

INTERFACE AND PRESENTATION ON ROMANIAN TOURISM WEBSITES

Alexandra MĂRGINEAN¹

Abstract

The interest in this paper is to analyze the Romanian tourism websites of three famous travel agencies from the point of view of the user interface and the website presentation. We do not enter the technical area of functionality and actual programming, which would require ample and applied, domain-specific information for a pertinent insight, sticking, instead, to what can be detached from the interaction of the regular visitor, who is not knowledgeable in programming or design as a specialist, and from his/her basic navigation experience practically. To this purpose, we have chosen to draw a comparison between the websites of the Romanian tourism agencies Christian Tour, Happy Tour and Eximtur, which are analyzed from the perspective announced above, and as they appear in the autumn of 2023, more exactly the end of the month of October, so not around any special holidays, events or sales opportunities in our country. The purpose of the analysis is to indicate the way the websites present appealing elements for the user from an emotional perspective (in Donald Norman's terms), and to rank them from this angle, as well as from the point of view of user optimization at a first glance.

Keywords: web design, tourism websites, Romanian travel agencies, emotionality, user optimization

JEL Classification: H5, Z10

1. Introduction

In a world of an overflow of information, most of which can be accessed using the Internet, and implicitly websites, what people seek while resorting to this manner of getting informed is, mostly, to save time, which means that the importance of not only having the information available, but also of having it organized in the best way possible to make the experience of a search both efficient and pleasurable becomes overriding. This paper means to explore the extent to which websites of Romanian tourism agencies fulfil some basic principles of interface and presentation composition, to check if, in this field of tourism and in our country, there is enough interest to offer a qualitative navigation experience to the user. In a world struck by the pandemic in recent years, the quality and appeal of the website of a company performing in the field of travel and tourism becomes crucial in manifold senses,

¹ Associate Professor, Romanian-American University, alexandra.roxana.marginean@rau.ro

as business, sales and profit depend on it more than ever when the odds have been against this field altogether, and its re-launching needs to take fresh forms in every aspect, including online marketing and commerce.

To this purpose, three tourism agencies have been chosen on the criterion of representing the top positions in the classification of companies of this domain – according to Traveler: Christian Tour for the greatest earnings, Happy Tour for being the most popular in the eyes of the young generation, and Eximtur for enormous demand when it comes to Romanian sand-and-beach holidays [1]. The outlook in the analysis resorts to the layperson's opinion – which represents the regular user's and the non-specialists in web design. More precisely, we first think about the websites' likeability and the sense of navigation ease that they inspire. We look at the visitor's experience to see its degree of optimization from a less technical point of view, relying on intuitive insights. Last but not least, we point out the emotional aspect that favors a positive navigation experience and ultimately the visitor's behavior as a potential buyer of the products and services advertised on the websites.

2. First impressions of the homepages

This section means to compare the homepage of the websites upon a first glance. At a first look, Christian Tour's homepage is the roomiest, less choked with details, which renders a general feel of relaxation and organization of the available space. As opposed to this, the Eximtur homepage is much more cramped, leaving the Happy Tour one in the middle in this respect. However, this effect says nothing about the content, it is more about the atmosphere of the page as one enters it. Let us see the content of the homepages of these three websites in more detail.

2.1 Christian Tour

The horizontal menu at the top of the page, with a detailed selection in the drop-down classes, contains the categories "Destinations", "Holidays", "Package Tours", "Winter Holidays", "Accommodation", "Romania", "Early Booking", "Exotic", "Adventure", "Family", "City Break", and "Senior Voyage", most of which reappear in the vertical menu that follows in a separate white rectangle, on the left, which shows the following headings: relaxation holidays, individual holidays, vacations in Romania, package tours and pilgrimages, Senior Voyage, exotic holidays, plane tickets, accommodation, city breaks, autumn and separately winter holidays, sand-and-beach Early Booking ones, cruises, coach rentals and catalogues [2]. A second vertical column in the middle part of the white rectangular area is a form allowing visitors to select the destination, the desired means of transport and the period of the travel along with the number of rooms for a specified number of people, assuming the visitor is restricted by timeline and has a specific destination in mind, rather than having a preference for a particular type of holiday, or searching for something less exact, merely prospecting the market offers. The third column in this menu

invites the visitor to check the offers for a fairytale winter 2023-2024, the text appearing above a picture of some relevant items sending us to think of winter and travel.

