

ROMANIAN BALNEARY RESORTS PROMOTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: *On the whole world level, the number of social media users is increasing. Even though it is assumed that social media in hospitality and tourism industry is used under its own potential. According to the statistics the most frequent used social media channel in Romania is Facebook, considerably in front of other social media channels. The aim of the research is to analyze the presence of balneary resorts promotional activity on Facebook and YouTube, from the specific indicators' perspective analysis. The results show an under valuation of these channels in spite of their use.*

Keywords: *social media; balneary resorts; promotion; tourist destination; Romania.*

JEL Classification: *M30; C80; L83.*

1. Social media and tourist destination promotion

Social media is a set of applications based on web 2.0 technology which allows the transmission and retrieval of content by their user. Users can share thoughts, exchange opinions, upload photos and videoclips, they can create groups based on common interests and participate in live discussions. Social media can be communicating support for promotional messages but also important means for information retrieval, direct interaction, reaction recording and direct exchange of information between consumers and so on.

The diversity of social media channels is very high and constantly dynamic. They exist under different forms: social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn; review sites, such as Booking, Yelp and Trip Advisor; image sharing sites such as Instagram, Imgur, Snapchat, Flickr; video hosting sites – 52% of the marketers say that video clip is effective for brand awareness (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014), such as YouTube or Vimeo; community blogs like Tumblr, CNET.com, P&G's Vocalpoint; discussion forums such as Reddit, Gaia Online, Quora; collaborative (or shared) economics network such as Airbnb, Rover; collaborative websites like Wikipedia; virtual worlds or virtual reality such as Second Life; social games (Mafia Wars); business communities (eBay, Amazon.com, Craig's List, iStockphoto, Threadless.com); podcasts; news sites (TV current); social bookmarking sites which allow users to communicate stories online, music, videoclips (Digg, del.icio.us, Newsyne, Mixx it, Reddit).

Worldwide, the number of social media users is continuously increasing reaching as of 2020, 2.96 billion users.

"Growing dynamics of SM (social media) suggest that it is not a fad" (Bonson et al, 2015). Promoting has to follow the targeted clients on their social media preferred channels; thus, advertising on social media channels became a necessity.

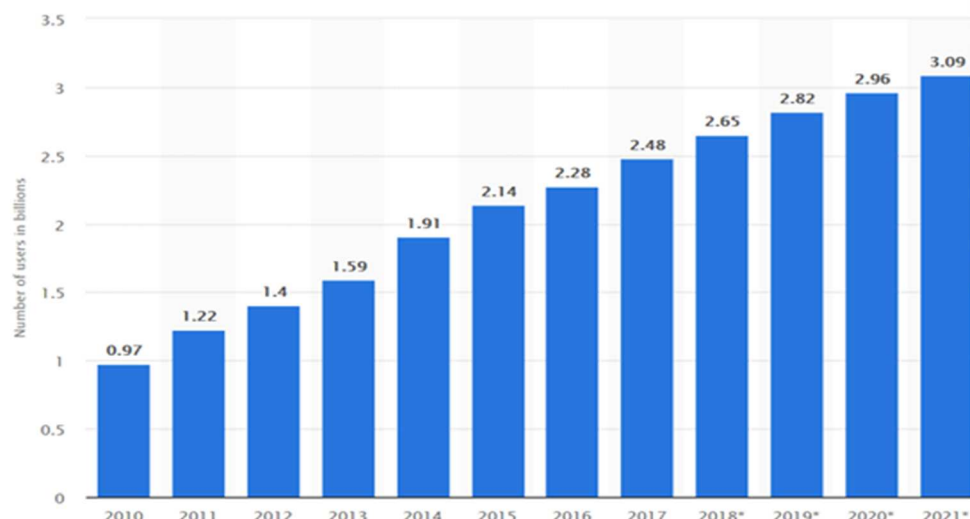


Figure 1: Number of social network users worldwide from 2010 to 2021

Source: Statista 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/> accessed in 7 February 2020

Advertising on social media sites has many advantages (Dehghani and Tumar, 2015):

- "to attract consumers' attention and address customization of their needs,
- (...) to encourage users to share the brand image and to develop free advertising,
- (...) is a less expensive solution than taking the risk of paying large sums to advertise in non-virtual media,
- (...) brands can speed up consumers' information dispatch,
- (...) consumers have more opportunities to increase viral messages created by advertisers to their contacts through Facebook,
- social media such as Facebook act as a check on the credibility of brands.

