BUCHAREST: ANALYSIS OF AN 'OLD' DESTINATION WITH A NEW TOURISM IDENTITY

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Abstract: To be able to promote itself efficiently on the market, a destination, given the marketing perspective – has to be aware about the authentic and crucial elements of its own identity as being the only way to transfer, virtually and materially, of what it has best – the social-cultural and artistic identity (which, from a tourist perspective, represents its perceived image, along with psychological and artistic image of the destination). Hence without a detailed knowledge of this aspect, the promotion leads to a presentation of a distorted image of the destination which, in time, can distort the socio-cultural identity of the inhabitants of that region. To build the image of a destination (a notoriously long and complex process), begins with the need to profoundly understand tourists' complexity of expectations (both functional and psychological) and, on their basis, to use these as attributes of the destination in order to improve attractiveness. In Romania's case such an aspect gains more importance due to the fact that, after the 1989, young generation, an important population segment, seem to register a continuous and dangerous process of "identity erosion", which over time could result into disconnecting from the essence of the Romanian spirit, not being able to understand or even ignoring sense of belonging, sense of identity, heritage and "tourism heritage".

Key words: Tourism heritage, Tourism potential, Identity, Image, Form of tourism, Brand.

Introduction

Certain effects of the globalization have been also felt by major urban agglomerations; which have attracted the attention of international bodies, including the United Nations. In 1986, a European initiative led to the establishment of "Eurocities" - The network of the largest European cities, which brings together a number of 120 European cities from 31 countries. Its main activity is to analyse and assess contextualizing of some policies related to the development of these cities, policies that provide a set of strategic objectives, grouped into more specific dimensions. In this context, each city interested in becoming peerlessly attractive, should plan its urban development as a personalised process.

This process, beside involving strategic objectives related to the economic, social and administrative dimensions, and objectives tightened into a cultural dimension (called "creative big cities") in addition to an environmental dimension (called "sustainable big cities") would be helding an important place for its development.

Conceptual background in brief

Any local development strategy should involve "an examination of the past, an assessment of the present and a planning of the future" as crucial component of the planning process of the local community. Thus, an important role is held by the urban marketing which represents "a set of activities designed to draw the attention of potential and existing customers to the city, by using specific instruments and through coordinated efforts of the involved actors" (processed after Dincă & Dumitrică, 2010: pp. 244-293).

The process of urban marketing presumes as one first stage the analysis of the current situation of the city/town, in its attempt to identify the weaknesses

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and strengths of the place. This stage may also parallel imply a preliminary stage of building the "brand" of the city, which is all about "a process that involves – first of all – the real physical reconstruction of the truth and its content, of the physical environment and of the lifestyle that allows it to differentiate itself from the competitors [...]. In the middle of any coherent action regarding such an aim should be the reconstruction of the great scenery – cultural landscapes, historical sites, urban environment, monuments and historical centres. In addition to this (re)construction process, there should also be considered the successively activated attractive and plausible ways of life: cultural tourism, social, cultural, economic events, a civilized everyday life. The benefits of such an operation would be of major and almost immediate significance: the attraction not only of the tourists of a certain status, but also of the residents, of the business and cultural environments [...]" (Andreescu & Gaivoronski, 2009: p. 259). Urban branding represents "a strategy which aims to offer the city an image, a cultural significance that will perfectly work as a source of added and symbolic value" (Mommaas, 2002: p. 269), with some experts considering the process of "branding" as a good starting point in destination marketing and a framework in which the image of that place can be built (Kavaratzis, 2004: p. 58-73), under this circumstances branding "being very close to the heart of the destination marketing strategy" (Pike, 2004). Excellent

Given this context, the first stage of destination branding is the market investigation along with analysing and putting together the strategic recommendations related to the situational factors and established purpose and objectives (Morgan & Pritchard, 2004). Among the "success" factors regarding the strategic orientation of a destination, there can be mentioned: the strategic vision implementation, the main competitors identification, the international competition awareness/recognition, the infrastructure improvement priority, the tourism development plan integration within the national development plan, the attitude consideration within the cultural values and of the lifestyle of the residents and later of the non-residents regarding their (own) city, etc.