Following on the page, there is a carousel that reiterates some of the headings enumerated in the menu above in the first column, adding photographs, and others, among which specific destinations, such as: Marocco (with a photo of a young woman in traditional garments); advertising the magical Lapland as the home of Santa Claus (accompanied by a photo in which a little girl sits on Santa's lap); a Cappadocia package tour titled the "40 laws of love" with a stylized air balloon; adventure and exotic travel (the photo of which shows some people riding in a safari and photographing zebras); Jordan with a photo of, most likely, Petra [3]. There is an announcement, involving TBI bank, related to financial issues and facilities as to how one may pay for the holidays more easily. The types of holidays in succession in the carousel include details such as a specified price, meal arrangements and some key stopovers or sights in the respective package.

Below the carousel, there is a Calendar button which sends the visitor on a page that enumerates the holidays one can go on by month of the year. Here, the usual categories under every month are listed by means of transport – plane, coach, cruises, but also the broad kind of holiday, i.e. relaxation or package tour, preceded by the transportation or the adjective "exotic" [4].

Back on the homepage, there follow some blocks with images and the types of holidays mentioned in the first menu, with the added categories "Groups" and "Business Travel" [5]. These are alternated, by groups, with, first, a horizontal menu entitled "Offers for holidays in Romania", displaying the possibility to select a city, and, secondly, in the same horizontal layout, "Offers for city-breaks" listing cities all over the world in an alphabetical order [6].

Under all these, we have three boxes of different, vibrant colors announcing "Christian Tour Values" (neon dark blue), "Payment in Instalments" (in purple) and "Terms and Conditions for signing up and paying for the products" (in green) [7]. On the next line, we have some logos accompanied below by concepts such as "Trust", "Safety", "Continuity" and the mention of the 26 years that the company has lasted on the market and, last but not least, a blog [8]. This third part of the page towards the bottom is meant to reassure and inspire trustworthiness and the seriousness of the business, giving additional details in the area of exotic holidays which seem to explore spaces that may appear estranged or might inspire uncomfortableness to the Romanian tourist given their more pronouncedly different nature and culture. This reassurance concern from the part of the tour operator shows the intention to take care of the potential customers' emotional and psychological comfort. After this, a newsletter button appears, which is strategically placed at the end with the sense that the visitor might acquiesce to subscribe, being convinced by all that (s)he has seen on the website.

On the Blog, on four columns, there are photos of such destinations as we have mentioned – Jordan, Cappadocia, Thailand, and African Serengeti – all introduced with a suggestive and at the same time intriguing and appealing description – Jordan as "pacifistic",

Cappadocia as “cool”, Thailand as the country of smiles, and Serengeti as a “dazzling wilderness” – to catch the visitor’s attention [9]. Then, there is some text, followed in each case by the “Read more” button which sends the viewer to a new page filled with details related to the respective place.

2.2 Happy Tour

The upper part of the homepage in the case of the Happy Tour website portrays two horizontal menus: one aligned right, which begins with “Disneyland Paris”, next to which there are the following destinations-countries listed: “Romania”, “Bulgaria”, “Turkey”, “Greece”, the Disneyland entry opening on a whole new different page, whereas the others provide a dropdown selection of options, containing mainly areas or cities, but sometimes sights (for instance, in Bulgaria, St. Constantin and Elena) [10]. The other horizontal menu, aligned left and right below this one, has as headings “Holidays by plane”, “Hotels”, “Plane tickets” and “Package Tours”, each displaying its own pertinent menu below, once the visitor clicks on an option, where (s)he is then able to complete personalized data and subsequently search for this tailored input [11].

The carousel that follows shows a range of holidays: “It’s time for a holiday in Dubai”; “Exotic holidays”; “Lapland 2023”; “Disneyland Hotel Is Re-opening”; “Pay for your holiday in Romania with vacation vouchers”; “Offer to your loved ones a present in the form of beautiful memories”; “Time for Cruises” [12]. Every entry has a button with “See the offers”, which opens a new page for details.

Below the carousel, Happy Tour chooses to use a fragment of text which presents the travel agency as a partner with the help of whom one can acquire memorable moments. In this centered text, there are bold words – types of holidays, i.e. “special offers” and “exotic” – and destinations – the ones in the first horizontal menu, Dubai from the carousel, and Egypt [13].

