

THE IDENTITY / IMAGE OF THE BRÂNCUȘI BRAND

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Abstract

In the contemporary society characterized by dynamism, in the perspective of the globalization of social life in which rapid changes have generated a spectacular evolution of tourism marketing, it is necessary for each people or nation to look to the future intuiting what changes must make, what changes must bring the current situation in fact, not only to survive, but to prosper. Having an economic purpose, brands are an integral part of our visual culture. Any tourist destination, in the case of this work being the tourist destination of the city of Tg-Jiu, is increasingly determined to build a unique and competitive identity in the mind of the tourist consumer. Brand identity and brand image are necessary ingredients for a successful destination brand (Qu et al., 2010, p. 2). The article aims to reproduce the importance of the Brancusi brand, as a well-defined image and identity in the Gorj city, trying after the analysis and questionnaire applied in conducting research on the three tourist information centers in the area to draw with other specialists in branding and branding an image of the Brâncuși brand that cannot be built only on images transmitted externally but also needs to incorporate the direct experience supported by infrastructure, projects, events, initiatives for the aggressive promotion of the Brâncuși sculptural ensemble in parallel with the development of the place in order to build an original, sustainable image of the brand under investigation.

Keywords: *touristic destination; brand image; regional tourist brand; destination marketing.*

Clasificare JEL : Q57, Z32, Z33, Z38

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, the role played by the image in the development of tourism and, in particular, as a differentiator, of the element of a destination area, is widely recognized. This is largely reflected in the literature that focuses on identifying variables that motivate acquisition or stimulate decision-making.

Knowing that the brand of the destination was defined by Ritchie & Ritchie (1998, p. 103) as “a name, a symbol, a logo, a keyword or any graphic sign that identifies and also differentiates the destination; moreover, it expresses the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; [the brand] serves to strengthen the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination”, the Brâncuși brand meets and offers the quality of a unique tourist product, memorable in time and space in Gorj.

"Branding has become such a significant phenomenon of our times that it is almost impossible to express an idea or describe a personality without branding them" (Wally Olins, 2006, p. 23, and „in a noisy world in terms of competitive discourse and where a rational choice has become almost impossible, brands mean quality, safety, consistency, status, belonging - that is, everything human beings need to define themselves . Brands mean identity”(Wally Olins, 2006, p.27).

2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to ensure the success of the tourism phenomenon, a large number of researchers (Bornhorst, Ritchie & Sheehan, 2010; Adeyinka-Ojo, Khoo-Lattimore & Nair, 2014), considered that it is absolutely necessary and useful a correct management of all the elements that make up,

one of them, with a decisive role in the development of the tourist phenomenon, is the image of the destination.

According to studies that have focused on the process of choosing a destination for the next vacation by tourists, one of the important factors influencing their decision is the image of the destination (Gartner, 1994; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Chi & Qu, 2008). In the complex process of forming the image of a destination there is a permanent interconnection between tourism promotion and available sources of information (Govers, Go & Kumar, 2007).

Chi & Qu (2008) draws attention to the special importance that must be given to the image of the destination in real consensus with the quality of products and services provided to tourists as they affect the satisfaction and future intentions of behavior.

Brand identity and brand image are necessary ingredients for a successful destination brand (Qu et al., 2010, p. 2).

Identity is created by the broadcaster based on tourist attractions (artificial or natural), on the history of places, on people, on the motivation to choose because, „ *the branding activity means to give a service or a product an emotional dimension, which the public can identify it* ” as stated by Eytan Gilboa in 2008 in the work “ Searching for the theory of public diplomacy ”. At the same time, the image is the one perceived by the receiver and is based on his previous experiences, but also on the promotion strategies of the sender.

The relationship between brand identity and brand image is reciprocal. The brand image appears as a reflection of the brand identity and playing a very important role in its constitution. The image of the destination that the tourist forms is based on the promotion and communication strategies elaborated by the sender based on the brand identity.



Figure 1. The relationship between brand image and brand identity

Source: adaptation after Stăncioiu, A-F., Teodorescu N, Părgaru, I. Vlădoi, A-D, Codruța Băltescu, C (2011): „ The image of the tourist destination - a supporting element in the construction of the regional tourist brand. Case study - Muntenia ”. Theoretical and applied economics, Volume XVIII (2011), No. 2 (555), pp. 139-152.

