

# Is Cultural Tourism Attractive in Transylvania? A Focus on Cluj and Sibiu Counties, Romania

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*Abstract: The current paper aims at sketching the manner how both native and foreign visitors perceive, appreciate and, why not, intend to consume the cultural tourism offer of Transylvania, a Romanian region. The article is elaborated on the findings of an Internet based research study that was carried out at the beginning of this year, findings that are correlated to the ones obtained in two previous personal researches. Cluj and Sibiu, two Romanian counties belonging to Transylvania, represent the focus points of our paper. Why were they chosen? Cluj is a major economic center of Romania, while Sibiu was the European Capital of Culture in 2007. This paper tries to contribute to the identification of the possible answers to several questions. Is Transylvania's cultural heritage attractive to tourists? Do foreigners travel to Romania for cultural purposes? Are the Romanians still interested in cultural activities? Transylvania's potential related to the development of cultural tourism is extremely valuable for the region's branding process.*

*Key-Words: Cultural tourism, Cultural heritage, Cluj County, Sibiu County, Transylvania, Romania, Economic crisis, Tourism development and branding*

## 1 Introduction

More than ever, in the context of the global economic crisis, Romanian business authorities must acknowledge the fact that the country's business environment is expected to confront harsh times, which shall eventually negatively affect the whole economy. In this respect, authorities, once for all, should finally treat tourism as a very precious asset for our country. Hence, tourism branding is compulsory in our case.

Present-day Romania struggles to design and communicate a coherent tourism brand. After 1990, several nation-branding attempts have been made by different Romanian democratic governments but none managed to pass the initial phases and to truly generate the desired results. Generally speaking, all sorts of people seem to agree that Romania enjoys a great and generous tourism potential but, unfortunately, this is by far underexploited. Regarding the country's tourism offer, one may notice that Transylvania and Bukovina – two historic regions, Bucharest, and the Danube Delta seem to be the destinations most capable to raise the

interest of foreign visitors. Previous personal researches – carried out in 2006 [4], [5] – revealed that the foreigners who visit Romania are especially interested in Transylvania's and Bukovina's tourism offers, being attracted by the cultural heritage of these two regions. Some also mentioned that they highly appreciate the wilderness of the natural landscapes of the Apuseni Mountains (Western Carpathians) and of the Southern Carpathian Mountains (also called Transylvanian Alps). Very few tourists visit the Danube Delta, mainly due to access difficulties, and to the limited and poor accommodation facilities, while Bucharest, as a capital, is popular for business tourism. Most of the old cities of Transylvania were mainly cultural destinations but nowadays they have become popular business tourism targets, too.

The Saxon city of Sibiu dominated the year of 2007, that found itself – in this way – under the sign of Transylvania. Together with Luxembourg, Sibiu was the European Capital of Culture of 2007. This project managed, through the many events that were organized all year long, to attract quite a lot of

Romanian and foreign visitors or tourists to Sibiu, and consequently to Transylvania, too. Statistical data reveal for the past ten to fifteen years an ascending trend of the country's international tourists' number. On the other hand, democracy also opened the borders for Romanians who, increasingly, choose abroad destinations. The poor quality of the country's hospitality services, correlated to a weak and incoherent image, represents the main cause of Romania's poor tourism activity, even though services are rather cheap compared to similar international tourist destinations. What seemed to be an encouraging increase in the number of the country's visitors (considering the figures of 2007 and 2008) was disrupted by the global economic crisis that also reached Romania. It was only by the end of last year (2008) that the Romanian authorities finally admitted that Romania was also caught in the spinning of the global economic crisis. Both incoming and outgoing tourist activities registered promising increasing trends until the end of 2008 (as one may notice in Figure 1):

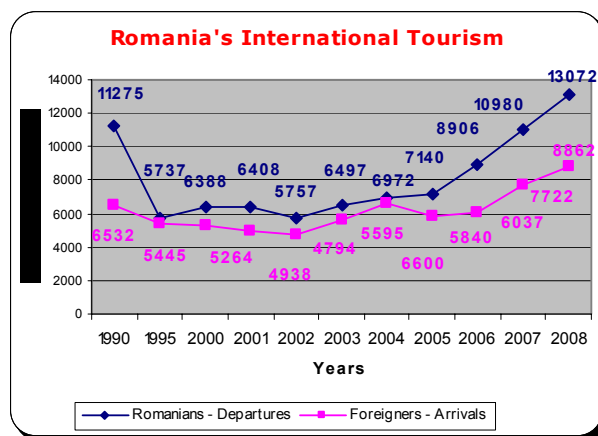


Fig. 1. International Tourism of Romania (Arrivals of Foreigners, Departures of Romanians Abroad)  
Source: own calculations, based on NIS [17]

Worrying signs are brought by figures that are more recent. According to the last press release of the National Institute for Statistics (NIS) [18] comparing the figures of the first semester of 2009 (January through May – as specified by NIS), to those of the first semester of 2008 (January through May – as specified by NIS) we may conclude as it follows. There were registered:

- a slight decrease (by only 0.5 %) in the number of the Romanians' departures abroad; and

- an important diminishing (by 12.7 %) in the number of foreigners' arrivals to Romania.

