



SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE AND ONLINE BOOKING PERFORMANCE IN RURAL TOURISM: EVIDENCE FROM VISCRI, ROMANIA

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Abstract: Whether social-media marketing translates into measurable booking demand remains a key question for small rural accommodation providers. This paper analyses all six properties listed on Booking.com in Viscri, a UNESCO heritage village in Brașov County, Romania, and examines the association between each property's social-media footprint and its accumulated Booking.com review count (proxy for relative occupancy). A strong positive correlation is observed between Facebook page likes and review count (Pearson $r = 0.82$, $p < 0.05$), with a similar relationship for Instagram followers ($r = 0.81$, $p \approx 0.05$). The only property without social media and without a dedicated website records both the lowest review count and the lowest guest rating. Even modest social-media investment appears to yield tangible benefits for rural operators in heritage destinations.

Key words: rural tourism, social media marketing, accommodation performance, Booking.com, Viscri

Introduction

The link between digital visibility and commercial performance is well established for urban hotels, but far less is known for small rural accommodations — typically family micro-enterprises with no dedicated marketing staff.

Plausible mechanisms: Facebook and Instagram expand visibility beyond OTA search, stimulate user-generated content acting as informal word-of-mouth, and predict review accumulation and RevPAR.

Viscrist offers an unusually clean setting: a small enumerable accommodation stock — six properties on Booking.com — and wide engagement variation, from a guesthouse with 44 000+ Facebook likes to one with no online presence at all.

Materials and Methods

- Data collected April 2026 for all 6 Viscrist Booking.com properties (entire local market, not a sample).
- Variables: Booking.com review count + rating; Facebook page + likes; Instagram profile + followers + posts; dedicated website.
- Review count used as proxy for relative demand (only verified guests can post reviews).
- Boundary: Viscrist 125 prioritises a direct Cloudbeds engine — its OTA review count understates actual demand.
- Analysis: Pearson r and Spearman ρ ; social-media intensity score (0–3: active FB + active IG + website).

Results and Discussion

A clear gradient emerges: stronger digital activity coincides with higher Booking.com review accumulation.

- Viscrist 32 — largest footprint ($\approx 45k$ FB likes, $37k+$ IG followers) — highest review count: 167.
- Verde de Viscrist: 121 reviews; Viscrist 125: 106; Viscrist 195 (no IG): 64.
- Facilități cazare Raluca (no SM, no website): 36 reviews and the lowest guest rating (8.0).
- Viscrist 143 (dormant IG): only 12 reviews — nominal presence is not equivalent to active marketing.

Correlations with Booking.com reviews (n = 6):

- Facebook likes: $r = 0.824$, $p = 0.044^*$ ($R^2 \approx 0.68$)
- Instagram followers: $r = 0.809$, $p = 0.051^\dagger$ ($R^2 \approx 0.65$)
- Instagram posts: $r = 0.736$, $p = 0.097$

Conclusions

- Stronger social-media profiles — especially larger Facebook pages and active Instagram accounts — are consistently associated with more Booking.com reviews.
- Active presence matters far more than nominal account ownership; dormant accounts do not generate measurable booking demand.
- Extends prior hospitality findings (Anderson, De Pelsmacker) to micro-scale rural accommodation in a heritage destination — a segment underrepresented in quantitative studies.
- Limitations: small cross-sectional sample ($n = 6$); single distribution channel (Booking.com); one-shot measurement.
- Practical implication: even modest, sustained social-media activity may yield tangible booking returns for rural operators.

