	NO*	NO*
Business Travel & Turism	NO*	NO*	NO*
Christian Tour	NO*	NO*	YES
EXIMTUR	YES	YES	YES
Filadelfia Turism	YES	YES	YES
Happy Tour	YES	YES	YES
HotelAir	YES	YES	YES
J'info Tours	YES	YES	YES
Kartago Tours	YES	YES	YES
Mareea Comtur	YES	YES	YES
Marshal Turism	YES	YES	YES
Olimpic International Turism	YES	YES	YES
Paralela 45	YES	YES	YES
Perfect Tour	YES	YES	YES
Prestige Tours	YES	YES	YES
Prompt Service Travel	YES	YES	YES
SunMedair	NO*	NO*	NO*
Transilvania Travel	YES	YES	YES
Vola.ro	YES	YES	YES

*\*Instead of a copy of the document, the website only outlines some general coordinates such as issuing number, issuing date, start/end date of validity etc.*

<sup>1</sup> **Government order no. 65 / 2013** for the approval of the methodological norms regarding the issuing of classification certificates for accommodation and public alimentation facilities, and of tourism licenses;

The websites analysis (Table 2) revealed that even though the majority of the investigated travel agencies comply with the national legal requirements for travel agencies' websites, displaying scanned copies of the general manager's certificate of qualification in tourism, the travel agency's tourism license, and of the insurance policy, 25% of the twenty investigated travel agencies only pay a superficial level of attention to these legal requirements, their websites only textually outlining some general coordinates related to the mandatory legal documents (such as issuing number, issuing date, start/end date of validity etc.), instead of scanned copies.

#### *4.3 Economical/commercial/financial success references*

The perceived economical, commercial and/or financial success of a company can be significant in generating customer trust, choice, preference, loyalty, and a positive customer attitude towards the company, both in general, and in particular, in the service sector and, especially, in the tourism distribution sector, in which case the specific characteristics of offered products (intangibility, inseparability etc.) can increase customers purchasing perceived risks. Moreover, as an essential component of the whole concept of CSR, the economic responsibilities of companies are directly related to their economical, commercial and/or financial success, which should be communicated in a transparent and credible manner.

**Table 3: Economical/commercial/financial success references included in the top Romanian travel agencies websites\***

Travel agency	Self-praises its financial/commercial success within website sections	Outlines several press news regarding its financial/commercial success	Displays several awards received for its financial/commercial success
Accent Travel & Events	NO	NO	NO
Aerotravel	NO	NO	NO
Business Travel & Turism	NO	NO	NO
Christian Tour	YES	YES	NO
EXIMTUR	YES	NO	YES
Filadelfia Turism	YES	NO	NO
Happy Tour	YES	YES	NO
HotelAir	NO	NO	NO
J'info Tours	NO	YES	YES
Kartago Tours	NO	NO	YES
Mareea Comtur	YES	NO	NO
Marshal Turism	NO	NO	YES
Olimpic International Turism	NO	NO	YES
Paralela 45	NO	NO	YES
Perfect Tour	YES	YES	NO
Prestige Tours	YES	NO	NO
Prompt Service Travel	NO	NO	NO
SunMedair	NO	NO	YES
Transilvania Travel	YES	NO	NO
Vola.ro	NO	NO	YES

The websites analysis (Table 3) shows that 25% of the investigated travel agencies pay very little attention to outlining their economical/commercial/financial success, even though they are among the top businesses in this sector. Moreover, another 20% of the analyzed travel agencies only present their success in a less credible manner, by self-praising within website sections, with no third party sources or endorsements such as press news or received awards. Nevertheless, the other 55% of the investigated travel agencies include press news links (3



agencies), scanned copies of received awards (7 agencies), or both (1 agency) in their websites, in order to increase the credibility of their claims regarding the economical/commercial/financial success.

#### *4.4 General statements regarding the attitude towards stakeholders*

Regrettably, only 25% of the investigated travel agencies include in their websites clear statements regarding their general attitudes towards their businesses' stakeholders (Table 4). Moreover, only one agency includes such a statement in a complete manner, referring to all stakeholders, while the others only outline a limited view referring to "customers, employees, partners and collaborators", or just "partners", or by mentioning a very general statement such as "Our relations are based on sustainability principles".

