# ANALYSIS OF THE TOURISM ENTERPRISES' IN CLISURA DUNARII READINESS TO ADOPT E-TOURISM INSTRUMENTS

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**ABSTRACT**

*This research has as main objective the analysis of the Small and Medium-sized Tourism Enterprises' (SMTEs) from Clisura Dunarii perception regarding the importance of ICT integration in the business strategy, as well as the analysis of the current situation regarding the promotion strategy and online distribution of touristic services granted.*

*In view of a thorough understanding of the situation and finding solutions for the identified problems within the tourism organizations in Clisura Dunarii, we have formulated two research hypothesis which have been validated according to the data collected and processed with an adequate research instrumentary. The current research describes the stage in the intermediation process of the tourism enterprises, by using the Intermediation- Dis-intermediation- Re-intermediation (IDR) Cycle as main analysis instrument. The research results show the need for improving the E-tourism performance in Clisura Dunarii destination, not only by the individual tourism enterprises, but by the Destination Management Organization as well.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Destination management, E-tourism, Tourism website;*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *M15, M31;*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

21st century, also called the century of informational society is appreciated by most of the economists and researchers in the field as being the century of digital trade, or of the Internet economy, with a crucial impact on the society based on knowledge. The tourism is an industry focused on the information, with a specific characteristic to grant products and services that are directly intangible in a direct way to the buyer, the moment of purchase. Given this main characteristic of the touristic products, that is its intangibility, the need of a strong communications mix is higher than in any other industry. In the context that the landscape of the international tourism modifies permanently it is necessary that the business operators from this domain be in permanent alert, relate and adapt in order to optimize the resources and to add plus value to their own organizations. This research has as objectives the thorough analysis of ICT integration in the business strategy of SMTEs from the touristic destination Clisura Dunarii. It is being taken into consideration the execution of a qualitative analysis of the Managers` perception of SMTEs from the destination Clisura Dunarii regarding the importance of ICT integration in the business strategy. As well, through the analysis of the online presence of the touristic websites from the destination aimed and through the analysis of IDR Cycle there is pursued the evaluation of the integration degree of ICT to the level of the promotion and distribution strategy of touristic services granted by the SMTEs from the region. For a better understanding of the whole situation there is being taken

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into consideration the performance evaluation of the destination website www.clisura-dunarii.ro in comparison to the main touristic destinations in Romania. In view of reaching the objectives of research there had been issued for validation the following research hypotheses:

*I1. If we were to compare the websites of main touristic destinations in Romania with the website of the destination Clisura Dunării, the latter has a performance under the average.*

*I2. If we were to report ourselves to the perspective of IDR Cycle, the SMTEs from the touristic destination Clisura Dunării are at present in the stage of disintermediation and there are created the premises for passing to the reintermediation stage.*

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following research instruments have been used:

• *Instrument 1: The structural analysis of the website of the touristic destination www.clisuradunarii.ro*

In view of the analysis of the destination website www.clisuradunarii.ro there was created an analysis framework of website contents and functionalities which contains 120 indicators that are grouped in the following sections:

The analysis of contents and functionalities of the site www.clisuradunarii.ro was achieved by granting a score with the value of 1 or 0, depending on the presence or the absence of each indicator. The value 1 is granted when the indicator is present on the website under analysis and therefore the content/functionality part associated is available, existing links that supply accurate information. The value 0 is granted if the information is absent or when the link leads to a generic website.

In view of validating the research hypothesis I1 there was used the same analysis framework for the evaluation of the websites of the main touristic destinations in Romania :

www.litoralulromanesc.ro, www.descoperadeltadunarii.ro, http://www.turism.sibiu.ro/,

http://www.turism-constanta.ro/, http://www.prahovatravel.ro/, http://www.inromania.info/,

http://moldova.romaniaexplorer.com/, http://www.baileherculane.ro/, http://www.vatra-dornei.info/,

http://www.visitmaramures.ro/.