(Jorge et al., 2020) states that "is a growing interest in social media usage in tourism industry and the existence of empirical evidences that support the strategical importance of these platforms to achieve a better competitiveness of this industry...". (Leung et al., 2013) analyzed 44 articles regarding the use of social media by consumers and providers, especially in the field of tourism and hospitality. The findings of their study show that "social media appear to be a strategic tool that plays an important role in tourism and hospitality management particularly in promotion, business management, and research functions" (Leung et al., 2013). Also, social

media increasingly influence destination awareness and decisions on destination selection (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009).

However, it is appreciated that social media is used by the tourism and hospitality industry below its potential. "The online world is rapidly evolving and some companies may embrace new technologies due to the pressure to "be digital" but are not thinking about what it means to the business in a virtual environment" (Leung et al., 2013). The mere presence on the Internet is not enough; this can show the weaknesses of a company: rigidity, inability to interact (in a timely manner), inability to dialogue, etc.

2. Research Methodology

The purpose of the research is to analyze the Romanian balneary resorts presence on social media channels in order to promote their offer.

The research objectives are:

- to identify which social media channels are the most used by the Romanian balneary resorts;
- evaluation of the balneary resorts presence on social media channels, according to the performance indicators specific to the channel.

The research methodology consisted of analyzing the presence of Romanian balneary resorts on social media channels. Each social media channel was analyzed according to specific indicators. The data was collected directly from the internet during February 2020-March 2020.

The research hypotheses were made starting from the already registered data. Compared to the European average, Romania expose lower values related to the advertising over the Internet. Compared to an average of 25% in European Union, only 12% of Romanian companies make use of Internet advertising. In what concern social networking only 29% of Romanian companies use them for promoting activities, compared to 42% in the E.U. (Bertea, 2019).

By far, the most used social media in Romania is Facebook, followed, at great distance by other channels, as shown in Figure 2.

In this study we analyzed the presence of the balneary resorts on two of the social media channels, namely, Facebook and YouTube.

The hypothesis considered in the study were as follows:

- H1. Over 50% of the analyzed balneary resorts are present on Facebook;
- H2. Less than 50% of the balneary resorts having Facebook pages make use of all the indicators needed to assess the success of the presence on Facebook
- H3. The age of the Facebook page does not affect the number of likes.
- H4. Over 50% of the analyzed balneary resorts are active on YouTube.
- H5. The age of posting on YouTube does not affect the number of likes for that post.
- H6. The length of the videoclip does not affect the number of likes.

