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Developing a Website to Promote Local Producers for Râșnov Creativ

Megan DeSanty, Luke Foley, Alexander Pietrick, Kseniia Romanova, Rebecca Young

Developing a Website to Promote Local Producers for Râșnov Creativ

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report
submitted to the faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Science

By:
Megan DeSanty
Luke Foley
Alexander Pietrick
Kseniia Romanova
Rebecca Young

Date:
27 April 2023
Bucharest, Romania

Report Submitted to:
Mihai Dragomir
Mioritics Association
Professors Melissa Belz & Melissa Butler
Worcester Polytechnic Institute



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Abstract

Local artisans in Râșnov, Romania struggle to promote their goods due to a lack of visibility. The Mioritics Association founded the Râșnov Creativ initiative to promote producers' handmade goods through a website that showcases artisan stories and products. The team interviewed artisans to understand their motivations in creating products, provided surveys to tourists to determine their desire for local goods, and compared other promotional storytelling websites. The team found that artisans want a close-knit community that shares their love for Râșnov culture, while tourists are interested in connecting with artisans through digital tools. These findings informed the development of the Râșnov Creativ website, where artisans will gain exposure and connect with a supportive community.

Executive Summary

Background

Rural tourism plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and creating job opportunities worldwide. It allows tourists to connect with local identity and understand the way of life (Popsecu, 2014). By showcasing artisans' unique, locally made goods, rural tourism enables visitors to learn about an area's culture and history while providing a source of income for artisans (Masset, 2020).

With half of Romania's population living in rural areas, the country showcases its rich culture through various festivals and interactions between local artisans and tourists; however, the country still struggles to promote local artisans and incorporate rural tourism into its economy (Avram, 2016; Popsecu, 2014; Poruțiu, 2021). Râșnov, a small rural town in Transylvania, is a popular tourist destination due to its fortress and location between two famous castles. Tourists enjoy visiting local stores in Râșnov, but often struggle to find meaningful, local goods, instead settling for kitschy, mass-produced souvenirs (Marica, 2015).



Figure A: Map of Romania with Râșnov Labeled

Local Râșnov artisans have struggled to market their products due, in part, to the long-lasting effects of communism. During the communist regime, the state did not have a strong economy and could not provide jobs (Badulescu & Hatos, 2013). As a result, people turned to entrepreneurship to support themselves. The transition to a market economy led to opening of borders and encouraged more Romanians to leave the country in search of better opportunities (Stan, 2013). This exodus sparked a loss of culture and tradition in rural communities and reduced the economic success of producers (Otovescu, 2019).

Websites are a valuable tool to help small-scale artisans market their products and spread cultural awareness (Taneja & Toombs, 2014; Maquera, 2022). A promotional website built in a storytelling framework connects artisans to consumers by encouraging an emotional attachment to the artisan and their brand (Williams, 2020). Studies have shown that a well-designed and well-maintained website can significantly increase the number of tourists visiting a particular area (Goyal, 2013).

Under the leadership of Mihai Dragomir, the Mioritics Association works to preserve Romania's cultural and national heritage through local initiatives. The Mioritics Association's efforts have an immense effect on the area by promoting and organizing local events. In 2023, they established a program called Râșnov Creativ to increase the visibility of local artisans. The team developed a website for Râșnov Creativ to connect local artisans to tourists and help them build a stronger artist community.

Purpose

The goal of this project was to assist the Mioritics Association in increasing visibility of artisans in the Râșnov Creativ initiative through a promotional website. To

successfully achieve this goal, the team completed the following objectives.

1. Understand the purpose of the Râşnov Creativ initiative
2. Comprehend the needs of local producers and tourists
3. Analyze how storytelling websites increase visibility
4. Develop and test a functional storytelling website prototype

Methods

To gather information about the Râşnov Creativ initiative's purpose, the team conducted a Zoom meeting with Mihai Dragomir, head of the Mioritics Association, to fill out the Business Model Canvas (BMC). In addition to the BMC, the team collected information about the initiative through in-person meetings with our collaborator, his colleagues, and local artisans.

We conducted surveys and interviews with five local producers to understand their marketing needs. The team also surveyed fifty-two tourists who visited Râşnov area over a two-day period to determine how they discover new products and attractions.

To determine the best design and features to include that encourage engagement from both tourists and producers, the team conducted a comparative analysis on seven promotional storytelling websites based on design and aesthetics, user experience and incorporation of producers' stories.

Using WordPress, the team designed a visually appealing and easy-to-navigate website that highlights the unique qualities of each local producer and their products. We also conducted think-aloud usability testing to create a list of improvements for the final version of the Râşnov Creativ website.



Figure B: Methods Timeline

Results & Conclusion

Establishing a strong online presence and gaining visibility is challenging for most producers. All five producers struggle with social media. This is attributed to a lack of social media use and an inability to attract followers. Even those who use social media consistently have a small following. While producers acknowledge the importance of connecting with customers through social media, they struggle with its usage. Most surveyed tourists use digital methods to connect with producers, highlighting the need for an increase in producer use of online platforms.

Out of five producers interviewed, all incorporate culture and history into their products. Andrei Negus, an illustrator selling products at the citadel, emphasized the importance of educating people about the history and heritage of the region. The producers share a mutual belief that the expression of their artwork holds greater significance than the medium used and the profit gained.

Despite the passion for their work and a desire to showcase the rich cultural history of Râşnov, producers struggle to connect with like-minded individuals without a supportive community. Four of the five producers stated that they were not part of a close-knit community before Râşnov Creativ. During the interviews, artisans expressed their excitement to meet fellow craftsmen in Râşnov Creativ who share similar passions.

Establishing a strong online presence and gaining visibility is challenging for most producers. All five producers struggle with

social media. This is attributed to a lack of social media use and an inability to attract followers. Even those who use social media consistently have a small following. While producers acknowledge the importance of connecting with customers through social media, they struggle with its usage. Most surveyed tourists use digital methods to connect with producers, highlighting the need for an increase in producer use of online platforms.

The comparative analysis of storytelling websites revealed that incorporating multimedia elements – such as images, videos, and text – enhances the user experience, engagement, and information retention. Of the websites that we analyzed, 85% had intuitive landing pages, that had many options for users to access various pages. Prioritizing the most important pages in the navigation menu is crucial for easy navigation through the website and plays a critical role in user retention. All websites had dedicated spaces for displaying producers' products and stories, and over half of the websites included multimedia on individual producer pages.

The team collaborated with the Mioritics Association and used research findings to create an appealing and innovative design that fulfilled all the requirements of the website.



Figure C: Landing Page of the Râșnov Creativ

Upon opening the website, the landing page displays the producer image

carousel, the highlighted producers, the product story, and the latest news feed. The “About Us” page describes the Râșnov Creativ initiative and the website. The “Local Artisans” page shows each producer in gallery view. The “Individual Artisan” page shows the producer’s profile image, story, information, and images of their work. The news page shows all the stories added to the website, with images, descriptions, a search feature, and a “latest stories” bar. The “Contact Us” page has a summary of why producers should join the program, and an email form to fill out for interested producers. In the creation of the website, the team used a minimalistic design to make it accessible and visually appealing.

The team projects that the producers will feel a sense of community and will share their stories with tourists by using this website. The team anticipates that more local producers will want to join the Râșnov Creativ program through the website, and that tourists will be enticed to explore the area and discover Râșnov’s remarkable products.

Acknowledgements

Our team would like to thank everyone who helped us make this project successful:

- Our collaborator Mihai Dragomir for giving us guidance on this project. Additionally, everyone at the Mioritics Association for helping us with the technicalities of the website and aiding in translation during interviews and surveys.
- Our advisors Professors Melissa Belz and Melissa Butler, who guided us in the right direction and provided us with constructive feedback.
- Our project center directors, Professors Rodica Neamtu and Bogdan Vernescu for setting up the Bucharest project center and providing us with the opportunity to complete this project in Romania.
- The Bucharest 2023 cohort for their continued support throughout the semester.
- Everyone who voluntarily participated in our surveys and interviews while in Râșnov.
- Everyone who participated in our think-aloud interviews over Zoom.

Authorship

Section	Primary Author(s)	Secondary Author(s)
Abstract	Megan, Rebecca	All
Executive Summary	Luke, Kseniia	Megan, Rebecca
Acknowledgements	Megan, Rebecca	All
1.0 Introduction	Megan	Kseniia
2.0 Background	Luke, Megan	Kseniia
2.1 Local Producers in Romania	Kseniia	All
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2.2 Websites as a Promotional Strategy	Kseniia	Rebecca
2.2.1 Benefits of Storytelling in Promotional Websites	Rebecca	All
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3.0 Methodology	All	All
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3.1.1 Business Model Canvas	Kseniia	Megan
3.2 Objective #2: Comprehend the Needs of Local Producers and Tourists	Alexander	All
3.2.1 Producer Interviews	Alexander, Rebecca	Megan
3.2.2 Tourist Surveys	Alexander, Rebecca	Megan
3.3 Objective #3: Analyze how Storytelling Websites Increase Visibility	Alexander	Kseniia, Megan
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3.4.1 Website Design	Kseniia	Luke, Kseniia
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1.0 Introduction

Rural tourism¹ plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and creating job opportunities worldwide. It can help prevent depopulation, as people are more likely to stay in their communities when they have employment opportunities (Lopez, 2021). By showcasing producers' unique, locally made goods, rural tourism enables visitors to learn about an area's culture and history through local products while providing a source of income for artisans and producers (Masset, 2020).

Romania has struggled to establish itself as a major tourist destination and promote creativity of its local producers². The transition to a market economy led to opening of the borders and encouraged more Romanians to leave the country in search of better job opportunities (Stan, 2013). This exodus sparked a loss of culture and tradition, which has negatively affected rural communities and the local economy (Otovescu, 2019).

Romania's tourism sector needs to develop better promotion, organization, and distribution of information regarding tourist destinations to promote culture (Sima, 2016). Studies have shown that websites are highly effective promotional tools, but many tourism organizations overlook their full potential (Dudensing, 2010; Yuan, 2004). Creating and maintaining a website can increase visibility, attract visitors, and improve quality of life for locals (Angheluță, 2020; Hassan, 2022; Avram 2016).

The Mioritics Association is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization which aims to promote places and events less known to tourists through promotional campaigns and support for cultural activities. In 2023, they launched the Râșnov Creativ initiative to connect local artisans to tourists within the Transylvanian area. The Râșnov Creativ initiative assigned the team to develop a website to promote local artisans.

The background discusses the challenges Râșnov producers face in reaching their audiences and highlights the crucial role websites play in promoting rural producers. The methods chapter details our project objectives and methods. The team then explains the design and implementation of the Râșnov Creativ website based on tourist feedback, artisan stories, and a comparative website analysis.

2.0 Background

The global souvenir market is expected to grow by 13.04 billion USD from 2021-2026, which signifies the intense demand and room for growth in this industry (Technavio, 2022). Research has shown that quality, local products are more appealing to consumers because consumers believe that indigenous products are of higher value and better quality (Heroux & Church, 2014). Furthermore, many tourists feel "bored to see such mass-produced and undifferentiated souvenirs in almost every souvenir shop" (Masset, 2020, p. 725). However, small producers struggle to market their goods against mass-produced, kitschy souvenirs.