Blocks with images – “Lapland 2023”, “Exotic holidays” and “Dubai 2023” – appear below the title “Happy Tour Recommends” [14]. Then, other blocks are under “Holiday by plane in Egypt” with resorts and areas in the country, then some specific accommodations under “Discover Romania”, cities under “Plane tickets”, more (sometimes of the same) cities under “Hotels in the world”, and four countries under “Package tours by plane” [15].

On the Happy Tour homepage, the Blog appears in the grey area at the bottom, in a vertical menu on the left. On the right, the newsletter subscription is in the form of a white rectangular button on which it says, in red capital letters, “Subscribe”.

2.3 Eximtur

Eximtur begins with a left vertical menu entitled “Holidays” with four categories, “Holidays in Romania”, “Holidays Abroad”, “External Accommodation”, “Plane Tickets”

[16]. Upon hovering over the category name, we get vast choices opening up to the right, which represent an overview of the whole amount of offers.

Then, there is a horizontal form entitled “Where do you want to travel?”, providing options to be filled in a personalized manner once the desired option is chosen from the set called “Categories” [17].

The rest of the page is organized into “Eximtur holidays”, “Charters”, “Hotels in the country and abroad”, “External accommodation” and “Plane tickets”, portraying below each category rectangular photos with destinations that can be clicked on [18]. Also, every set of photos and destinations ends with a button on the right – “See more” – which announces that there are others that can be viewed in the set.

The Eximtur homepage ends with a thick horizontal blue bar, inquiring whether the tourist has found what (s)he was looking for: “Haven’t found the desired offer of period? Contact us” [19]. The “Contact us” is a white rectangular button on this blue field. At the very end of the page, there are the newsletter and blog buttons, coming in similar shape and on dark blue, and, respectively, light blue backgrounds.

3. Analysis

The very first item that appears on the homepage of both Happy Tour and Eximtur websites is a search field with “What are you looking for today?”, which is missing from the Christian Tour homepage. On Happy Tour it is smaller and placed on the right, whereas on Eximtur it is centered and bigger. We could say that using it appears to give the visitor much more search freedom. However, since the menus on all website homepages are extremely comprehensive, and information is repeated countless times, this search field seems redundant and unnecessary. Therefore, a good organization of the services and products on the page is much more important than the existence of this field. Christian Tour does not have one, and the homepage is not missing out on anything for this reason (quite the opposite, actually).

In the case of the Christian Tour website, the choice of photographs in the carousel is welcome, as it places the types of holidays in a context, sometimes creating a story around them or merely revealing a bit about the destination characteristics or activities. An intelligent manner of drawing our attention to the headings in the use of the photographs is that they are not of a single type but mixing cartoon-like ones with panoramic drone-like images, and some that appear to be created precisely as a visual input for that holiday. The blend achieved is multi-layered. On the one hand, it combines layers of identity, emotion and statuses that appeal to different aspects of one’s personality: playfulness and the inner child in the sketchy ones, nostalgia in the portrayal of a child and the myth of Santa (also addressing the parent, to stir in him/her the desire to do something for his/her little one(s)), mysteriousness, sensuousness and even sexuality with the picture of the beautiful exotic young woman and fit-bodied skin-showing young man and woman (in the early 2024-

summer bookings). Hence, more roles in the same human being are triggered, as well as diverse age categories and stages of maturity, in the idea that the visitor will definitely identify with at least one. The varied styles in the rendering of the images themselves cover a wide variety of preferences for simply the kind of picture one may like – more elaborate and lifelike, simplistic, more colorful, and detailed, suggestive of something and/or hinting at certain ideas or concepts, static or dynamic, panoramic or close-ups, some for which some preparation has been done in advance or merely looking like snapshots etc. These variations cover more moods as well, leaving one under the impression that a wide range of tastes can be and is in fact met by the products and services advertised on the websites, rendering the sense of completeness, richness, and potential satisfaction of more needs.

Above, where we have presented the carousel, we have said that the pictures are accompanied by bits of text that give us a glimpse of the actual characteristics of the offers. We could say here that the information chosen for these sneak-peak text boxes that come with the images is appropriate, in terms of relevance and quantity, managing to arouse one's curiosity without being burdensome or verging on something too complex to digest or take in. It has the right amount of conciseness, being at the same time descriptive enough to help one form a brief minimal impression or become intrigued.