From a marketer's point of view this latter factor requires a careful and constant study of the visitors (including residents) and of the potential tourists (non-residents) regarding their perceived image seen from the angle of their cultural/tourism heritage since "the easiest and the most effective promotion is the self-promotion [...] which involves the strengthening of the civic consciousness and self-confidence" (Ashworth, 2001: pp. 58-70).

Place image, is mainly "represented by its cultural heritage" (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000: pp. 417-423) and is formed within what it is called "the mind or knowledge space" (Go & Van Fenema, 2006: pp. 64-78). The cultural identity of a place is represented by its material and immaterial cultural heritage and, since the concepts of "culture" and "identity" cannot be separated, as well as the concepts "society" and "culture" cannot be divided – resulting the "socio-cultural" concept (Sorokin, 1967) – the socio-cultural identity of a nation is representing, in fact, "its psychology or its soul" (processed after Luca, 2010: pp.104-105).

It is widely accepted the fact that cultural identity of a place is an important part of its identity and therefore, in its essence, it should not change! In this context, the main problem of the marketer is that, while its identity remains and should remain the same over time, its image suffers, usually, some changes. Therefore, the projected image should be realistic (Govers & Go, 2009: p. 190). In some circumstances, the image of a destination can be changed by the "formation agents", such as news and folk culture (Gartner, 2009: pp. 191-215) and may give rise to what it is called the "a priori" image, an image that is stable over a longer period of time and that can change/distort even its socio-cultural identity.

Generally speaking, the image of a destination can be built on a broad set of functional and psychological expectations belonging to the consumer, on basic or holistic attributes, on common or unique aspects (Govers & Go, 2009: p.191), or a combination of all.

An important segment of the market in general, and of the tourism market, in particular, is represented by the young people who, under the circumstances of the social changes after 1989, seem to register a continuous process of "identity erosion" and who, in time, can easily detach from the essence of the Romanian spirit, from its values (in Luca, 2010: p. 225).

Therefore, the perception of young people ("a sum of socio-cultural identities" – an important psycho-sociological component) of a tourism destination in terms of the predominant form/forms of tourism is important for the marketer within the process of drawing of its image, especially since it has a substantial "tourism heritage" and a suitable tourism potential, necessary for the sustainable development.

If the desire for a certain place to become a successful tourism destination, (irrespectively to a development tourism model and a chosen time frame) implies that the destination marketing has to play a central role, then the starting point being represented by the inventory and perception of its "tourism heritage", in the smallest details, then the

marketing audit should become in this case an integral part of the urban marketing.

Methodology

The conducted research[*] aimed to identify the main forms of tourism that respondents coming from different Romanian regions – young people aged 20-24 years, actual and potential tourists – associate them with the city of Bucharest. In October-December 2010 – January-March 2011 a statistical survey was conducted within more Romanian university centers (Bucharest, Braşov, Craiova, Sibiu, etc.). In order to ensure the representativeness, four regions (Banat, Crişana, Moldavia and Maramureş) were merged into two, namely Banat-Crişana and Moldavia and Maramureş.

The main objectives of the research were:

a) to identify the predominant form of tourism for the city of Bucharest before and after the 90's;
b) to identify the representative form of tourism for the city of Bucharest before and after the 90's taking into account the region of origin of the respondents;
c) to highlight the tourism potential of the city of Bucharest;
d) to identify some representative tourist attractions that may contribute to the (artistic and psychological) image of the tourism destination.

The sampling of the statistical survey consisted of 2201 young people, aged 20-24 years, persons with ongoing studies. In terms of age category and territorial distribution for Romania, according to the methodology established in the specialty literature, the sample is representative.

The method used was the statistical survey and the instrument was the semistructured written questionnaire, completed by the respondent.

