

THE ANALYZE OF THE PERSONALITY, THE VISUAL IDENTITY AND BRAND COMMUNICATION OF DESTINATION - ROMANIA

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Abstract

The development of a national tourist brand has an impact on medium term both on the country brand development as well as on the growth of domestic and foreign tourist markets. Tourism is one of the axes that generate income to the government and a tourist brand is only a part of a country brand - indeed an important one through the high visibility it enjoys. The development of a national tourist brand is particularly important as Romania does not have a sharp image as a tourist destination, with its internal and external promotion quite inadequate and undersized.

Therefore, this activity must overcome the identity crisis that Romania faces today. A wider involvement in promoting national resources and values would generate benefits for various categories: raising living standards through the expansion and development of economic activities, openness to what a value system means in tourism and sustainable tourism, attracting foreign investors, new business opportunities, increasing public confidence in the business environment, international fundraising for developing ecological and cultural projects etc

Keywords: tourist brand, tourist destination, identity, communication

JEL Classification: L83, M31, M37

1.Introduction

A destination's success is also dependent on the tourist products provided by the enterprises in the respective region – the former should have certain quality, meet tourists' real needs and last but not least, have a market. The quality of the new product or destination should be at least at the same level with the one of the product introduced by the national tourist brand. Otherwise, no matter how famous a national brand might be and no matter how beautiful its image, the destination extension shall fail. Moreover, the poor quality of tourist services rendered in a tourist destination shall reflect in its turn upon the national tourist brand. Beyond the dynamics between the national brand and its extension, a product that does not supply quality cannot simply sell.

Country branding means state-centralized management. It primarily means coordinating macro-economic policies in order to get the country's competitive advantage. In order to have a country's brand, there should be value as well, and value should be accomplished with devotion and after some time.

Diminishing a national tourist brand is the highest risk of an unsuccessful or exaggerated extension which eventually leads to losing consumers' loyalty. The decrease process may occur due to various causes. Thus, if a new product has low quality, it will make consumers think negatively, therefore having an impact upon mother-brand and this will eventually make them wonder whether producers will worsen the quality of their original products one day.

2. The analysis of the specialized literature

A destination brand is defined as a "name, symbol, logo, word or other graphic elements that identify and differentiate a destination, conveying the promise of an unforgettable travel experience, uniquely associated with a destination, enhancing the experience of pleasant memories" [10].

A destination brand is significant in this period when there is a need for a particular destination (a country, region, city) ranked by buyers and interested parties [1]. The authors identify an issue in terms of destination branding referring to the fact that products having the same destination may be perceived differently depending on target groups [9].

A tourist product is more complex than most products, being rather an experience than a tangible good [7]. According to Baker and Cameron, an effect of globalization is the fact that penetrating a market (in a country, region,

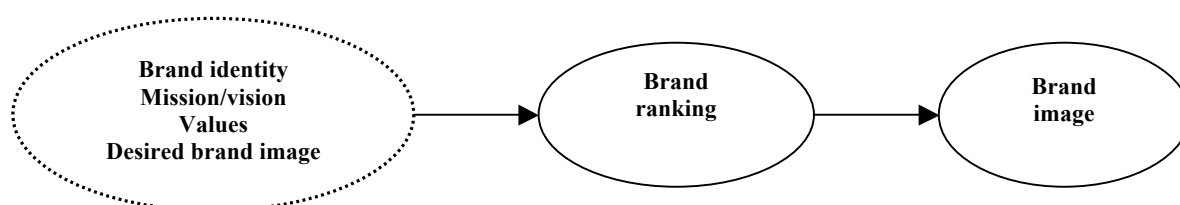
city) becomes a very important strategic process due to increased competition among multiple destinations seeking to attract investors and visitors [1].

There are certain issues that must be considered when it comes to branding a region. The name "Balkans" has been changed into "South East Europe" because it the West has thought it a negative word due to the social instability in the region [20]. Each country has a tendency to build its own country brand, that is why other countries are regarded as its competitors.

According to a survey [11], the greatest competitors of Slovenia are Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Each of these countries offers similar tourist products and is trying to attract tourists from the same tourist markets. They examine the challenges and opportunities for promoting Montenegro in terms of its sustainable destination tourism, during the post-civil war period in former Yugoslavia, and grant it the unique country branding status. The terms of imagery and branding are very important, especially to countries with negative consequences after the war. For example, until recently, Bosnia and Herzegovina have been associated with war, and to change such a view first of all they have to get themselves far from their negative past [5]. Croatia has a similar problem, since it is perceived more as a post-socialist, post-Yugoslavian and post-war country [13].