In comparison with the Christian Tour carousel, the Happy Tour website uses only classical-type photos, and the information that accompanies them is only the title presented above the picture in each case. This renders a feeling that the carousel is more unitary or harmonious, to which the use of only a title with no other details for the offers contributes. The advantage is that it looks more spacious and perhaps classy, helping the visitor focus on the big picture and, since the information is absolutely minimal, actually be able to remember the options. The “less is more” approach is more elegant and provides a smoother feel to the navigation experience. Hence, aesthetics may have to gain from the decision to build the carousel in this way, with minimalist information and photographs that look the same. Nevertheless, finding out anything at all about the actual offers takes more time in this way, as it presupposes accessing another page. To a visitor who is in a hurry, this may be annoying, as opening a new page constantly may seem inefficient, and (s)he may give up consulting the offers altogether or become tired much sooner, before having the opportunity to check them and like something. Overall, interest stands more chances of being piqued and retained with the carousel on the Christian Tour site.

On the Happy Tour carousel, there is a spelling mistake in one of the entries – in Romanian, in original, “Vremea crozierelor” instead of, most likely, “Vremea croazierelor” [20]. Unfortunately, this is a gross mistake when it comes to website design, as an inattention of this kind seriously affects the good image of the business and impairs professionalism, so it is an absolute no, something to be definitely avoided at all costs. Even though everyone may realize and understand that it is of course an error, sloppiness in the making of the website echoes over the whole business organization and its activity, not just the site presentation itself.

The Happy Tour website uses, as we have seen, a text to address the visitors, with some words written in bold letters. This strategy to attract attention to them is, however, both redundant, unnecessary, as they all exist in the menus above, already providing the visitor with the means to find out more about them, and downright futile, as these terms do not incorporate links to send one to further information on them. From this latter point of view, they are even deceptive, as the person navigating the website would expect them to send somewhere, determining her/him to hover with the mouse over them, and when in fact they do not, this is both confusing and irritating. Hence, the only rationale behind the existence of the bit of text is that the creators of the website may have thought that the power of direct address is appealing – but have not considered the downturns of the manner in which they have achieved it. Moreover, the last line, which prompts us to travel “#happy”(/ily) with the agency – written in red, to draw even more attention in an attempt to symbolize power – sends to an Instagram page that does not exist, which is yet another blunder that only manages to create the opposite effect, of disappointment and displeasure, rather than the enthusiasm initially intended.

The three options under the recommendations made by Happy Tour are completely redundant with the offers found in the menus above (which the content creators must have realized, as they have the smallest size among the photos permeating the second half of the page). Their only plus is that they show some more pictures, which are indeed aesthetically pleasing. Also, as a plus, we notice the effort to use a different style for the respective categories, so as to help the user visually separate more easily the categories while scrolling down on the page. The three photos of Egypt destinations are much bigger than the recommendations and noticeably so in comparison with those of accommodations in Romania, the latter having a red band at the bottom with price ranges, which makes them even more visibly different. Those in the next, “Plane tickets” section, are wider and less high and so on, every time a detail being changed to mark the separate group of photos. The differences are sufficient to create visual separation quickly, and at the same time not great enough to engender a feeling of disproportionateness, incongruity or lack of cohesion.

Unlike on the Happy Tour homepage, on Eximtur all the categories containing pictures with destinations provide photographs of the same size and type. It is evident that Eximtur has chosen uniformity as a strategy in this compilation. The photographs are indeed high-resolution, and their evenness renders the impression of harmony, given their superior quality and vibrant colors. The ability to fast identify the category that they belong to with only a quick look from the viewer is lost, but the effect of consistency gives the page its elegance. The use of the same fonts contributes to this feeling as well. Another gain from this strategy would be that the visitor does not feel tired or baffled navigating the page. The similarities of the fonts, photos and sharp, even, aligned edges inspire neatness and order. These features also make the visual and mental assimilation of information regarding the layout smoother, as it helps prediction and is according to the expectations that the user subconsciously forms. If we think about the huge photo taking up the first part of the homepage, with the young woman relaxing in the long chair, we can conclude that Eximtur

aims through their website at the chief value of relaxation, avoiding stress associated with the baffling of expectations even in their design.

