

Romania Oscillating in the Shaping of the Tourist Destination Profile at a World Level

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Abstract: The increase of the competition of prices and of the better-organised and cheaper destinations network on other continents emphasises the pressure on the European tourist sector and on the traditional destinations. More destinations compete based on experience, and a larger transparency of the market in terms of prices and/or other comparable features of the destinations strengthen the competition.

At the request of the tourists to purchase products/services at prices permanently correlated with the offer, the operators answer through the more accentuated optimisation of the quality/price ratio.

In this context, the small and medium sized classic tourist enterprises are forced to fight for survival in front of the competition of the integrated destinations, which work with world level tourism professionals, disposing of a strong functional organisation and may achieve significant savings, net superior to those of any other small, isolated enterprises. On the other hand, however, these small enterprises, in order to face an increasing pressure, they must direct towards cooperation, innovation, specialisation and the creation of trademark products, of high quality.

Key-Words: tourism, destination, specialization, traditional, market.

Motto: "The four Qualities' of services marketing are: people, people, people." (Richard Dow)

1 Introduction

There are many studies that speak about the "anonymity" our country is sinking in, from the point of view of the international tourist identity, about the symbols, which define us. We have never known how to make ourselves truly known through what we have in particular, not because we lack the specific features, but because it is possible that we do not know or do not know anymore what truly represents us. There have been several initiatives, some of them even recent and costly; to create and promote a country brand, starting firstly from tourism, but it has not had the expected impact. Why? There are many reasons that may be reminded, one of them however must be taken into account as essential beyond the political games and arrangements, the bad communication and implementation decisions, it is the simplest one and maybe that is why it is overlooked: do we know today what represents us? Do we have an element/several elements that offer us a sustainable image for the Romanian rural tourism?

Are the adventure, the culture, the village, the

traditions, the gastronomy, and the authenticity tourist identity elements for the Romanian village as an element of tourist offer? What symbols, values, ideas, feelings, places, emotions, types of behaviour, food, artistic expressions are by excellence truly Romanian? Moreover, how many of us admit this?

2 Problem Formulation

Let us see what the statistics say: a study recently performed by **FutureBrand** ranks our country on the 81st place from 102 states, stating that the "Profile of the country is very difficult to identify. The people from various countries of the world know very little about Romania", states the report, which ranks the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and France in Top 5. Romania is averagely acknowledged for the natural environment, history, top technology, the purchase power and the life standard. "The brand has a huge potential, and it does not limit only to tourism. It has an essential role in the attraction of investors and the

stimulation of trading. In the context of the economic crisis, the need to maximize the opportunities and to acquire a strong identity is critical", says Rina Plaper, executive manager of FutureBrand.

Tourism, undoubtedly. What are the favourite destinations in the world and how are they chosen? Many tourists prefer the destinations where tourism has not become a mass tourism, thus among the newest "original destinations" are nowadays the Balkans, Azerbaijan and Ghana, which took the place of Croatia and Thailand, being nowadays tourist destinations by excellence!

In the last year's list, Romania ranked 76, from 78 states included in the study. This year there has been a spectacular change in the top of the list, the United States taking over the first place from Australia. The country-continent reached the third place, Canada ranking the second. A list of the first 10 countries preferred by the tourists, according to the **FutureBrand** study, looks like this: 1. USA; 2. Canada; 3. Australia; 4. New Zealand – which has chosen ecology and natural beauty in order to promote itself with a special tourist success and an equally efficient strategy; 5. France; 6. Italy; 7. Japan; 8. Great Britain; 9. Germany; 10. Spain.