For example, Gilmore explains the success brand of Spain as having been built according to the ranking strategy of Porter's diamond. It considers the basic skills for the better ranking of a brand, including a region's physical and human assets mostly focused on friendly people [8]. A similar example of branding, people and places is shown in a survey by Foley and Fahy [6] where the message used to enhance this ranking is "Ireland, an emotional experience." This shows that, in essence, the image of a friendly host, of people and beautiful, unspoiled landscape are the "core values" to the Irish tourism.

Figure no.1. Brand identity, brand ranking and brand image



(adapted from Baker and Cameron 2008)

Other surveys highlight the need for a destination brand: creating an image and a strategic vision as part of a recognition flow - awareness, differentiation, brand consistency and brand message regarding strategic communication as well as creating the confidence of a target group [3]. The ranking strategy and the development of brand destination may be explained by the terms of brand image and brand identity.

In Risitano's opinion [19], a destination brand identity is based on six elements: culture, character, personality, name, logo (and symbols) and slogan of a brand.

However, previous surveys have suggested a model that conceptualizes brand identity in terms of vision and culture, which leads to the desired ranking, personality and future relationships [4]. Brand image is based on the connections that tourists make about a destination and its brand [19], all the information about a place and the impressions about the people who belong to that place. [12].

3. Brand Personality

A tourist destination needs a strong tourist brand created in compliance with the genuine, authentic strengths of advertising on national and foreign channels according to its tourist potential that should be able to persuade visitors that it is a unique, customized, competitive destination. It is necessary to set up a real, complex tourist image by the introduction of new elements to promote and diversify promotional materials (brochures, CD's, films, maps, study-tours, road-shows etc.).

That is why the authors believe that a brand is the starting point for all marketing decisions and all media creations.

Branding conveys information on what a destination is and can actually be, it can render value to a destination, it is the set of methods by means of which a destination or a product communicates, symbolizes and makes itself different to its audience.

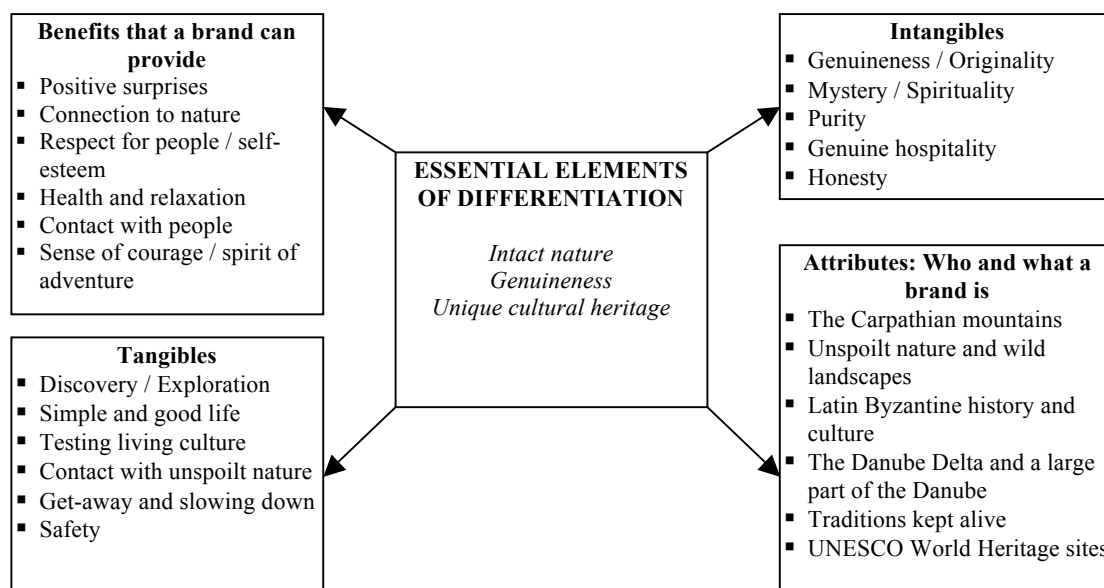
Brand personality reflects both Romania's view seen from abroad and the Romanians' opinions, both among travellers and among those who work in tourism.