The Christian Tour homepage is the only one than ends with a consistent Blog section that is actually present on the page instead of represented by a button. As we have seen above, there are plenty of useful tips and even comprehensive advice as to what the tourist should expect in the exotic destinations introduced here and how to deal with the newness of these aspects from which one is more estranged, as they are significantly different from what is valid in one's home culture, and therefore potentially tricky to handle. This approach shows concern for the wellbeing of the tourist, appears as an intention to go the extra mile, where the sellers of tourist products put themselves in the shoes of their prospective customers, wanting to be of help as much as they want to sell and be profitable. This attitude wins popularity points, being a good marketing strategy. It mirrors an intention of reassurance, which scores high in the consciousness of the client, assuring a type of psychological comfortableness that determines more openness towards embracing the otherness of the portrayed destinations, putting one in the mindset of considering purchase more intently than if this extra element had not been present in this manner. The invitation to subscribe for the newsletter comes in the noticeable, unmissable big orange horizontal bar below, which invites one to accept a subscription for the newsletter which comes accompanied by a promise of better, "special offers" as an outcome spelled out directly. Then, the prospect of being bothered by regular advertising e-mails is overtly presented as having a definite advantage, which means that an emphasis is placed on the gain that the visitor would acquire.

In comparison with Christian Tour, the Eximtur homepage ends with the blue horizontal bar described above. The inquiry whether the visitor has found the desired product is formulated in the negative form, being a negative-interrogative sentence. This is a poor approach, as in Romanian the sentence begins with the word "No", inducing negativity without perhaps realizing it. Eximtur has the least emphasized introduction of the Blog, which is an entry among many in that vertical menu at the bottom of the page. It is not highlighted enough, coming after the entry "Careers" (which a lot of visitors may be confused about, as per its content and relevance). This lack of visibility is probably not recommendable when it comes to advice and testimonials – the information that can be typically found on a blog – especially given the temporal-historical slice that we are living these post-pandemic, ongoing-war chunk of history, when others' opinions and communication in general are elements that have been functioning as a lifeline on many occasions and have a huge bearing on consumer behavior. Also, as far as the newsletter is concerned, the sense is that Eximtur requires the subscription instead of offering it as an advantage. The button announcing it is too visible and bright, leaving the impression that the travel agency is too desperate or at least highly keen on obtaining it from the visitors.

We notice, on all websites, that the information is arranged in such a way that the same categories reoccur, differently arranged, taking into account various possible criteria of

selection. This is often a case of “needless duplication” in the navigation elements, accompanied, moreover, by “multiple competing navigation schemes” which race each other “for users’ attention” [21]. The recurrence and re-arrangement of the same information or headings in various ways may be a strategy to falsely render the notion of a greater amount of products and packages than the one really available, suggesting indirectly to the user that the business is expansive and the supply vast, hence that the travel agency is successful. Also, this kind of layout will actually lead the user to the same products, no matter which path is chosen, much as in a network in which “all roads lead to Rome”. On Happy Tour, the categories under the recommendations made by the agency are completely redundant with some of those in the carousel above.

All the websites seem to display categories in an extremely subjective manner, apparently in no particular order or coherent logic within a set. About these categories, we could say that they are a bit confusing, often not mutually exclusive and not fitted according to the same classification criterion: “arbitrary, overlapping, nonexhaustive, and subjective”, resembling Jorge Luis Borges’ funny (and supposedly imagined) animal classification Chinese encyclopedia, whose categories include “Suckling pigs”, “Mermaids”, “Fabulous” and “Tremble as if they were mad” [22]. On Christian Tour, the categories enumerated above under the “Calendar” button illustrate this.

We notice a tendency on Christian Tour and Happy Tour websites to introduce an element of magic and infantilism with the presence of Santa Claus, snowmen (on the former) and Mickey and Minnie Mouse (on the latter). Both of these websites try to bring out and address the inner child and evoke all the connotations surrounding (nostalgia for) this character: the need for feeding her/his needs and fulfilling his/her wishes as an adult – perhaps due to a compensatory mechanism of the adult soothing his/her childhood version as a care provider later on in life, and thus acquiring a sense of accomplishment and success; the sense of security back in one’s childhood, when life was much simpler while one was simply cared for and decisions were made for the child’s benefit in his/her stead; the sense of being carefree again etc. Addressing the inner child is a strategy of putting one in a good mood and thus making the visitor more open to suggestions. If the visitors have children of their own, then the tactic above, of addressing the inner child, combines with the trigger of the role of the good parent, offering his/her child a nice holiday and thus a joyful experience, basically making the child happy and thus reassuring oneself as a fit/good parent. Eximtur focuses on a different need, namely the adult’s need for relaxation, the wide huge photo in the opening of the homepage being evidence of that – the young woman relaxing on a long chair, with her back at us (signifying that she has left all her problems behind, and a devil-may-care attitude), facing the beach and sea water, with her hands at the back of her head to suggest a comfortable position. The infantile, childhood-related magic and fantasy elements are missing from the Eximtur homepage, but they are replaced by the cult of one’s wellbeing.