Figure 1. Booking.com Reviews vs Facebook Page Likes (Viscrist accommodations, n = 6)

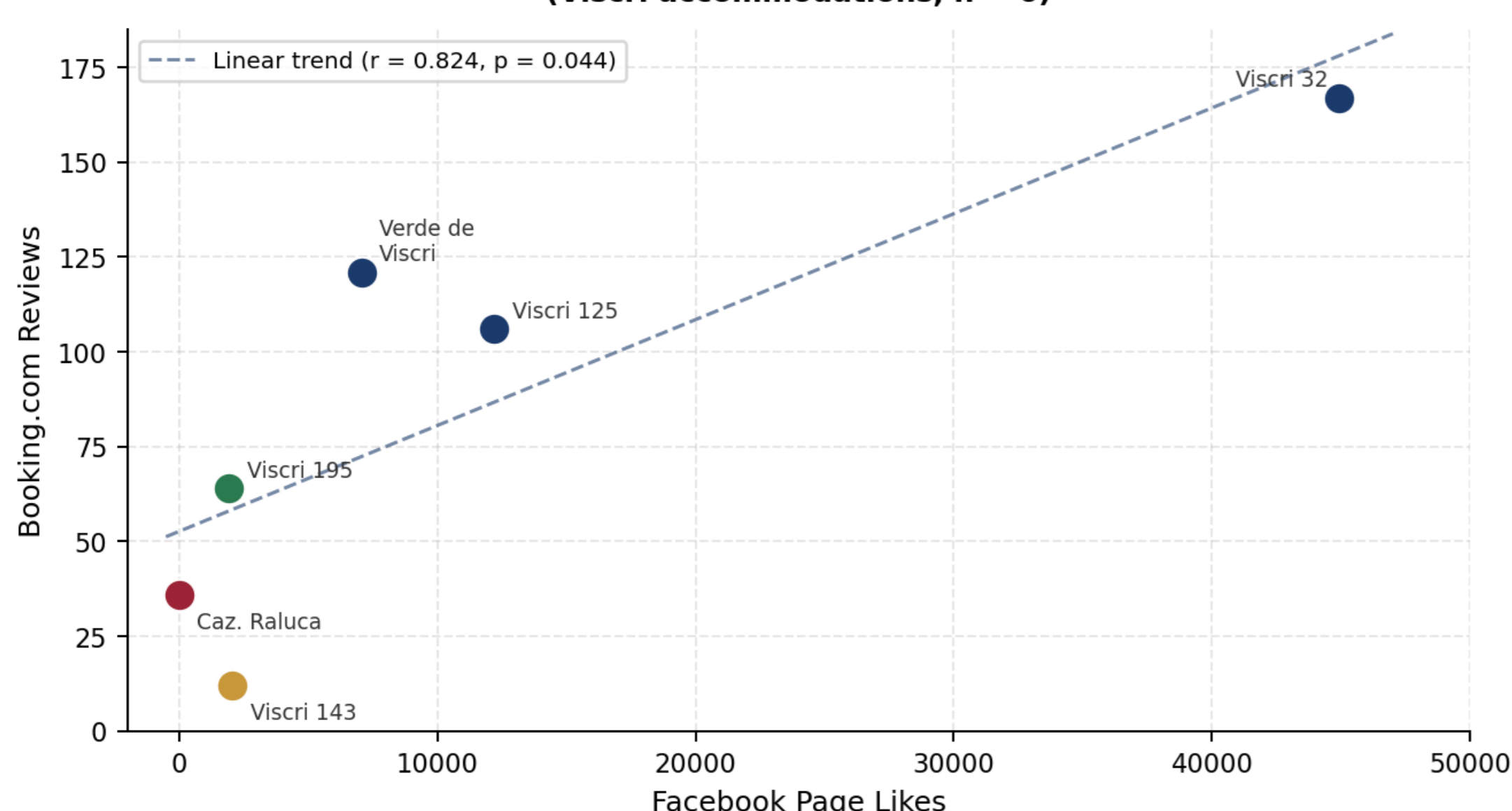


Figure 1. Booking.com review count vs. Facebook page likes ($n = 6$; dashed line = OLS regression).