• *Instrument 2: Semi-structured interviews*

In view of validating/invalidating the research hypothesis I2 there were made the semi-structured interviews with the Managers of nine SMTEs from the region. Interviewing the SMTE Managers there was selected as a viable method to obtain exploratory data regarding their perception on the business strategy. The deep interviews are considered to be the most appropriate method in order to obtain information regarding the perceptions, attitudes and convictions of the respondents (Frankfort − Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996; Finn et al., 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The sampling relied on the results of the analysis of the websites of the organizations from the Destination Clisura Dunării, the reason established being the one of selecting as subjects for the semi-structured interviews the representatives of the organizations with the most advanced online presence. The sampling was selected in order to include respondents that are informed and have a personal relevant vision regarding the subject under research. Fifteen organizations had been selected and contacted by phone, at the end being made nine interviews, which lead to a response rate of approximately 60%. The interviews were made at the respondents` workplace, for a period of three days, the duration of each interview being of approximately 45 minutes. The interviews had been organized in two sections:

*The first section of interviews* was made of a number of open questions that had as a purpose the data collection regarding the perception of managers on promotion strategies and current online distribution, of existing informational systems that support promotional strategy and of the factors that hinder the use of communication and informational systems in online touristic promotion. In

this section the participants received a set of questions, having the option of freely express their own opinion.

*The second section* was made of a number of structured questions with multiple answers and appreciation scales. The reason of this structure is to obtain as much information as possible regarding the unique characteristics of informational systems that are specific to the touristic industry. The information that is relevant to the research and which had not been pointed out in the first section of the interview can be obtained through these questions. The questions are conceived in order to allow the researchers the identification and evaluation of the factors that influence the adoption decision of E-Marketing but also of actual strategies used by SMTEs for the promotion and online distribution. For each factor the respondents granted a mark from 1 to 5 (1=total disagreement, 2=disagreement, 3=neutral, 4=agreement, 5=total agreement) which reflects in what extent the aspects presented motivate them to adopt the E-Marketing within the business strategy and in order to interpret the results obtained, there was calculated the average value for each factor analyzed. The five main interviews had been made with the managers of some hotel units from city of Craiova, Romania, in view of eliminating the possible misunderstandings and in order to provide clarity and the research comprehensibility. The feedback obtained was used in order to improve the research tool, some minor changes being made before launching the research.

The answers from the first section of interviews had been generalized based on the similarity between individual answers. There had been taken into consideration the conclusions as being actual facts, the moment when more than three answers to a question were similar. Nevertheless, certain various answers had been taken into consideration, in cases when the unique practices of certain SMTEs could not have been ignored. These cases are supported by the documentary research of the specialised publications (examples of good practice, that had been transposed in strategies that also the other SMTEs have to adopt). Similarly, the answers to the structured questions from the second section of the interviews had been introduced in Microsoft Excel programme, the aggregated answers being expressed under the form of arithmetic means, in order to obtain more relevant quantitative information. This information was used for the validation of the results obtained in the first section. In a particular way, the results regarding the factors that influence the ICT use were extremely relevant, because of incomplete qualitative answers received to open questions.

## 3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Hereinafter there will be presented the data obtained through the research instruments used.

### 3.1. The structured analysis of the website with the destination Clisura Dunării in comparison with the websites of the main destinations in Romania

In the area Clisura Dunării it operates the Tourism and Recreational Association Cazanele Dunării which created in 2009 the website: http://clisuradunarii.com/ that can be considered the official website of Clisura Dunării Destination. In order to analyze this site there had been used the Research Tool I1, that had been presented above. There has also been observed the presence/absnce of the 120 indicators identified on the official websites of some important touristic destinations. The presence of the site indicator was noted with 1 point (absence with 0 points). The scores obtained are the followings:

- *Information about the destination*: (7 points out of 13); there are maps, description, geopolitical and demographic information, the most important cities/places, list with the attractions, information about nature, seasonal information. There is no information about history, language and dialects, legislations, environment, guide books about the destination, the addresses of the Embassies and Consulates.

- *Cultural Information*: (4 points out of 12); There is the list of the places of historical importance and cultural, monuments/attractions, information about the folklore and traditions, the description of attractions. There is no list with the most important museums and galleries, the description of museums, description of exhibitions, information about cultural associations and patrimony conservation, description of local gastronomic specialities, local products, list of conferences, of the events organized in the area.

- *Practical information*: (2 points out of 4); There are present some climatic conditions and weather forecasts, but there are not weather reports or web cameras.