A very important and sensitive issue at the same time is that of destination marketing. Thus, the brand identity must remain constant, while the image of the destination may change over time due to external / objective factors or, it is necessary to be completely renewed due to internal / subjective factors, with the passage of a period of time. (after Mazurek, 2008, p.31).

Henderson (2007, p. 262) presented a definition of the image of destination as "multidimensional, with cognitive and affective spheres (...) an amalgam of knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations and impressions that people have from a certain destination."

Brand associations are classified by Keller (1993, p. 4) into three categories: attributes, advantages and attitudes. According to the author, attributes are those descriptive characteristics that characterize a brand, the advantages that can appear are represented by the personal value associated by tourists with brand attributes, and brand attitudes are overall evaluations of tourists about a brand.

Therefore, the attribute represents what the tourist thinks that a brand can offer and what its acquisition or consumption implies (Qu et al., 2010, p. 3). The advantages appear in the form of functional, symbolic and experiential attachments, ie what tourists believe the brand can do for them while attitudes are the foundation of consumer behavior (eg, choosing a brand).

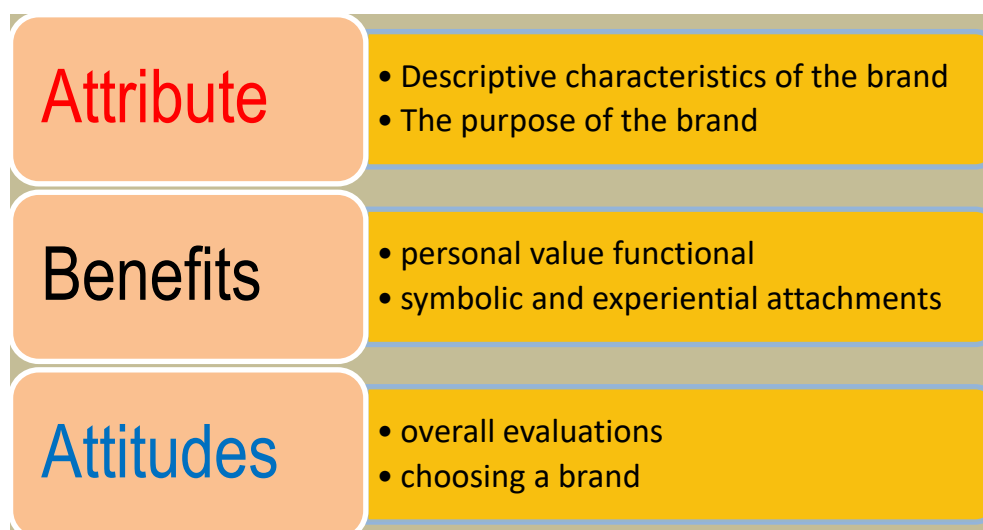


Figure 2. Classification of brand associations (Keller 1993).

Therefore, in order to establish the brand of a destination, both cognitive and affective competencies must be taken into account, establishing the predominant form of tourism / forms of tourism and subsequently the corresponding tourism product or products.

In the current global context, with continuous and rapid changes from all points of view, the tourist destinations are in a continuous territorial competition.

A successful brand can make an essential contribution to the sustainable development of the entire region, stimulating the regional economy (through its own products and services offered and consumed), while promoting elements such as: nature, landscapes, friendly weather, relaxing environment, accessibility, infrastructure (artistic image), historical vestiges, art monuments, regional culture (customs and traditions, manifestations and events, etc.), tourist reception units (pensions, hotels, motels, restaurants, bars, etc.), elements of regional gastronomy psychological image) etc.

Although many tourist destinations offer the same product, they must discover, promote and capitalize on the competitive (and / or unique) advantages they have, in order to compete globally and obtain investment, tourism promotion, political power. and so on (Messely et al., 2010, p. 20).

Moțoc (2011, p. 4) points out that national identity “is nothing more than a sum of regional identities”, so that the national brand represents a synthesis of individual / local and regional brands that support the development of a community based on values, common principles and beliefs.

In elaborating the strategy of building the tourist brand, Romania, seen as a tourist macro-destination, it is necessary to go through the following successive stages: country tourism brand, component regional tourist brands, local community brand, local / individual tourist brands.