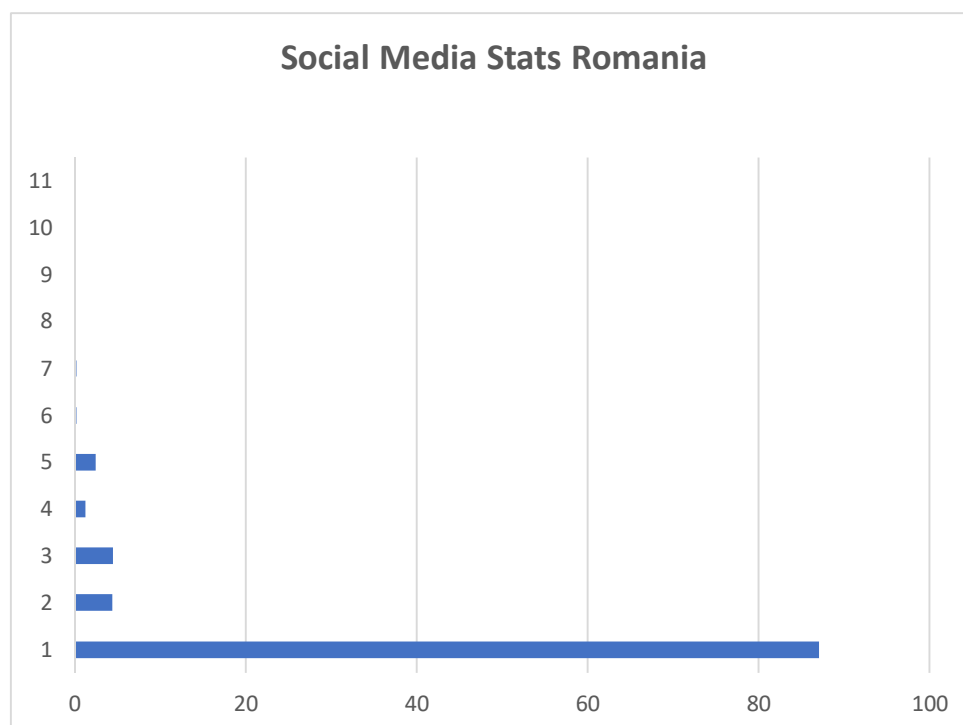


Figure 2: Social Media Stats in Romania in January 2020

Legend: 1-Facebook, 2- Pinterest, 3-Instagram, 4-You Tube, 5-Twitter, (6-Tumblr, 7-reddit, 8-LinkedIn, 9-Vkontakte, 10-Google+, 11-Other)

Source: StatCounter, Globalstats, <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/romania> accessed in 7 January 2020

The research stages were:

- The identification of balneary resorts, using for this the existing official sources;
- Collecting the official social media webpages (Facebook, YouTube) which promote the destination – touristic resort as touristic destination;
- Analysis of the social media webpages according to criteria specific to that channel.

For this research, we selected a number of 34 balneary resorts from the list offered by the Ghidul stațiunilor balneare (Ministerul Dezvoltării Regionale și Turismului, 2011), as shown in Table 1. According to Ordinance no. 109 of August 31, 2000, (Art.1, pct.a) balneary resort is defined as “the locality and / or the area that has resources of mineral substances, scientifically proven and traditionally recognized as therapeutically effective, of specific facilities for the cure and that has an organization that allows the granting of balneal medical assistance in appropriate conditions”.

According to H.G. no. 1016/2011, for 29 resorts was granted the status of balneoclimatic resort and for 4 the status of balneary resort. According to H.G. no. 1072/2013 was granted the status of balneoclimatic resort for 23 resorts. Some of the balneary resorts from Ghidul stațiunilor balneare (Ministerul Dezvoltării Regionale și Turismului, 2011) have been declared balneoclimatic resorts (in late 2011 and 2013). We kept the classification from the Ghidul stațiunilor balneare (Ministerul Dezvoltării Regionale și Turismului, 2011) because this aspect does not influence the present research. For each of them we search for both their official pages on social media (for the case they have one) as well as forms of promotion initiated by third parties (physical or legal), being included in the results only those sites which promote the entire resort.

3. Results and discussion

Searching and collecting information from the official Facebook pages has been done in February 2020 (Table 1). Facebook pages were created between 2009-2017. Among the stations analyzed, 82.35% have Facebook page, so H1 hypothesis is validated. Each page has as indicators of popularity measurement: number of Likes on the Facebook page, number of Facebook page followers, average of evaluation on Facebook page, evaluations number on Facebook page, number of recommendations.

Table 1: The Facebook pages of Romanian balneary resorts

Balneary resort/ Facebook address/created page	L	F	V	ME	NoE	R
Amara/18 februarie 2015 https://www.facebook.com/statiuneaa.mara/	1940	1982	3621	4.3	82	-
Bazna/21 februarie 2014 https://www.facebook.com/statiuneab.azna/	1570	1590	3121	4.5	120	-
Băile 1 Mai/ 20 mai 2014 https://www.facebook.com/VisitBaile1Mai/	898	919	31	-	23	2
Băile Felix/19 august 2012 https://www.facebook.com/Statiunea.BaileFelix/	11.413	11.567	-	4.0	32	22
Băile Govora/26 ianuarie 2010 https://www.facebook.com/baile.govora/	8.792	8.844	5.137	4.9	44	25
Băile Herculane/22 februarie 2012 https://www.facebook.com/baileherculane.ro/	2.317	2.307	4	-	-	-
Baile Olanesti/21 decembrie 2016 https://www.facebook.com/OrasBaileOlanesti/	675	698	16	-	-	-
Tușnad/8 august 2013 https://www.facebook.com/tusnad/	4.918	4921	-	-	-	-