The fact that many Romanians keep traveling abroad, while foreigners visit our country in a lower number contributes to the increase of the already negative trade balance of Romania. Thus, for the time being, the economic crisis seems to have stopped the further development of Romania's tourism.

Given the whole situation, Romania's tourism must be resurrected. In this respect, we believe that Transylvania needs to be branded and promoted as a tourist destination – both for the Romanians and for international visitors. This region represents a third of the country's surface and manages to attract the highest number of visitors (from abroad and natives). More than a third of Romania's tourism assets are located here. Moreover, Transylvania enjoys a higher notoriety than Romania – due to its multicultural environment, to Bram Stoker's, *Dracula* and to the events hosted by Sibiu in 2007. Our previous research works [4], [5] also revealed that the region is better perceived than the country. Authorities do not seem able to feel the genuine potential of Transylvania; thus, they do not consider branding it yet.

Thomas Cromwell [6] states that nation or region branding “is not simply coming up with a cute logo and tag line”. The guru of nation branding, Simon Anholt [9] points out the main problem of this type of branding:

“there is no widely accepted theory of branding... about what it is and what it hopes to achieve. The consequence is that there are a lot of countries who are confused... and have a lot of different ideas of what branding is all about. And most of them [...] are achieving very little”. [9]

This paper focuses on the place of cultural tourism in Transylvania's brand architecture. In this respect, we are going to refer only to two counties, Cluj and Sibiu; the issue of branding the whole region is the subject of other future papers.

According to an analysis of *Europa Nostra* – European federation for cultural heritage development and promotion – the travel and tourism industry generated 1706 billion Euros by 2005, while the direct and indirect impact of European tourism was responsible for approximately 11.5 % of the GDP and 24.3 million jobs (about 12 % of the total employment) [16]. Obviously, data that are more recent can prove the continuous development of the positive contribution of tourism to Europe's

economy until the beginning of the crisis. Researchers and authorities are, of course, going to thoroughly analyze the economic impact of the global crisis upon the travel and tourism industry and upon the various tourist destinations.

A statement of *Europa Nostra* reveals the great importance granted to tourism, and especially to cultural tourism. This position is very valuable from the perspective of the recently integrated Romania into the European Union:

“Cultural tourism is an inevitable component of cultural heritage. Our common European heritage also constitutes a key ingredient of the European identity. Cultural tourism is not only one of the key engines of economic growth. The concrete discovery of cultural diversity, common identity and pluralism are equally important stakes for cultural tourism. It has a vital role to play in encouraging both a greater understanding of the rich diversity of the national and regional cultures of Europe and the greater appreciation of our common European heritage, roots and culture. Cultural tourism can therefore help further the cause of European integration and identity by fostering a better understanding between the peoples of Europe.” [16]

Europe’s economic growth is closely related to tourism and culture. These two elements play a key role in ensuring a better understanding of the rich diversity of regional cultures of Europe and a deeper appreciation of the common European heritage. Over a third of UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites are situated in Europe. Cultural tourism focuses on the joy of discovering and enjoying historic monuments and sites, including cultural landscapes [16].

Referring to man-created landscapes (urban architecture and, especially, industrial sites), Luis Loures emphasizes the fact that:

“landscapes should be seen as assets, once as historic sites they enhance the possibilities of creative practice in preservation, design, and planning, given that they are by definition: unique, resulting from the combination of natural landforms and buildings defining a particular place or region.” [11]

These lines speak in favor of our own researches concerning the branding process of Transylvania, one of Romania’s most important regions, as an international tourist destination. Moreover, our country enjoys the benefits of multiculturalism. Due to its geographic position and its historic

development, Romania has grown under the sign of the confluence of Occident and Orient, thus being for centuries the Eastern border of Europe.

The Romanians are of Latin origin. Their interactions with other peoples and cultures over past centuries have led to the development of a valuable multicultural environment and heritage. There can be identified many cultural influences: Hungarian, Saxon, Jewish, Slavic, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Turkish, Serbian, and even that of the Gypsy communities.



