

ROMANIAN TRAVEL AGENCIES: RE-BUILDING UP CORPORATE IMAGE THROUGH OFFERS

IOSIM IASMINA¹, POPESCU GABRIELA¹, PASCARIU ANKA¹, MARIN DIANA¹,
DUMITRESCU CARMEN¹, NEGOIȚĂ GABRIELA³, DRAGOESCU ANDREEA*²

¹*University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timisoara,
Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Romania*

²*University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I" from Timisoara,
Faculty of Agriculture, Romania*

³*West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, Timisoara, Romania*

*Corresponding author's e-mail: andreeadragoescu@usvt.ro

Abstract: *This study presents and analysis of the way 10 Romanian travel agencies ranked among the first 10 in Romania in 2019 have managed to re-build their corporate image after the Covid-19 pandemic through offers made on their websites. The authors investigated the "About (Us)" page of their websites in search of common and specific "offers", identifying the most common offers mentioned on the websites of these travel agencies, the travel agencies with the largest number of offers, and the qualifiers of these offers.*

Key words: *travel agency, corporate image, corpus analysis, offer*

INTRODUCTION

The corporate image of an organisation has been defined in various ways. Abratt [1] gathered some of these definitions: "the net result of the interaction of all the experiences, beliefs, feelings, knowledge and impressions, that people have about a company" (Bevis, 1967), "all planned and unplanned verbal and visual elements that emanate from the corporate body and leave an impression on the observer" (Selame & Selame, 1975), "the sum of the visual cues by which the public recognises the company and differentiates it from others" (Bernstein, 1984), and "the profile-or sum of impressions and expectations of that organisation built up in the minds of individuals who comprise its publics" (Topalian, 1984). To note the recurrence of the word "impression(s)" in the definitions above. Gray & Balmer (1998, 697), defined it as "the immediate mental picture that audiences have of an organization", and pointed out that "corporate images can be fashioned more quickly through well-conceived communication programmes". Hence, the claim that corporate communication is "a critical link between the corporate identity and the corporate image and reputation". Argenti & Druckenmiller (2003, 3) defined it as "A reflection of an organization's identity and its corporate brand. The organization as seen from the viewpoint of one constituency." And mentioned that "Depending on which constituency is involved (customers, investors, employees, etc.) an organization can have many different images."

Impression (a graphic or pictorial representation of someone or something), picture (an impression of something formed from a description), and reflection (an idea about something, especially one that is written down or expressed) could all be synonyms for corporate image.

To understand the importance of corporate image, we need to go to a seminal study about the management process of corporate image (Figure 1). [1]

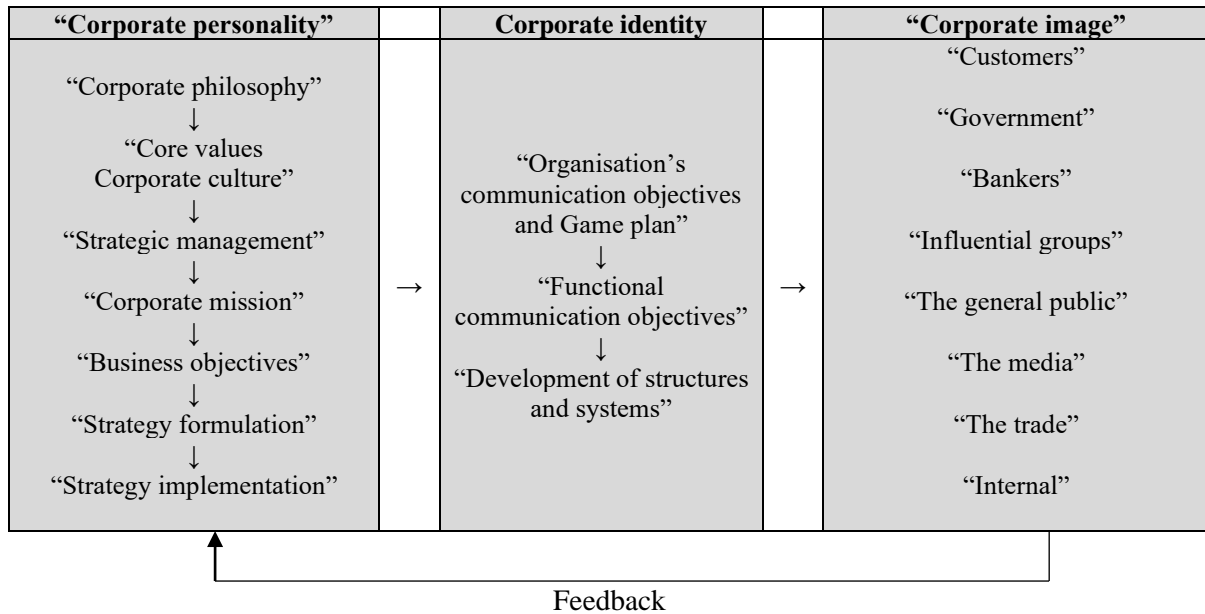


Figure 1. The management process of corporate image

Source: I.Abratt, R., 1989

Gray & Balmer (1998) designed an “operational model for managing corporate reputation and image” (Figure 2).