Balneary resort/ Facebook address/created page	L	F	V	ME	NoE	R
Borsec/2 iulie 2013 https://www.facebook.com/LogicHostRo/	1241	1244	19.768	4.3	408	53
Buzias/11 decembrie 2013 https://www.facebook.com/statiunea.buzias/	1.422	1.451	5.912	4.7	52	28
Calimănești-Căciulata /29 ianuarie 2012 https://www.facebook.com/ILoveCalimanesti/	4034	4046	-	-	-	-
Covasna/25 februarie 2016 https://www.facebook.com/visit.covasna/	17860	18034	-	4.5	32	23
Geoagiu Băi/20 mai 2011 https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Geoagiu-B%C4%83i-163569080372376/	2.331	2.353	-	-	-	-
Lacul Sărat	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moneasa/13 februarie 2012 https://www.facebook.com/moneasaoificial/	2003	2020	-	4.8	21	2
Ocna Sibiului/29 martie 2013 https://www.facebook.com/ocnasibiu/	1281	1286	-	-	-	-
Ocna Șugatag	-	-	-	-	-	-
Praid/12 iulie 2009 https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Local-Business/PRAID-TRAVEL-102039718462/	133	126	-	-	-	-
Pucioasa/19 aprilie 2012 https://www.facebook.com/statiunea.pucioasa	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sărata Monteoru/17 octombrie 2017 https://www.facebook.com/sarata.monteoru.ro/	1127	1151	6647	-	-	-
Sîngeorgiu de Mureș	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sîngeorz Băi/27 septembrie 2010 https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community-Organization/Sangeorz-Bai-1504260763200626/	4625	4717	2	-	-	-
Slănic Moldova https://www.facebook.com/SlanicMoldovaOfficial	11.569	11.724	-	-	-	-
Slănic Prahova	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sovata/20 noiembrie 2015 https://www.facebook.com/visitsovata/	1.056	1082	6	-	-	2

Balneary resort/ Facebook address/created page	L	F	V	ME	NoE	R
Turda	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vatra Dornei/17 iunie 2013 https://www.facebook.com/lubescVatraDornei/	14.832	14.857	168	4.8	148	10
Vața de Jos/13 ianuarie 2011 https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Vata-de-Jos-183863564971213/	572	580	-	-	-	-
Voineasa/19 februarie 2011 https://www.facebook.com/StatiuneaVoineasa/	29.181	29.025	-	4.5	204	45
Eforie Nord/25 iunie 2013 https://www.facebook.com/Eforie-Nord-502122253201198/	958	965	-	-	-	-
Techirghiol/24 iunie 2017 https://www.facebook.com/StatiuneaBalnearaTechirghiol/	9.244	9.673	591	4.9	73	31
Neptun/24 iulie 2017 https://www.facebook.com/StatiuneaNeptunOnline/	554	568	-	5	3	2
Saturn	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mangalia/15 aprilie 2014 https://www.facebook.com/mangaliadragosteamea/ https://www.facebook.com/LoveMangalia/?eid=ARB19jgnchiBrZ_DM5pfUTrqTbAJnrmB-FwZRd0sxn6pJYDQzCxcqGVWU370NeCvWBVW7n3Fghw_SSwE4 / 19 iulie 2013	11.407	11.478	-	-	-	-
	10.557	10.509	153	4.9	53	3

(Legend: L- likes on facebook page; F- followers on facebook page; ME- average of evaluation on facebook page; NoE- evaluations number on facebook page; R- number of recommendations)

Only 21,42% of the 82,35% balneary resorts having a Facebook page present values for all indicators which measure popularity on Facebook. Under these conditions we assume that H2 hypothesis is validated.

In order to verify the H3 hypothesis, we made an average of the Likes recorded on the page according to the year of setting up the page. Naturally, elder pages should have brought more likes since there was more time available for registering the Likes. Anyhow, we assumed that not the page's age gives its success, but the posting frequency, interaction, attractivity, etc. According to chart in Figure 3 neither ascending nor descending trends of the Likes according to the year of setting up the page can be noted. In conclusion, hypothesis H3 is validated.