The significance of brand components that define brand personality includes:

Green and rural areas. Green is the color of nature in Romania, a color that extends naturally to the concept of tourist brand. Romania's climate, mountains' height and type of agriculture are the foundation of this color's

prevalence. Romania is not only a country blessed with beautiful and abundant nature, but also a nation that lives close to nature and from nature. A significant part of Romania's population lives in rural areas, producing and consuming organic and healthy food and living mainly from agriculture, with many joys, traditions and celebrations being related to that. "Green" is more than a color, it is a lasting and positive lifestyle that allows the protection of natural resources. Agriculture is still far from the level of industrialization in other countries and it is still in the "hands of man" which makes it more accessible and attractive to travellers wishing to enjoy "green" and healthy holidays.

Figure no.2. Brand personality components



Source: *from autor*

Being *genuine, pure and innocent* assumes that industrialization is not yet as advanced as in European Union countries, and tourism has not yet the modernism and progress of other destinations.

To those looking for unique travel destinations, Romania can be a solution, as in many areas of the country nature is in its pure state.

"Local" is more important than "global" in many regions of Romania. As the world becomes more homogeneous as a result of culture influenced by multinationals, Romania retains its local traditions, clothing, food, drink, music, dances and stories in its rural areas. Although vanished in other countries long ago, in Romania these aspects are not artificially maintained or restored to entertain tourists, but they are real, authentic. There is no need to organize local dance festivals for tourists, since almost everywhere there are such events that can be seen. There is no need to tell people to dress in traditional costumes at local events, because they do that anyway. There is no need to prepare people to show "smiley faces" because their sincere and deeply moving smiles are naturally Romanian hospitality.

Friendly and warmhearted is how a Romanian ready to accommodate guests and tourists of all categories is.

The Romanians smile a lot, they are open and have a great sense of humor. They do not instantaneously smile to any stranger, but a traveller who wants to know them will be able to discover and enjoy incredible warmth and honesty when getting closer to the locals that will both surprise and delight them. The Romanians like talking, telling jokes; there is an amazing wealth of fascinating stories that can be shared. Hospitality is sincere; services are not luxurious or modern everywhere, but there is always sincere hospitality, friendliness and warm, a traveller being spontaneously invited as a guest to lunch or to a local party. This can be a truly unforgettable experience.

4. Visual Identity and Slogan of a Brand

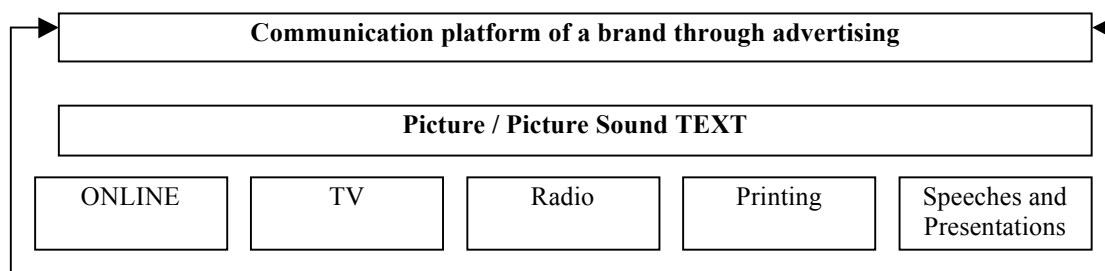
To really highlight and achieve the recognition of interests and differences, creative thinking is needed not only to express brand identity but also in basic messages communicated through the media mix used to accomplish a desired brand exposure.

Strategic thinking is required to ensure that messages are correctly sent to the right people at the right time ... and more importantly they have the desired effects.

The elements of visual identity and a slogan do not represent and do not describe a brand. These are just an "anchor" to remind of a set of perceptions that make it up [2]. Thus, when seeing the visual elements, the key attributes, values and personality of a brand will be acknowledged. Visual elements should not communicate or show something

explicitly [17]. They will be known from all communication activities that have used a brand such as advertising and promotion in printing, television, online etc.