- *Local facilities*: (7 points out of 27); There is information about "how to arrive here" (train, plane, car), information about gardens and parks, the list of accommodation places: hotels, hostels, residences, residentships, apartments, bed and breakfast, camping. There is no information about the tourist information centers, local transport, prices and conditions, nearby train stations, the train schedule, taxi, subway, bus stations, bus schedule, conditions and companies for the guided tour of the destination, information about traffic and roads, parks, traffic rules, information for cyclists.

- *Functional Instruments*: (9 out of 38); There are evaluation services and booking for the accommodation, of sending the page to a friend, site map, web contacts, news, web contact form, photo gallery, video gallery. The website does not have: trip planner, research engine for accommodation or attractions, trips organization on itineraries suggested by the user, virtual tours, 3D Presentation of the monuments tours/attractions, searching events and booking tickets, forum, versions in several languages, printing pages, internal research engine, help site, downloading brochures and guide books, website version for mobile devices (phone), buying online tickets, link to official pages, officials blogs, frequently asked questions (FAQ), reports and documents, chat with touristic operators, option of sending the brochures through the email.

- *Promotional Instruments*: (6 points out of 17); There are presented some special offers, "why to visit", suggestions of accommodation, of itineraries, journey information. There is no information about the best attractions of trips. As well there is no information about the tourism offers or suggestions and guide books about couples, for groups, for families, for disabled persons, for eco-green holidays, for reduced budget holidays, events.

- *Information about the entertainment*: (2 points out of 9); There is information about spa & wellbeing, fun/relaxation. The website does not present information about night life, clubs, casinos, food and drinks, list of bars and restaurants, information about restaurants and bars or information about purchases.

As a whole the website www.clisuradunarii.ro raised 37 points out of 120. In Figure 1 there is presented the score obtained on this website on the six criteria analyzed, in comparison to the maximum score that could be obtained, as well as the website of touristic destinations Maramureş and Constanţa (the most performant and the weakest tourstic website from those subject to analysis).
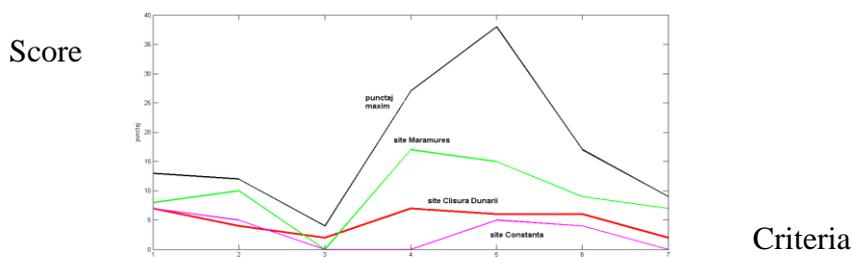


**Figure 1**. **Comparison of the results obtained from the analysis of contents and functionalities by some websites of touristic destination in Romania.**

On the horizontal axis there are enumerated the seven sections where there are grouped the criteria (1 = information about the location, 2=cultural information, 3=practical information, 4=local facilities, 5=functional instruments, 6=promotional instruments, 7=information about entertainment). From the comparison with the other websites of destinations there results that the website www.clisura-dunarii.com has a low score, only the websites www.turism-constanta.ro/ and www.inromania.info having an inferior score. The highest disparity in regard to the maximum score there is observed to the criterion Functional Instruments, where less than 25% from the requirements are being satisfied. Nevertheless, the website satisfies the basic requirements of Romanian tourists, to whom it is exclusively adressed.

Some informational lacks of the website are the result of the organization way of social and economic life in the area. For example, the lack of information about local transport facilities (bus programme, stations, etc) can be a consequence of the fact that the local transport is uncoordinated and the programme changes are frequent. On the other hand booking online tickets is not a priority for the Romanian tourist, as long as in the area there are no big shows or cultural repetitive actions.

But unfortunately updating the site is not constantly made and its content does not reflect not even close the complexity of the activities organized in the area. In conclusion, the website does not represent an effective tool of active promotion in order to attract tourists in the area. The fact that there is no Romanian version, it excludes from the start a category of tourists that could be very profitable, that is foreign tourists. In order to become trully attractive, the content of the official website of Clisura Dunării Destination should be improved, and the functional tools should be added, even if their use is limited.