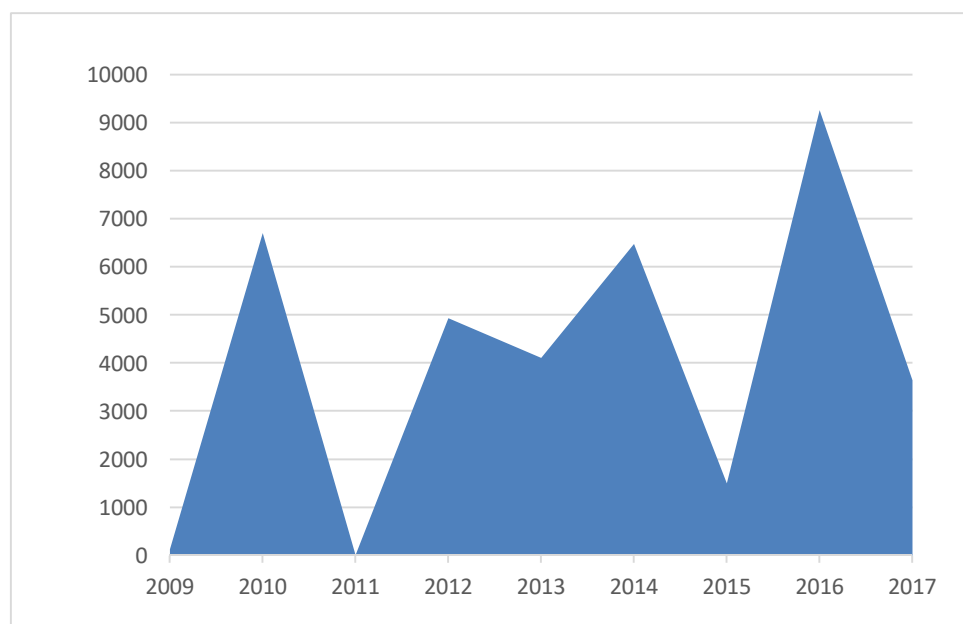


Figure 3: Average of the recorded Likes according to the year of setting up the page

In what concern the searching and collecting information YouTube pages the activity has been conducted during February-March 2020 (Table 2). We noticed that 94,12% of the balneary resorts use third parties (physical or legal) for promotional activities. Also, we noticed that all of the analyzed balneary resorts are present on YouTube, so that hypothesis H4 is validated. Each presentation videoclip has as popularity indicators: number of views, number of likes, number of dislikes.

Table 2: The Youtube videoclips of Romanian balneary resorts

Balneary resort/ Youtube	Dp	T	Nv	L	D
Amara https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XluHCtvfY1U https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrVni3KaMoo	15.03.2015 29.03.2015	3:02 2:56	69.491 17.181	243 34	66 10
Bazna https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INQ827hCHRI	19.04.2011	4:35	34.218	112	17
Băile 1 Mai https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZtElXs7uWE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8E_Lj7N0q8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay0va1te5Bw	15.03.2015 3.07.2017 29.04.2016	2:26 2:15 2:39	11.097 6.321 5.366	39 33 18	1 0 0

Balneary resort/ Youtube	Dp	T	Nv	L	D
Băile Felix https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5j6984kv3g https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llGYwYo5ewE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywZKFNFHJV8	7.07.2013 15.03.2015 26.02.2018	13:50 2:10 2:54	56.464 31.703 6.864	214 145 37	21 9 2
Băile Govora https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzlsbsDue_c	15.03.2015	1:47	15.506	63	7
Băile Herculane https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCDomuT2eFU&t=34s https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7TKkY2Rs2Q&t=25s https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xeiAc dRZyhq https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmElMI69YMq	13.08.2013 30.04.2014 7.08.2013 9.04.2017	25:00 10:22 24:59 11:09	177.655 60.221 55.645 37.786	508 303 226 127	70 23 14 38
Baile Olanesti https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1IWnD9bTu4	17.05.2016	17:24	18.347	94	16
Tusnad https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzDGjMsTyH8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylnyztBirag https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AykCuexML1o	10.06.2009 10.07.2012 10.07.2012	3:47 11:52 5:25	65.266 27.891 16.072	139 72 34	16 14 10
Borsec https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcT8u5XmQM4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tW9gZHUJtIY https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gmk-0F1QWc	2010 11.2019 16.09.2016	3:22 17:45 1:41	13.314 643 15.277	27 14 88	3 0 8
Buzias https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCB9rIFv5Al https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVp7p8nd3cs	15.03.2015 1.11.2017	3:22 5:43	24.598 2.923	116 28	11 1
Calimănești-Căciulata https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=821p6jl-TQ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uFzZkm510w	22.09.2016 28.05.2017	5:00 20:02	131.829 9.776	820 71	59 5
Covasna https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=869zDlzfOLs	28:2019	15:39	3.908	74	0