Supporting local producers offers economic, cultural, health, and educational benefits, as well as awareness for the preservation of crafts and traditions (Tregear, 2016). People are drawn to rural tourism because it provides a connection to the local identity and allows tourists to connect with people and understand their way of life (Popsecu, 2014). In regions across the

¹ Rural Tourism – tourism in which people get to experience rural life and purchase products from small rural areas.

² For this project, words 'producers' and 'artisans' will be used interchangeably.

world, rural producers help diversify the rural tourism industry economy (Probstl, 2014). Using traditional methods, local producers create high-quality, distinctive merchandise for sale directly to consumers. Local businesses improve quality of life for residents by alleviating economic and employment pressures (Hassan, 2022). For producers in the rural tourism industry to be successful, they must have community support in their business and a means of promoting their goods (Monica, 2010). Producers share their passion for creating their products and gain support for their businesses through the sale of handmade, local goods.

2.1 Local Producers in Romania

In Romania, local goods are crucial for supporting producers and sustaining the area's economy. Half of Romania's population lives in rural areas (Popsecu, 2014). The rich culture of Romania is shared through a variety of festivals and cultural events (Figure 1), as well as through the sale of locally produced goods. Many rural producers depend on the profits from tourists purchasing their products (Popsecu, 2014). Romanian producers pride themselves on providing high-quality products that represent their unique culture (Gherasim, 2017). By creating meaningful products, Romania's producers can showcase their creativity to tourists through the goods that they create (Masset, 2020). Tourists are interested in bringing back souvenirs that are specific to the location they visited (Masset, 2020). However, given the increase in mass-produced souvenirs, Romania is struggling to both promote small producers and successfully incorporate the rural tourism industry into its economy (Avram, 2016; Poruțiu, 2021).



Figure 1. Râșnov Historical Reenactment Festival

Râșnov is a small town located in Transylvania that is popular for its fortress and location on the route between two famous castles. This town is home to numerous tourist sites which include shops where local producers feature their work.

2.1.1 Producer Challenges

The Communist period reshaped the culture and dynamics of the country leading to increased poverty and diminishing or destroying many historic traditions entirely (Britannica, 2013). After the communist regime ended in 1989, Romania transitioned to a market economy, but was seen as less advanced in comparison to Western European countries' well-established economies (Pop, 2007; Stan, 2013). This increased the number of economic opportunities, but Romania was a less preferable option for conducting business (Stan, 2013). Although there were more opportunities, the state did not provide Romanian citizens with guidance on how to support themselves (Badulescu & Hatos, 2013). As a result, Romanian citizens often turned to

entrepreneurship to support themselves despite facing numerous challenges in developing their business (Istudor, 2018).

Effective marketing remains the largest challenge that producers face (Gülsoy, 2018). To overcome this challenge, it is important for communities to work together and gain support from official channels (Gherasim, 2017). In Portland, Oregon; the craft sector saw success through the use of over 200 blogs to increase informal community collaboration (Curtis, 2016). Additionally, artisans could benefit from technical assistance courses on topics such as recording business metrics and initiating tourist communication. Support through the local government, including small business grants and education on how to meet quality, authenticity, and certification standards could help them market more successfully (Gherasim, 2017).

2.2 Websites as a Promotional Strategy

Websites are valuable tools for small-scale producers, helping them overcome obstacles such as limited visibility and inadequate marketing (Taneja & Toombs, 2014; Maquera, 2022). Studies have shown that a well-designed and well-maintained website can significantly increase the number of tourists visiting a particular area, providing clear evidence of the technology's attractiveness (Goyal, 2013). According to a 2009 Small Business Success Index© survey in the U.S., 61% of producers use social media to identify and attract new customers (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Websites can reach wide audiences and target specific demographics, such as families, outdoor enthusiasts, and culture seekers.

Studies suggest that a successful website should have a modern design, well defined structure, be up to date, content rich, easy to use, consistent, fast, and highly available (Al-hawari, 2021). Successful websites build a positive user experience to solidify brand longevity. In fact, 95% of consumers say that a positive user experience is the most important aspect of a website (DesignRush, 2019).

Due to a recent shift towards technology, producers have been forced to find new ways to connect with consumers through online platforms (Maquera et al, 2022). Between 2019 and 2022 the percentage of daily internet users in Romania jumped from 56.7% to 77.2% as they looked to form more digital connections (Eurostat, 2023). This shift allowed small scale producers to advertise to a larger audience with minimal costs (Maquera, 2022).

Maintaining an appealing website is crucial for a business to communicate its values, strengthen its customer connections, and expand its customer base (Pato ML, 2021). As consumers become more attracted to the internet, online platforms have become increasingly vital for spreading cultural awareness and achieving economic growth in rural areas and small tourist destinations (Maquera, 2022). Specifically, storytelling websites allow producers to increase their connection with the public by sharing their stories, backgrounds, and inspirations (Canziani, 2019).

2.2.1 Benefits of Storytelling in Promotional Websites

Storytelling websites aid in the advancement of smaller producers, providing economic, societal, and promotional benefits. A promotional website built in a storytelling framework is used to connect producers to consumers by encouraging an emotional attachment to the producer and their brand (Williams, 2020). By providing history on authentic craft techniques, origins of the business or the inspirations behind their work, artisans can create an emotional connection with their audience. This marketing technique is helpful for heritage-based producers who work to share their passions with the world (Canziani, 2019). An important piece of promoting

producers is the emphasis on the passion involved in their craft, rather than the financial incentive (Williams, 2020). Through this technique, small-scale producers can differentiate their products by defining their personal brand (Williams, 2020).

In recent years, storytelling has gained considerable importance in the realm of business and marketing (Manowicz, 2023). Through storytelling, companies have built brand loyalty and created emotional connections with customers, which significantly influence their purchasing decisions (Kotler, 2020). Studies have also shown that narratives have a considerable impact on consumer engagement and customer response to online advertising (Ching, 2013).

2.2.2 Challenges of Promotional Websites

Although websites are an impactful tool, producers struggle to effectively use them to promote their products. Studies in Europe have revealed that websites created on free platforms were frequently abandoned in favor of other platforms leading to a proliferation of redundant websites; and even when websites remained in use, they were not updated regularly (Król, 2019; Pato & Duque, 2021). Researchers found that producers also struggle with a lack of technical knowledge, requiring outside retailers to help them implement virtual promotional methods (Makhitha, et al., 2022). Platforms that are not easy-to-use, detailed, or consistently managed are less likely to attract and retain visitors, reducing the impact of producer websites (Król, 2019; Maquera, 2022).

2.3 The Mioritics Association

The Mioritics Association has designed similar promotional storytelling websites for initiatives promoting regions of Romania. Under the leadership of Mihai Dragomir, the Mioritics Association works to preserve Romania's cultural and national heritage through various local initiatives. The organization partners with entities to plan historical reenactment festivals in Râșnov, establish a network of heritage information centers, and publish a magazine that compiles news and events relevant to Romania and its surroundings (The Mioritics Association, 2023). The Mioritics Association's efforts have an immense effect on the area by promoting and organizing existing attractions.

In 2023, The Mioritics Association launched the Râșnov Creativ initiative to promote Râșnov culture by showcasing local artisans' work. The association will promote local artisans in the Râșnov fortress and chose five artisans to go on a business development trip. A component of this initiative is creating a promotional platform to support local artisans, allowing them to share their stories and products with tourists.

3.0 Methodology

The goal of this project was to assist the Mioritics Association in increasing visibility of artisans in the Râșnov Creativ initiative through a promotional website. To successfully achieve this goal, the team completed the following objectives.

1. Understand the purpose of the Râșnov Creativ initiative.
2. Comprehend the needs of local producers and tourists.
3. Analyze how storytelling websites increase visibility.
4. Develop and test a functional storytelling website prototype.

This chapter explains the reasoning behind each objective, as well as the methods the team used to achieve them.

3.1 Objective #1: Understand the Purpose of the Râșnov Creativ Initiative

The team used Business Model Canvas (BMC) to effectively gather information about the Râșnov Creativ initiative, because it provides visualization for website development and is widely used by businesses, startups, and established companies to describe business identity, mission, project's priority, and other key elements that are crucial for the success of any business initiative (Manowicz, 2023). The team also collected additional information about the initiative through discussions with our collaborator, his colleagues, and local artisans.

3.1.1 Business Model Canvas

The BMC is split into nine building blocks which are value proposition, customer segments, channels, customer relationships, revenue streams, key activities, key resources, key partners, and cost structure (Manowicz, 2023). Together these blocks form a visual map (see Appendix E) that can be used by businesses to connect their ideas and see the bigger picture (Manowicz, 2023). Following BMC concepts, the team conducted a Zoom meeting with Mihai Dragomir, the head of the Mioritics Association, to better understand the goal of the initiative, our contribution to the project and the best way to intertwine storytelling into a promotional website. In addition to the Zoom meeting, the team also held multiple in-person conversations with Mr. Dragomir to ask follow-up questions and gain a deeper understanding of Râșnov Creativ. Furthermore, the team spoke with local artisans to gain their perspective on the initiative and how it has impacted their work. Laura Oancea, an employee of Mioritics who was responsible for writing artist biographies, provided insights into the mission and values of the initiative. By utilizing a variety of methods and engaging with different stakeholders, the team was able to gain a comprehensive understanding of Râșnov Creativ and its goals.

3.2 Objective #2: Comprehend the Needs of Local Producers and Tourists

To understand the online platform and marketing needs of producers and tourists, the team interviewed five local producers and surveyed fifty-two tourists regarding their current usage of promotional platforms and their preferences for local products. We opted for interviews with producers because they provided the opportunity for follow-up questions and in-depth explanations. In contrast, tourists had limited time available, so we provided them with surveys accessible via QR code to complete at their convenience.

3.2.1 Producer Interviews

The team conducted interviews with five Râșnov Creativ producers for whom our collaborator, Mihai Dragomir, provided contact information. We conducted three of these interviews in-person at the Mioritics Association office in Râșnov and the other two remotely over Zoom. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes and began with a preamble and verbal consent to ensure the producer agreed to the interview and knew that they had the ability to stop at any time. The team also requested consent to record each interview for further analysis using voice recordings, word dictation, and note-taking techniques. Starting with questions about the producer's background, the team then inquired about their goals and inspirations. We also asked about the challenges faced in terms of visibility and selling locally produced goods, as well as why they joined the Râșnov Creativ initiative (see Appendix A). The information the team collected from these interviews was valuable to the website development process as it provided us with inspiring producer stories that we later included on the website.

3.2.2 Tourist Surveys

The team constructed a brief five-minute survey using Qualtrics®. The survey was designed to accommodate a broad audience and was available in five languages: English,

Romanian, Russian, Ukrainian, and German. The survey's first page provided visitors with the consent form where they could either proceed to the questions or exit. The questions focused on how tourists discover new products and attractions, providing valuable insights into the preferences of potential website visitors (see Appendix B). Prior to arrival, the Mioritics Association confirmed that the team could conduct tourist surveys at the designated locations. The team distributed the survey through QR codes outside of the two most popular tourist sites in Râșnov: Dino Parc and the entrance to the Râșnov Citadel. The team briefly introduced the project to curious tourists and then asked if they would be willing to scan the QR code and complete the survey at their convenience. Over a two-day period, the team surveyed fifty-two tourists who visited the Râșnov area. These insights helped the team develop the Râșnov Creativ website effectively.