Fig. 2. Romania’s Historic Regions  
Source: Calendo International [19]

Transylvania is Romania’s region that was and is by far the most renowned part of our country for its multicultural heritage. The different ethnic groups (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Roma people, Armenians, Jews, etc) living together in this area have led to the creation of a cultural mix that has transformed Transylvania into a unique space, endowed with a very valuable and highly original cultural patrimony (the result of the cultures interweaving):

“This expresses itself in built object and folkloric hypostases. It belongs – through its texture and features – to the European thesaurus, being the result of an interesting and unique destiny of ethnic confluences.” [10]



Fig. 3. Romania’s Modern Regions of Development  
Source: Ministry of Regional Development [20]

Figures 2 and 3 from above present, on one hand, Romania's historic organization (relevant for the cultural characteristics of our country) and, on the other hand, today's administrative organization of the country, according to the European custom of discussing countries based on regions of development.

The statement of Zuhairuse et al regarding 'Regionalism' which "means something that is native to a place and harmonized beautifully with the climate, topography, landscaping, indigenous building materials, local surroundings, local cultures and local values" [13] comes to support our opinion that branding Transylvania as a tourist destination can improve the overall performances of Romania's national brand (whenever this one is going to be elaborated and fully functional). It would also revitalize the country's tourism industry.

Our paper tries to analyze the attractiveness and development of cultural tourism in Transylvania and implicitly in Romania, by focusing on how tourists (both native and foreign ones) perceive the cultural offer of two different counties: Cluj (situated in the North-West region of development) and Sibiu (belonging to the Center region of development), as shown below in Figure 4:



Fig. 4. Romania's Modern Regions of Development  
Source: Romania Central [21]

There are more reasons that have determined us to choose these two counties; among them, we may mention:

- Cluj is one of Romania's major counties from the point of view of its economic development, size and contribution to the country's wealth;
- Cluj is situated in the center of Transylvania;
- Cluj hosts "Babeş-Bolyai" University, the oldest in the country (a major Romanian university, renowned world-wide);
- during the past two and a half years we have carried out three web-based researches in this

county: one concerning how foreign visitors perceive Transylvania as an international tourist destination (May-June 2006, quota based sample that included 91 subjects); another one focusing on the positive and negative aspects associated with Transylvania (May 2008-February 2009, a random sample that included 1105 persons); and the most recent one concerned with the impact of the economic crisis upon tourism in the County of Cluj and tourism behaviors of Romanians (February-March 2009, a random sample of 170 persons); all three of these researches basically constitute the testing phase of a more complex research that is going to be carried out beginning with October 2009;

- Sibiu is another key county of Romania, due to its German traditions tightly interwoven with the Romanian ones;
- Sibiu is becoming a more and more important Romanian university center;
- Sibiu was together with Luxembourg the European Capital of Culture of 2007 (ECC '07), fact which helped to regain its status of cultural center of the country;
- these two counties enjoy rich cultural heritages, which must be better valued and promoted at both national and international levels, mainly by means of cultural events and by those of the Romanian cultural institutions, organizations and associations (e.g., *Festivalul de Jazz de la Sibiu – The Sibiu Jazz Festival*; *Festivalul de Teatru de la Sibiu – The Sibiu Theatre Festival*; *TIFF – Transylvania International Film Festival* from Cluj-Napoca; *Festivalul Enescu – Enescu Festival* from Bucharest, with events at Cluj-Napoca; *Toamna Muzicală Clujeană – The Cluj Musical Autumn*; etc.). For example, this fact is confirmed by the enormous success achieved by the "Radu Stanca" Theatre from Sibiu at the *Edinburgh Theatre Festival* of August 2009.

It is well-known that Romania is internationally recognized as a country with a generous and rich cultural heritage:

"Romania has a harmonious, diverse landscape, as well as rich tradition and culture. The country could be considered as one of the most beautiful and resourceful places in Europe." [7]

Romania has a cultural-historic and ethno-folkloric heritage with a great tourism potential. There are over 680 heritage sites of great

international and national tourism attractiveness (churches, monasteries and graveyards, monuments and architectural ensembles, urban and rural historic centers, etc). The folkloric heritage is also very valuable, due to its uniqueness (wooden churches and gates in Maramureș and Sălaj, handicraft, traditional costumes, fairs, habits and traditions, etc). According to the Ministry of Tourism, cultural tourism is supported by an accommodation capacity of almost 13 % of the country's total [15].