Balneary resort/ Youtube	Dp	T	Nv	L	D
Geoagiu Băi https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNfDDmsm4FE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsvqawa5k18	2.07.2017 2015	3:44 6:02	12.360 15.441	45 66	10 7
Lacul Sărat https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiEdj9iOZfo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Xyl2dLNRY8	13.06.2019 28.07.2018	7:20 0:58	1.381 2.792	13 14	1 1
Moneasa https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZhdn8raOYE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZu0tX9RQM8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2kijZKJ8rao	19.01.2014 25.08.2018 04.2008	5:27 3:41 3:26	11.977 5.876 18.505	36 41 17	6 7 3
Ocna Sibiului https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_Bzrxp54sE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IDx5qPnddY	7.03.2015 2011	6:15 8:50	27.900 23.333	76 41	12 7
Ocna Șugatag https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuaWKrO-5ZU https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Xyl2dLNRY8	7.06.2019 28.07.2018	3:08 0:58	3.463 2.793	21 14	0 1
Praid https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8laFnxoGsEM https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BL0LBoovVw8	6.02.2014 4.08.2014	6:41 1:09	71.585 46.295	343 84	32 9
Pucioasa https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q40J7QJ_Q5s https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOhSDDpiYSI	27.09.2018 5.08.2010	3:29 4:05	1.928 4.288	17 8	0 0
Sărata Monteoru https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aajBYgAoDU https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGfsuDw42fQ	9.10.2017 11.05.2011	7:54 4:14	2.459 79.329	10 195	1 32
Sîngeorgiu de Mureș https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZ857vMuT2g https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FXpAyyDJjk	17.08.2009 6.02.2018	3:0 3:23	22.064 2.012	35 8	2 2
Sîngeorgiu Băi https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUyn	23.11.2018	13:14	1.369	20	1

Balneary resort/ Youtube	Dp	T	Nv	L	D
6OHaxRM https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xF7nEhOo-9c	23.11.2018	5:30	2.415	31	2
Slănic Moldova https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONa1U6_bu7E https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2Mqg_0Y4pk	8.03.2014 3.09.2015	4:32 3:21	20.041 61.875	108 447	6 18
Slănic Prahova https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8qAXNxrNHg https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qj5PL4F8qCQ	6:11.2014 24.03.2019	10:20 5:13	57.485 7.968	250 132	32 13
Sovata https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW4N2gFFxGA https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DZyKUXkFNM	3.12.2016 8.06.2018	7:11 39:42	20.611 5.524	99 32	9 6
Turda https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psgsWZTrK2Q https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3x6ZPzO_4PQ	29.09.2016 21.01.2018	4:04 2:17	4.799 76.486	40 513	3 29
Vatra Dornei https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWCeYzGBrVc https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2J9MhTaAkg	2.12.2011 6.01.2017	2:09 3:19	23.782 21.046	82 203	11 3
Vața de Jos https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzpsofV8Ang&t=4s	18.08.2019	2:23	147	12	1
Voineasa https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jspaKGrVJXI https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svWZKGhqwyM	3.09.2012 26.09.2015	2:06 1:19	10.856 2.206	36 13	2 0
Eforie Nord https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fls5z_3-X0k https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gt8ViMdOV9o https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNlKS_R_el-g	14.08.2014 21.04.2015 27.07.2019	2:19 1:51 14:48	2.312 8.354 19.285	8 16 111	0 2 11
Techirghiol https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5crdan1_DfA https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A7-ELRZbUg	19.08.2016 12.09.2019	20:11 5:21	23.676 647	88 17	9 0
Neptun					