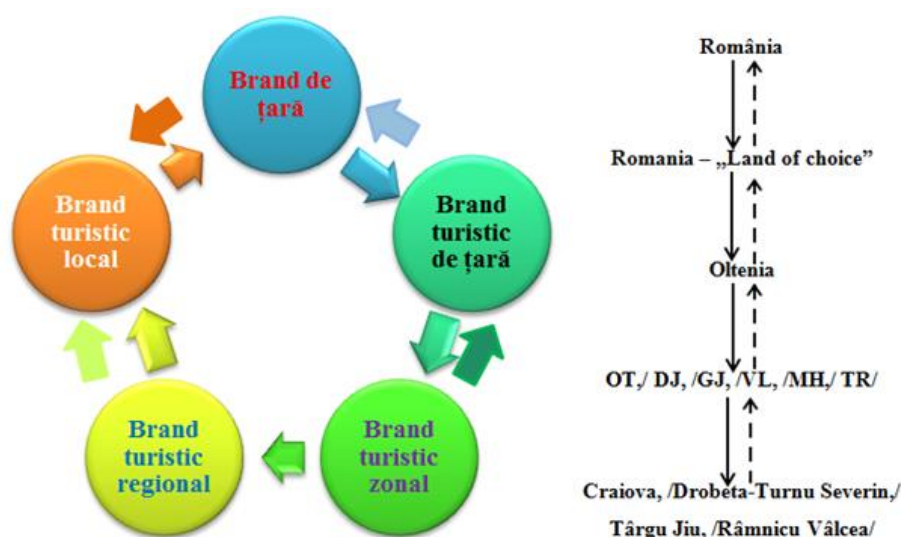


Figure 3. Family of tourist brands

Source: adaptation after Stăncioiu A.-F., Pârgaru, I. Mazilu, M. (2009): “Destination brand - some conceptual-methodological landmarks in destination marketing”, Proceedings of the The Second International Tourism Conference “Sustainable Mountain Tourism - Local Responses for Global Changes”, Eșelnița, published in Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova, 2009, p. 288.

Regional tourism brands (eg, Oltenia brand) bear the imprint of local and individual brands. In turn, individual tourism brands must be the basis for the construction of regional brands, which will be essential elements, indispensable to the country's tourism brand (Figure 4).

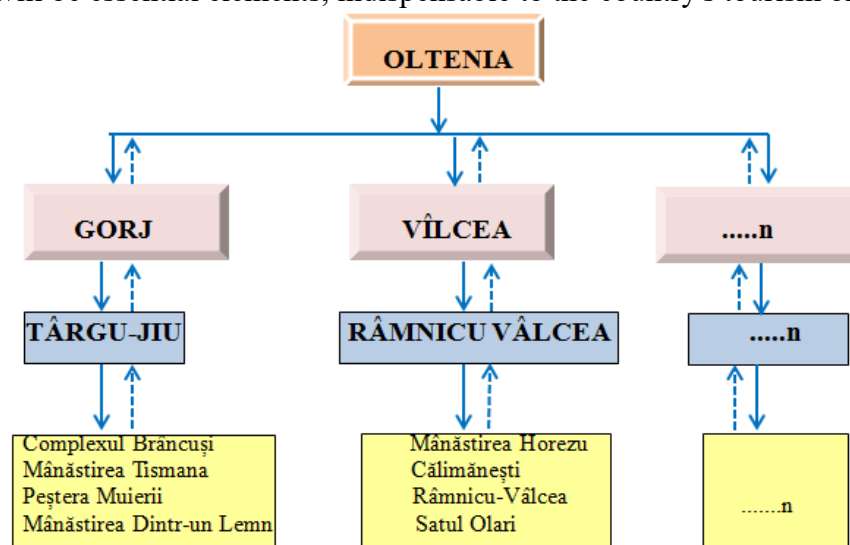


Figure 4. Regional tourist brand of Oltenia microdestination

Building, consolidating and expanding the brand requires clarity, consistency, leadership and, at the same time, a long-term vision, paying more attention to competition and new technologies.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The favorable image of a region has a direct impact on trade, investment and tourism throughout the country.

But why create a regional brand? The main reasons are simple. In a country with a strong brand, brands (CBI 2008): will communicate with power and economy, attract investment, help

promote sources of economic value, allow and / or support change, profitable export of the brand, will recover stereotypes and clichés, will build a global competitive advantage, will serve as a source of differentiation.