Taking into account the above, we could draw some conclusions on which type of design is favored on the websites under analysis, among the three mentioned by Donald Norman in his study *Emotional Design*. He describes the existence of three aspects of design: the “visceral”, in which “appearance” and beauty is primordial; the “behavioral”, which prioritizes “effectiveness of use”; and the “reflective” [23], which is about a “personal component”, “meanings” and the object being a “symbol” or “reminder” of identity, “an expression of one's self” [24]. Norman warns against the faulty conceptualization of a dichotomy between emotion and knowledge, feeling and mind, saying that “Emotions are inseparable from and a necessary part of cognition.” [25]

From the criticism brought to some aspects in the organization of the homepages under scrutiny, it is obvious that the behavioral aspect of design is not primordial, as attention was not on a particularly rational and disciplined layout. It was rather about the seeking of emotional and visceral components to be displayed in the design. This is achieved with the use of triggers for the inner child, magic, elements from the childhood universe, and the value assigned to relaxation by mature adults (on Eximtur). Photographs and colors, raising nostalgia or a positive state are deemed more important than text. Emotions are useful because they enable choice [26]. Among the things that give rise to “positive affect”, we find “‘attractive’ people” [27] (portrayed on the Christian Tour homepage), which, along with “arousal” prompt individuals to act more, and more in the line of what they immediately desire without thinking of the consequences, so driven by “Mr. Hyde” [28] rather than the superego, less conservative, and prone to impulse buying to satisfy the pleasure of self-indulging in a holiday.

4. Opinion poll

The opinion poll was performed on a focus group of twenty second-year computer science students. The rationale behind it was to overlap intuitive user hunches and layperson's opinions of the websites with the perspectives of future specialists, who already have some minimal technical knowledge on matters such as user optimization and front-end work, but not enough to fully put an imprint on their choices.

The participants in the poll had to answer two questions, comparing the three homepages:

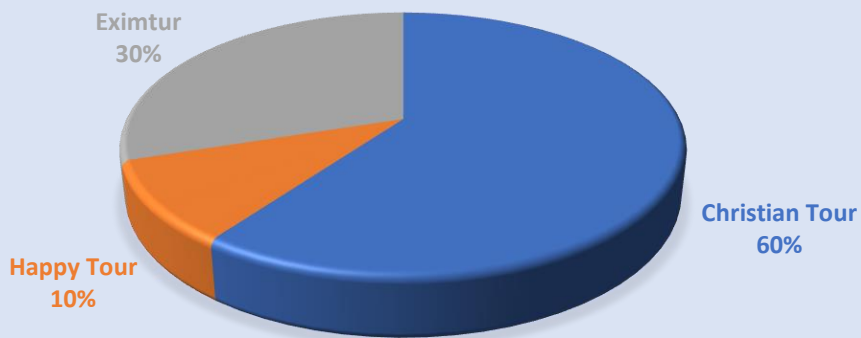
- 1) Which website is better from the point of view of user optimization of the homepages? State two reasons why.
- 2) Which homepage is aesthetically more pleasing? Give (an) argument(s).

We have to make here the comment that even though the second question seems purely subjective, if it is answered by the future specialist – so someone who looks at it with a more informed eye than the regular, unknowledgeable visitor – there will be at least some unconscious professional influence on the input, as the judgment will be made having at the back of the mind some knowledge as to what is recommendable when it comes to harmony and aesthetics in the drawing up of website pages. Thus, their opinion is not the