The figures presented by the Ministry of Culture, Cults and National Heritage reveal Romania's cultural heritage by 2004 [14]:

Table 1. Romania's Cultural Heritage by 2004

	Romania	Transylvania	Cluj	Sibiu
Existing Monuments	29,525	10,936	1,382	926
Destroyed Monuments	544	243	15	5

A short glance at the table from above allows us to point out the fact that Transylvania has a great cultural heritage (37 % of Romania's total), while Cluj county appoints for 4.6 % and Sibiu county for 3.1 %. Moreover, there are seven major categories of monuments listed by UNESCO, adding up to a total of 33 cultural and historic objectives [6], [8]:

- seven fortified Saxon churches from Transylvania (Saschiz, Dârjiu, Viscri, Prejmer, Biertan, Valea Viilor, and Călnic);
- the Hurezi monastery of Walachia;
- seven painted monasteries and churches of Bukovina (Moldovița, Humor, Voroneț, Arbore, Pătrăuți, Suceava, and Probota);
- the old citadel of Sighișoara (the best preserved medieval fortress and the only one still inhabited of Central Europe, if not of Europe);
- eight wooden churches of Maramureș (Bârsana, Budești, Desești, Surdești, Plopiș, Rogoz, Ieud Deal, and Poienile Izei);
- six ancient fortresses and archaeological sites of ancient Dacia, in the Mountains of Orăștie (Banița, Lunca-Piatra Roșie, Costești Blidaru, Costești Cetățuie, Căpâlna, and Sarmizegetusa Regia); and
- the natural reservation of the Danube Delta. Of these worldwide known objectives, 23 belong to Transylvania.

Figure 5 from below reveals the distribution of the UNESCO world-heritage of Romania and how it is spread throughout the country:



Fig. 5. Romanian UNESCO Heritage Sites:

- **Transylvania:** 1. Maramureș Wooden Churches; 2. Sighișoara Fortress; 3. Saxon Fortified Churches; 4. Dacian Fortresses in Orăștie Mountains;
- **Bukovina:** 5. Painted Monasteries and Churches;
- **Walachia:** 6. Hurezi Monastery;
- **The Danube Delta Reservation.**

N.B. Cluj and Sibiu counties are differently marked on this map.

Source: based on Romania Central [21]

## 2 Problem Formulation

A general truth is represented by the fact that, unfortunately, Romania confronts hard times, caused by the global economic crisis. In this respect, tourism, and, implicitly, cultural tourism represents a source of economic recovery, due to the development of the tertiary sector and to the creation of new workplaces and new specializations. Tourism has the potential to absorb the unemployed persons dismissed from other sectors, especially in the countryside areas. Training and education for tourism related activities do not raise very many difficulties; therefore, employment in this sector can be easily achieved, compared to other activity sectors. Tourism also represents a realistic option for the development of countryside farms and boarding houses. Moreover, Romania possesses a valuable cultural and natural heritage that can be properly exploited in rural areas.

Still, one can easily notice the fact that Romania and its destinations are merely present on the map of international tourism. Reasons for such a situation can be identified in the fact that Romania is not coherently and efficiently promoted inside the country and almost neither over its borders. Neither has it a nation brand, nor a tourist identity. A quasi-anonymous presence on a highly competitive market is translated by poor tourism (both national and

international) performances, and also unsatisfactory figures and revenues, mainly caused by overcharged prices, as opposed to the scarce quality of the offered services.

On one hand, the Romanians tend to choose destinations from abroad, while foreigners rarely think of Romania as a tourist destination. Still, we ought to mention that Transylvania enjoys a higher notoriety and a better perception among foreign visitors: 79 % of the investigated persons associate rather positive sentiments with Transylvania. When asked, almost 96 % of the same respondents declare that they have built a positive mental image of this region, while only 81 % positively perceive Romania [4], [5].

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned facts, we intend to focus our attention upon the opportunities offered by Transylvania's cultural tourism potential to the economic development of the region and of the whole country, under the conditions of the present global threat: the economic crisis.

We may raise questions such as the ones given below:

- *Is Transylvania's cultural heritage attractive to tourists?*
- *Do foreigners travel to Romania for cultural purposes?*
- *Are the Romanians still interested in cultural activities?*

## 2.1 Transylvania's Cultural Tourism Offer

In order to be able to better analyze Transylvania's tourist potential from the perspective of tourism, we believe it is necessary to briefly define cultural tourism. Offering a definition for cultural tourism, Medlik says that it represents

“in a narrow sense, special interest holidays (vacations) essentially motivated by cultural interests, such as trips and visits to historical sites and monuments, museums and galleries, artistic performances and festivals, as well as lifestyles of communities. In a broad sense, it also includes activities with a cultural content as parts of trips and visits with a combination of pursuits.” [12]

Places (countries, regions or cities and villages) can be regarded as individual destinations; in this respect, their branding can, and must, be taken into consideration. Moreover, places, especially regions and cities, can be thought of as cultural destinations. According to Bianchini and Ghilardi the

destination's cultural resources and heritage encompass:

- “arts and media activities and institutions;
- the culture of youth, ethnic minorities and other ‘communities of interest’, including local festivals and other celebrative events;
- the tangible and intangible heritage, including archaeology, gastronomy, local history, dialects and rituals;
- the local ‘image bank’ [...];
- the natural and built environment, including public and open spaces;
- the diversity and quality of places where people socialize, including street markets, bars, clubs, cafes and restaurants;
- local milieux and institutions for intellectual and scientific innovation, including universities and private sector research centres; and
- in the repertoire of local products and skills in the crafts, manufacturing and services.” [3]

According to the same authors [3], an urban ‘image bank’ is the representation of the manner how people think about cities as places. An urban ‘image bank’ is constituted of local and external images attributed to a city, which can manifest under the following forms:

- “media coverage;
- stereotypes, jokes and conventional wisdom;
- representations of a city in music, literature, film, the visual arts and other types of cultural production;
- myths and legends;
- tourist guidebooks;
- city marketing and tourism promotion literature; and
- views of residents, city users and outsiders, expressed, for example, through surveys and focus groups.” [3]

There is no point in identifying the cultural heritage of any place (city, region or country) unless this is properly integrated in the image of that specific place. In this sense, Simon Anholt [2] stresses the fact that:

“to see the representation of culture as an obligation is to misunderstand its role as a communicator of a country's true spirit and essence. It is my belief that culture plays an essential role in the process of enriching a

country's brand image, in driving the process from the initial shorthand of media communications towards a fuller and more durable understanding of the country and its values.

Culture can uniquely provide this extra dimension because, in the face of the consumer's increasing suspicion of commercial messages, culture is self-evidently 'not for sale' – it is, to use a cynical metaphor, a 'promotional gift' that comes with the commercial nation brand. Culture is, if you like, the rich harmonic accompaniment to the simple, accessible, easily memorable melody of commercial competitive advantage." [2]

Further on, Simon Anholt, the marketing expert, draws up the following conclusion, with which we fully agree:

"Representation of a country's culture provides the country's image with that all-important quality of dignity which, arguably, commercial brands can do without, but countries cannot." [2]

Throughout the following lines, we are going to briefly present the features of the cultural offer of Transylvania and Romania [17]. Due to the already registered significant changes, we have decided to discuss the figures for the years of 1990 and 2007.

Table 2. Existing Museums and Their Visitors [17]

Year	Museums	Visitors	Museums	Visitors
	Romania		Transylvania	
1990	450	10,511,329	134	2,466,450
2007	679	12,255,182	256	3,802,960
Year	Cluj		Sibiu	
	1990	13	318,786	17
2007	21	210,846	19	708,854

Several remarks ought to be made. Despite the fact that both the number of museums and also the total number of visitors increased by 2007, compared to 1990, in Transylvania's and Romania's cases, we need to point out that, in fact, there was registered an important decrease in the average number of visitors per museum (-19 % for Transylvania and -23 %, for Romania). The most dramatic decrease in this number appeared in the case of Cluj county (-59 %), while the number of museums significantly increased. The number of museums grew less in the case of Sibiu county but we ought to highlight the important increase in the average visitors (+66 %). Obviously, this can be easily associated with the intensification of the tourist activity of Sibiu during

2007, mainly generated by the events of the European Capital of Culture 2007.

Next, we have decided to analyze the country's entertainment industry, which mainly consists of show institutions (drama theatres, puppet theatres, opera houses, musical, comedy and variety theatres, philharmonics and symphonic orchestras, folk music bands, song and music ensembles and circuses).

Table 3. Cultural Entertainment Industry and Its Audience [17]

Year	Institutions	Audience	Institutions	Audience
	Romania		Transylvania	
1990	144	6,937,774	64	2,272,407
2007	156	4,385,789	64	1,352,788
Year	Cluj		Sibiu	
	1990	9	306,875	6
2007	9	135,524	6	117,333

The number of institutions did not suffer significant changes but, again, there are registered important decreases in the average numbers of spectators; Sibiu was again the exception of 2007 (-0.9 %), while, in the other cases, decrease rates were very high (-56 % for Cluj county, -40 % for Transylvania, and -42 % for Romania).