The regional tourism brand is only part of the country brand, but an important one.

Starting from the hypothesis that the distinctive signs that guarantee the quality represent spatial landmarks, these being sought by tourists and the tourist attractiveness of the tourist objectives is indeed in the case of the Oltenia Subcarpathians directly proportional to the number of labels awarded and the level of distinction awarded. a questionnaire-based survey with application in the Olt sub-Carpathian region. The purpose of the survey is to see what is the image that tourists visiting the study area have about the region. The questionnaire was applied within the three existing tourist information centers in the study area: Călimănești, Horezu and Târgu-Jiu. Secondary data sources, such as general literature, brochures and interviews with tour operators, representatives of local authorities, were also used in order to create the list of attributes used for measurement in order to study the relationship between locals and tourists. of identifying attitudes towards the socio-economic impact of tourism activity on the local community.

The survey based on the perception questionnaire was applied to tourists who visited the study area between June and September 2020. The sample was 594 questionnaires, of which 548 were valid. We eliminated the questionnaires in which the socio-demographic data were not completed. Tourists had the opportunity to complete the questionnaires at various accommodation units and near the tourist attractions.

The questionnaire was designed to collect data on:

- ✓ evaluation of the motivations that were the basis for moving to the study region;
- ✓ the overall image of the chosen tourist destination;
- ✓ sources of information in choosing the travel destination;
- ✓ places visited and favorite tourist objectives;
- ✓ the criteria based on which the tourist objectives and the products to be consumed are selected;
- ✓ the degree of satisfaction of the tourist services;
- ✓ socio-demographic profile of the people participating in this study.

Data processing and analysis was performed in the IBM SPSS Statistics Subscription program.

The directive questionnaire, comprising a total of 17 questions, being structured on several types of questions (general information about participants, their behavior, motivations, perceptions, attitudes). The application time for a questionnaire was approximately 30 minutes.

Table 1. Settlements in which questionnaires were applied

CITY	NUMBER OF TOURIST ARRIVALS, JUNE 2020	QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER APPLIED	QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER VALID
Târgu-Jiu	1823	275	254
Călimănești	1049	244	226
Horezu	75	75	68
Total	2207	594	548

Source: INSSE, own processing

The purpose of this research, reiterates and supports the idea that the country brand includes under its umbrella the brands of regions, to identify the perceptions of residents in different regions of Romania regarding each region helps to build its identity and image, and to develop strategy.

destination marketing. The effect of visiting a certain destination in image formation was investigated by Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the authors concluding that “the tourist experience contributes not only to the change of image, but also to the change of positioning based on cognitive / perceptual variables and affective and at the general level of attractiveness ”(Baloglu and McCleary, 1999, p. 151).

Therefore, it is necessary to study separately the images formed among potential and actual consumers of tourism products. The image perspective based on prior knowledge and persuasive informative information for visiting potential consumers and the complex image of actual consumers provides a comprehensive platform for developing destination promotion strategy (Fayeke and Crompton, 1991, cited in Greaves and Skinner , 2010, pp. 491).

Individuals develop mental constructs and representations of the image of destination, focusing on various attributes dictated by their beliefs, ideas, attitudes, perceptions, and impressions (Beerli and Martin, 2004; Rozier-Rich and Santos, 2011; Um and Crompton, 1990, by Nicoletta and Servidio, 2012, p. 19).

When asked about the selection of favorite destinations from a generous list of objectives (monasteries and churches, localities, natural attractions, anthropic attractions), tourists made a hierarchy of favorite destinations. Performing an analysis of the items, we identified the main categories of attractions. In the Horezu area, it is found that ecumenical tourism is preferred by visitors, 67% of them said that Horezu Monastery is the main motivation for travel in the area, and 31% expressed their opinion that the cultural objectives represented by the Brâncuși Complex in Târgu Jiu, they are preferred. Other attractive destinations were: The ceramics exhibition from Horezu, Olari Village, Olteț Gorges, Muierii Cave.