3.3 Objective #3: Analyze how Storytelling Websites Increase Visibility

Online platforms offer vast opportunities for interaction if they are implemented and maintained properly (Tu, 2009; Dudensing, 2010). To develop an effective website, the team conducted a comparative analysis on seven promotional storytelling websites to determine the best design and features to include that encourage engagement from both tourists and producers.

3.3.1 Website Comparative Analysis

The team performed a comparative analysis across a sample of storytelling websites intending to explore the different perspectives and features implemented. To extract relevant information on website design, the team selected seven websites for examination. All seven of the websites in the sample included aspects relating to promoting producers and their stories; however, the quality, approaches, and scope of these aspects varied greatly. The sample was constructed in this way to look beyond the websites that Râșnov Creativ would be most similar with and gain a wide breadth of knowledge for sites that incorporate producer storytelling at any scale. While more websites were considered for the comparative analysis, the team only included seven websites as other websites did not provide any new perspectives or features that were not around found in the seven selected websites. Comments on the chosen websites' backgrounds can be found in Appendix D: Comparative Analysis Website List. By analyzing existing websites that other organizations have been using, the team gained valuable insights into best practices and designs for websites with similar goals, which in turn informed the development of the Râșnov Creativ website.

To ensure a standardized and effective analysis of selected websites, the team established comparative criteria, including design and aesthetics, user experience, and incorporation of producers on the website. These criteria were included as they are prominent elements that contribute to a website's identity and are present in nearly all website comparative analyses as elements for review (Ruonan, 2020; Garret, et al., 2016). These criteria were then further distilled into specific website elements that the team could assess in a Boolean matrix. Additionally, select qualitative attributes of each website were recorded, resulting in a mixed-method research design. Mixed-method research designs are advantageous as they allow for a wider view of the field of study which combines qualitative or quantitative information (Shorten & Smith, 2017). An expanded list of criteria and elements the team considered can be found in Appendix C: Storytelling Website Comparative Analysis Criteria. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of different websites and drawing on best practices, the team developed a

comprehensive website.

3.4 Objective #4: Develop and Test a Functional Storytelling Website Prototype

The team followed best practices in website design, implemented Nielsen's heuristics and included elements found in the storytelling website comparison to create a visually appealing and easy-to-navigate website that highlights the unique qualities of each local producer and their products.

3.4.1 Website Design

The team designed the website using Figma with feedback from the stakeholders, with a focus on incorporating the features, aesthetics, user experience, and producer layouts identified in the previous objective. Figma is a cloud-based design tool for collaborative designing and prototyping, making it the ideal choice for team-based web development projects. It is accessible from anywhere with an internet connection. The website has a clean, modern design with a user-friendly interface, which helps to attract more tourists. The team developed the website on WordPress, a website development platform that simplifies the web creation process with pre-designed themes and drag-and-drop tools. The Mioritics Association manages the website through cPanel, a user-friendly web hosting control platform that facilitates the management of websites and their domains. The Mioritics Association actively participated in the website's content creation and will continue to maintain it to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in promoting local producers.

3.4.2 Nielsen's Heuristics

To ensure that the website is effective in expanding the market of the producers, it was important for us to adhere to the best practices for website design. Nielsen's heuristics for user interface design provided a useful framework for ensuring that the website was both user-friendly and visually appealing. The team designed the website to be easy to navigate, have clear and consistent navigation menus, and a logical layout. The website layout incorporates high-quality images and videos to showcase the various attractions and goods, as well as detailed information about local businesses and events. In addition, the team ensured that the website is optimized for search engines and is easily accessible from mobile devices.

3.4.3 Think-Aloud Usability Testing

The team conducted think-aloud usability testing, which is a unique interview technique in the field of human-computer interaction to evaluate the website. The team interviewed ten family members and friends over zoom, varying in age and technology experience. The interview started with the team prompting the subject on the terms and conditions and receiving verbal consent. The interviewee received a list of tasks to complete on the website such as locating certain profiles, events, and social media pages. While the user was completing their objectives, the interviewer took detailed notes on areas of difficulty. Additionally, the interviewer asked the subject to speak their thoughts on the problem to gain a better understanding of the specific problem. For example, if the user became stuck on a screen looking for a button for a specific function, the interviewer documented this in detail. Once the user completed all their objectives, the interview ended.

The team evaluated the data from the think-aloud and focused on the most common problems identified to create a list of objectives for improvements to complete for the final version of Râşnov Creativ website.

4.0 Results and Implementation

This chapter describes the central findings, including the main themes that emerged from data analysis and how they affected the website design choices. Data from tourist surveys and producer interviews informed the team about tourist needs and producers' inspirations, motivations, and challenges. Results from website case studies and think-aloud interviews guided the team's design decisions in making the final Râșnov Creativ website.

4.1 Râșnov Creativ

The Râșnov Creativ initiative seeks to increase the visibility of local producers through a multi-step plan. Through discussions with the Mioritics Association, the team learned that this initiative includes mentorship opportunities in Norway for a small group of producers, collaborative and promotional development workshops, and a workshop for producers to showcase and sell their goods to tourists in the Râșnov Fortress. In addition, the Râșnov Creativ website will provide a platform to connect producers with tourists and discover new artists who would be interested in participating in the initiative.

Through surveys, the team learned that tourists were very interested in purchasing local goods, as opposed to mass-produced souvenirs. They rated the importance of locally produced goods as 4.2 out of 5, demonstrating the need for further publicity of producers and local culture. Tourists are interested in buying from local producers “for a long-term memory” or “to add to a collection.” These motivations reflect their wish to recall their trip to Râșnov. Although 73% of tourists stated that Dino Parc and Râșnov Fortress were their favorite attractions in Râșnov, only half of them were interested in buying souvenirs from those places. This is consistent with previous findings that tourists are not interested in souvenirs that are not local and meaningful. Tourists know all these main draws to Râșnov, but they are not aware of the smaller-scale events and artisans in the area (Marica, 2015). The information we gathered from tourists about their knowledge on cultural attractions and products demonstrates the need to further publicize producers and local culture in Râșnov. The Râșnov Creativ initiative is working to address the gap in visibility, promoting lesser-known events and connecting tourists with local producers in Râșnov.

Interviews with each of the five artisans in the Râșnov Creativ initiative allowed the team to learn their stories, which included the types of products they produce, the number of years they have been operating, and the inspiration for producing their products. Out of the five producers interviewed, four had a career change, and many of these career changes were drastic. For example, Oana Leta – an abstract painter – worked in an American corporation, and Mircea Sevastru was a fashion designer in Paris before they each became painters. When asked why they made this change, all four said that they wanted to return to their first passions. Figure 2 is an infographic summarizing more general findings about each artisan:



RASNOV *Meet* **THE TEAM**

Andrei Negus
 Products: Maps, Guidebooks
 Years in Business: First Career
 Inspiration: Transylvanian History

Irina Dinica
 Products: Abstract Art
 Years in Business: 3
 Inspiration: Nature

Mircea Sevastru
 Products: Abstract Art
 Years in Business: 5
 Inspiration: Nature, Solitude

Nicoleta Ionescu
 Products: Children's Clothing
 Years in Business: 13
 Inspiration: Her Children

Oana Leta
 Products: Art - Specifically Paintings
 Years in Business: First Year
 Inspiration: Nature & Transylvanian History

Figure 2. Producer Profiles

4.2 Incorporation of Romanian Culture in Products

All five producers incorporate culture and history into their products. Andrei Negus, an illustrator who sells products at the citadel, emphasized the importance of educating people about the history and heritage of the region surrounding the Râșnov Fortress through culturally relevant souvenirs. This cultural incorporation is seen in one of his projects called *I Love Romania*, where he redesigned old maps of Romania. When asked to elaborate on this project, Andrei responded “We tried to bring back to the light, forgotten beautiful old maps. Each of them was redesigned and redrawn where they were cut or in a not very good condition” (A. Negus, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

For artist Oana Leta, expressing Transylvanian history and nature in her paintings is more important to her than the product itself. She stated, “I became fascinated by the heritage that Transylvania has and the rich history. So, my work is then a tribute to nature and to this region's rich history” (O. Leta, personal communication, March 28, 2023). This influence is apparent through her work. For example, *Paths Made by Walking* is a painting of a woman walking in front of the Bucegi mountains. In Ms. Leta's description of the painting, she focused on the

scenery in the background more than the woman, as she wanted to place emphasis on the beauty people tend to disregard in a fast-paced life.

This is similar to Irina Dinica's inspiration behind her art. When asked about her work, Ms. Dinica – a painter – explained that “the effects of being in nature affect our body and mind. This is my source of inspiration” (I. Dinica, personal communication, March 23, 2023). For Dinica, her connection to nature drives her creativity, but it is the viewer that interprets her work. She said, “I think it is more personal because my art is abstract and everybody's free to feel what they want” (I. Dinica, personal communication, March 23, 2023). Consistent with traditional Romanian culture, landscape and nature play important roles in fostering emotional connections (Riechers, 2021).

The producers shared a mutual belief that the expression conveyed through their artwork holds greater significance than the medium used and the profit gained. This finding is consistent with research stating that artisans focus on their inspiration rather than the financial incentive. Both Ms. Leta and Mr. Negus said that they were flexible in the type of product they plan to sell in the citadel. Mr. Sevastru said that “I don't even think about the money to be honest” (M. Sevastru, personal communication, April 4, 2023).

4.3 Artisans' Connection to Community

Despite the passion for their work and a desire to showcase the rich cultural history of Râșnov, producers struggle to connect with like-minded individuals without a supportive community. Four of the five producers stated that they were not part of a close-knit community before Râșnov Creativ. When asked what their goal was in joining Râșnov Creativ, Ms. Leta said she hoped to meet similar artists and form a community, “I hope by this project I will meet other artists and we will have a common goal. So, I will feel like I belong in an art community” (O. Leta, personal communication, March 28, 2023). When elaborating on why they want to be part of this community, artisans expressed their excitement to meet fellow artisans in Râșnov Creativ who share their same passions and said that being part of a community can provide inspiration for their work. As Ms. Dinica said, “There is a community and I want to be a part of it. You have time when you can't create because there are so many possibilities” (I. Dinica, personal communication, March 23, 2023).

When asked about community, the four artists who had switched careers stated that they did not feel part of a community in their old career. For Mr. Sevastru, working in the fashion industry in Paris was not the path that he wanted to continue in his life. He remarks that “it was an experience that was not made for me. I (took) a lot of time to find myself” (M. Sevastru, personal communication, April 4, 2023). Through conversations about their past careers, the team learned that they had more personal fulfillment in their new artistic careers.