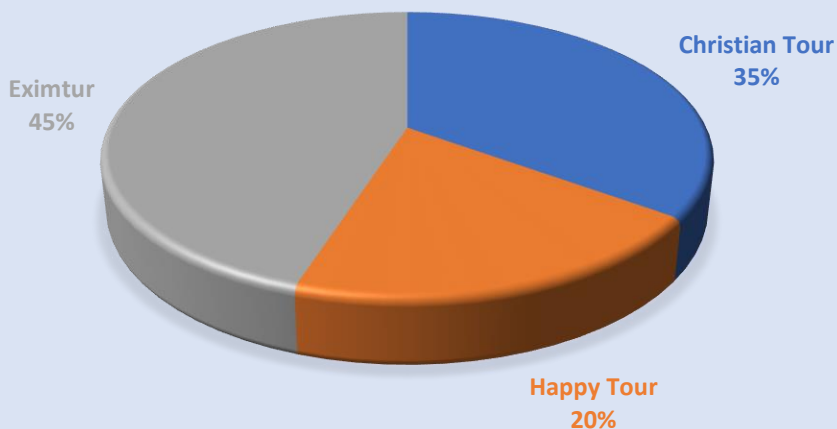
totally “innocent” one of the naked eye – so to say – but includes the outlook of the specialist-to-be, which we consider beneficial here, as the purpose is to establish what is aesthetically right while having at least some idea of computer science sanctions.

The results are summed up in the following two charts.

QUESTION 1
WHICH WEBSITE IS BETTER FROM THE POINT OF
VIEW OF USER OPTIMIZATION OF THE
HOMEPAGES?



QUESTION 2
WHICH HOMEPAGE IS AESTHETICALLY MORE
PLEASING?



We notice that in the case of the first question, there is wide agreement as to the fact that the Christian Tour website homepage is more optimized for the viewer. The opinion poll result reflects what we have intuitively provided as arguments for this perspective. Almost two thirds of the respondents agree on its superiority. Among the reasons provided by the students, the most prominent were it is well-organized, the types of holidays are clearly on display in tabs, so that the experience is pre-sorted; the search tool is visually well laid-out; better-chosen criteria for trip ideas in the second part of the page; one gets more information about offers at a first look. Professionally, the web technology used to create it is superior to that employed for the other sites, more modern, and the search menu works faster.

For the second question, there is a tight battle for supremacy between Christian Tour and Eximtur, with the latter winning over. The main reason is, apparently, the huge photo placed in the opening of the homepage, characterized as inspiring, exotic, and therefore drawing in the viewer. The fact that the homepages of the other websites use forms instead of this tool is apparently seen as a disadvantage when it comes to aesthetics. This dreamy element has thus made the difference in a positive sense. This is more forcefully valid and relevant given the particularity of the products and services sold on it, which address leisure, i.e. the dreamy element is necessary when the business is to sell precisely an escape from daily reality and hassle. It is possible, then, for this element not to have made the positive contrast had the object of activity been a different one. Paradoxically perhaps, the Christian Tour has gotten more comments or arguments in the “Why?” section of this second question, these being of the type: better color palette, with lighter colors that do not disturb the eye, rounded corners for the tabs or buttons, small fluid animations, which are supposed to enhance the pleasant feel given by the website. In contrast, the Eximtur page has received fewer pro arguments, the most recurrent being that it inspires relaxation, mainly through its background photo. This goes to show that relaxation trumps all the other enjoyable details, which goes along the contention made above related to the emotional component of one’s own psychological wellbeing and comfort being paramount, surpassing even the satisfactory fulfilment of social roles. Could an explanation be that the pandemic times have ultimately after all made us more egocentric or even selfish? Also, that people feel more stressed and need to escape from it? The respondents who chose Happy Tour brought in support of their claim the idea of a smaller agglomeration of details, finding the other pages a bit overwhelming from this perspective (a motivation invoked by those who chose Eximtur as well), also feeling that the combination of red and white is less predictable than white and shades of blue and somehow more engaging for this reason.

5. Conclusions

All websites resort to emotional elements. Be they nostalgia, the right to relaxation, the need for security or for successfully fulfilling certain roles, what they have in common is the element of emotionality. From the research, we may conclude that the feeling

component is considered a valuable trigger, deemed to be favoring purchase behavior. This is, as we have mentioned, the apanage of the specificity of the business of leisure which makes it relevant in context.

All websites have redundant elements, Happy Tour taking precedence in this respect in the negative sense. However, redundancy can also be a conscious choice, to send the potential customer to the same products and services over and over as a marketing strategy. The objective in this case would be to achieve smart redundancy, i.e. make it so that the customer should not immediately notice it or so that it is not annoying.

Even though Christian Tour uses a more modern and organized interface, with the most complex psychology behind it, visibly better optimized for the user, Eximtur nevertheless wins the points when it comes to likeability, although they are very close up in the visitors' preferences. What follows from this is that one's own relaxation component and suggestion seems to take primacy over the other elements.

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