Figure no. 3. Media communication of a brand



Source: MRDT, 2010

Photos/Pictures. For a positive effect, it is recommended to give up photographs that have passive, generic styles and look like postcards, and to replace them with images focusing on people, images typical of the dynamic and active image concept [15]. For example, a picture using active frames, animated frames, images of "real people", attractive and suggestive landscapes which a visitor can identify with is very useful. Artificial, digitized coloring should be left aside in favor of using natural, genuine colors as can be found in Romania.

The "discerning traveler" must also be shown discovering hidden aspects of Romania and living unique travel experiences.

Finally, pictures must depict selected tourist products.

Music/Sounds. The music used must be in harmony with the main attributes and elements of brand differentiation (genuineness, nature) avoiding the music of the current European trend. Music must be adapted so that to perform as a stand-alone song that conveys different messages [16].

It is recommended that, in compliance with the above, it should sound Romanian (keeping in mind that target audience should be attracted to it), perhaps using local and / or traditional musical instruments approaching the 21st century where even the sounds of nature can be integrated. The type of music must also be adapted to the product/video/picture shown.

For example, a message such as "Action and Adventure" can have a more "wild-like" background music than a message on "Wildlife and Natural Parks" where it is recommended to use slower music.

Local composers should get involved in creating specific themes for commercials, adapted to our country's characteristics, using different instruments, without confining to traditions.

A text is the message content defined by short phrases situated above (or near) the descriptive body of a text [15] that is to appear in subsequent campaigns.

Key information must be sent using short message as well as the most relevant attributes, benefits and differentiating elements with the highest intensity: genuineness, nature and culture.

A Slogan: The "Carpathian Garden" promotes the strongest tourist asset in the country according to market research [14]. The "explorer" theme clearly indicates the type of target traveller, their favorite activities as well as the benefits they can enjoy in various destinations in Romania. As in the case of visual aspects, the graphics and slogan have been selected after repeated market testing.

explore the Carpathian garden

Using the handwriting style for the word "Romania" reinforces the idea that there is no font used, but a drawing created especially for Romania, which expresses unique personality based on genuineness and originality. There is only one capital letter which highlights the differentiation element, the Carpathian Mountains.

The two components of the tourist brand of a tourist destination are the isotype and the logo (S. Pike, 2008). An isotype is a conceptual construction or description of an idea. A logo is the phenomenon that gives meaning/name to a brand.

A logo and an isotype should never be used separately.

An isotype used alone cannot be recognized, thus losing its effect. Only very famous brands such as Nike or Mercedes can use their symbols without a name and because their symbols are visible on their products and can be seen by consumers every day.

Moreover, a logo should not be used alone because it can lose everyone's appreciation and can create confusion to consumers [20]. The size of a logo and isotype are designed so that they can be used together in any circumstance.

In the case of Romania, its logo is written with letters imitating handwriting, having personality and a clear, friendly and original drawing. It is a visual label with simple, strong and optimistic shapes.



Figure no. 4. Description of the slogan

explore	the Carpathian	garden
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentle, inviting imperative. • Lets a target segment recognize itself. • Precisely reflects the reference background of ranking. • "Explore" applies to most key products. • Conveys the message that there is something new, unexplored, not assaulted by the masses, as the main selection criterion for a target segment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Carpathian Mountains have resulted from market research and preferences of different parties involved in the Romanian tourism as the most powerful element of differentiation in Romania • The Carpathians offer the best feedback of those who have been to Romania • The last wild, untamed mountain range which significantly contrasts with the highly developed and crowded Alps and Pyrenees. • Linking the mountains' name to Romania, even if they are part of neighboring countries too, renders geographical identity to the country helping it to get rid of its being rather "unknown". • Contrast with a civilized garden: an unspoiled place still having wild nature, as the dream of a target segment. • A name that is easy to connect with stories and myths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A beautiful metaphor symbolizing the country; it carries one's thoughts to walking through a garden and visiting its attractive places. • The word is also intended to cancel the perception of safety lack found on main markets. • In contrast with the wild Carpathian mountains, it indicates that they are accessible. • A garden is a symbol of care and growth, a place filled with peace and health, a place to visit with family and friends, a place to relax. • An excellent connection to healthy organic food, so important to a target group. • A garden is planted and has something different to offer in all seasons. • A garden is something you do not share with others, it is rather a personal place • Only one uppercase – C - highlights the differentiation item, the Carpathian Mountains

Source: the autor, adapted from MRDT (2010)

The **isotype** represented by a leaf reflects the basic principle of nature which addresses a Romanian soul through the folklore sources of "FOAIE VERDE – En. "GREEN LEAF" (it is an expression used in many Romanian traditional songs, showing the connection with nature); it can occasionally can resemble the shape of a mountain, whereas the blue tail represents the importance of water and the Danube River.