**Table 4: General statements regarding the attitude towards stakeholders included in the top Romanian travel agencies websites\***

Travel agency	Key words or expressions from "CSR", "About us", "Vision", "Mission" and "Values" sections
<b>Aerotravel</b>	„We earn and maintain the respect of our business partners”
<b>Business Travel &amp; Tourism</b>	“satisfying the needs of all stakeholders”, “our results depend on our responsibility towards employees, society, customers, shareholders, local community and natural environment”
<b>EXIMTUR</b>	“We respect our customers, employees, partners and collaborators”
<b>Happy Tour</b>	“Our relations are based on sustainability principles”
<b>Kartago Tours</b>	“Professional and fair relations with our partners”

#### *4.5 Market-oriented CSR aspects*

In what concerns market-oriented CSR aspects included in the analyzed websites, these are limited to service quality, fair pricing and ethical/ honest/ transparent communication, with no clear mentions of other specific aspects such as paying business partners without delay, contracting local partners, supporting local/regional business alliances etc.

By far, the market-oriented CSR aspects related to service quality are the most present in the content of the investigated travel agencies' websites. The concepts of service quality and CSR are strongly connected, as one of the most important fields of CSR refers to market-oriented activities, among which improving the quality of products and services is essential. Improving service quality and providing high quality services, as part of the social responsibility of tourism businesses, further generate long term relationships with important stakeholders (Blešić et al., 2011), among whom customers are essential. In order to operationalize the websites' analysis regarding market-oriented CSR aspects related to service quality, the classical five dimensions approach of Parasuraman et al (1985, 1988) regarding service quality was adopted. Thus, key words or expressions were extracted or summarized from the contents of the investigated websites, in order to identify the extent to which they focused on each service quality dimension (except for the tangibles, in which case none of the websites' content made references): reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge, professionalism, courtesy, ability to inspire trust and confidence etc.), and empathy (caring, individualized attention to customers etc.).

As it can be seen in table 5, reliability and empathy are the most emphasized service quality dimensions, according to the content of the analyzed websites. Empathy is mostly converged

by emphasizing customer satisfaction orientation, and, in many cases, by claiming a strong orientation towards customization and treating each customer individually. Moreover, in conveying responsiveness the most outlined aspects are related to the permanent or quasi-permanent availability of customer assistance, while in suggesting assurance the most frequent emphasized aspects are related to the experience of the company in the tourism sector and the professionalism of their staff.

In addition, mentions of any formal service quality management certifications were identified. Thus, 40% of the investigated travel agencies clearly mention within their websites the ISO 9001:2008 certification, a quality management system certification involving that the company has the ability to consistently provide products/services that meet customer and applicable regulatory requirements, enhancing customer satisfaction through the effective application of the system (iso.org).

**Table 5: Market-oriented CSR aspects related to service quality included in the top Romanian travel agencies websites\***

Travel agency	Certified standards	Reliability	Empathy	Responsiveness	Assurance
Accent Travel & Events			"customize your holidays", "plan your trips as you wish", "go anywhere and do anything you want"		
Aerotravel		"innovative tourism services", "quality"	"customer orientation", "customer satisfaction"		"more than 16 years of experience", "professional teams", "earn customers' trust and respect"
Business Travel & Tourism		"improving qualitative characteristics of services"	"customized solutions", "each individual is unique and important"	"assistance 7 days a week, 24 hours a day"	"we act in the same way for 21 years"
Christian Tour		"carefully selected accommodation", "top transportation"	"holidays designed according to your wishes", "customization universe", "we're willing to do anything to be your preferred partner"	"we are easy to find", "we expanded in order to be as close to you as possible"	
EXIMTUR	ISO 9001: 2008	"high quality travel services", "comfort", "we carefully select our offers"	"destinations and services diversity", "full/complete travel services"	"non-stop support and assistance", "the most extensive and performant network of agencies in Romania"	"security", "safety", "experience", "seriousness" (also emphasizes the high qualification of most of its employees)
Filadelfia Tourism		"best quality services", "constant improvement of service quality and performance"	"satisfying customers' needs", "full/complete solutions", "long-term partnerships with customers"		"kindness/ politeness", "seriousness"
Happy Tour		"we are engaged in excellence"	"travelers' satisfaction"		
HotelAir					