Starting from **symbols, profiles and identity**, we have the following classification:

- **Business:** USA, Singapore, Japan, Germany, Canada
- **Business travels:** Australia, Japan, Italy, USA, New Zealand
- **Beaches:** Tahiti, Bermuda, Aruba, Barbados, Bahamas
- **Protection of family:** Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand, Portugal
- **History:** Egypt, India, Peru, Israel, Italy
- **Art and Culture:** Italy, France, India, Japan, Greece
- **Natural beauty:** Tahiti, Costa Rica, Canada, New Zealand, Fiji
- **Resorts and accommodation:** Canada, Tahiti, Bahamas, USA, Mexico
- **Nightlife:** Japan, Great Britain, USA, Brazil, Thailand
- **Food sector:** France, Italy, Japan, Argentina, Singapore
- **Outdoor activities and sports:** Australia, New Zealand, Costa Rica, Canada, Aruba
- **Recreation and relaxation:** Tahiti, Aruba, Barbados, Fiji, Bahamas
- **Safety:** Canada, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Bermuda
- **Shopping:** Singapore, USA, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, Great Britain
- **The country where one would like to live:** Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand, Switzerland
- **Transport infrastructure:** Germany, Ireland,

Canada, Singapore, Bermuda

- **Life standard:** Germany, Canada, Japan, Finland, Singapore

- **Political freedom:** Canada, Germany, Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand

- **Quality products:** Japan, USA, Germany, Finland, Switzerland

- **Environment:** Finland, Germany, Canada, New Zealand, Iceland

- **Hospitable inhabitants:** Fiji, Ireland, Aruba, Thailand, Bermuda

- **Ease in developing business:** Singapore, USA, Canada, Great Britain, Germany

- **Organising conferences and meetings:** Japan, Germany, Singapore, USA, Great Britain

- **The country one would like to (re)visit –** Australia, New Zealand, Maldives, Tahiti, USA

- **The most original brand:** Japan, India, Peru, Cambodia, Bhutan.

The study was performed through questioning 3.000 business tourists or recreational tourists of nine countries (Great Britain, China, Australia, Japan, Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, Germany and Russia). Each of the 3.000 is the type of tourist who travels at least twice a year abroad. A commission of 47 experts of FutureBrand drew the conclusions. Source:

<http://turism.evz.ro/emain/articolul/875530/STUDIU-Romania-tara-anonima>

There is no surprise that France remains in the top of the preferences related to the cuisine, Japan is preferred for the nightlife, and Germany is always the first in terms of transport infrastructure. These are already generally accepted realities! Where is our country in a possible list of nations, from the perspective of identity symbols? Can we still speak about the Romanian hospitality and about the agro-tourism untouched by "civilisation" or about a special architectural Bucharest?

Romania was presented in 2010 as a European destination of first rank for hunting and fishing.

Romania presented at the Hunting, Fishing and Tourism Fair (Fercatur) from Ciudad Real – to which Romanian was this year the special guest – its offer as a European destination of first rank in this field, informed El Dia de Ciudad Real on Sunday (September 12th, 2010).

The Romanian authorities are working at the moment at a new tourist identity, for the promotion of the country in Europe, because this market is "the most suitable for the cultural, rural and adventure tourism heritage", the hunting representing a safe advantage for Romania, especially in the area of the Danube Delta, and that "a better fishing place in Europe is very hard to find".

In Romania, only a certain number of bears may be hunted in a year, because there are approximately 8000,

and there is the obligation of offering part of the advantages obtained from hunting to the protection of the specie.

On the other hand, Romania has a very interesting tourist offer at Fercatur, presenting seven areas declared by UNESCO Heritage of Humanity, among which Transylvania, the medieval city of Sighisoara or the Danube Delta.

In 2011, **Romania managed to rank 9th** in an index of the adventure tourism potential which analyses over 160 countries and emergent territories, according to a study performed by the **George Washington University in partnership with Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and Vital Wave Consulting** and made public in July 2011. The index took into consideration two categories, developed countries and countries in development. Romania is included in the second category, where it is analysed together with over other 160 global destinations.

In the list of 2011, Romania managed to **rank 9th, entering the top 10, after ranking 11th in 2009, and 21st in 2008**. The index performed by the American University took into consideration the current popularity of the destinations, although in many cases this coincided with the score, insisting on the development potential and the features of this tourism segment, based on the nature walks or the exploration of various cultures.

Some of the criteria considered to score the countries are the following:

- *Sustainable development,*
- *Safety of destination,*
- *Natural resources, the ones needed for the adventure activities,*
- *Infrastructure*
- *Cultural resources.*

In 2010, **the first three places in the category of countries in development were filled in by Israel, Slovakia and Chile**. Estonia and the Check Republic completed the top 5. Switzerland, Iceland and New Zealand filled in the first three places in the category of developed countries.