In the Călimănești region, the same preferences of the surveyed visitors regarding the Horezu Monastery can be noticed. A percentage of 57.6% of the tourists participating in the study chose as a objective to visit the mentioned monastery, while the second place was occupied by the Brâncuși Complex from Târgu-Jiu with a percentage of 32.3%. Other favorite tourist attractions in the study region are: Călimănești-Căciulata Resort, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Cheile Oltețului.

As expected, the respondents from Târgu-Jiu city stated that the cultural objectives of the Brâncușian Complex are preferred by them in an overwhelming proportion of 77%, followed by Horezu Monastery (19.2%), Muierii Cave, Sohodol Gorges, Săcelu Resort .

It is found that among the items included in this category, the Brâncuși Complex was preferred by 46.7% of the total number of respondents. As expected, the respondents from Târgu-Jiu selected the Brâncuși Complex as the preferred destination in proportion of 77%, the tourists surveyed in the Horezu area appreciated Brâncuși's works as an attractive travel destination in 31%, and the visitors of the resort Călimănești wants to visit the Brâncușian Sculptural Complex in a percentage of 32.3%.

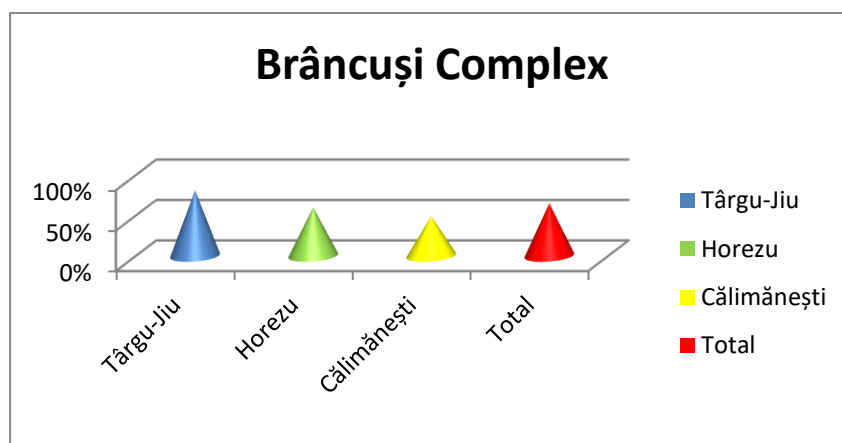
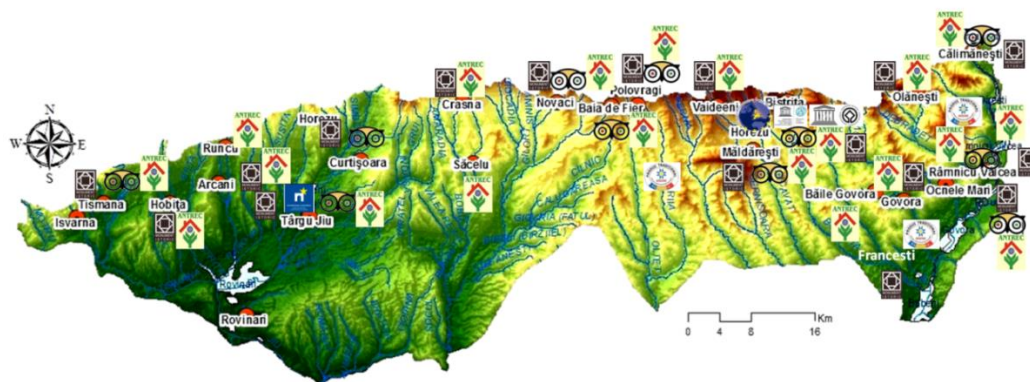