4.4 Artisan Visibility within the Community

Although artisans find fulfillment in their work, there is a need to establish a strong online presence and gain visibility for their work. Currently, producers face challenges in gaining visibility due to a lack of consistent use of social media and an inability to attract followers. For those who use social media consistently, they explained they do not have a large following because they are not part of a community where people exchange likes and comments. As Ms. Leta said, “I don't have a huge number of followers, so it's hard to reach my customers” (O. Leta, personal communication, March 28, 2023). This finding was also consistent with Mr. Sevastru and Ms. Dinica's experiences, both of whom use Instagram to promote their work.

For Ms. Ionescu, Facebook has been a major promotional platform since the start of her business thirteen years ago. Although Facebook has helped to promote her story, she recognizes

the cultural shift towards certain platforms such as TikTok. For her, this transition comes with a learning curve. She says, “I think now it's very challenging to learn social media because it's developing fast. Now I'm trying to ask my kids to help me with this, the teenage ones” (N. Ionescu, personal communication, March 23, 2023). For Mr. Negus, who does not use social media often, connecting with customers through social media is challenging, but he recognizes its importance. As Mr. Negus said, “I’m not a fan of Facebook, but I understand that it’s important to be on social media” (A. Negus, personal communication, March 23, 2023). In each interview, the producers noted the importance of online platforms and their ability to connect people, even if there was a learning curve.

Although all five producers struggled to engage with social media, 71% of surveyed tourists are accustomed to digital methods of connecting with artisans to learn about their products, such as websites, blogs, and social media. Tourists acknowledged very few issues with locating information online aside from details on the Râșnov Fortress renovation – in fact, 92% said they had no difficulties. However, tourists only identified the Dino Parc and the Râșnov Fortress in their surveys, giving the impression that they had only heard about the two most popular attractions. Only one tourist out of fifty-one identified a different attraction, a bear sanctuary in the nearby town of Zărnești. Based on this, tourists appear to easily find information online related to popular attractions, but none on small events, initiatives and producers. Another tourist stated that their favorite thing about tourism websites is that it is “easy to know the main places.” This duality showcases the need for an increase in the use of digital marketing of producers’ goods to build a connection between producers and tourists.

Among the tourism resources that tourists use, TripAdvisor, Instagram and Facebook were the most popular. Only TripAdvisor provides a centralized location for information about Râșnov. Tourists stated that their favorite parts of the platforms were “the details of everything you want to see” and “lots of information about new places or products.” Fifty-four percent of tourists noted that they prefer to see an abundance of detailed information. The tourists like to be captivated by information related to their trip rather than having to peruse vague, irrelevant information. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of honesty in a trustworthy website, as one tourist claimed that their favorite part was that “people can honestly describe their experience.” Others stated that they did not appreciate when “there can be fake news” or if “some of the reviews seem fake.”

4.5 Storytelling Website Comparative Analysis

Websites can be designed in many ways to effectively communicate their purpose by including advantageous design elements. Specifically, developing a storytelling website for producers is a valuable way of bridging the gap between tourists and producers. The team’s storytelling website comparative analysis aided in creating a meaningful design format for the Râșnov Creativ website, through discussion within the criteria of aesthetics, user experience, and incorporation of artisans. The full analysis and breakdown are in Appendix F: Storytelling Website Comparative Analysis Matrix.

4.5.1 Criteria #1: Aesthetics

Although our team’s sample featured 7 websites with a wide range of aesthetic choices, the team was able to classify the websites into three main design approaches: stylized, minimalistic and a combination of both.

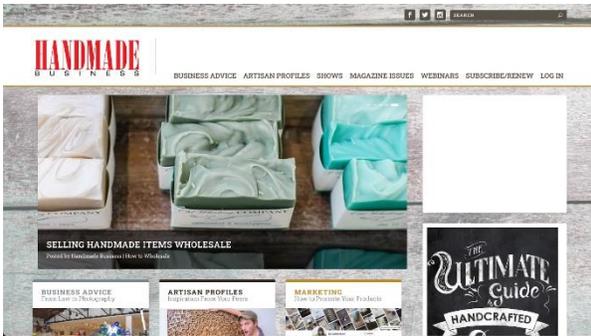


Figure 3. Example of a Stylized Design Approach (Handmade Business Landing Page)



Figure 4. Example of a Minimalistic Approach (DISTRICT Arts Landing Page)

Seventy-one percent of websites incorporated stylized elements and features to showcase the purpose of the website. For example, the wooden image background and grid display in Figure 3, which are elements directly tied to the identity of the website, promoting a handmade producer magazine. Conversely, 57% of websites used minimalist designs with muted colors and single-column layouts (see fig. 4).

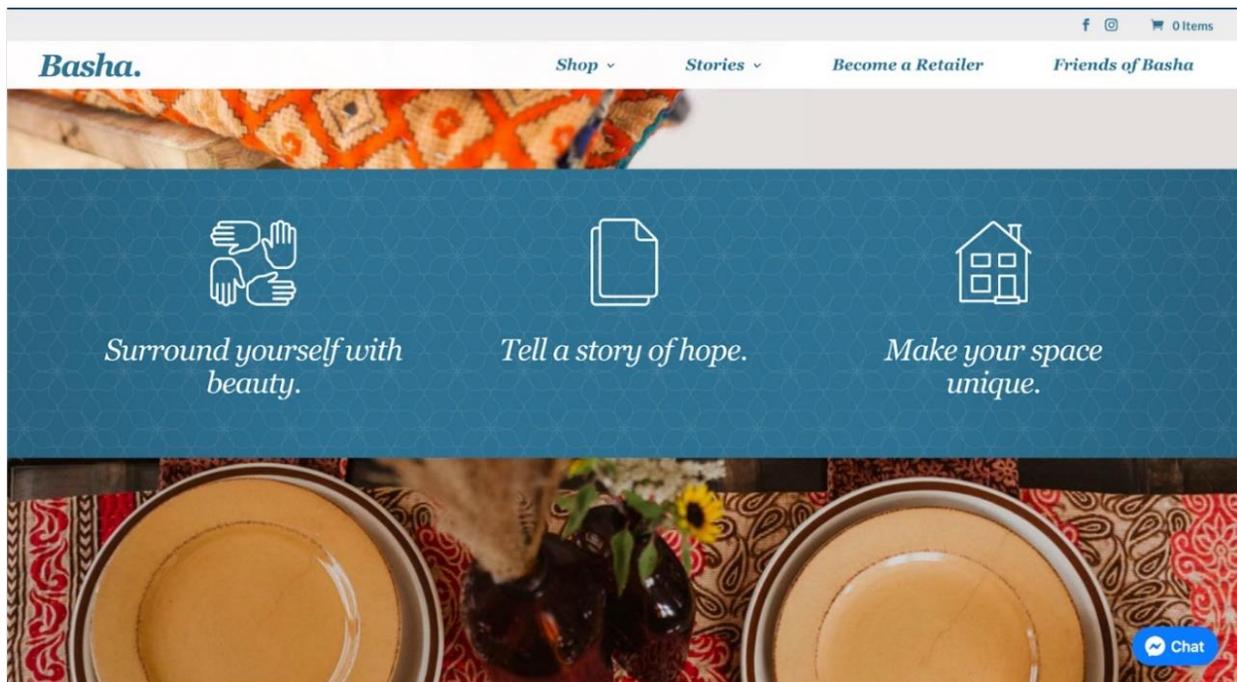


Figure 5. Bash Boutique's Landing Page

Forty-two percent of websites in the sample combined elements from both approaches, having minimalistic page designs with subtle stylizations, as illustrated in Figure 5. For example, some websites used minimalistic elements such as muted colors and single content columns, while incorporating more stylized elements, such as textures resembling different types of fabric for a textile producer's website. The team found that websites' designs with muted colors lead to increased readability and retention rates because pages were less rich in content (Hall, et al, 2004). Only 25% of combined approach websites had pages with text-heavy content, which made it difficult for the team to parse relevant information.

Incorporating multimedia elements – such as videos and images – can enhance the user's experience, increase engagement, and improve information retention (DesignRush, 2019). The team's findings support this statement, because all websites in the sample included a combination of images and supporting text. However, over-reliance on these elements – such as in Figure 3 – can make it challenging for users to parse the website's content because overpopulation of less relevant images on a website leads to lower retention rates (Elahi, et al., 2022).

4.5.2 Criteria #2: User Interaction

Every website in the sample incorporated menu tabs for pages and search bar. Eighty-five percent included the ability to view specific products and sign up for a newsletter. However, the team found that other features varied depending on the website's purpose and design. For example, only 45% of the websites allowed users to visit specific producers' stores and make purchases (see fig. 6), and just 14% had an online chat feature to connect with producers. It's important to note that the frequency of implementation in the sample alone is not enough to determine a feature's validity. For instance, the ability to filter producers and share posts on social media, which was only present in 14% of the websites, may still be useful features for the Râşnov Creativ website.

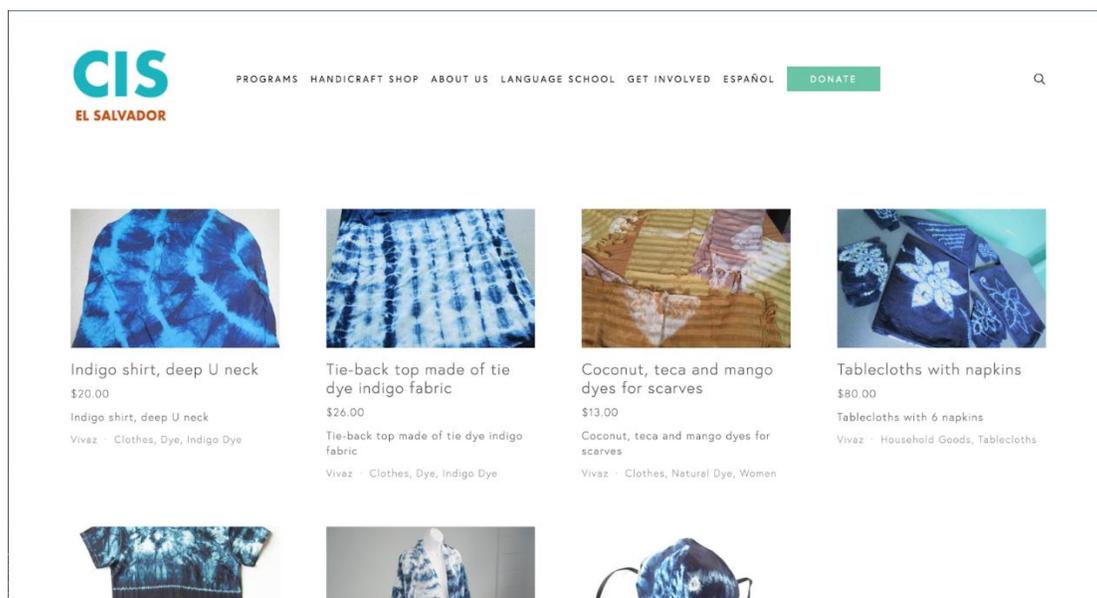


Figure 6. CIS El Salvador: Vivaz Indigo and Sewing Cooperative Shop

Landing pages make websites easy to navigate and user-friendly because they provide users with relevant and essential information (Al-hawari, et al., 2021). Eighty-five percent of the websites we analyzed had landing pages that satisfied these requirements.