Research results

According to the World Tourism Organization (1979) classification of forms of tourism, which takes into account the reasons guiding the choice of tourism destination (business and professional tourism, cultural tourism, leisure tourism, visiting friends and relatives and other forms of tourism), respondents

could choose the main form of tourism practiced in the city of Bucharest.

In the case of Bucharest city, regarding the distribution of the forms of tourism (results in figure no. 1), this did not register any significant change over time, *the business and professional tourism* maintaining its top position, being followed by the *cultural tourism* and *visiting friends and relatives*:

- for the period before the 90's, **62,5%** of the respondents considered the *business and professional tourism* as being the representative form of tourism for the capital city, while **80,3%** of the respondents associated the same form of tourism for the city of Bucharest at the moment;
- **20,9%** of the respondents associated to the capital city the *cultural tourism* as predominant form of tourism for the period before the 90's, while **9,1%** of the respondents associated this form of tourism to the city of Bucharest at the moment;
- for the period before the 90's, **12,1%** of the respondents considered the form of tourism *visiting friends and relatives* as being representative for the city of Bucharest, while **6,8%** of the respondents associated this form of tourism also for the present;
- **3,2%** of the respondents considered *leisure tourism* as representative form of tourism for the capital city before the 90's, while **2,4%** of the respondents associated this form of tourism as being predominant also for the present;
- **1,3%** of the respondents considered *other forms of tourism* as being representative for the city of Bucharest before the 90's, while **1,4%** of the respondents considered that this form of tourism is also practiced nowadays.

Given the above presented results one can observe that no crucial change regarding the rank of the forms of tourism in their whole emerged over time, the only remark is that the *business and professional tourism* holds a higher percentage to the detriment of *cultural tourism*; this fact can be explained, in our opinion, especially through the existence of a strong developed business centre – where well-known organizations at national and international level have their headquarters – but also through the existence of some university centres with tradition and prestige, such as University of Bucharest, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Polytechnic University of Bucharest, etc., that offer well trained and qualified workforce on the labour market; in the same time, we consider a general "reserved" attitude of the young people towards culture.

An overview regarding the forms of tourism associated by the respondents with different regions

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[*] The current paper represents an extension of a research regarding Romania as tourism destination (approaching the eight historical regions). The research results are presented within the "Theoretical and Applied Economics" Magazine, starting with the volume no. 2/2011.
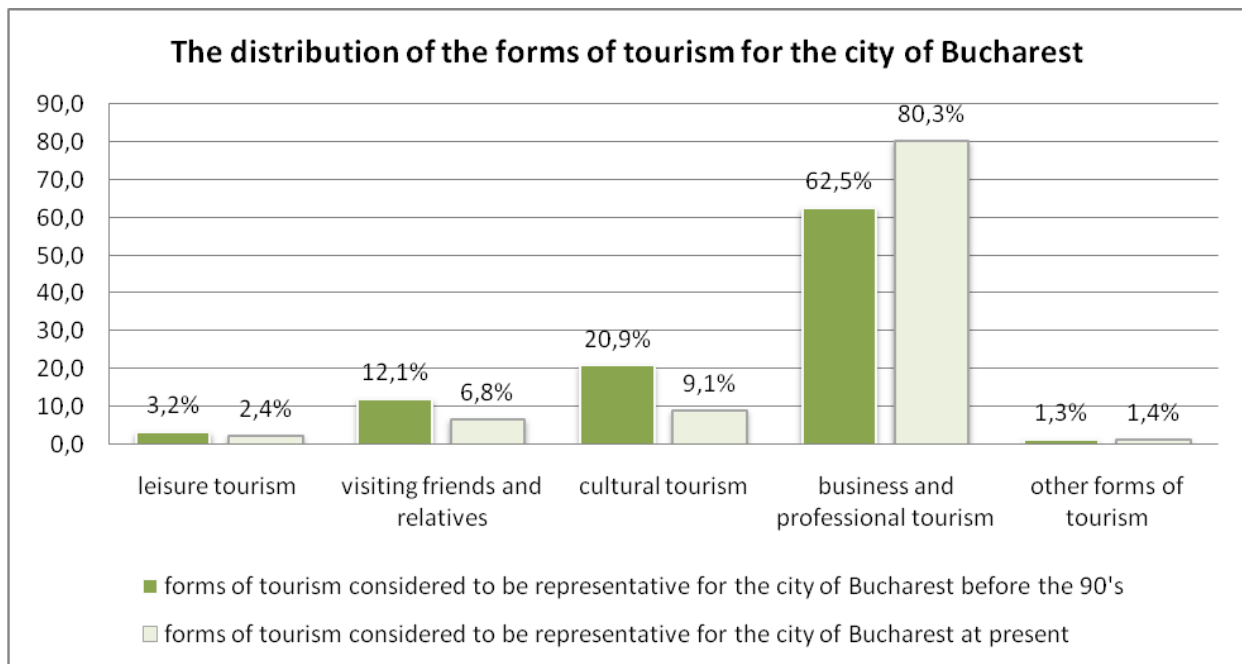
Figure 1. Distribution of the forms of tourism for Bucharest before and after the 90's