### 3.2. Semi-structured Interviews

As we have already mentioned, the interviews were structured in two sections. Hereinafter there are presented the relevant results obtained upon the application of the interviews:

*Part I of interviews*: The answers received in the first part of interviews were centralized, allowing us to reach the following conclusions:

- the website represents for SMTEs an important means of promotion, of improving the communication with clients and not necessarily a means in order to reduce the number of intermediaries from the distribution channel;
- the majority of the SMTEs Managers did not rely on professional webdesign services. This can be explained through the financial limited resources of SMTEs, but another motivation could be the fact that the decision makers do not grant a great importance to the differentiation through an online performant presence;
- implementation websites strategy did not rely on a rigorous research and planning of the resources that are available, but the decision to create a website was taken spontaneously. The websites do not show a special complexity, a criterion in creating the websites being that they can be easily managed in an internal way. The process of websites creation had generally relied on the analysis of other touristic websites in Romania, the structure following a frequent pattern of touristic website;
- the general conclusion related to the managers` perception on the need of specialization in IT is that there is not granted any special importance in this domain;
- the activities that are specific to traditional Marketing keep to be predominant, but the respondents declared that they intended to develop other techniques that are specific to E-Marketing in the near future. Most of respondents use E-Marketing resources, mainly in order to communicate with customers`, in order to promote the products and services offered in order to support the company`s commercial activities. Most of SMTEs subject to analysis have Internet, often using it in order to access the pages of other companies. In respect to the online performance of personal websites, a reduced number of respondents declared that it makes systematic updates of the content and generally it does not make effective activities of Management of Customer Relations, because only a part of the respondents mentioned that they have a customers` data base, that it uses for the

developments of a direct Marketing activity. The E-mail is the main means of communication with the clients, the respondents declaring as well that their websites offer them the possibility to register the users and communicate with through online contact forms;
- related to the execution of commercial transactions through website, any of the respondents seemed to trust this tool, the websites under analysis not having the online payment option through credit or debit cards;
- in the relations with the business partners, SMTEs generally do not develop marketing activities of the type Business to Business or Business to Government;
- as for the specific instruments of E-marketing (Internet, e-mail, mobile phone, intranet, extranet), SMTEs subject to analysis rely especially on the internet and e-mail and less on the mobile marketing, while none of the respondents uses the intranet or the extranet in its marketing activities. These results show *that ICT integration in the promotion strategy of SMTEs is still at an early stage, given on the one hand the lack of knowledge of managers or the decision makers, and on the other hand given the limited financial resources.*
**Part 2 of interviews**: In order to analyze the current stage there had been debated aspects related to the E-Marketing activities developed, but also by the marketing activities of type B2B, B2C and B2G. The ideas under debate and the scores obtained are shown in Table 2.

**Table 1. The results of the analysis regarding the E-marketing activities achieved by the accommodation units from Clisura Dunării**

| In my company: | Average score |
|---|---|
| We develop Marketing activities that are specific to traditional Marketing. | 3,55 |
| We develop Marketing activities by using traditional Marketing techniques, but we also plan to adopt the e-Marketing. | 3,88 |
| We do not have access to Internet or to any that means electronic Marketing. | 1,22 |
| We use the e-Marketing resources (as well as the Internet page and E-mail) | 4,22 |
| We use the e-Marketing resources (as well as the Internet page and the e-mail) | 4,33 |
| We use the Internet in order to access the Internet pages of other companies. | 4,66 |
| We use the e-Marketing resources in order to support the commercial activities of our company (for example information related to price, customer relations). | 3,88 |
| We make systematic updates on our site. | 2,77 |
| Our site is connected to a small data base of customers. | 3,33 |
| Our company interacts with its customers through registration forms, news bulletin and e-mail accounts. | 3,88 |
| We use the e-Marketing resources in order to develop commercial transactions (for example selling products and accepting payments through the Internet site). | 2,77 |
| We have a computerized customer database that we use for the developments of marketing activities. | 3,11 |
| We develop marketing activities of the type Business to Business (B2B). | 2,22 |
| We develop marketing activities of the type Business to Consumer (B2C). | 4,44 |
| We develop marketing activities of the type Business to Government (B2G). | 1 |
| We do not develop marketing activities of the type: B2B, B2C and B2G, but we plan to do this in the future. | 1,33 |

In accordance with the results of the research, the main E-Marketing activities address to customers. The results of the interviews are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. The results of the analysis regarding the main E-Marketing activities achieved by the accommodation units from Clisura Dunării**

| Our Company: | Average score |
|---|---|
| Does not use Internet in marketing activities. | **1,22** |
| Does not use the e-mail in marketing activities. | **1,55** |
| Does not use the mobile marketing in the marketing activities. | **4,22** |
| Depends strongly on the Internet in order to develop marketing activities. | **3,77** |
| Uses its intranet in the marketing activities. | **1** |
| Uses the extranet in marketing activities. | **1** |

Hereinafter there had been analyzed the internal and external factors that could influence the decision of integration of the new informational and communications technologies in the Marketing strategy.