Scott-Parker discusses navigation and content extensively in “What Makes a Successful Website?” and reaches the conclusion that it is crucial to prioritize the most significant content areas in the navigation menu and ensure that users can navigate the website with ease (Scott-Parker, 2003). However, the team observed that 42% of the websites included high volumes of text and 85% of the landing pages lacked dynamicity with their content, making it difficult for users to navigate and comprehend information.

4.5.3 Criteria #3: Incorporation of Artisans

While all the websites in the sample included a dedicated space for displaying their producers’ stories and products, the quality and features implemented in this space ranged. Only 42% of the websites had a dedicated page for individual producers, and 33% of those websites gave ample space for producers to tell their stories without formatting restrictions. The other 58% crowded their producer profiles onto a single page, which made it difficult to tell the producers’ full story (see fig. 7).

Research has shown that users experience difficulties with retaining high volumes of information on singular pages that do not use adequate spacing. This can be alleviated through the careful consideration of spacing and critical summarizing of the information (Reder, et al., 2020). Storytelling websites can implement this advice by giving ample and personalized space for producers to fully tell their stories.

Regarding the written producer information, only 42% had content that was written as a structured story that highlighted the producer’s journey rather than a formal business description about the producer. While formal business descriptions of producers (see Fig 7) do incorporate storytelling themes and elements, research has shown that it is difficult for users to connect with the producer through this blurb as the information does not provoke much emotional response in comparison to other methods (Winkler, et al., 2022).

MARIEKE GOUDA

Marieke Penterman
Thorp, Wisconsin

<http://www.hollandsfamilycheese.com/>

Marieke Gouda is a true farmstead cheese (cheese made on a farm with milk produced by cows on that farm) created in Thorp Wisconsin by Marieke Penterman and her staff of 12. Marieke immigrated to Wisconsin from the Netherlands in 2003 to assist on her future husband's dairy farm, and missing the European cheeses she grew up with, pursued her cheesemaker's license. Her first batch of cheese won a category award at the 2007 U.S. Championship Cheese Contest. Today she creates a line of award-winning goudas with traditional Dutch recipes and techniques using equipment, culture, herbs and spices imported from Holland.

SARTORI CHEESE

The Sartori Family
Antigo, Wisconsin

<http://www.sartoricheese.com/>

Sartori is a large third-generation family owned operation based in a former brewery. Its cheeses are created with milk from Wisconsin dairy farms within 60 miles of the Antigo facilities. Sartori has embraced modern mechanization while still retaining many artisan techniques including hand-pressing, hand-trimming and hand-rubbing. Sartori has 3 master cheesemakers who create over 20 varieties of unique original cheeses, including their popular flavored washed-rind cheeses which range from a merlot soaked Bellavitano® aged cheese to a salsa-rubbed Asiago.

CRAVE BROTHER'S CHEESE

Charles, George, Thomas and Mark Crave
Waterloo, Wisconsin

Figure 7. Lakewind Food Co-op Producer Profiles Page

Links to producers' social media accounts were only present on 45% of the websites and only 25% of these placed the social media link in an easily accessible location. Having a producer's social media link directly within sight of the user is beneficial as users are more inclined to utilize information tools if they come across them on the website rather than having to search for them themselves (Imler, et al, 2016). Additionally, hiding producer's social media, where they post more content about themselves and their products, makes it more difficult for the user to connect and follow the producer's story.

4.6 Understanding the Mioritics Association's Needs

To meet the needs of the Mioritics Association, the team discussed the Business Model Canvas with our collaborator. While working through this canvas, the team learned about the

target audience, value of the website, and connections made in making the website (see Appendix A for full canvas).

Need	Implementation
Mioritics Role	The Mioritics Association will be taking on the responsibility to upkeep the site and current events as well as rotate features as wanted through WordPress.
Promote Producers	The website will feature various artisans from Râşnov Creativ initiative.
Large Audience	The website is hosted on a local server and will be available to the public.
Showcase Events and New Stories	The website homepage includes a rolling feed of producer events and stories about their products as well as their individual pages.
Social Media	Each individual producer page includes links to their social media pages for personal promotion.
Discover More Producers	There is a page about the Râşnov Creativ initiative, including steps to join as a new producer.

Table 1. Summary of Business Model Canvas Findings

4.7 Website Implementation

After completing the preliminary research, the team proceeded with the design phase of the Râşnov Creativ website. To draft the website, the team used Figma, a collaborative interface design tool, allowing the team to iteratively design many mockups before settling on a final design (see appendix H). Through collaborating with the Mioritics Association and analyzing the outcomes of our interviews, surveys, and case studies, the team arrived at an innovative and appealing design that fulfilled all the requirements of the website. We tested the functionality and user-friendliness of our website through think-aloud interviews. Table 4.2 describes our main findings from think-aloud interviews and what the team did to address these problems. We outline the design elements for each page of the website below the table.

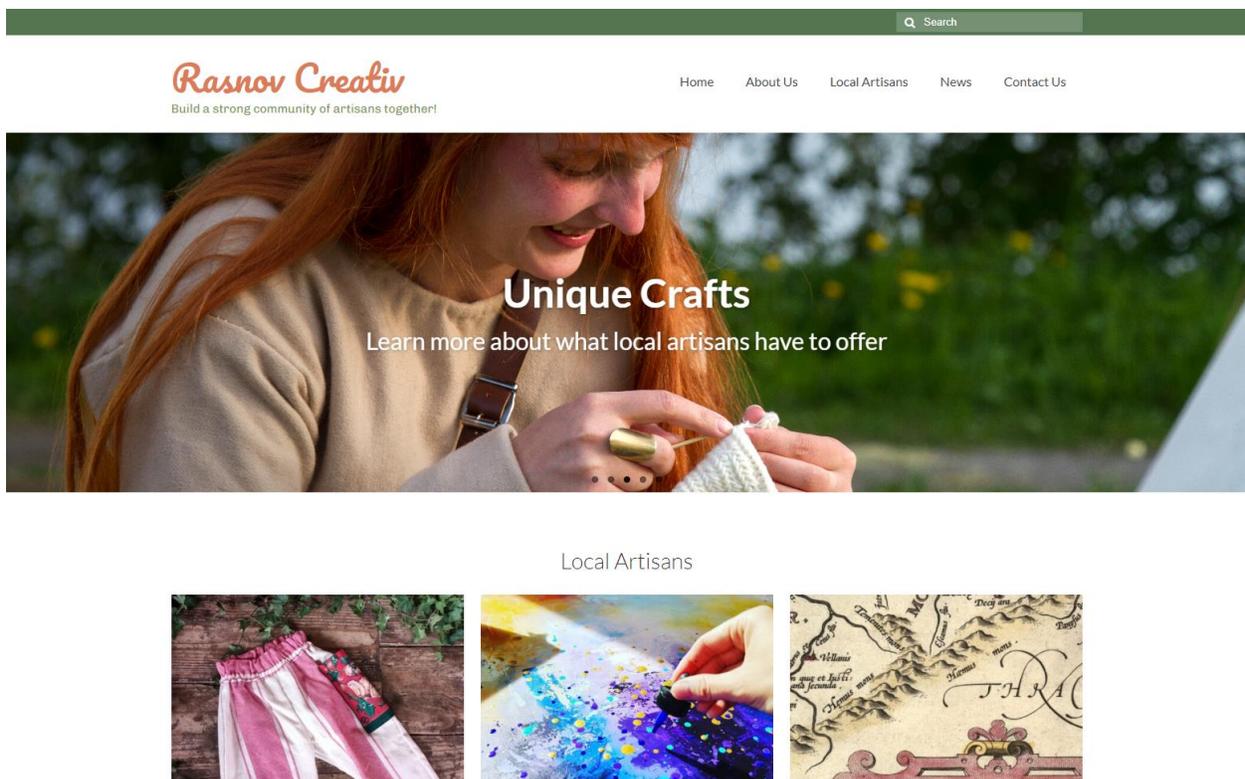
Main Findings	Actions Taken
Interviewees struggle to find email form	Created two separate pages called Contact Us and About Us to provide users with clear labels
Highlighted product section title is not descriptive enough	Changed wording to have a more detailed title
Under the banner there should be description of the project	Added a brief statement of what Râşnov Creativ is about

Interviewees are confused about the word ‘producers’	Changed the word ‘producers’ to ‘artisans’ on all main titles
Banner’s font is too small	Made the font bigger and picked a different color to make it stand out more

Table 2. Think-Aloud Findings

Landing Page

The landing page (see Figure 4.5) displays the various facets of the website in a concise and easy-to-understand manner. Its purpose is to catch the user’s attention and showcase the content of the website in an intriguing manner that motivates them to explore the “Local Artisans” page. The team used a minimalistic design to create an accessible and visually appealing website.





Product Highlight by Oana Leta



This is a handcrafted clay plate, imprinted with wildflowers from my own garden and painted with earthy tones to create a one-of-a-kind piece of art. The plate is carefully crafted from the earth itself, with clay sourced from the mountainside where I live. The wildflowers that bloom in my garden serve as my inspiration, and I have carefully imprinted them into the clay to create a beautiful, natural pattern that captures the essence of the world around me.

Once the plate was air-dried, I painted it with earthy colors, then fired in a special oven at high temperatures, ensuring that it is strong and durable enough to be used as a functional piece of art. What sets this plate apart is its organic shape, which is deliberately imperfect to showcase the imprint of the hands that created it.

As an artist, I am constantly inspired by the small things that occur in my daily life, and I strive to capture them in my work. By creating this embossed plate from dirt with wildflowers from dirt, I have created a testament to the beauty and wonder of the natural world.

Latest News



Local Community Showcases New Mural (April 4, 2023)

After 3 months of hard work, Oana Leta finished her mural taking inspiration from the mountains surrounding Rasnov. The community came together to support her at an unveiling last Tuesday, April 4th, admiring... [READ MORE](#)



Art Program for Children with Irina Dinica (March 17, 2023)

Talented painter, Irina Dinica, will be hosting a watercolor workshop next Friday, March 17, 14:00 to 15:30 in Rasnov. Irina encourages children of all ages who are interested in art and expressing their... [READ MORE](#)

Figure 8. Landing Page

The top of the page features a fixed navigation bar, with the Râșnov Creativ logo and title in the upper left-hand corner. Clicking the logo or title will always redirect the user back to the landing page. On the left side of the navigation bar, there are buttons for the “About Us,” “Local Artisans,” “News,” and “Contact Us” pages, which direct the user to their respective pages. These design choices mimic the layouts of websites from comparative website analysis (see section 4.3), where developers intuitively place navigation buttons at the top of the screen to allow for easy access, which meets the desires of the surveyed tourists for an easy-to-use website with a simple navigation system.