of origin to the city of Bucharest nowadays and before the 90's is offered by table no. 1.

The second place held by the form of tourism *visiting friends and relatives* as representative form of tourism for the city of Bucharest, in the opinion of respondents with region of origin Oltenia, can be explained through the proximity of the two regions, namely Muntenia (Bucharest) and Oltenia.

Associations related to the tourism resources for the five forms of tourism that the respondents assigned to the capital city of Romania are among others, by order of relevance, the following:

a) *historical traces and art monuments:* Palace of the Parliament, Triumphal Arch, Cotroceni Palace, Şuţu Palace, Curtea Veche, etc.

b) *museums***:** Village Museum, "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History, Museum of the Romanian Peasant, National Museum of Romanian History, National Museum of Art of Romania, National Museum of Contemporary Art, National Geology Museum, "George Enescu" Museum, etc.

c) *cultural – artistic institutions:* Romanian Athenaeum, Romanian National Opera, National Theatre Bucharest, Ţăndărică Theatre, "Ion

Table 1. The distribution of the responses by forms of tourism and by region of origin of the respondents (%)

Forms of tourism Region of origin of the respondents	Business and professional tourism		Cultural tourism		Leisure tourism		Visiting friends and relatives		Other forms of tourism	
	*	**	*	**	*	**	*	**	*	**
Bucharest	56,4%	82,1%	22,3%	11,1%	7,5%	2,2%	11,7%	3,1%	2,1%	1,5%
Muntenia (except Bucharest)	56,6%	79,3%	21,7%	9,3%	5,4%	5,0%	14,5%	5,1%	1,8%	1,3%
Oltenia	52,7%	81,6%	14,7%	4,3%	7,2%	5,2%	21,8%	7,6%	3,6%	1,3%
Transylvania	54,4%	80,7%	22,1%	8,1%	7,4%	4,7%	13,2%	3,4%	2,9%	3,1%
Banat – Crişana	56,3%	79,0%	20,8%	8,8%	6,3%	5,7%	14,5%	5,0%	2,1%	1,5%
Moldavia and Maramureş	56,1%	78,7%	21,1%	11,3%	7,0%	5,9%	12,3%	2,9%	3,5%	1,2%
Bucovina	53,2%	73,4%	20,4%	11,5%	9,7%	4,4%	13,5%	4,2%	3,2%	6,5%
Dobrogea	67,7%	80,6%	14,7%	12,7%	2,9%	3,2%	5,9%	1,5%	8,8%	2,0%