The officials of the **World Tourism Organisation**¹

¹ The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Teodor Baconschi, had a meeting with **Taleb Rifai, the General Secretary of the World Tourism Organisation**, specialised institution under the coordination of the United Nations Organisation, on July 12th, 2011.

The two officials evoked the excellent cooperation between Romania and UNO, reflected in the presence of numerous agencies and specialised institutions from the system of the

previously said that Romania² would double the number of foreign tourists in the following 2-3 years, from 1.3 million at the moment, if it continues to focus on the promotion of the mountain, of the Delta, of the monasteries and the life in the countryside.

Romania climbed three positions this year, up to the 63rd place, in a competition regarding the tourism competitiveness performed by the World Economic Forum (WEF), which included 139 countries, but it ranked the last in the European Union. The leaders of the list were Switzerland, Germany and France, followed by Austria, Sweden, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Spain and Singapore.

3 Problem Solution

The marketing plan of Romanian tourism³ stipulates even the promotion of the natural and cultural destinations abroad.

“The biggest chances of Romania on a global tourist

United Nations in Romania, as well as the developed partnership between Romania and WTO in order to reevaluate the tourist potential of our country.

The Minister, Teodor Baconschi, repeated the commitment of Romania, as vice-president of the Executive Council of WTO, in order to contribute to the advance of the global agenda of the organisation, and announced the intention of our country to candidate during 2011 for the position of Prime Vice President of the Council.

The Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the high official of the UNO had an exchange of opinions on the evolutions of tourism and the emergence of new markets regionally and globally, as well as on the strategic role of the cooperation between WTO and Romania in the Danubian basin and the extended region of the Black Sea, while the Romanian part ensured the coordination of the application of the EU Strategy for the Danube region in the field of tourism.

The General Secretary of the World Tourism Organisation visited Romania, during the period July 11th-12th, 2011, at the invitation of the Minister of Regional Development and Tourism.

² Mazilu Mirela Elena, *Opportunities and Threats for Romania as a Tourist Destination after the World Economic Crisis*, publish in Proceedings ISI of 5-th WSEAS International Conference on Economy and Management Transformation(EMT'10),ISSN:1792-5983,ISBN:978-960-474-240-0,West Timisoara University,2010,pag.66-72.

[http://www.wseas.us/e-](http://www.wseas.us/e-library/conferences/2010/TimisoaraW/EMT/EMT1-08.pdf)

[library/conferences/2010/TimisoaraW/EMT/EMT1-08.pdf](http://www.wseas.us/e-library/conferences/2010/TimisoaraW/EMT/EMT1-08.pdf)

³ HG nr. 14/2011 approving the Annual Program of marketing and tourism promotion, and Annual Development Program of destinations, tourism forms and products, published in 23 febr.2011

http://www.mdr.t.ro/userfiles/turism_legislatie_hg14_2011.pdf

market focus on the wild area and the natural reservations. The Danube Delta may be a key destination of Romania, but only if investments are made in infrastructure, on a period of 2-3 years", according to the statements of the **Horwath Tourism, Hotel & Leisure** representatives, the company which achieved the Romanian tourism marketing plan for 2011-2015, at the beginning of the year.

The company identified **6 key tourist products** for Romania. Besides the category of the wild and natural reservations, the idea of geography and nature is aimed as well. "There is no other better alternative for Romania than the promotion of the Carpathians and the orientation of the country brand on this idea making the marketing policy easier", the authors of the marketing plan stated. The over-discussed problem of infrastructure interferes in this case as well. According to the Romanian tourism marketing strategy for the following 5 years, Romania should become a global competitive tourist destination. This is the main starting idea of the **National Plan for Romanian Tourist Marketing** for 2011-2015, the first for Romania to benefit from, recently launched by the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism.

"Romania faces a challenge,⁴ firstly to determine and then to supply new travel experiences and products for the new global markets in tourism and, last but not least, to take advantage of the diversity of the tourist assets that may be used to attract future clients", according to the Marketing Plan.