Through internal factors we make reference to the factors that can be controlled and they result from inside the company. The results of the qualitative research show the fact that *there are several internal barriers in E-commerce integration in the business strategy of SMTEs.*

Through external factors we make reference to the factors that are not controllable, coming from outside the Company. The general conclusion of the analysis on the impact of external factors upon the ICT integration process in the marketing strategy is that the communication tools that are specific to E-Marketing are the first to be adopted, but in the relationship with the suppliers and distributors of SMTEs they still rely on traditional communications means. The influence of competitive environment was decisive in the decision of adopting E-Marketing, SMTEs trying to keep up with the market courses and to be competitive in a globalised market, where the competition no longer occurs to local level, but it extended through Internet to national and global level. The Government did not manage tu support SMTEs development initiatives of online promotion strategy, a strategy to national level of facilitating the ICT integration process in the business strategy of SMTEs, becoming an important promoter factor.

## 3.3 Intermediation-Disintermediation-Reintermediation (IDR) Cycle Analysis in Clisura Dunarii Destination

➢ *Online intermediaries (E-intermediaries):*

Upon semi-structured interviews and through the identification of main results obtained through the online research engine www.google.ro, in accordance with the pertinent key words established, there had been identified the main touristic E-intermediaries (tourism agents that have an exclusive online presence) that interfere in the distribution chain of products and touristic services from the region under analysis. Thereinafter there are presented the main E-intermediaries and the accommodation units from the touristic Destination Clisura Dunării with whom they concluded partnerships, in the order that they are supplied by Google research engine and implicitly in the order of their popularity among potential tourists.

● www.turistinfo.ro was inaugurated on June 24th 2011 and it was made by the Association of Young Entrepreneurs. The site contains information about 74 accommodation units from Clisura Dunării and it is the most significant from the point of view of the online presence for this area.

● www.infopensiuni.ro was inaugurated on November 11th 2004 and it contains information about 30 inns, all on the list www.turistinfo.ro

● www.cazarelapensiune.ro was cofinanced by the EU, being inaugurated in 2012. The website contains informations about 41 inns.

● www.pensiuni-vile.ro was inaugurated in 2004 and it contains information about 16 inns.

- www.infodestinatii.com was inaugurated in 2013 and it has partnerships with 11 inns.
- www.booking.com contains information about 6 accommodation units, from which two hotels.
- www.zona-clisuradunarii.viaromania.eu, inaugurated in 2009, contains information avout 3 inns.
- www.plecat.ro, inaugurated in 2012 contains information avout 2 inns.
- www.directbooking.ro, inaugurated in 2010 has a partnership with Paloş Inn, Orşova from the touristic destination under analysis.

  ➢ *Traditional intermediaries (tourism agencies)*

SMTEs from the touristic destination Clisura Dunării no longer rely on the intermediation made by traditional tourism agencies. This is due to the demand of accommodation facilities that becomes lower coming from offline intermediaries. As well, the tourism agencies generally collaborate with the accommodation units of higher dimensions, SMTEs with a reduced accommodation capacity preferring at present to collaborate with E-intermediaries.

  ➢ *Integrated intermediaries*

In view of establishing the existence of some partnerships with traditional tourism agencies that integrated specific tools to E-tourism, there had been identified in a first stage all the tourism agencies that SMTEs subject to analysis collaborate with. Subsequently, there had been researched the online strategies of these agencies, in view of framing them in the category of traditional intermediaries or of integrated intermediaries. The results of the research show the fact that there is a reduced number of intermediaries that integrated in the business strategy the online component, two identified examples being: www.tymestours.ro and www.banattour.ro.

Hereinafter we will analyze the IDR Cycle (Intermediation-Disintermediation-Reintermediation) for the touristic destination Clisura Dunării in view of establishing the stage that the destination is at.