Below the navigation bar is a revolving display of images, showcasing different attractions in Râșnov and the various producers and wares that they offer. Based on the storytelling website research, this display engages the user with the culture and environment in Râșnov, forming a personal connection to the website upon opening it. This is a common feature originally identified in our case analysis. The natural world deeply influences Râșnov's culture and each producer's work. Therefore, the team incorporated images featuring nature into the overarching pages of the website, including this carousel of images. Based on feedback from Mr. Dragomir, the website lists three producers with their product's image, name, and type to pique the user's interest and encourage them to learn more. This display of images revolves every few seconds to showcase different artisans. Clicking on a producer's name takes the user to their respective page. Beneath this display is an image of a particular producer, accompanied by a short story of their products to initially garner consumer interest in the storytelling aspect of the website. This section is regularly updated to highlight a new story and promote each producer in a creative way, which makes the website dynamic and engaging to the user. Following this is the news feed, which provides information on recent or upcoming events in Râșnov to encourage viewers to visit the area.

About Us Page

The “About Us” page (see Figure 4.6) provides detailed information about how the Râșnov Creativ initiative was formed and its goal. Based on the think-aloud interview feedback, the team made the decision to create two separate pages – “About Us” and “Contact Us.” These pages split information into two parts: a broad description for interested tourists and a call to action on how to join the initiative for artisans outside of the initiative. The “About Us” page features an image of Râșnov fortress – where the events will take place – as well as a general description of the purpose behind the website to provide curious visitors with the information they need to understand Râșnov Creativ initiative.

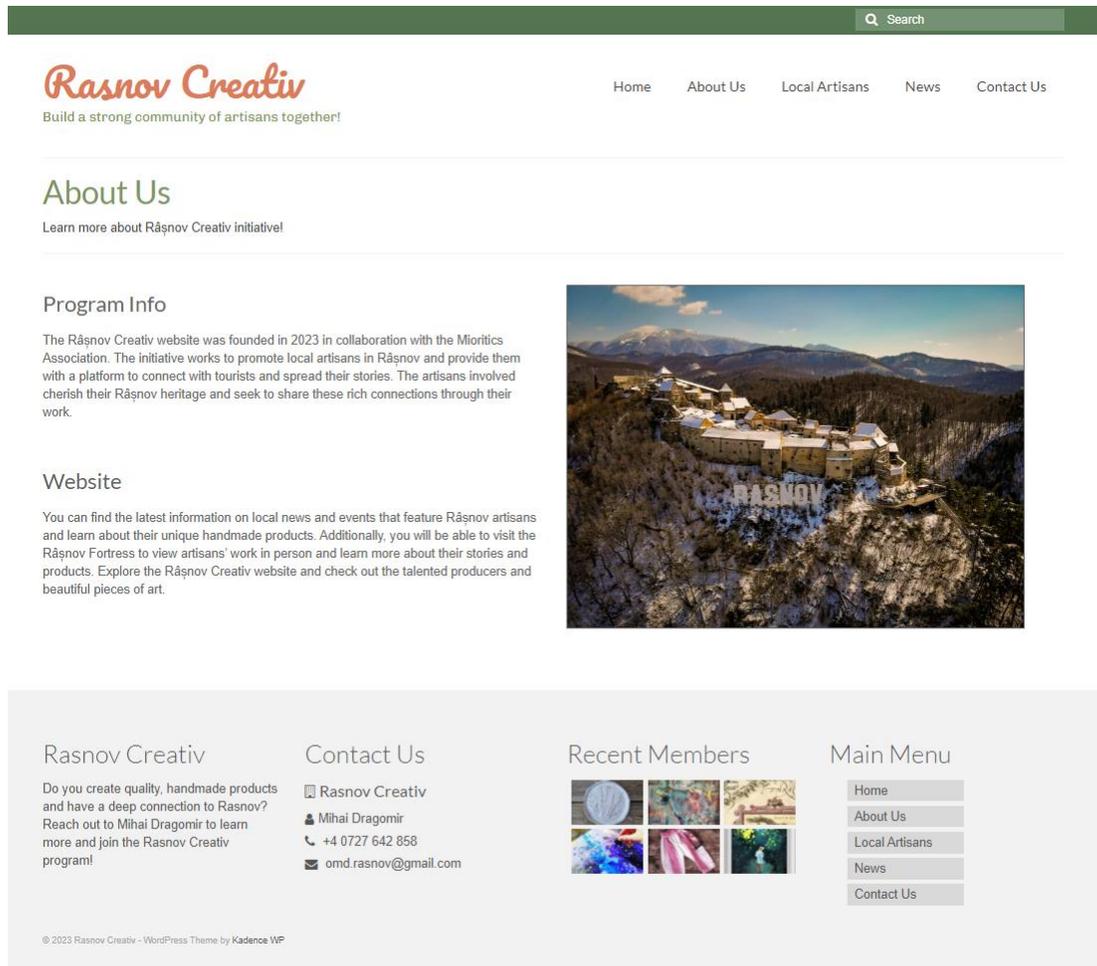


Figure 9. About Us Page

Local Artisan Page

Based on the findings that highlight the importance of community, the team designed an inclusive artisan page layout that allows users to view multiple profiles on the same page. This page is in addition to individual producer profile pages and promotes the idea of connectivity between producers and tourists. This page was originally listed third in the menu bar and was called the “Local Producers” page; however, the order and title were changed to make this page sound less corporate and more prominent. As the Râșnov Creativ website aims to highlight the

local artisans, the team dedicated space for these individuals but also carefully considered design decisions to ensure the seamless integration of this section with the rest of the website.

The “Local Artisans” page (see Figure 4.7) showcases a complete list of producers participating in the Râșnov Creativ initiative. The team used this specific layout to encourage equal promotion between members of the same community. Users can access this page by clicking on the “Local Artisans” button on the navigation bar.

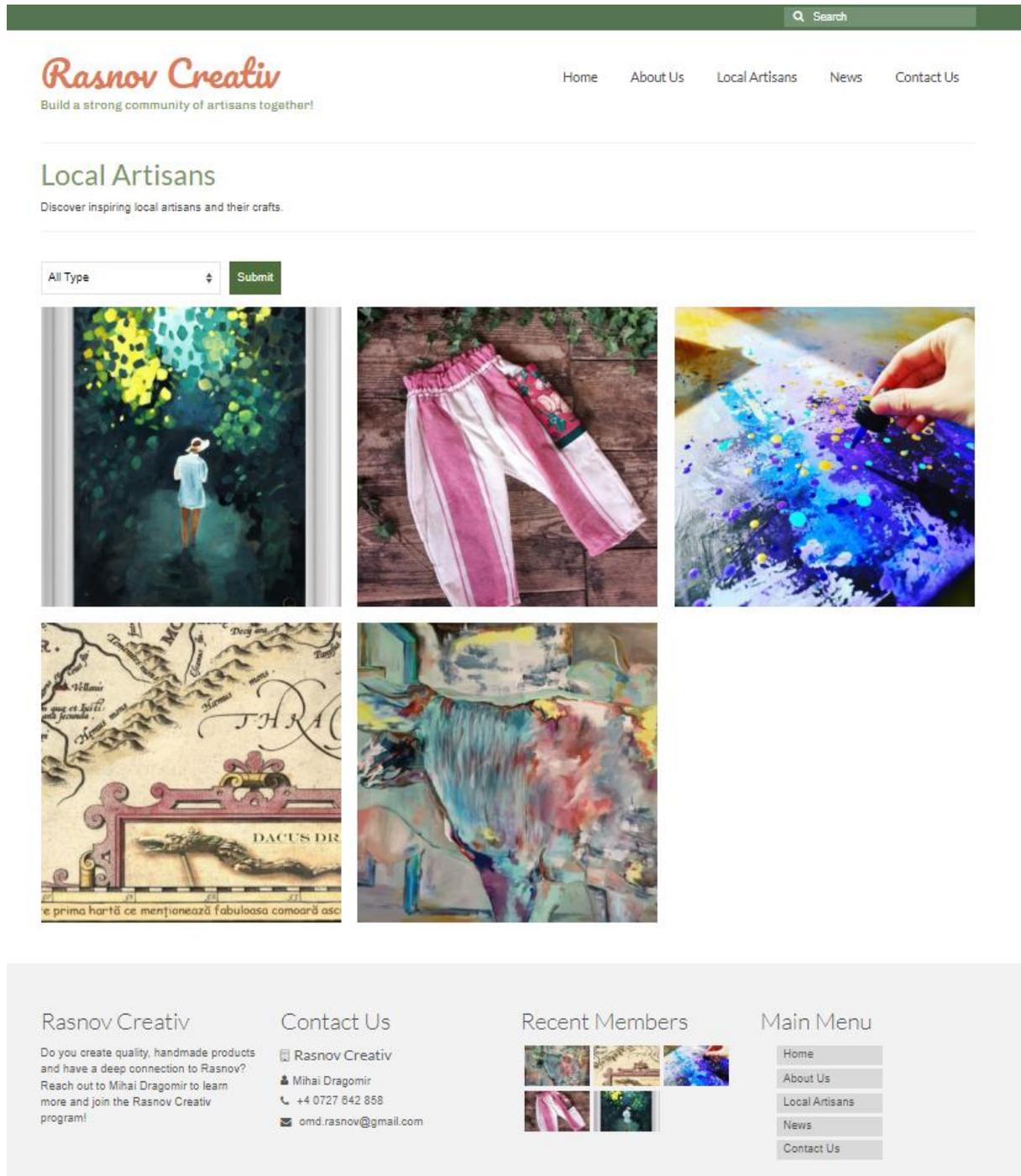


Figure 10. Local Artisans Page

On this page, each producer box showcases the producer's name, their work, and a brief personal story, connecting visitors with a diverse group of producers. These description boxes give overviews and highlights – rather than detailed summaries – of each producer, garnering interest and providing equal visibility to producers. Clicking on these boxes will redirect users to the corresponding producer's profile page, where they can delve deeper into the producer's story and explore their products. This page also features a search and filtration system, where users can search for a specific producer or type of producer using the search bar, or filter the producers based on categories or preferred order, making it easy to make connections between website visitors and local producers. This system of organization is common in websites hosting multitudes of information and is what makes them successful in allowing users to find the information that they are trying to retrieve (DesignRush, 2019).

News Page

The “News Page” (see Figure 4.8) lists all the events and local updates relating to the producers featured on the website. These events can range from producer workshops to product showcases in the citadel. While the home page only shows the most recent stories, the news page is a complete repository of all stories posted on the website. Each news story has an image, title, category, and description. This multimedia approach is used to catch the user's interest and make them want to learn more about the story. We recommend leaving out the post date of news stories, because if news stories are created sparsely, users might think that the website is not updated on a regular basis. Each story is accessible in full screen view if the viewer clicks on it. This page also has a sidebar featuring the latest news stories.

🔍 Search

Rasnov Creativ

Build a strong community of artisans together!

[Home](#)
[About Us](#)
[Local Artisans](#)
[News](#)
[Contact Us](#)

News

Learn more about Rasnov events and local news.



Local Community Showcases New Mural (April 4, 2023)

📌 posted in: Event | 🗨️

After 3 months of hard work, Oana Leta finished her mural taking inspiration from the mountains surrounding Rasnov. The community came together to support her at an unveiling last Tuesday, April 4th, admiring the immense talent that is evident in her art. This mural and celebration is a great reminder of the deep connection that the community has to each other and to the town of Rasnov.