A brief numeric illustration of both Transylvania's and Romania's tourist activity ever since 1989 (year that brought the shift towards capitalism in former communist Romania) is needed in this context:

Table 4. Tourist Activity since 1990 [17]

Types of	Area	Years and Number of Persons			
		1990	1995	2000	2007
Tourists	TOTAL	12,296,552	7,070,385	4,920,129	6,971,925
	Transylvania	4,882,316	2,626,782	1,996,590	2,894,243
	Cluj	428,915	208,247	146,616	372,007
	Sibiu	389,030	234,619	156,838	327,925
Romanians	TOTAL	10,864,891	6,304,570	4,053,105	5,420,968
	Transylvania	4,394,470	2,365,888	1,620,812	2,279,887
	Cluj	365,241	180,492	111,461	304,241
	Sibiu	356,917	211,539	116,423	235,873
Foreigners	TOTAL	1,431,661	765,815	867,024	1,550,957
	Transylvania	487,846	260,894	375,778	614,356
	Cluj	63,674	27,755	35,155	67,766
	Sibiu	32,113	23,080	40,415	92,052

Beside the fact that, again, 2007 proved to be a true success for Sibiu, we ought to make a few other remarks:

- generally speaking, Transylvania's and Romania's tourist activity registered an important decrease between 1990 and 2000; only

- after that year, our country's tourism began to resurrect;
- the two analyzed counties, Cluj and Sibiu, seem to have enjoyed a better recovering of their tourist activity; Cluj-Napoca (the county residence) has managed to become a very attractive business tourism destination but it is also appreciated as a cultural site; while Sibiu (ECC '07) is a top cultural tourism and a business destination, too;
  - data from above only present tourists (accommodated ones) but Sibiu and Cluj-Napoca receive important numbers of day-visitors, too (who do not stay overnight); unfortunately, NIS does not have any figures for this category;
  - the important number of museum visitors and spectators of cultural events (mainly registered in the case of Sibiu, and in that of Cluj, too) reveal a significant interest for cultural activities (both for residents and for visitors and also for tourists – studies concerning Sibiu ECC '07 confirm this statement);
  - the increase in the number of foreign visitors of Sibiu for 2007 can be accounted for by ECC '07.

## 2.2 Foreigners and Transylvania's Cultural Tourism Offer

Our previous researches [4], [5] revealed different aspects concerning Transylvania's foreign visitors. Those relevant for our current paper are the following:

- 49.45 % of the investigated foreigners travel for satisfying their cultural tourism needs; while 26.37 % travel for professional and business purposes;
- when asked why they would travel back to Transylvania, 40.9 % mentioned cultural purposes, while 22.7 % would return for business tourism;
- tourists were asked to evaluate Transylvania as a tourist destination; from their answers, we may conclude that: on one hand, the landscapes are highly appreciated but this region's attractions receive only a low to moderate appreciation (due to their poor organization and promotion); on the other hand, cultural elements and sites enjoyed a relatively high evaluation;
- visitors were asked to mention their favorite activities while traveling during vacations; the results relevant for our paper were: visiting of churches and monasteries (71.4 %), visiting of

historic and archaeological sites (68.1 %), going out and eating in restaurants (68.1 %);

- we aimed at finding out if Transylvania enjoys or not a higher notoriety than Romania; that is why, tourists were asked, first of all, to mention destinations and tourist attraction from Romania and, then, from Transylvania; most of the nominations in Romania's case were situated in Transylvania. Thus, it seemed that to most foreigners, Transylvania is synonymous with Romania; as, in their minds, it was easier to primarily identify tourist objectives from this region. Therefore, we dare conclude that Transylvania is better known abroad than Romania as a whole.

## 2.3 Romanians and Transylvania's Cultural Tourism Offer

A first concern of our research was to determine the interest raised among Romanian tourists by native destinations, respectively by foreign ones. We have asked them to mention how they make their choice. Answers were split as it follows:

- Romanian destinations are taken into consideration: always (11 %), most of the times (39 %); often (19 %); sometimes (17 %); rarely (6 %); very rarely (5 %) and never (2 %);
- foreign destinations are taken into consideration: always (7 %), most of the times (23 %); often (19 %); sometimes (28 %); rarely (9 %); very rarely (9 %) and never (6 %).

The fact that 30 % of the respondents seem not to be interested in native destinations can be associated with the poor service-quality of our domestic tourism offer, to the uneven quality-price quota, and, why not, to the lack of a tourist brand. On the other hand, the percentage of 52 % of the Romanians who decide, rarely to never, to travel abroad is closely linked to their limited financial capacities, but this fact cannot be associated with a positive appreciation of the inland offer; it is just a matter of time until they are going to travel abroad, too.

Domestic cultural attractions seem to raise a limited interest among the Romanians:

- during their summer vacations in Romania, they either prefer the relaxation of beaches (58 %) or that of spas (9 %), or there are some respondents who love to hike mountains (19 %);



- Christmas breaks are generally spent at home (54 %), in the mountains (29 %) or in the countryside (13 %).

