

The Online Visibility of After School Programs in Timisoara

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Abstract: *In this paper, I have analyzed and compared the way institutions that provide after school programs use the Internet in order to persuade and to present themselves to the public. First of all, I will bring into discussion several comparisons between the way public institutions and private institutions that offer after school programs use the Internet in order to increase their visibility. Second of all, I will highlight a qualitative analysis by creating an online questionnaire addressed to the public educational institutions representatives. This tool aims to find out if and how the online visibility affects the existence of such programs. Finally, I will suggest ideas for service promotion if the institution does not already use the Internet for promoting after school programs. The analysis allows for a final conclusion to be drawn.*

Keywords: *after school programs, creative schools, extracurricular activities, education.*

1. Introduction

I chose this topic – Online visibility of after school programs– based on several reasons, but the most significant one is: as a future specialist in digital media communication, I know the importance of a good online

marketing for providing all kind of services, even educational. The educational institutional websites should offer information but also a communication channel between the institution and their clients. In this paper I have tried to make an analysis of the websites of educational institutions that offer after school programs in Timisoara by taking into consideration their visibility and utility in the digital environment. Therefore, this paper is based on the hypothesis that people spend a lot of time in the virtual environment, and the best way to promote any kind of service, even the educational one, is by increasing the online visibility.

2. Expert sources consulted

The topic addressed in this paper is part of the digital media field. I intend to highlight how an educational institution can create an online visibility, as a promoting and communication channel, thus building a digital consumer informational community. In order to accomplish this work, I have consulted various bibliographic sources: printed and online books, online studies and articles. Thus, I base my theoretical considerations on the following:

Gary Becker in "Human Capital" stated that education is the most important investment, when talking about the human capital: "Simply put, human capital refers to the abilities and qualities of people that make them productive. Knowledge is the most important of these, but other factors, from a sense of punctuality to the state of someone's health, also matter. Investment in human capital thus mainly refers to education but it also includes other things—the inculcation of values by parents, say, or a healthy diet. Just as investing in physical capital—whether building a new factory or upgrading computers—can pay off for a company, so investments in human capital also pay off for people. The earnings of well-educated individuals are generally higher than those of the wider population."

Also, Sir Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica in "Creative Schools" , hinted on some important ideas about creative schools and the

importance of an active communication between the provider of the education and the audience.

Last but not the least, Sir Plous Scott in “Tips on creating and maintaining an educational web site”, provided important information about how and why it is important to have an online visibility in the field of education.

3. Research methods

3.1. Comparative analysis

After a thorough documentation, I have chosen to analyze mainly the public educational institutions in Timișoara, with a brief comparison with private educational institutions.

I have chosen to use the comparative analysis as a research method. Since the subject is mainly focusing on the online visibility of after school programs, I have tried to analyze the existing sites from multiple points of view. According to specialists, a good, effective business website should satisfy the following criteria:

1. A Clean, Professional, Brand-driven Design
2. Well Written Content that Speaks Directly to the Target Audience
3. To Educate. Not to Sell.
4. Sharable Content & Easy to Subscribe to
5. Calls to Actions on Every Page
6. Each Page should be optimized for the Search Engines

This way, and by taking into consideration the mentioned criteria, I will perform a comparative analysis of educational institutions websites, in order to identify the most important elements, the common points, but also those points that differentiate them, and closely to highlight the importance and usefulness of the online visibility.

3.2. Online questionnaire

I will use the online questionnaire, as an investigative tool. I intent to create a questionnaire with a few short questions which I will address to public educational intitutions that provide after school programs. I am focusing one hand on the institutions that do not have a website

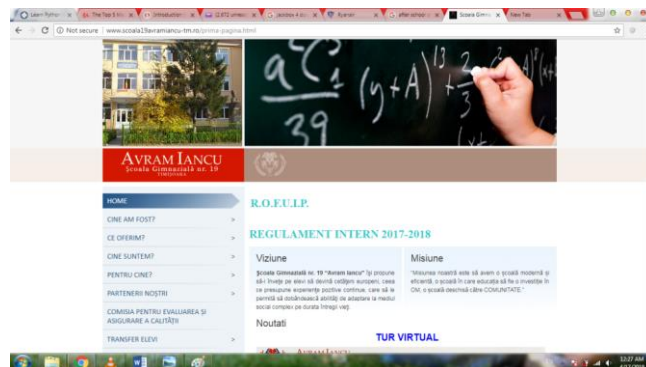
and an online visibility, and on the other hand, I am following the answers of those institutions that already have a website, in order to find out the changes that occurred once their online visibility was created, in order to point out the advantages and disadvantages.

4. Results

After a thorough research, some of the results are the following: On the one hand, almost neither of the public institutions that provide after school programs have an online visibility. The existence of websites in this case is scarce, an almost unexisting online communication channel with the audience. From a total of approximately ten such institutions, only 50% have a website. The information on the websites is not updated, almost no details about the after school programs, and the interface is not very modern.