<b>J'info Tours</b>		"high standard services" (also emphasizes several awards received for quality excellence)	"we satisfy the needs and hopes of customers"		"one of the first private tourism businesses in Romania" (also emphasizes the high qualification of most of its employees)
<b>Kartago Tours</b>	ISO 9001: 2008	"high quality tourism services"	"customer orientation", "customer satisfaction is our first priority"		
<b>Mareea Comtur</b>	ISO 9001: 2008	"the quality of our services"	"our main objective is the constant growth of customer satisfaction"	"prompt services"	"experience gained through years of activity", "professional team", "performant team of specialists", "good management"
<b>Marshal Turism</b>	ISO 9001: 2008	"we offer qualitative services"	"always thrive to offer something new", "in a different manner", "adaptable to new requests"	The general manager promises to personally respond to any complaint.	
<b>Olimpic International Turism</b>	ISO 9001: 2008		"Our mission is total customer satisfaction"		
<b>Paralela 45</b>		Emphasizes several Reader's Digest Trusted Brand awards received for quality excellence in tourism.			"22 years of experience"
<b>Perfect Tour</b>	ISO 9001: 2008	"excellent services", "travel excellence"	"customers before anything else", "customized services", "each customer is unique"	"non-stop availability", "the oldest Call Center in the Romanian tourism market"	"friendly"
<b>Prestige Tours</b>		"quality is an essential component of anything we offer and believe in"	"we focus on our partners' requests and wants"		"23 years of tourism experience", "professional team", "experienced professionals with know-how"
<b>Prompt Service Travel</b>		"guaranteed quality"		"assistance from consultants", "24/7 online reservations"	"more than 20 years of experience in the Romanian tourism sector"
<b>SunMedair</b>	ISO 9001: 2008	"high quality of services"	"we adapt offers to customers", "each service has its own personality, according to each customer's desires", "flexibility"		"more than 23 years of experience in the Romanian tourism sector", "international standards high professionalism"
<b>Transilvania Travel</b>	ISO 9001: 2008				"professionals" (also emphasizes the high qualification of most of its employees)
<b>Vola.ro</b>		"you receive exactly what you buy", "latest technology"	"customized services", "full/complete services", "your satisfaction is our gain"	"on 24/7", "professional Call Center [that is] never busy"	"5 years of experience", "buy with trust", "transactions data security", "Trusted.ro award"

\* Extracted from the "CSR", "About us", "Vision", "Mission" and "Values" sections of the websites.

In what concerns fair pricing, the websites' analysis revealed that 50% of the investigated travel agencies clearly include references to such aspects, while regarding ethical/ honest/ transparent communication, 35% of the analyzed travel agencies include key words or expressions such as "honesty", "transparency" and others suggesting such orientations (Table 6). As specified before, the Romanian tourism services distribution sector is highly regulated, one important aspect bound to legal restrictions being the contract between travel agencies and their customers when it comes to selling tourism services packages<sup>2</sup>. Thus, Romanian regulations impose a standard content of such contracts, which is applicable to any travel agency, and which is mandatory, only a few sections/parameters of the contract being customizable. Nevertheless, it is not mandatory for travel agencies to display or describe in detail, on their websites, the standard contract, but its display or detailed description could be considered an extra-indicator of ethical/ honest/ transparent communication. Therefore, the occurrence of such a disclosure was quantified, the results revealing that 60% of the investigated travel agencies present in detail the standard agency-customer contract, 15% of them outline some selective information regarding the standard contract in their websites "Terms & Conditions" section, while the rest (25%) do not include within the content of their websites any details regarding the contract.