Balneary resort/ Youtube	Dp	T	Nv	L	D
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=em94CYihjEU	3.06.2019	10:43	36.735	292	32
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4ug6wdiND8	2.07.2019	27:57	1.571	14	4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-5hf3L5AC8	3.06.2019	14:10	11.918	85	7
Saturn					
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RabxWPQxVEc	17.08.2015	2:33	9.567	21	1
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H68jSorEOQQ	11.07.2019	3:53	2.312	21	0

Legend: Dp - date of posting; T – videoclip length; Nv – number of views; L- likes; D - dislikes

Identified posts have been made during 2008-2019. For all videoclips the number of Likes is far smaller compared to the number of views; also, the number of Likes is bigger compared to the number of Dislikes. Therefore, many of the viewers didn't provide a feedback.

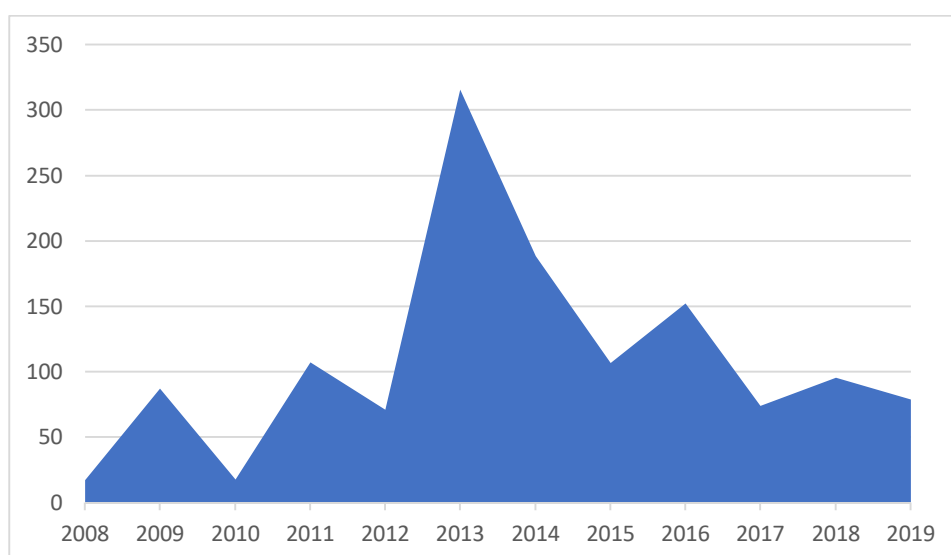


Figure 4: The average of Likes per videoclip according to the year of the videoclip posting

To verify the H5 hypothesis we averaged the Likes registered of the page considering the year when the videoclip was posted (Table 2). Both Table 2 and Figure 4 shows that neither number of views nor the number of Likes is influenced by the age of the page, even though an elder page should have brought more of

these indicators since there was more time available for viewing or registering the Likes. Therefore, the visualization/appreciation of a videoclip could depend on factors such as for example an increased interest for certain balneary resorts, willingness in seeing recently made videoclips, the quality of information contained in the videoclip, or the professionalism of its realization from a marketing perspective. Figure 4 shows that no trend for Likes can be established according to the year of the video posting (H5 hypothesis is thus validated). The duration of the videoclips (which vary between 0,58 and 50 minutes) does not influence either the number of views or the number of likes. This way, the H6 hypothesis is also validated.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of the balneary resorts' presence on Facebook and YouTube show that:

- Over 80% of the balneary resorts own official Facebook pages as well as videoclips (the majority of them made by third parties, physical or legal) for promoting purposes. However, there are situations when it cannot be stated if a Facebook page is official or not, as well as situations when two official pages coexist, which leads to the split of appreciations.
- Facebook offer companies a set of indicators for pages' attractivity analysis which can be analyzed during a period of time, but only a few owners (approximative 20%) are aware of these indicators and make use of them.
- The age of the Facebook page and, as well, the age of a videoclip doesn't automatically bring Likes, which mean that other factors are involved in the success of a webpage (or videoclip), an aspect which will be analysed in future research.
- The length of a videoclip does not influence the number of views or the number of Likes for that videoclip.

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