Figure 5. Tourist preferences for the Brâncușian Complex

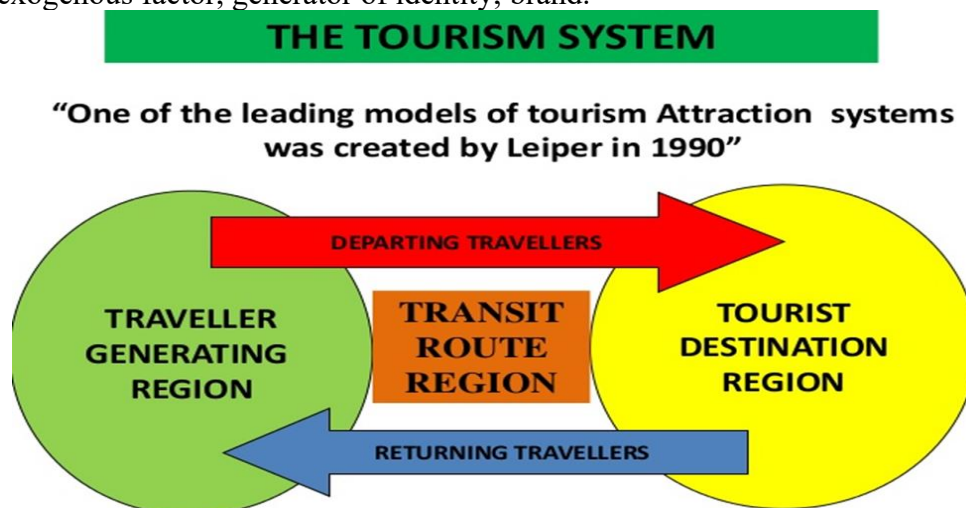
We concluded that at the level of tourist sites in the study area, the most visited are the Horezu Monastery (68,8%), which is on the Unesco World Heritage List since 1993, followed by the Brâncuși complex in the Central Park of Târgu-Jiu (65,2%), which is inscribed on the European Heritage List and in the process of being inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List.

The recognition of these two sites is manifested at several levels:

- Horezu (global level - Unesco site, Tripadvisor recommendations, European - destination of excellence, national - historical monument, rural tourism - Antrec network);
- Târgu-Jiu (world - Tripadvisor recommendations, European level - European, national heritage - historical monument, included in the Antrec network).

**Figure 5.** Existing labels in the study area (Olt sub-Carpathian region).

The tourism system itself generates an image of the region and the tourist destination through the tourist attractions that offer its identity, uniqueness (Leiper 1990), tourists becoming in this context an exogenous factor, generator of identity, brand.

**Figure 6.** Tourism system model (Neil Leiper, 1990).

4. THE BRAND - FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Building, consolidating and expanding the brand requires clarity, consistency, leadership and, at the same time, a long-term vision, paying more attention to competition and new technologies.

The process of building a strong brand must go through a series of well-defined stages: brand planning, brand analysis, brand building and auditing (Philip Kotler, 2011, p.165).

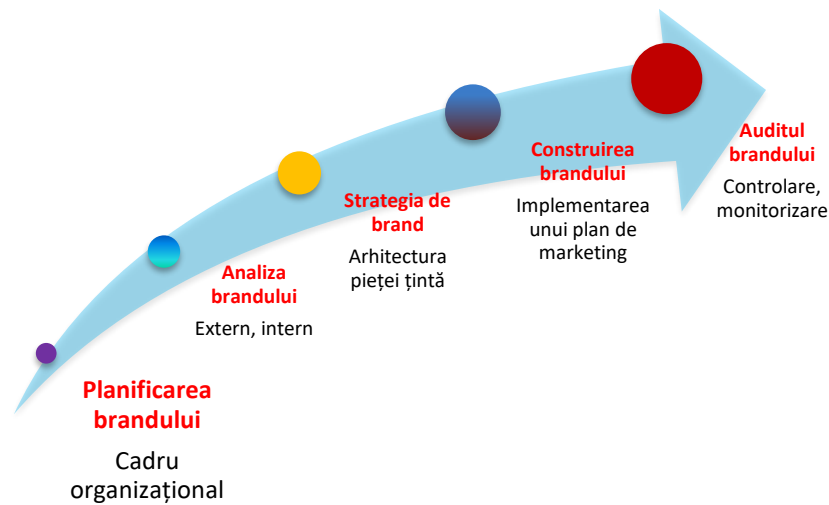


Figure 7. The succession of brand building processes (Kotler, 2011).

In order to gain effectiveness in building a successful brand, it is well known to effectively combine the indispensable conditions that precede it (the 3 C's of branding): Consistency, Clarity, Continuity.