**Table 6: Market-oriented CSR aspects related to fair pricing and ethical/ honest/ transparent communication, included in the top Romanian travel agencies websites**

Travel agency	Fair pricing – key words and expressions*	Ethical/ honest/ transparent communication: key words and expressions*	Ethical/ honest/ transparent communication: standard agency-customer contract
Accent Travel & Events			partially presented
Aerotravel		"honesty and transparency"	not presented
Business Travel & Tourism	"best solutions for customers budgets", "optimal costs"	"transparent relations with all stakeholders"	not presented
Christian Tour	„holidays for all budgets”, “you pay less with us”		fully presented
EXIMTUR	"proper price quality ratio", "competitive prices"	"transparency", "transparent activity"	fully presented
Filadelfia Turism			fully presented
Happy Tour	"maximum economy and value for all expenses"	"we are honest", "open communication with customers"	not presented
HotelAir			not presented
J'info Tours			fully presented
Kartago Tours		"detailed [...] pertinent and correct information"	fully presented
Mareea Comtur	"good prices"		fully presented
Marshal Turism			fully presented
Olimpic International Turism			fully presented
Paralela 45			fully presented
Perfect Tour	"low tariffs"	"transparency"	fully presented
Prestige Tours	"best quality price ratio"		not presented
Prompt Service Travel	"correct price"		partially presented
SunMedair			fully presented
Transilvania Travel	"lowest prices possible"		fully presented
Vola.ro	"lowest tariff guaranteed", "transparent commissions"	"buy exactly what described", "pertinent & correct information"	partially presented

\* Extracted from the "CSR", "About us", "Vision", "Mission" and "Values" sections of the websites.

<sup>2</sup> **Government order no. 516 / 2005** regarding the approval of the standard contract for the commercialization of tourism services packages

#### 4.6 Society/community-oriented CSR aspects

Regarding society/community-oriented CSR, only three categories of such aspects could be identified within the content of the analyzed websites: social tourism offers (dedicated to low income social categories), philanthropy, and, respectively, labor market integration at community level (Table 7). In what concerns social tourism offers, the analysis revealed that 70% of the investigated travel agencies include referrals to such offers in their websites, but, nevertheless, only 55% of them have a dedicated website section to such offers, in most cases directed at seniors. Considering philanthropy, only three travel agencies (15%) include such aspects in their websites, among which two only describe a few isolated and rather minor philanthropic actions, while the other only displays some awards received from non-profit organizations for offering support, with no details. Finally, considering labor market integration at community level, only two travel agencies include within the content of their websites such specifications, one (“Prompt Service Travel”) strictly referring to offering internships for students, while the other (“Business Travel & Turism”) very generally referring to its responsibility towards the society and the local community (“our results depend on our responsibility towards society and local community”, “we will undertake actions to facilitate children & teenagers education”), with no any other detail.

**Table 7: Society/community-oriented CSR aspects included in the top Romanian travel agencies websites\***

Travel agency	Social tourism offers	Philanthropy
<b>Accent Travel &amp; Events</b>	Some isolated offers	Describes three actions: sponsored holidays for the Romanian students awarded by NASA (2014); sponsored trip for a group of bloggers (2014); a sponsored individual international bicycle trip (2014).
<b>Aerotravel</b>		
<b>Business Travel &amp; Turism</b>		
<b>Christian Tour</b>	Dedicated section (“Senior Voyages”)	
<b>EXIMTUR</b>	Some isolated offers	Displays some awards received from non-profit organizations for offering support (e.g. a local library, The Romanian Maltese Relief Service)
<b>Filadelfia Turism</b>	Dedicated section (“Social packages”).	
<b>Happy Tour</b>	Dedicated section (“Senior and Social”)	
<b>HotelAir</b>		
<b>J’info Tours</b>	Some isolated “social tourism” offers	
<b>Kartago Tours</b>		
<b>Mareea Comtur</b>	Dedicated section (“Senior Tourism”)	
<b>Marshal Turism</b>	Dedicated section (“Programs for Seniors”) & some isolated offers.	
<b>Olimpic International Turism</b>		
<b>Paralela 45</b>	Dedicated section (“Senior and Social Tourism”)	Describes two actions: a sponsored holiday for a group institutionalized children (2010); a financial donation (6700 RON) for a group of institutionalized children (2010).
<b>Perfect Tour</b>	Dedicated section (“Senior and Social Holidays”)	
<b>Prestige Tours</b>	Dedicated section (“Social and Seniors”)	
<b>Prompt Service Travel</b>	Dedicated section (“Social Tourism”)	
<b>SunMedair</b>		
<b>Transilvania Travel</b>	Dedicated section (“Seniors”)	
<b>Vola.ro</b>	Dedicated section (“Senior Tourism”)	