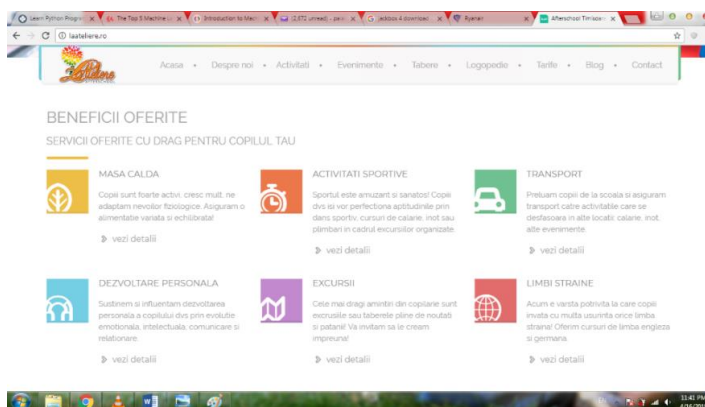
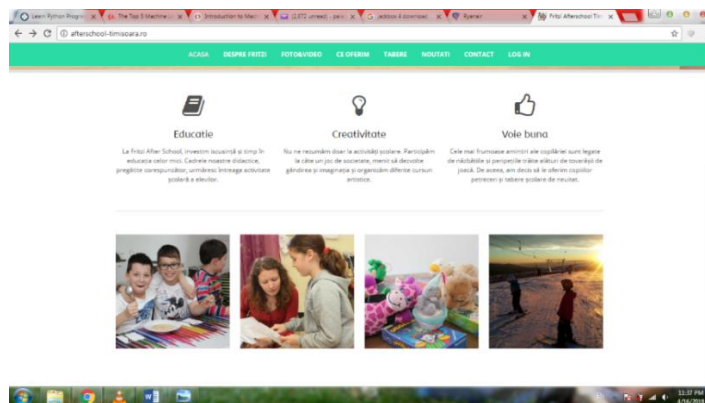
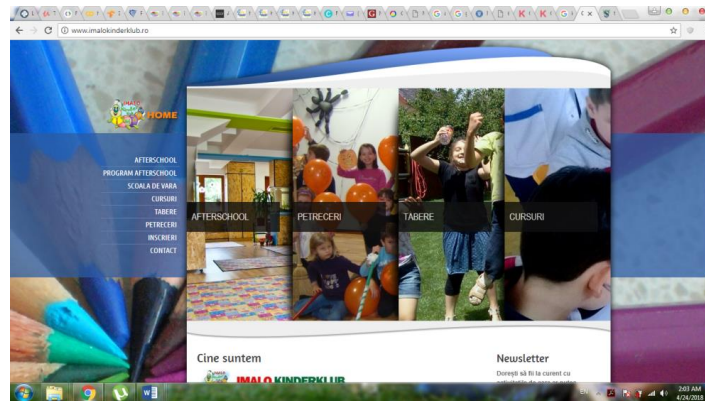
Public educational institution that provides after school programs' website:

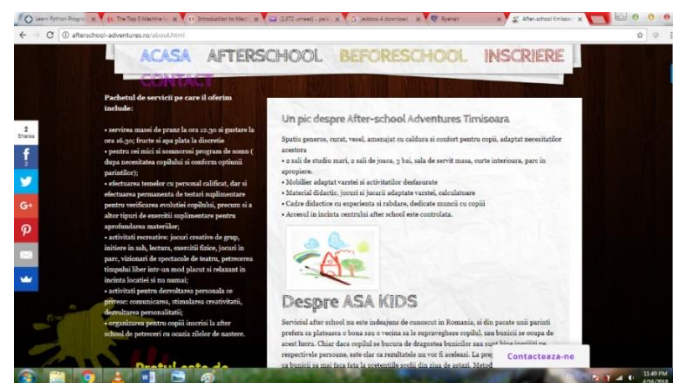
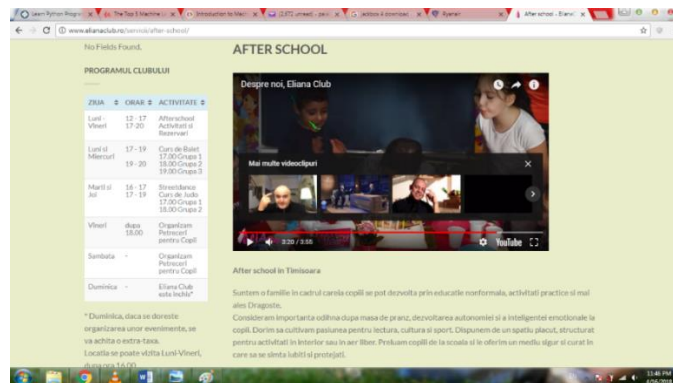




On the other hand, private educational institution that provide after school programs, seem to give a great importance to their online visibility. Websites are modern, up to date and the information is updated and public-friendly. From a total of approximately twenty such institutions, almost 100% have an online visibility.

Private educational institution that provides after school programs' website:





5. Conclusion

Based on the theoretical elements from the sources I have consulted, I have made a comparative study between two educational institutions websites, a public one on the one hand, and a private one on the other

hand. The comparative study was made by observing closely the usefulness of an online visibility and the importance of using a website as a promotional tool, but also as a communication channel between the provider and the audience.

Educational institutions that have an online visibility are actually more engaged in a good communication and relationship with their audience, which can be found in general active in the digital environment. Thus, websites are a necessity nowadays.

Therefore, in my dissertation paper, I will, on the one hand, compare, according to the same criteria, several existing websites of public educational institution and private educational institution. On the other hand, I will apply an online questionnaire meant to identify the usefulness of the website and the benefits of an online visibility on this field of activity. The questionnaire will be applied online and the results will be interpreted in the applicative part. Based on the results of the research and the results of the questionnaire, I will be able to make a proposal regarding the increase of the online visibility that I will eventually send to the institution concerned.

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