The **colors** used are shades of true green representing the natural wealth of forests, countryside and mountains. The curves recall one of the Carpathians and the hill-valley horizons of the landscape. In the middle, the circumflex diacritical mark characteristic to Romanian grammar is arc shaped pointing upwards, painted in warm colors to create contrast, reputation and vitality.

5. Brand and Communication Strategy of a Brand

A brand strategy is the key to success, being more important than the design of visual identity elements or than a slogan, for example. A brand can be successful only if the implementation of an effective strategy adds value and strength to it. This value must be communicated, but above all, it must be attributed to Romania. Positive travel experiences that fulfill the promises made by a brand stimulate today the strongest forms of marketing: viral marketing and direct marketing. The credibility and impact of real travelers' opinions are becoming increasingly important. Thus, communication and value provision must act in parallel, mutually reinforcing each other.

How to start or develop a brand involves a series of steps that take into account both domestic plans and the reference market context. Many times things are done step by step, intuitively, depending on immediate opportunities and constraints, overlooking the usefulness of a well-developed plan, covering all the objectives, stages, resources, means of implementation and results' evaluation criteria. A strategy is what most often acts in favor of a brand or another.

Figure no. 5. Objectives of brand communication

	Brand communication objectives	Defining the key objectives for each type of communication (to be reached in 2020)
Inform	1. Raising one's awareness	Internal: Increasing the number of Romanians who know most sights in Romania: from 40% to 75% External: Doubling the number of people who can think of Romania as something unique: from 30% to 60%
	2. Increasing the level of understanding	External: Doubling the number of people who can name one of the unique features of Romania (especially with focusing on culture and nature): from 27% to 50%
Motivate	3. Improving an image	Internal: Increasing the number of Romanians who believe that holidays in Romania are better than abroad from 26% to 45% External: Increasing the number of foreign tourists who have a rather positive view of Romania from 45% to 65%
	4. Explanation of attributes and benefits	External: Doubling the number of people mentioning the positive elements spontaneously associated with Romania as compared to the people mentioning negative items from 26% to 50%
	5. Creating preferences	Internal: Increasing the number of tourists that prefer Romania to other destinations from 26% to 50% External: Regarding the six top products, Romania will be perceived as more attractive than all its competitors
Act	6. Encouraging sales	Internal: Increasing the number of Romanian agencies which are ready and sell destinations in Romania by 50%. External: Increasing the number of tour operators and travel agencies that sell destinations in Romania by 25%
	7. Encouraging demand repetition	External: Increasing the number of returning visitors from 56% to 75%
	8. Encouraging recommendations	Internal: Increasing the number of Romanians who recommend their country as a holiday destination to other Romanians and foreign citizens. External: Increasing the number of foreign visitors' recommendations from 50% to 70%.

Source: the authors, adapted from MRDT (2010)

In order to meet the requirement of promoting national tourist destinations, attention needs to be paid to the implementation of promotion, advertising and public relations activities having a role in increasing awareness regarding destinations and tourist products through personalities that have national and international recognition in different fields such as arts, culture, sports, science and the like, as vectors for promoting Romania's tourist brand.

6. Conclusions

The investigations carried out so far have showed that Romania currently has a rather negative image and one of the main objectives is to make Romania known as a tourist destination. One of the ways that can increase awareness is running a campaign sustained by promotion to address a target audience whose profile is defined in a brand strategy.

The overall objective of such a campaign is to promote the national tourist brand in order to create a positive image of Romania as a tourist destination, by better ranking our country at international level and increasing the demand for tourism in Romania, on the main priority markets identified.

Promoting a successful national tourist brand will enable Romania to create its positive view as a quality tourist destination based on its natural and cultural heritage that meets international standards as to delivery of products and services, and to achieve sustainable development of its tourist sector in a growth rate superior to other tourist destinations' in Europe. Therefore, more information and promotion campaigns need to be carried out to support a brand and convey communication messages to the target groups taken into account.

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