\* From “CSR”, “About us”, “Vision”, “Mission”, “Values”, and media/press/news sections of the websites.

#### 4.7 Workforce-oriented CSR aspects

Regrettably, only 25% of the investigated travel agencies include in their websites clear statements regarding workforce-oriented CSR aspects (Table 8). Moreover, only one agency includes such a statement in a quasi-complete manner, referring to working conditions, occupational health and security, employees' rights, lack of discrimination, and equitability. The other four travel agencies which make references to workforce-oriented CSR aspects generally limit their statements to assuring periodical professional trainings to their employees, and, in one case, to working conditions and professional promotion opportunities.

Table 8: **Workforce-oriented CSR aspects included in the top Romanian travel agencies websites**

Travel agency	Key words or expressions from "CSR", "About us", "Vision", "Mission" and "Values" sections
Business Travel & Tourism	"permanent improvement of working conditions", "occupational health and security", "we respect employees' rights", "we do not tolerate any kind of discrimination", "equitable disciplinary practices, working hours and remuneration", "we assess and control the workplace accident and health risks"
EXIMTUR	"we periodically organize internal or external specialization, sales, communication, and customer care training activities"
Filadelfia Tourism	"we ensure all the necessary resources for our employees to be continuously trained and prepared in order to develop their competences"
Prompt Service Travel	"our employees represent our most valuable resource and therefore we try to take great care of our team", "we try to offer the best working conditions", "we offer professional promotion opportunities to motivated employees"
Transilvania Travel	"sales and communication training sessions are periodically organized"

#### 4.8 Environment-oriented CSR aspects

In what concerns environment-oriented CSR aspects, only one of the twenty travel agencies analyzed, namely "Business Travel & Tourism" (one of the two agencies having a CSR dedication website section), includes in its website such references, mentioning among its CSR policies the "prevention of environment pollution" and the "monitoring and measuring of environmental performance". Nevertheless, the travel agency's website does not include any other detail regarding these policies, nor does it make any other reference to environment-oriented CSR aspects (examples, implementation results etc.).

### 5. Conclusions

The results of the current research show a relatively low engagement of the top Romanian travel agencies in CSR activities, at least considering the extent to which they communicate these aspects through their websites. The whole website-analysis reveals, by far, that the most frequent CSR aspects included in the top Romanian travel agencies' websites can be categorized as market-oriented, service quality being the most emphasized facet, fair pricing and ethical/honest/transparent communication being also consistently emphasized. Nevertheless, other market-oriented CSR aspects, as well as employees-oriented, society-oriented or environment-oriented CSR issues are very scarcely (or, in some cases, not at all) included within the content of the investigated travel agencies' websites.

A possible explanation of this situation could be the fact that the top-management of these travel agencies does not understand or realize the significant positive impact that CSR activities and, moreover, their communication/promotion, can have on their companies' success, even though these companies are medium-sized enterprises. For that matter, Mandl &

Dorr (2007) demonstrate and outline the fact that CSR can positively influence SMEs' in several ways: improved products, better customer satisfaction and loyalty, higher motivation and loyalty of employees, better publicity due to the award of prizes and/or enhanced word-of-the-mouth, better position in the labor market, better networking with business partners and authorities, cost savings and increased profitability, and increased turnover/sales.

Nevertheless, the fact that the top Romanian travel agencies websites do not suggest a significant engagement in CSR activities does not mean that the investigated companies are not actually concerned or engaged in CSR. The problem might be mostly related to the lack of importance their top-management assigns to online (including own-website-based) CSR communication.

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