Legend: * - specific form of tourism for the city of Bucharest before the 90's
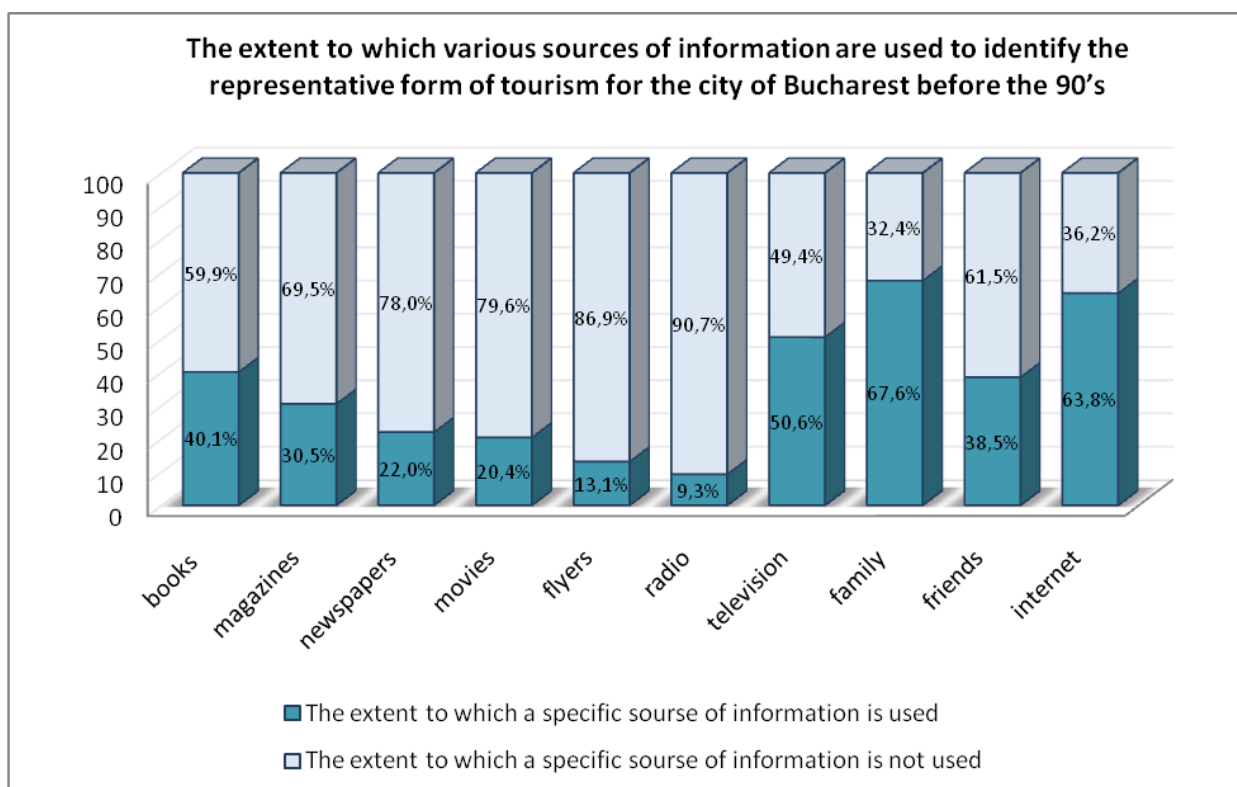   ** - specific form of tourism for the city of Bucharest nowadays

Figure 2. The extent to which various sources of information are used to identify
the representative form of tourism for the city of Bucharest before the 90's

Dacian" National Operetta Theatre, Palace Hall, Romanian Patriarchal Cathedral from Bucharest, Radu-Vodă Monastery, Sf. Gheorghe Church/St. George's Church, Romanian Cultural Institute, etc.

d) *personalities*: Nicolae Ceaușescu, Ion Mincu.

Analysing the results one can conclude that young people have a rather out of depth knowledge of the tourism heritage of the city of Bucharest. Even from the analysis of the above enumeration of the tourism resources, it can be observed that the city of Bucharest is a city full of history and histories, situated between Orient and Occident and which acquires both positive and negative aspects of the two worlds. However, important elements of interest related to the history and culture of the city of Bucharest were not mentioned by the respondents, fact that demonstrates either their ignorance, or the low concern of the local administration or both aspects.