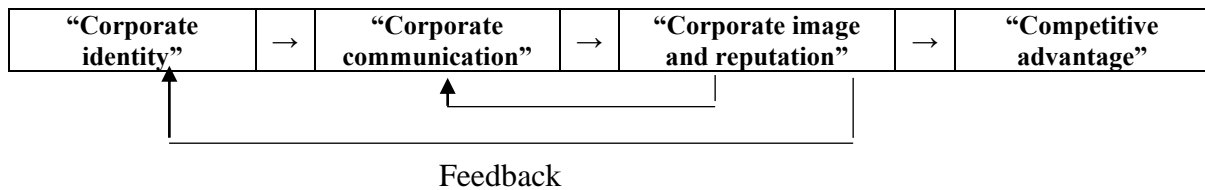


Figure 2. Operational model for corporate reputation and image management

Source: Gray, E. R. & Balmer, J. M. T.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material used in this study consisted in the offers identified on “About (Us)” page of the websites of the first ten Romanian travel agencies in 2019-Touring Europabus Romania [30], Business Travel [18], Paralela 45 Turism [27], Vola.ro [31], Christian Tour [20], Aerotravel [16], Eximtur [23], Happy Tour [26], Accent Travel & Events [14], and Prompt Service Travel Company. [9,29]

The method used was corpus analysis: both “theoretical corpus analysis studies” [3,8,12] and “practical applications of corpus analysis on the English of tourism” [4,5,7,10,11,13] have been used in this paper.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The offers of the ten Romanian travel agencies are shown in Table 1 below. They have been extracted from the “About (Us)” page off thee travel agencies, where available, and they reflect their situation after two years of Covid-19 pandemic and during a period of re-birth of tourist activity.

- Accent Travel & Events [14] has two special offers: a complete and advantageous offer for ski holidays in Europe through the SKIFUN platform and a German operators offer with the lowest rates for exotic holidays and individual stays through BISTRO PORTAL; [15]

- Aerotravel [16] offers, through CruiseHub, the cruises of over 10 profile companies, including Costa Cruises, MSC Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line or Silversea, as well as M.I.C.E. (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions) services; [17]
- Business Travel [18] has an “About (Us)” page in English, but no offer; [19]

Table 1.

Offers of the ten Romanian travel agencies from their websites

Offers	<i>Accent Travel & Events</i>	<i>Aerotravel</i>	<i>Business Travel</i>	<i>Christian Tour</i>	<i>Eximtur</i>	<i>Happy Tour</i>	<i>Paralela 45 Turism</i>	<i>Prompt Service Travel Company</i>	<i>Touring Europabus Romania</i>	<i>Vola.ro</i>
Accommodation abroad		x			x					
Accommodation in Romania	x	x			x					
Business travel services		x								
Circuits							x			
City breaks					x					
Client support										x
Complete tourist products					x					
Complete travel services					x				x	
Consultancy		x								
Corporate services								x		
Cruises		x			x					
Dedicated services					x					
Diverse destinations					x					
Diverse services					x					
Events					x			x		
Exotic holidays	x				x					
Financial transparency and control		x								
Good quality: price ratio					x					
High-quality tourist products					x					
High-quality travel services					x					
Individual stays	x				x					
Information										x
Interest-free instalment payments					x					
Liners									x	
Lowest tariffs upon reservation		x								
M.I.C.E. services		x						x		
Memorable experiences		x								
Multiple-benefit tripartite contracts		x								
Occasional transport									x	
(Online) ticketing		x			x					
Perfect experiences		x								
Personalised services					x					
Phone assistance										x
Plane ticket-included stays		x								
Preferential prices / tariffs					x					
Rent-a-car		x							x	
Reservation system								x		
Ski holidays in Europa	x									
Specific services					x					
Travel insurance		x			x					

- Christian Tour no longer has a website [20], but, in exchange, it has a Facebook account without any offer on its page; [25]