Search

Latest News



Local Community Showcases New Mural (April 4, 2023)



Art Program for Children with Irina Dinica (March 17, 2023)



Historical Reenactment Festival (February 10-11, 2023)



Figure 11. News Page

Individual Artisan Page

The “Individual Artisan” page (see Figure 4.9) offers an in-depth look into each of the producers featured on the “Local Artisans” page.

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Oana Leta

<
📖
>










I am a Râșnov-based artist, full-time painter, specializing in painting on canvas. I have the luck to live in one of Europe's last wild places, where bears, wolves and lynx still roam free: the outskirts of Râșnov, Transylvania. The Carpathian Mountain range, which encircles the hilly region of Transylvania, is home to the largest population of brown bears in Europe. My house is at the foothill of the Carpathians, and my backyard is the wild forest. I spend time in nature everyday, I run on the mountains, go backcountry skiing and swim in lakes. But it wasn't always like this.

Not long ago, I was working for the leading global robot company, and I had a successful career in London. But, with each day that passed, I felt like I was climbing the wrong ladder. Fortunately, I left corporate life and returned to the roots. Now I am as free as the nature surrounding me, and I can live in sync with myself. My artwork is a celebration of the rich heritage and stunning wilderness of Râșnov and Transylvania, where I am free to be myself, and become who I am.




- **Producer Type:** Artist
- **Inspiration:** Nature, Transylvanian history

Rasnov Creativ

Do you create quality, handmade products and have a deep connection to Rasnov? Reach out to Mihai Dragomir to learn more and join the Rasnov Creativ program!

Contact Us

📠 Rasnov Creativ
👤 Mihai Dragomir
☎ +4 0727 642 858
✉ omd.rasnov@gmail.com

Recent Members







Main Menu

- Home
- About Us
- Local Artisans
- News
- Contact Us

Figure 12. Individual Producer Page

On the left side, the page features an image gallery displaying artisan's unique goods, along with their name and a brief story about their inspiration for creating their products. Consistent with our findings from our comparative analysis of websites, this allows viewers to establish a personal connection with the producer and encourages engagement. The team decided to make producer portraits optional since many artisans value their craft's message over gaining popularity as individuals. However, based on the findings from the website analysis, it is encouraged for producers to share their profile images, as it helps to create a more personal connection between website visitors and artisans.

Beneath the producer's story, there are icons that correspond to different social media links, enabling visitors to connect with the producers on their respective social media accounts. This allows visitors to follow the producers' accounts, purchase from their online shops if desired, and read honest consumer reviews. Many tourists noted in the survey that this feature would increase the perceived reliability of the website. Forty percent of think-aloud interviewees expressed excitement about the ability to buy goods by directly following an Etsy link, while the remaining interviewees thought it was a good feature. When a user clicks on the icon a new page opens in the browser providing a great accessibility feature as noted by one of our think-aloud interviewees. By incorporating different elements on the page, the team aims to capture visitors' attention on small details that they might overlook in a large paragraph. This is a common practice in websites and social media, where content is displayed in a way that makes it clear and succinct, so that it is easy for the user to engage with the platform (Hall, et al, 2004). This is seen in 57% of the websites analyzed in section 4.4. The artisan's specialty, inspiration, and year that they joined the initiative are located at the end of the producer's description providing a quick overview of the producer.

Contact Us Page

The "Contact Us" page (see Figure 4.10) serves as an information guide for both local producers who are interested in joining the Râșnov Creativ initiative, as well as curious visitors seeking to understand the purpose behind the initiative. This page was originally called the "About" page, however the name was changed due to overwhelming feedback from think-aloud participants.

Rasnov Creativ
Build a strong community of artisans together!

Home About Us Local Artisans News Contact Us

Contact Us

Find how to join the program and contact us!

See our Work In-Person!

Rasnov, Romania

Give Us a Call

Our Number: +4 0727 642 858

Discover the hidden gems of Rasnov, Transylvania's southern region, through the eyes of passionate local artisans. At Rasnov Creativ, we aim to promote the unique handmade products produced by these skilled individuals, giving them a chance to share their stories and engage with a diverse audience.

Are you an artisan who takes pride in Rasnov's rich cultural heritage and traditions? We invite you to join the Rasnov Creativ program! Whether you are already creating high-quality handmade products or looking to learn how to promote your craft further, our community offers a space to connect with like-minded producers and showcase your skills.

Don't hesitate to reach out to Mihai Dragomir today to learn more about how the Rasnov Creativ program can help you develop your skills and be part of a community that celebrates the artistic and cultural diversity of Rasnov!

Full Name *

Email *

Message *

Send Message

Rasnov Creativ

Do you create quality, handmade products and have a deep connection to Rasnov? Reach out to Mihai Dragomir to learn more and join the Rasnov Creativ program!

Contact Us

Rasnov Creativ

Mihai Dragomir

+4 0727 642 858

omd.rasnov@gmail.com

Recent Members

Main Menu

- Home
- About Us
- Local Artisans
- News
- Contact Us

© 2023 Rasnov Creativ - WordPress Theme by Kadence WP

Figure 13. Contact Us Page

As an outreach platform for the initiative, the “Contact Us” page features a brief description of the Râșnov Creativ initiative along with its contact information, such as phone number and a simple form, which allows interested producers to easily reach out with any questions. The description is designed with a compelling call to action, aimed at attracting more producers to join the initiative and become a part of its growing community. This strategic display of information encourages both locals and tourists to explore the Râșnov Creativ initiative. A description of the Mioritics Association was excluded from this page due to feedback from Mr. Dragomir to keep the focus of the website on the producers, their stories, and the Râșnov Creativ initiative rather than the founding organization.

5.0 Conclusion

The team's research and collaboration efforts revealed that Râșnov, Romania is home to a broad group of local artisans eager to connect with like-minded individuals. The team also discovered that local producers struggle to gain interest in their products, which negatively impacts cultural promotion within local communities. In response, the team set out to increase visibility of local artisans and facilitate connections with consumers.

Through our interviews and surveys, the team concluded that producers see the Râșnov Creativ initiative as a channel to stimulate tourist interest in their products and connect with producers who share similar interests. Common themes among producer interviews included the incorporation of culture into their products, their connection to community, and the platforms that they use to increase visibility. The team linked producers and consumers by including networking features such as social media links and program contact information. Additionally, the landing page highlights new producers each month, which strengthens the Râșnov Creativ community.

With the creation of this website, the team expects that the producers will feel part of a close-knit community and will share their stories with tourists. The team anticipates that the website will attract more local producers to join the Râșnov Creativ initiative and encourage tourists to explore the area and discover the remarkable products of Râșnov.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Artisan Questions

Verbal Consent:

We are students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts, USA working with Mihai Dragomir to promote local producers in Râșnov through an online platform. We are conducting interviews to get a better understanding of the current techniques and platforms used for promotion and to better understand how to better increase visibility between producers and consumers. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer any question that we ask. This interview is confidential—no names or identifying information will appear in any project reports or publications *unless* you agree to have your name published.

Do you consent to this interview being recorded and transcribed?

Should you have any questions or concerns upon completion of this interview, we can be reached at gr-Mioritics-D23@wpi.edu. For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, please contact Ruth McKeogh at rmckeogh@wpi.edu or irb@wpi.edu.

Questions:

1. What type of goods and services do you offer?
2. Where did you learn your trade?
3. What led you to this line of work?
4. What is the meaning behind your work?
5. How many years have you been producing your goods?
6. What are the main problems have you faced over time as a producer? Please explain in detail.
7. Where do you sell your goods and services?
8. What is challenging about the way that you sell your goods and services?
9. Do you currently promote yourself on social media? If so, please list each platform and username.
10. What challenges do you encounter while engaging with customers through social media?
11. What do you think is the cause of these challenges?
12. How do you think you can improve the connection between you and your customers?
13. What legal frameworks are the most difficult for your work? How so?
14. Where do you see yourself in relation to your craft in the next 5 years?
15. What do you hope to gain from participating in the Râșnov Creativ initiative?

Appendix B: Tourist Questions

Written Consent:

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts, USA and are working on a collaborative project with The Mioritics Association to promote local producers in Râșnov through an online platform. The purpose of this survey is to get a better understanding of how to better increase visibility between producers and consumers. This survey will take approximately *5 minutes* to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary, and

you may withdraw at any time. Please remember that your answers will remain anonymous. No names or identifying information will appear on the questionnaires or in any of the project reports or publications. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or concerns, we can be reached at *gr-Mioritics-D23@wpi.edu*. For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, please contact mbelz@wpi.edu or mbutler@wpi.edu.

Questions:

1. What products or souvenirs have you bought from Râșnov?
 - a) How many of those products were produced locally?
 - b) On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied are you with this product?
 - c) On a scale of 1-5, how important is it to you to purchase local souvenirs?
2. How do you find out about local attractions and shops?
3. Did you experience any difficulties finding local attractions and goods? Describe them.
4. What is your favorite point of attraction in Râșnov?
 1. How likely are you to buy merchandise about that attraction (Example: a t-shirt or a mug)
 - a) What is your ideal price for Râșnov wares?
5. What is your favorite online platform to discover new attractions and things to do?
 - a) What do you like about it?
 - b) What do you dislike?

Appendix C: Website Case Study Criteria

The team first established a list of criteria to focus their efforts on evaluating each website. This list was crafted by reviewing website comparative analyses conducted by previous IQP teams and by considering the goals and direction of the project.

Criteria Main Category	Notes on Inclusion
Aesthetics and Design	This category is focused on the visual appeal of a website and how the website is structured as a whole
User Experience	This category is focused on how the website allows its users to interact with it
Incorporation of Producers	This category is unique to the team's project as it focuses on how the websites features and incorporates producers on their pages

All these categories covered quite a lot of content, therefore the team decided to break them further down into sub-categories. Each sub-category highlights different aspects of their main categories and was the focus of the team's search conducted on each website.