The IDR Cycle was used as a main analysis tool for interpretation of the results obtained through semi-structured interviews with SMTEs representatives from the target region, as well as through the online analysis made by the researchers, in view of obtaining a thorough understanding of the transformation process generated by the Internet on the distribution channels used by the SMTEs from the region. The chart of IDR cycle for the touristic destination Clisura Dunării is presented in Figure no. 2.

The qualitative and quantitative analysis conducted lead us to the following conclusions:

- Until 2004 SMTEs from the region Clisura Dunării relied mainly on traditional touristic agencies for the promotion and distribution of products and touristic services.
- During 2004-2010 there were created partnership relationships with touristic intermediaries that were developing their activity exclusively in the online environment. The main partners, identified through semi-structured interviews and questionnaries were www.infopensiuni.ro, www.pensiuni-vile.ro and www.viaromania.eu. During all this period there is a growing number of touristic units that develop their own presence online, mainly with the purpose of promoting products and touristic services and not necessarily in view of making some direct sales to the customers.
- The period 2010-2013 was characterized, in accordance with the answers received from the economic environment, by the increase of the partnership offers from some touristic intermediaries that develop their activity exclusively online. The respondents pointed out the progressive increase of booking made online through E-intermediaries partners, to the prejudice of bookings made by means of traditional touristic agencies. During all this period 60% from the respondents built and improved their own websites, 20% also including online booking facilities.
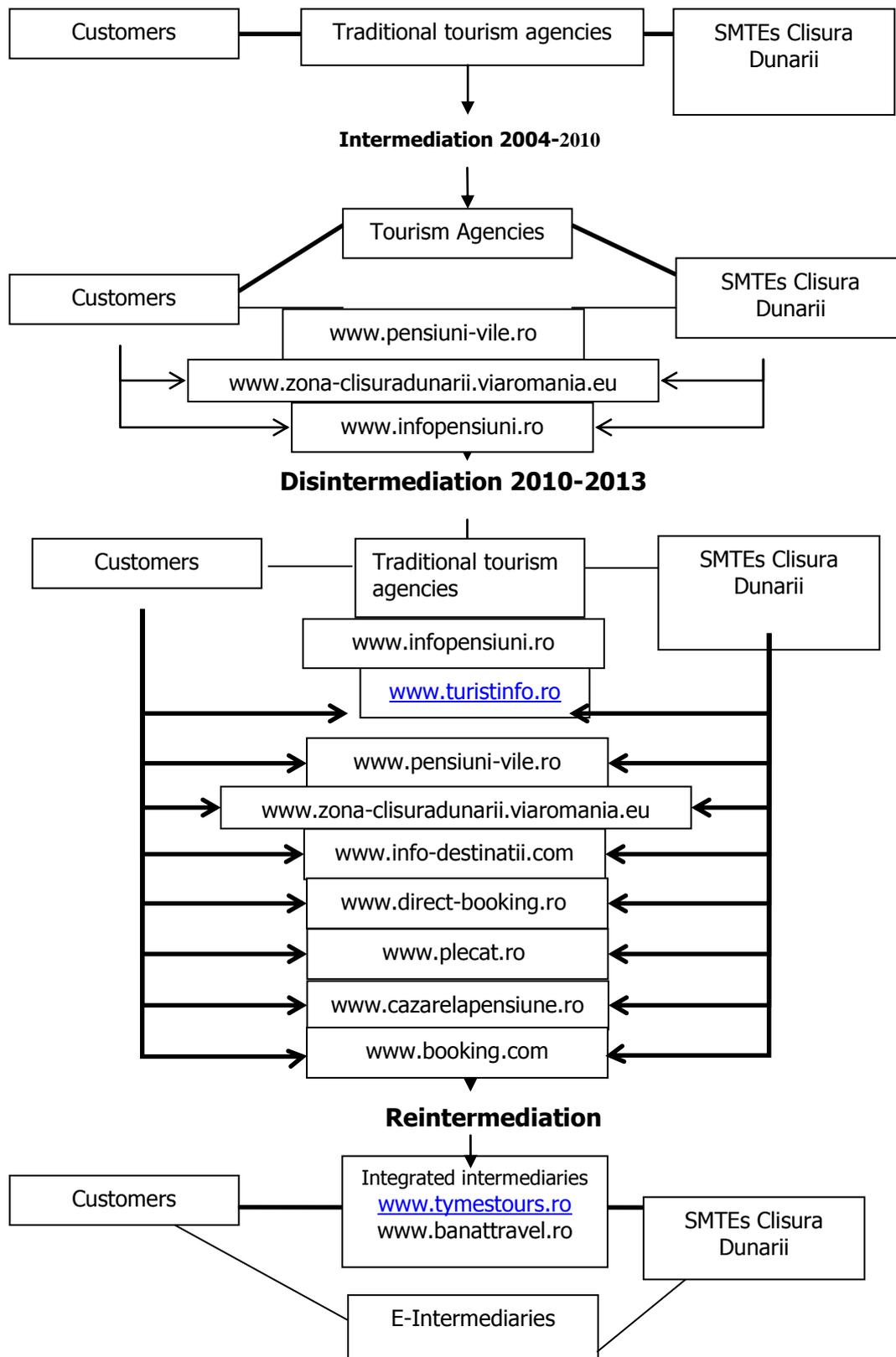
**Figure 2. IDR Cycle for the destination Clisura Dunării**