For a better identification of the Romanians' culture-related behavior and attitude, we have asked them to mention how much money they allocate to cultural activities. Results were rather surprising: 20 % do not allot any amount of money at all to cultural activities; 66 % spend up to 50 Euros per month for such activities; while the remainder spend up to 300 Euros per month for this purpose. Nearly 60 % of the investigated sample spend less than 50 Euros for cultural activities when traveling. The answers reveal a rather unpleasant situation. An optimistic interpretation of this fact would be that the average Romanian family does not yet have sufficient incomes in order to afford spending money for cultural activities. Still, we believe, that there is also another reason, a misfortunate one, that has little to do with money, but which is tightly related to education: the Romanians seem to have almost fully lost their interest for culture-related activities. This can also explain the low amounts they spend for any kind of cultural activities while on trips; that is perhaps not the case of 'shopping-mania'.

As the need for culture can be also satisfied by reading, we tried to find out how much Romanians spend on buying books: 17 % do not buy books, 72 % spend less than 50 Euros per month for books, while only a small remainder seems to really be interested to buy books. Strongly related to education and culture, books seem to share the unfortunate lack of interest for spending on cultural activities. Again, this situation is hardly surprising for the present-day Romanian cultural landscape, which is mainly dominated by subcultures such as bad-taste ethnic music ("manele"), TV or Internet-gaming. On the other hand, one must be sincere and admit the fact that this situation has well-developed roots in the educational system, which has become very loose and which requires a lower and lower level of knowledge. The young generation seems to have lost its compass of values, while the educational system does not manage to contribute to the establishing and understanding of genuine cultural values.

Culture consumption in general was also measured based on the respondent's habits of spending leisure time:

- cinema (never to rarely, 62 %; sometimes, 25 %; often to always, 13 %);

- folkloric festivals and events (never to rarely, 88 %; sometimes, 9 %; often to always, 3 %);
- folkloric fairs (never to rarely, 72 %; sometimes, 14 %; often to always, 4 %);
- library and reading (never to rarely, 71 %; sometimes, 18 %; often to always, 11 %);
- visiting museums (never to rarely, 68 %; sometimes, 24 %; often to always, 8 %);
- theatre (never to rarely, 65 %; sometimes, 25 %; often to always, 10 %);
- opera house (never to rarely, 79 %; sometimes, 15 %; often to always, 5 %);
- **watching TV** (never to rarely, 23 %; sometimes, 15 %; **often to always, 62 %**);
- Philharmonic (never to rarely, 87 %; sometimes, 8 %; often to always, 5 %).

Even adult population, that one would expect to have better established values and somewhat 'healthier' habits, has lost interest in cultural activities. Again, one of the reasons might be the lack of financial resources, and perhaps the lack of spare-time.

Unfortunately, it seems that the single sane conclusion is that the Romanians are very little interested in cultural activities. Watching TV seems to be the favorite pass-time, while more sophisticated activities, such as attending a concert or a play merely raise the interest of less than 10 %. Even less popular seem to be traditional and folkloric events. Almost 70 % of the investigated persons do not seem to be attracted at all by museums, still only 23 % have visited one during the past 5 years or a longer time ago, 30 % have been in a museum last year, while the remainder, about 47 %, have visited one this year.

The Romanians were asked to evaluate the cultural tourism offer of Cluj and Transylvania; despite the fact that they do not seem to be attracted by cultural aspects, the investigated people responded:

Table 5. Cultural Tourism Appreciation

	Good and very good	Satisfactory	Poor and very poor
Cluj*	46 %	26 %	8 %
Transylvania	42 %	34 %	24 %

\*N.B. 19 % of the respondents are not familiar with the cultural tourism offer of Cluj

People were asked to mention three museums, three churches and three castles from the county of Cluj. The great majority of the sample resumed to nominating only well-known objectives.

### 3 Problem Solution

After having presented and discussed the results of our researches, we may point out a first solution to the problems identified above. Cultural tourism needs to be taught to its potential consumers. Based on the fact that both the Romanians and foreigners agree that Transylvania enjoys a rich cultural heritage, authorities, tourism stakeholders and benefiting communities must rejoin their efforts in properly communicating how people can take profit from the positive influences of cultural experiences. Events such as museums open at night can prove to be effective and efficient for attracting visitors. Foreigners seem to be a little more educated concerning cultural tourism, while the Romanians seem to have forgotten the joy of discovering the past. The nowadays-venerated TV stations should take their educational part more seriously, by promoting genuine cultural values and should less focus on subcultures.

One must also admit the fact that the poor appreciation and the relatively low interest in the cultural heritage of Transylvania, and consequently of the two counties, Cluj and Sibiu, are in a great measure generated by the improper state of the access infrastructure. In this respect, one may begin with the roads and end up with the signalization and restoration of the cultural tourist attractions.