Criteria Main Category	Criteria Subcategory	Notes on Inclusion
Aesthetics and Design	Page Layout	This sub-category focuses on the overall structure of the website's pages. This includes whether the page has a Header, Footer, and/or Sidebar. Additionally, it covers how the content of a page is displayed, whether the content is in a Single Column or is a Grid display
	Landing Page	This sub-category is all about the website's landing page and the content that is displayed there. Elements such as whether the page features large images, recent posts, and have a high volume of text are considered
	Page Design	This sub-category reviews the elements the website uses for page design. This includes whether the design is simplistic, incorporates thematical elements that highlight the website's purpose, use a muted color palette, have content-rich pages, and incorporates multimedia in its pages
	Language Support	This sub-category focuses on the language options that the website offers. Mainly whether the website has English and its regional language supported
User Experience	Navigability	This sub-category focuses on how the user can navigate throughout the website. Elements such as intuitive navigation features and whether the use can find specific pages easily are considered
	UX Features Present	This sub-category regards the additional features on a website that a user can interact with. Elements were discovered as the team searched through websites and were added to the matrix
Incorporation of Producers	Space for Producers	This sub-category focuses on how the website incorporates space for the promotion of producers. Elements such as if there was a page for all producers, a page for individual producers and whether any page featured new producer arrivals were considered
	Social Media	This sub-category revolves around the present of a producer's social media in their promotional space on the website. Specifically, the team was looking for whether the producer's social media was present on the page and whether it was easily accessible

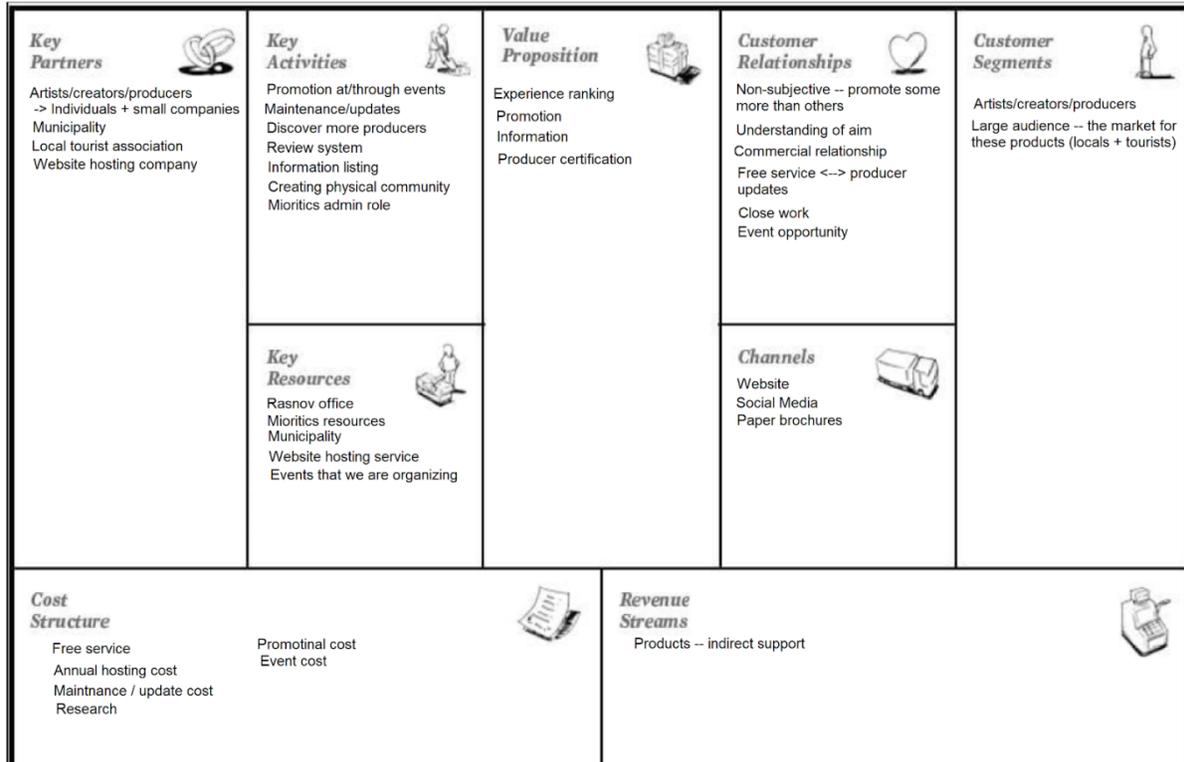
Criteria Main Category	Criteria Subcategory	Notes on Inclusion
	Producer Page Elements	This sub-category reviews the design elements on the producer's promotional page. It covers whether a story relating to the producer was featured, the quality and personalization of the story, whether there was ample space for the producer, present of multimedia on the page and whether there were stories for specific products as well

The opinion for other comments for further elaboration was also implemented for select sub-categories.

Appendix D: Comparative Analysis Website List

Website Title	Background
<u>Basha Boutique</u>	Website for promoting a single homemade business and showcasing all of their employees.
<u>Handmade Business</u>	Website for promoting and educating handmade producers
<u>DISTRICT Arts</u>	Website for promoting homemade producers and their art in the USA.
<u>CIS El Salvador</u>	Website for promoting producers in El Salvador.
<u>Ethical By Nature</u>	Website for promoting producers and producers that are ethical and naturally conscious with the production of their products
<u>Co-op Partners Warehouse</u>	Website for farming co-op in the Midwest United States that focus on promoting local farmers and producers
<u>Lakewinds Co-Op</u>	Website on focus on promoting producer and local artisans within the Midwest farming region

Appendix E: Business Model Canvas



Appendix F: Storytelling Website Comparison Analysis Matrix

Criteria Category	Criteria Sub-Category	Reviewed Element	Websites featuring Producer Storytelling						
			Basha Boutique	Handmade Business	DISTRICT Arts	CIS El Salvador	Ethical By Nature	Co-op Partners Warehouse	Lakewinds Co-Op
Aesthetics and Design	Page Layout	Header	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Footer	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Sidebar	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		Single Column	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
		Grid Display	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE
	Other Comments								
	Landing Page	Large Images	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Recent Posts	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		High Volume of Text	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE
		Other Comments	Very liberal use of images; hard to parse all content	There is quite a lot going with the landing page; it's hard to comprehend it all		Very hard to take in due to the scale of the images and the length of the page	Way too much content on the page; products and prices are already displayed	Very clean and well put together for the goal of the website	
	Page Design	Clean/Simplistic	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE
		Thematic Elements	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE
		Muted Colors	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE
		Content Rich Pages	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE
		Present of Multimedia	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Other Comments							
	Language Support	English	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
Regional Language		FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	
User Experience	Navigability	Easy to Find "Page Tabs"	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Easy to Find "About Page"	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE
		Easy to Find "Producer Pages"	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
		Intuitive Navigation	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE
		Other Comments							
	UX Features Present	Page Tabs on Menu	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Visit Specific Products	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE
		Producer Shop on Website	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		Shopping Cart and Adjacent Ordering Features	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
		Sharing Posts on Social Media	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		Newsletter Signup	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Contact/Chat with Producers	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		Filtering by Categories	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
		Search Bar	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
Other Comments									

Criteria Category	Criteria Sub-Category	Reviewed Element	Websites featuring Producer Storytelling						
			Basha Boutique	Handmade Business	DISTRICT Arts	CIS El Salvador	Ethical By Nature	Co-op Partners Warehouse	Lakewinds Co-Op
Incorporation of Producers	Space for Producers	Page for All Producers	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Page for Individual Producers	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		New Arrival Page for Producers	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		Other Comments	All Producer page is very difficult to parse and find producers due to the mosias formatting of the pages and generic product images		There is a new arrival page for artworks and products, but not Producers	Every producer is feature on the same very long page. This page is difficult to navigate and overloads the user with too much content	Space is very much an afterthought as it is very crammed and difficult to find		
	Social Media	Social Media is Present	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE
		Social Media is Easily Accessible	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE
	Producer Page Elements	Story about Producer	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
		Producer Written Story	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
		High Quality Producer Story	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
		Ample Space for Story	FALSE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		Present of Multimedia	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE
		Present of Product Specific Stories	FALSE	FALSE	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE
		Other Comments	All images are of the generic products from the website rather than the producers themselves				Stories are business write ups that don't provide that much personal connection to the reader. Formatting and stylization on the page is severly lacking		

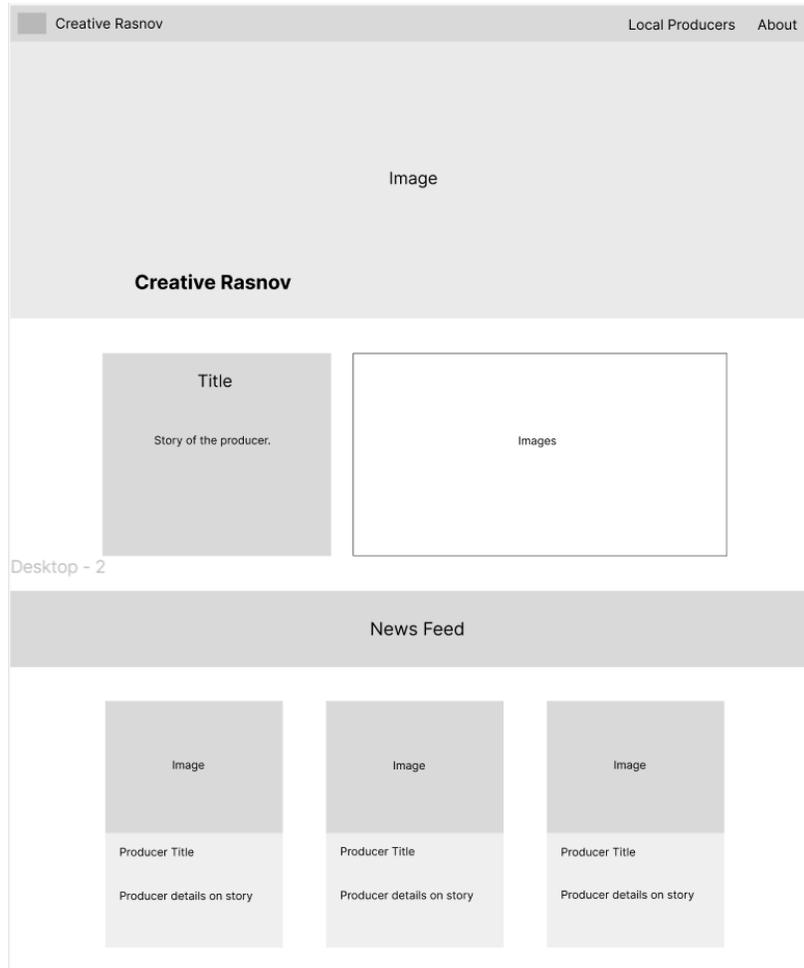
Appendix G: Mioritics Association Website Manual

Complete Editing Walkthrough: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1aeDvSEQ9uf2LN-35oQV9tODtUodQsX4nNXgQ4_FNTk/edit?usp=sharing

Producer Guidelines:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NYKJMNpCIIvaQzWI5_FgOrGAXJBo_RmdenxY4TBA BQA/edit?usp=sharing

Appendix H: Figma Mockup Design



Landing Page

Creative Rasnov Local Producers About

Local Producers
Details about the page



 **Name of Producer**
Information about Producer

 **Name of Producer**
Information about Producer

 **Name of Producer**
Information about Producer

 **Name of Producer**
Information about Producer

Local Producers Page

Individual Producer Page

Creative Rasnov Local Producers About

Hello, I'm Ben Joe

Nature Painter

Image

Ben Joe

Information about their inspirations and what they do

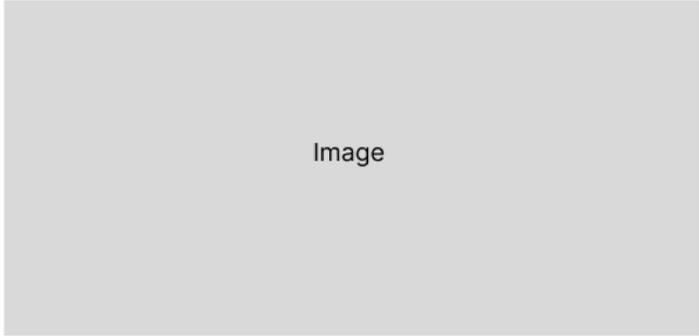
Individual Producer Page

Individual Producer Page

About the Project Page

Creative Rasnov Local Producers About

About the Project



Image

Here we describe the details about the project.

About the Project Page