Figure 2. Booking.com Review Counts by Accommodation (ordered descending; colour = social media intensity)

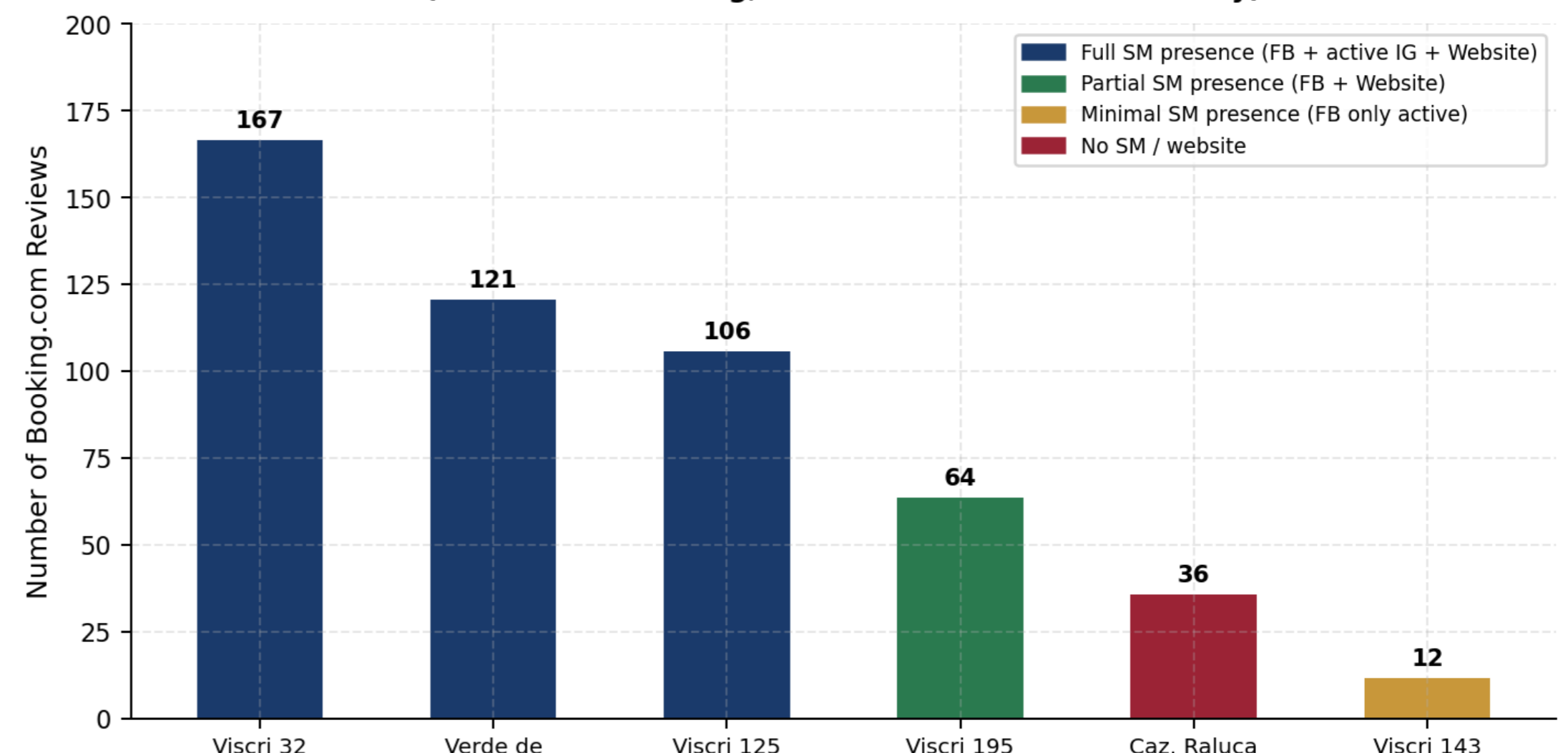


Figure 2. Booking.com reviews by accommodation, ordered descending; bar colour reflects social-media intensity.