➤ The representative of Horwath HTL company admitted that Romania is only at the beginning of the creation of a competitive image: "Romania has slept during the last 15-17 years regarding the promotion of tourism. No effort has been made in this matter". He gave also a warning that despite the good promotion efforts for tourism, nothing may be done without investments in infrastructure, without larger incomes for the tourist industry or the creation of conditions for profile companies. "*Tourism is a more and more important sector of economy. Romania must profit from the fact that it is a less exploited tourist destination, as Australia and New Zealand have done*", stated the representative at the official launch of the Marketing Plan. Romania's promoting activities shall be directed towards the following markets-source: Germany, Italy, France, Great Britain, Austria, Russia, USA and Hungary.

⁴ Mazilu Mirela Elena, *Romania –an Attractive Tourist Market after the World economic Crisis*, publish in International Journal of Energy and Environment, Issue 2, Volume 5, 2011, p.212-221, <http://www.naun.org/journals/energyenvironment/19-771.pdf>

4 Conclusion

The marketing strategy for Romania proposes the doubling of the foreign visitors' number in 2015, compared to 2010, the increase of the arrivals in the accommodation units, up to 2.5 million in 2015. In addition, this strategy aims at reevaluating the six major tourist products of Romania, defined following the development process of the tourism brand:

✓ *Rural tourism, Parks and wild nature, Health and wellness, Adventure, Tourist circuits and City breaks.*



<http://www.horeca.ro/turism/1262-strategia-de-marketing-pentru-turismul-romanesc-pe-urmatorii-5-ani-.html>

For the first time, the promotion of Romania shall be made in a professional manner, according to the recommendations of experts. If until now the promotion of Romania was traditionally performed, this marketing plan shows us that the promotion on the internet is necessary. The recommendation of having a web portal with comprehensive data about Romania connects to our collaboration project with Facebook.

We mention some of the main marketing objectives for 2011-2015:

- ❖ The modernisation of the *target-audience* and sales system, knowing the type of client targeted and the creation of electronic means of sales on the web;
- ❖ aiming at individual travellers through the means of internet;
- ❖ Encouraging the creation of an education institution in the management of high-level tourism or the transmission of the essence of the tourist brand, such as

Romania, a destination of unknown experience, waiting to be discovered, an adventure destination.

The application of the Marketing plan shall revive the tourist sector and shall support the recorded increase in this field from last year. According to the data supplied by the National Institute of Statistics, during the 4th trimester of 2010, the Sector of Services – the field of Hotels and Restaurants recorded an increase of 16.3%, and the field of Activities of travel agencies, tour-operators recorded an increase of 37.2% compared to the similar period of 2009. The marketing plan sets forth the objectives we aim at in order to achieve a competitive tourist destination. It is really important to understand that the plan shall have to be implemented not only by the Ministry, but also it addresses the local public authorities, as well as the tourism industry we want to be close to us, as an active partner of the Ministry of Tourism.

Another proposal from the marketing plan refers to the short holiday area from the cities, a product that “may bring increase”, in the opinion of the plan's authors.

The circuits are another field where Romania must introduce interesting products on the market. The authors of the marketing plan consider that Romania may be one of the most important 10 European destinations on this segment. However, here we have another problem: the roads. The marketing plan offers an alternative to the personal car or the bus, flying.

Other key products are the holidays in the country, the wellness area, the holiday packages focused on adventure. The officials of the Ministry of Tourism admit that there are huge problems in the wellness area of Romania, many resorts being in ruin. They stated that they have already drafted certain facilities that the government would offer to investors in these areas.

Moreover, the ministry claims that at the same time with the tourist promotion, investment shall be made in the interest areas, in order to improve the infrastructure.

The industry of hospitality is a business made by people for the people, a business within which a very small part of the people achieve a mass production, for the majority of the population. Of course, we do not only talk about the problem of hospitality, when we talk about this industry. However, this problem is one of the most important. In many cases, the atmosphere created in these places counts, together with a smile and a friendly greeting, which represent the elements determining the clients to come back.

Seen from the perspective of the person who pays, tourism may be recreational and relaxing or uncomfortable and unpleasant. Seen from the perspective of the one cashing the income, tourism is an economic activity.

From an economic point of view, the man has two essential dimensions, the one of the producer and the one of the consumer, each of the two having its features and

rules.

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