- Eximtur [10] characterizes its offer as “complex, extensive, varied” and offers such special programmes as “Early booking”, “Last minute”, “Plătești 10 și stai 12” (E “Pay 10 and Stay 12”), “Plătești 6 și stai 7” (E “Pay 6 and Stay 7”), or “Vacanțe pentru SENIORI” (E “Holidays for SENIORS”) ; [24]

- Happy Tour [26] does not have an “About (Us)” page;

- Paralela 45 Turism [27] has “not to be refused” offers and online offers; [28]

- Prompt Service Travel Company [29] makes its offers in English, including M.I.C.E. (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions) services; [21]

- Touring Europabus Romania [30] provides only transport services [22];

- Vola.ro [31] has accessible offers and a special offer-the #VolaTeAjuta (E Vola Helps You) campaign to bring clients back home. [32]

As shown in Table 1, Eximtur mentions 21 offers, Aerotravel mentions 15 offers, Accent Travel & Events, Prompt Service Travel Company, and Touring Europabus Romania mention 4 offers each, Vola.ro mentions 3 offers, and Business Travel, Christian Tour, Happy Tour and Paralela 45 Turism mention no offer.

A special mention should be made about Eximtur, a travel agency which offers specific services: [23]

- Choosing, personalizing and decorating the location;

- “Effective coordination of the event and elaboration of the final organization report”;

- Electronic services: online registration, dedicated web page design;

- Food services-catering, coffee breaks, festive dinners, opening receptions;

- Graphic conception, form editing, and printing;

- Identifying and attracting media partners;

- Inscription of materials and promotional objects;

- Logistical services and technical equipment;

- Pre- and post-event tourist programs;

- Preferential negotiated rates;

- “Professional solutions dedicated to outdoor and indoor team-building activities”;

- “Simultaneous translation services”;

- Strategic planning and assistance throughout the events;

- Transport services, transfers and accommodation.

Offer qualifiers point to exceptionality (17 occurrences) and economic advantage (9 occurrences):

- Exceptionality: complete (complete tourist products, complete travel services), diverse (diverse destinations, diverse services), high-quality (high-quality tourist products, high-quality travel services), preferential (preferential prices, preferential tariffs), dedicated (dedicated services), exotic (exotic holidays), individual (individual stays), memorable (memorable experiences), occasional (occasional transport), online (online ticketing), perfect (perfect experiences), personalised (personalised services), specific (specific services);

- Economic advantage: preferential (preferential prices, preferential tariffs), financial (financial transparency), good (good quality: price ratio), interest-free (interest-free instalment payments), low (lowest tariffs), multiple-benefit (multiple-benefit contracts), tripartite (tripartite contracts), and plane ticket-included (plane ticket-included stays).

CONCLUSIONS

Accommodation in Romania is offered by 3 travel agencies; Accommodation abroad, Complete travel services, Cruises, Events, Exotic holidays, Individual stays, M.I.C.E. services, (Online) ticketing, Rent-a-car, and Travel insurance are offered by 2 travel agencies each; Business travel services, Circuits, City breaks, Client support, Complete tourist products, Consultancy, Corporate services, Dedicated services, Diverse destinations, Diverse services, Financial transparency and control, Good quality: price ratio, High-quality tourist products, High-quality travel services, Information, Interest-free instalment payments, Liners, Lowest tariffs upon reservation, Memorable experiences, Multiple-benefit tripartite contracts, Occasional transport, Perfect experiences, Personalised services, Phone assistance, Plane ticket included stays, Preferential prices / tariffs, Reservation system, Ski holidays in Europa, and Specific services are offer by one travel agency each;

The travel agencies with the largest number of offers are Eximtur (21 offers) and Aerotravel (15 offers);

Offer qualifiers point two ties more to exceptionality than to economic advantage, which means that travel agencies pay more attention to the illusions they sell than to the real economic advantages of their offers.

It seems that only two of the ten travel agencies have paid proper attention to re-building their corporate image after the Covid-19 pandemic. Phasellus non arcu sed ex facilisis posuere sed eget quam. Donec eu vulputate lectus. Curabitur facilisis felis massa, auctor lobortis lorem aliquet et. Sed venenatis, nisi in fermentum dictum, sem nibh rutrum lectus, vel feugiat nisl libero id odio. Nulla a convallis orci. Donec ac massa quis eros vestibulum cursus commodo id nulla. Pellentesque dignissim, dui non molestie interdum, mauris nibh cursus massa, ut imperdiet ipsum eros eu mi. Suspendisse potenti.

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