## 3.4. Validation Process of Research Hypotheses

***Research Hypothesis I1***. *"If we were to compare the websites of main touristic destinations from Romania with the website of Clisura Dunării destination, the latter one has a performance below the average."*

In view of the validation process of the research hypothesis there was calculated the total score obtained by the website www.clisura-dunarii.ro through a structured analysis presented in section 2.1 of this paper.
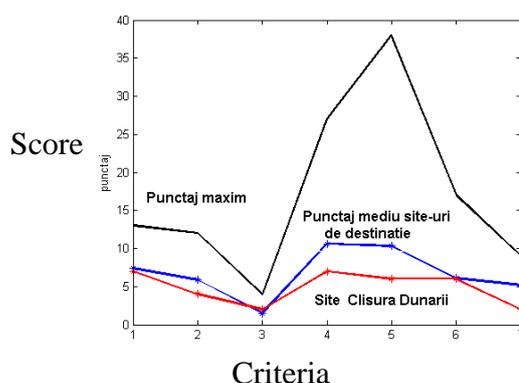


**Figure 3. Score of the website www.clisura-dunării.ro in regard to the average score of touristic destinations websites in Romania**

In Figure 3 there are represented the scores obtained by the website www.clisura-dunarii.ro to the seven criteria, that is:
1. *Information about the destination:* (7 points out of 13);
2. *Cultural information*: (4 points out of 12);
3. *Practical information: (2 points out of 4);*
4. *Local facilities*: (7 points out of 27);
5. *Functional instruments*: (9 out of 38);
6. *Promotional instruments*: (6 points out of 17);
7. *Information about entertainment*: (2 points out of 9);

The site cumulated a total of 37 points out of possible 120 points. In order to position the website of the touristic destination Clisura Dunării in line with the rest of touristic destinations in Romania, there had been calculated an average score for every analyzed characteristic. As it can be seen in figure 2, the total score obtained by the website www.clisura-dunarii.ro (37 points) is under the average of the other touristic destinations in Romania (47 points), therefore **the research hypothesis is validated.**

***The research hypothesis I2****: "I f we were to report ourselves to the perspective of Cycle IDR, SMTEs from the touristic destination Clisura Dunării is at present in the disintermediation stage and there are created the premises for passing to the reintermediation stage".*

In case of the touristic destination Clisura Dunării, the traditional intermediation of touristic services (through traditional tourism agencies) is vulnerable because of the apparition of E-intermediaries that offer the same services in the online environment, but with lower operational costs.

In the intermediation stage which, in accordance with our research started around the year 2004, the E-intermediaries, even if they granted similar services to those of traditional tourism agencies, they did not have very strong relationships with their customers, because of the offer novelty and of the approach. Starting with 2010, and especially 2011, there is observed the passing to the next stage of

IDR Cycle, the Disintermediation. This is shown by the reduction of the number of traditional intermediaries with whom the SMTEs from the region collaborate with and the significant increase of the number of E-intermediaries, as well as of the their performance. The intermediation websites managed to gain a significant market share, which is also shown by the number of SMTEs from the region and which are willing to give up to the collaboration with traditional Tourism Agencies and pay the commissions to E-intermediaries. It is extremely important to mention the fact that SMTEs do not grant a big improtance to their personal websites in what concerns the strategy of online distribution. To this stage, the managers choose to collaborate with the E-intermediaries and use their own websites only as promotion tools.