Unfortunately at the same time, it cannot pass unnoticed the fact, that parallel with the lack of important cultural attractions, the lack of some personalities who marked the history and the urban development of the city, being mentioned just Nicolae Ceaușescu and Ion Mincu (although in some cases were mentioned just the cultural-artistic

institutions, museums, art monuments or cultural-artistic events related to their names).

Thus, among personalities with remarkable contributions to the economic, social and cultural development of the city of Bucharest that deserve to be perceived as auxiliary elements of identity in order to draw a right image, there can be mentioned Vlad Țepeș (Comana and Snagov monasteries being related to his name), Constantin Brâncoveanu (New St. George/ Sf. Gheorghe Nou Church, Mogoșoaia Palace and Potlogi Place, etc.), Dimitrie Gusti (with Village Museum, Museum of the Romanian Peasant), Dimitrie Leonida (the founder of the Technical Museum), George Enescu and Constantin Brâncuși. The last two names, by their weight, may set the tourism destination Bucharest in the European construction even if they lived and worked in other countries for long periods of time.

Regarding the source of information used by respondents to find out the representative form of tourism practiced before the 90's within the city of Bucharest it can be observed that the family (67,6%), the internet (websites, blogs, socialization networks, etc. – 63,8%) and the television (50,6%) represent the main sources of information for the young people aged 20-24 years (fig. 2). The usage of the three above mentioned sources could not have any significant impact on the respondents so that they could lead to major changes in the top of forms of tourism

representative for the capital city. Books (40,1%), magazines (30,5%) and flyers (13,1%) hold a lower percentage in comparison with the three mentioned sources of information, although they should hold top positions, given the fact that in any country that respects and preserves its cultural/tourism heritage, these sources represent official sources and in the same time main sources of information, with crucial role in the shaping of the a priori perception of a tourist regarding the image of a destination.

In other words, although it holds a cultural heritage "richer than the most residents think" (both material and immaterial), the city is ignored in particular by its residents, but also by the authorities who administrate it.

With the two predominant forms of tourism – business and professional tourism and cultural tourism – that influence each other and with an appropriare infrastructure (especially due to the fact that the first impresion regarding the city of Bucharest is that "it is a dissaranged/chaotic city not only through the urban aspect and architecture, but also through its traffic", fact that can inhibit the tourist), the city of Bucharest can be considered in line with the attractive European cities.

Research limits

Respondents could select one form of tourism out of a range of five (business and professional tourism, cultural tourism, leisure tourism, visiting friends and relatives, other forms of tourism). Apart of these forms of tourism, other forms of tourism may exist, even a combination of the forms mentioned above (e.g., scientific and cultural tourism, business and cultural tourism, etc.); some of them are likely to be considered as umbrella tourism forms (e.g., leisure tourism and cultural tourism).

Another limitation of the research is represented by the fact that, in order to be conclusive, such research should be conducted on a constant/regular basis, since the trends in the customer expectation and demand are increasingly higher and complex due to environmental changes and evolutions and to the competitive scramble between tourism destinations.

Conclusions

Although the business volume of the city – the largest in the country – generates an image for Bucharest as a tourism destination that has as predominant form of tourism the business and professional tourism, through its cultural heritage, with an appropriate infrastructure and through a sustained promotion, the cultural tourism may become representative and

may combine the four dimensions of the urban development and planning, namely economic, human, environmental and technological.

Although with an "old" identity and with a rich tourism heritage, "Bucharest is a city hard to love. Its beauty, glory and goodness are hiding deeply into the chaos of the everyday life.

By stepping into the third millennium with the burden of an unhappy overlapped inheritance, carrying reminiscences of old and new ages, the city, needs to face challenges concerning the face it shows to the world, even if this doesn't look as aesthetic as one hope for. For its many and deep 'wounds', there can be mentioned among successfully experienced nostrums in other parts of the world a forgotten one: the love.

If anyone would know the city, everybody would love it, if everybody would love it, anyone would be able to change slowly its fate in good..." (Dragu Dimitriu in Olian D., 2009: p. 3).

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