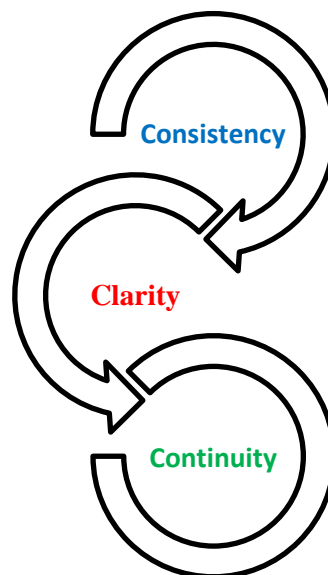


Figure 8. The 3 Cs of branding

Philip Kotler adds two other branding principles: Visibility and Authenticity.

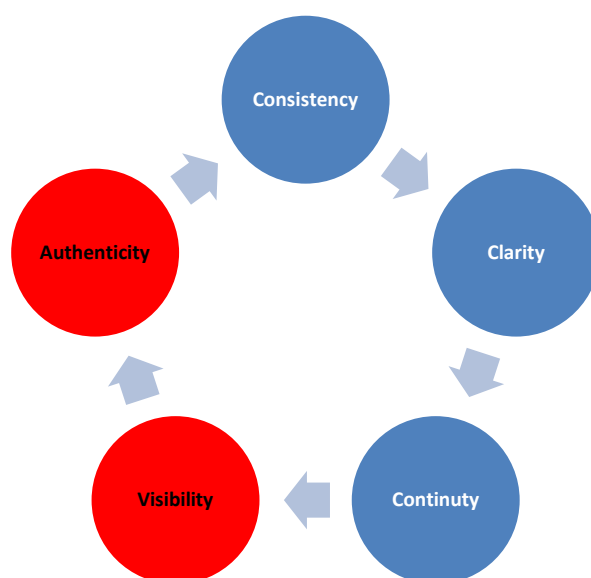


Figure 9. Principles of branding (Kotler, 2011).

4. CONCLUSIONS

In order to build a "healthy" tourist brand of Romania, it is necessary to conduct research among other categories of public, respectively among non-visitors (those who do not want to visit the destination at least in the next period for emotional and rational reasons), strangers (tourists or visitors, respectively temporary users), returnees (those who keep in memory certain images that they then compare with the existing image) and professionals who find, analyze and create images and technical or humanistic premises (processing after Stăncioiu et al., 2009, pp. 285).

Any research has limits. The one we "fought" with was given by the COVID 19 pandemic, which massively restricted the flow of tourists to the city of Tg Jiu. Another limitation of the research is the fact that, in order to be conclusive, such research must be carried out permanently / periodically, as trends in tourists' motivations, expectations and requirements become increasingly sophisticated, amid changes and trends in the environment. and increasingly fierce competition between tourist destinations.

Following the analysis of the predominant forms of tourism for the Oltenia micro-destination (leisure, recreation and leisure tourism), it results that the image perceived by the Romanian inhabitants is an artistic one (natural environment) rather than a psychological one. Therefore, the destination marketer should pay more attention not only to artistic images, but also to those "soul" images in which to participate, and "soul" images in which to interrelate. Or "the true identity of the place" is an expression that means the whole set of characteristics of a place and its culture at a given time, although it is subject to multiple metamorphoses, and includes other fragmented identities (Govers and Go, 2009, p .51).

We consider in the case of the Brâncuși brand that precisely on this unique identity the proposal of the local brand and the concrete offer of products and services must be drawn, without this anchoring the sustainability and quality of the brand development can be questioned.

The image of the place was defined as "the complete set of impressions on a place or the global perception on it, a representation or a mental prototype of the way the trip would look in that place" (Hunt, 1975, p.3). It is based on the characteristics, functional consequences (expected benefits) and symbolic meanings (psychological characteristics) that consumers associate with a specific geographical area so that the image influences the positioning and ultimately the behavior of tourists towards that place (Anholt, 2007, p. 4). The image of the place undoubtedly remains a consequence of the perceived quality, of the degree of satisfaction but also of the post-experience

consumer behavior (Kotler et. Al, 2003, p.420). Thus, the places are made up not only of material heritage but also of symbols and representations.

A strong image of the brand of a place can not be built only on images transmitted externally but needs to incorporate direct experience supported by infrastructure, projects, events, initiatives for the development of the place in order to build an original image of the place brand. the major role of the local administration to trigger actions of aggressive promotion intervenes, the Brâncuși brand being a tourist product with perennial qualities, in parallel, being the soul of Tg Jiu, the one that becomes our landmark in the national and world tourist space.

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