Exception makes the city of Sibiu that was renovated for the events of 2007 but the surrounding areas are still far away from any civilized standards. The city of Cluj-Napoca has also begun to be restored but, unfortunately, that is not the case of the most of other Transylvanian and Romanian destinations: valuable cultural and historic sites seem to be well-preserved and hidden from the eyes of the potential visitors mainly by not being signalized and promoted (e.g., the museums situated in the county of Cluj, excepting those from Cluj-Napoca, are barely promoted, while there exists a Tourist Information Center in Cluj-Napoca, etc.). Foreign visitors' access to the museums and cultural sites of Transylvania and Romania is still limited due to language barriers.

On the other hand, renowned national and especially international publishing houses (such as *The House of Guides*, *Hachette* or *Michelin*) seem to have become more and more interested in printing tourism related materials (tourist guides, brochures, maps, hotel and restaurant guides, etc). Attractive materials are also published by the Romanian Ministry of Tourism. Obviously, time has come to dust off the old promotional leaflets and brochures that were promoting Romania's destinations through images of the 'golden

communist era' (pictures taken in the '70's and '80's). Regarding promotional activities, the Internet also opens promising gates, such as governmental or private initiatives – for example, the private website that presents the Romanian UNESCO heritage sites:

[www.patrimoniuromanesc.ro](http://www.patrimoniuromanesc.ro)

Local and national authorities ought to learn an important lesson from any genuine politician, that of the valuable "earned media" PR tool. Generally speaking, this idea stands for earning free media time or space by the means of interesting and attractive events that determine journalists to discuss, write or take pictures of a certain site. In this respect, a great example can be offered by the fact that the Natural Reservation of the Retezat Mountains managed to be included among the finalists for the world's seven natural wonders listed by UNESCO. This example is twice as valuable, because of the fact that it is a sign of culture to establish a natural reservation, to preserve it, and to be able to exploit it in a long-lasting manner.

### 4 Conclusion

To conclude, we may refer once again to Simon Anholt's opinions [1] regarding the role of culture in place branding and, consequently, for the sake of tourism development, especially in poorer regions:

"Culture is the component which is absolutely necessary in order to make any place properly satisfying as a brand, especially in the case of countries which [...] suffer from a brand image that is largely or exclusively based on tourism.

Culture is next door to tourism (indeed, cultural tourism is often identified as the highest-yielding and fastest-growing area of tourism), and it is the area that can start to make a connection between people's interest in the place itself and their interest in the life of the place. A rich cultural life makes a complete place rather than just a tourist destination, a place worth visiting at different times of the year, a place with a broader social appeal but particularly to the higher-end, higher-spending, somewhat older and usually well-behaved visitors that most tourist destinations need above all others.

Most moderately developed countries and regions have a range of cultural attractions to offer the visitor in the form of historical and heritage sights [*sic*]; relatively few have

attractions that really create a sense of the *cultural life* of the place. Yet new attractions and events of the right sort are ideal for putting a new lens in front of the country and starting to change people's minds about the kind of place it really is." [1]

Transylvania's cultural tourism is positively appreciated both by foreign and native visitors. Therefore, it is compulsory for the authorities to understand its huge potential and to establish a proper strategy for its promotion.

Due to the world-wide recognized success of the project *European Capital of Culture of 2007*, Sibiu must be used as a means of promoting cultural tourism inland and abroad.

The global economic crisis represents a huge opportunity for Romania's tourism development, because foreigners still perceive it as a relatively cheap destination, with a varied tourism offer.

Authorities need to work on the national branding strategy, while local destinations' representatives must understand that they need to promote these ones for a better exploitation of their tourism assets and cultural heritage. Moreover, they must understand that:

"the reason why Transylvania is one of the Romanian preferred cultural regions by foreign tourists is very simple: it is famous for its rich multiethnic heritage as a mix of Germans, Hungarians and Romanians. Numerous ancient sites with medieval fortresses and castles are spread all over Transylvania. Some of the attractive sites are Bran Castle (known as Dracula Castle), the citadel of Sighișoara or the medieval towns, as Sibiu, Brașov and Cluj. Foreign tourists, especially European ones, prefer the Transylvanian cultural product because it is easier to perceive and understand. They can recover their historic and cultural heritage. From this point of view, Transylvania is a sample of European cultural heritage." [7]

Indeed, this is a great potential that ought to be exploited in the branding process of Transylvania as a tourist destination.

A very important aspect related to the growth of domestic tourism is the one of managing to attract Romanian visitors. Hospitality investors must also contribute to this development by improving the quality of the services delivered here.

The fact that Romania's and, consequently, Transylvania's cultural attractions are included in

the UNESCO World Heritage offers a great opportunity to develop cultural tourism.

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