In accordance with the IDR Cycle, the next stage will be Reintermediation, once those traditional intermediaries will manage to adapt themselves to a new competitive environment and include technological innovations in their business pattern, becoming integrated Intermediaries. The reintermediation stage is predicted for the touristic destination Clisura Dunarii by the apparition of some performant websites of traditional tourism agencies, such as www.tymestours.ro or www.banattour.ro. *In conclusion, the research hypothesis issued is validated*

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

In this research there had been analyzed the perception of SMTEs Managers from Clisura Dunarii destination regarding the importance of ICT integration in the business strategy, the degree of integration of ICT in the strategy of distribution and online promotion of touristic organizations, as well as the performance of the touristic destination website www.clisuradunarii.ro in comparison with the main touristic destinations in Romania.

The main advantage of the collaboration with E-intermediaries for the SMTEs from the region consists of the fact it benefits of experience and professional IT services through which it is provided the first contact between the organization and the potential customers. A disadvantage is the fact that the information presented by the E-intermediaries is limited and it cannot be fully controlled by the SMTEs, which leads to a reduced possibility of differentiation in regard to the competition. In exchange, through its own website, SMTEs have the possibility to valorize to a maximum their touristic potential and to grant to clients a plus value. Nevertheless, the online reduced performance of their own websites shows the fact that SMTEs do not manage to exploit all the benefits granted by the online environment and they still depend on the E-intermediaries. Various Managers of SMTEs from the region are aware of the improtance of the online presence of their organization, but they do not have the necessary knowledge, or the financial resources in order to implement an appropriate strategy.

An important conclusion of the research is related to the insufficient financial resources that the organizations dispose of, which hinders them to develop their ICT infrastructure. But despite the limited resources, the respondents had not been influenced in their decision to integrate the E-Marketing in the business strategy by the cost involved. The poor integration of ICT in the Marketing Mix can be explained by the lack of advanced knowledge of the Managers of the decision makers in the E-Marketing domain, having as well a neutral attitude (score 3,33) regarding the importance associated to the Internet and the other E-Marketing tools in developing their business.

This poor awareness of ICT potential in promoting the business leads to a poor integration of E-Marketing specific tools in the vision of the company. Neither the employees nor the management of the organizations have a positive attitude in the direction of adopting E-Marketing, which is reinforced by the conclusion that no organization has a qualified responsible employee exclusively for the Marketing Strategy of the Organization. In what concerns the technological infrastructure, SMTEs subject to analysis present a reduced level of hardware and software performance, but they all declared that they have an Internet access.

But the development perspectives are encouraging, the respondents declaring that they would adopt E-marketing in the future, no matter the size of the organization, the costs involved and even if they do not have skilled employees. Only a reduced numbers of respondents consider that it is not necessary to adopts E-marketing, because it activates to a local level.

As a whole, *the perception of respondents related to the integration of E-Marketing is positive, they consider that it is not difficult to use the specific tools and that they represent a way of improving the effectiveness and quality of their work.*

This research is pertinent because it shows certain important aspects that should be taken into consideration by the targeted SMTEs regarding the integration of new technologies in the business strategy. This study shows the fact that SMTEs search for informal ways of acquiring new advanced ICT knowledge, the general tendency being the one to refer to family, friends or other alternative versions. A good strategic option would be that more SMTEs refer to external specialized services in this domain or train their employees, because the online performance and ICT integration to the level of business processes and collaborations and strategic alliances can represent an important source in order to obtain the competitive advantage.

The most often met areas for the ICT use among attending SMTEs to the study are Marketing, Serving Customers and in a more reduced percentage Finances and Accounting. This shows the fact that SMTEs from the targeted region should acknowledge the extraordinary strategic potential that the new technologies and innovative applications have.

When we refer ourselves to the online presence, SMTEs should build a communications strategy for the employees, customers, suppliers and distributors. The results of this study shows that there are clear differences between the ways chosen by the SMTEs in order to communicate to these stakeholders, and the various informational and communications technologies can have a key role even in the direct interaction.

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