

ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ROMANIAN TOURISM BRAND

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Abstract: *To be known in the world and to attract as more tourists as possible, you must have, as a country, a well established communications and public relations strategy, whose results be revealed by the collections from the tourist services field. In Romania, the post-revolutionary governments took several attempts to create a tourism brand. In this paper, we shall analyze the process of creating the Romanian tourism brand, as well as the effects it generates in the Romanian economy.*

Key words: *brand, tourism, communication strategy, efficiency*

INTRODUCTION

For each country, the natural heritage constitutes its hallmark that can be present in the world at any international tourism fair or symposium on travel. Romania enjoys a wealth of natural landscapes of various landforms (sea, mountains, the Danube Delta), the existence of natural monuments with unique character, some part of UNESCO heritage, a history that is the source of inspiration for many movies, different customs and traditions. All these aspects of tourism can make a considerable profit in the national economy. Even if Romania enjoys a number of factors that can constitute sources of profit, without an efficient communication strategy, the expected results will not appear soon.

National tourism brand personality has been defined as a result of rigorous research and reflects both Romania's image abroad and the opinions of Romanians, both among travelers, and among those who work in tourism. Brand promise is deep satisfaction and high level of recognition as an explorer of an intact and new destination who is not on traditional routes from Europe. The target group consists of tourists looking for unique destinations with wildlife and authentic culture. Key values are: exploration, spirituality, simple living, good. Arguments are unique Latin-Byzantine legacy, large area of protected nature, one of the most rural countries in Europe. Brand personality is made up of: kindness, purity, green, innocence. The main elements of differentiation are: intact nature, unique cultural heritage, authentic lifestyle in rural areas.

In this paper we explore strategies to achieve a country brand and their effectiveness, quantified in relation to tourism brand development costs and revenue from tourism.

The cult of country brand had lately a troubled history, with many attempts to shape tourism brand through various promotions, such as:

- ✓ 1995 - 'Eternal and Fascinating Romania " cost Romania 5.97 million dollars and consisted in printing of illustrated books to be offered to tourists;
- ✓ 2004 -, „Romania always surprising" cost Romania 2 million dollars;
- ✓ 2007 -, „Romania fabulous - spirit "cost 110.000 euro and was abandoned;
- ✓ 2008 -, „Romanian in Europe "has cost 7.9 million euro and was designed to improve the external image as is the case of Mailat from Italy;
- ✓ 2009 -, „Romania - The Land of Choise " cost 1.5 million euro and consisted of a video;
- ✓ 2010 -, „Romania - Explore the Carpathian Garden’’: was allocated a budget of 75 million euro.

From what we can see, there have been few attempts to adopt communication strategies on creating and promoting Romania's tourism brand.

However, a quick look over the country as a multidimensional brand shows that a number of issues to be considered, such as: the country as an investment destination, country as a provider of goods/services or as a tourism destination and others, and relationships between these issues. Then, as a brand and our country brand, the central element is the concept of brand value, which includes this value, which is perceived by various external publics who may or may not support its interests or objectives of brand. The value of a brand can translate into consumer's preference for that brand, the loyalty and, accordingly, the financial results. In the case of a country, the image formed in the minds of the people about that country, major influences their purchasing decisions, investments or travels.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

For carrying out this paper were consulted a number of relevant specialty papers, data from the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, tourism SWOT analysis of communicational point of view.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Among the strong points in the activity of tourism from a communicational point of view, include:

- Tourism potential and increase the flow of tourists through a larger number of measures of promotion:
 - ✓ current actions promoting tourism in all organized fairs and by foreign tour operators. Note the reintroduction of Romania among options of German tour operators, especially by ITS Reisen;
 - ✓ development of promotional materials;
 - ✓ internet marketing, social networking and other electronic media means, including the creation and management of a travel information portal, on a competitive basis;
 - ✓ promotion and advertising through the major airlines and airports in Romania and abroad, consisting of advertising inserts in promotional materials of airlines and airports, TV clips, promotional films for tourism; performing actions of promotion and advertising with role in increasing awareness of Romanian tourism destinations and products through national recognition and international personalities.
- The existence of a rich offer with tourism, history and culture importance, which may be subject to country branding campaigns: Brasov, Prahova Valley, Sibiu (declared European Cultural Capital in 2007), Sighisoara, Maramures, Bucovina monasteries of Moldova, Danube Delta;
- The existence of areas with a strong tourism brand (Transylvania, Sibiu);
- Diversity of sightseeing and their correct promotion can lead to the development of business tourism and thus, attract investment.

As weaknesses, I could mention all the above promotional campaigns carried out between the years 2005-2010, which involved enormous costs, some projects having no end.

With all this promotion, statistics show that the number of tourists decreased, although the capacity for accommodation is increasing.

Perhaps the most controversial campaign to promote tourism brand was „Romania-Explore the Carpathian Garden" which was launched in Shanghai, China, in 2010,

triggering a media scandal on the "leaf" logo used as the national tourism brand. This logo has cost 900.000 euro. To promote tourism brand abroad were allocated 1 million euro and the results are not encouraging. Thus, if the number of foreign tourists in 2010, the year the brand launch was 1.3 million, in 2011 it had reached 1.5 million, and in 2012 the number of foreign tourists reached 1.6 million, according to National Institute of Statistics (INS). Therefore, the promotion made with very high external costs caused an increase in the number of foreign tourists in Romania by about 300.000 people.

Most of the foreign tourists registered in INS statistics came from our immediate neighborhood, Bulgaria, Hungary and Germany.

In addition to the money allocated from the state budget to promote Romania, the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism has provided 75 million, non-refundable, to promote tourism brand through Regional Operational Programme, Priority Axis 5, the operation "Creating a positive Romanian image as a tourist destination by defining and promoting national tourism brand". Thus, it is estimated that the amount of European money spent to achieve and promote Romania's tourism brand has exceeded 20 million, without notable results.

These amounts are added a few more million allocated for Romania's participation in international fairs, development of outdoor advertising, development of promotional materials, and money allocated for inserts in catalogs of major interest of Germans tour-europeans. Also the tourism brand was promoted on internal TV channels, being carried out and co-productions with Romanian Television and Reality TV, the contract value was over 200.000 euro. There were paid over 2.5 million for promotion logo during Bute Gala held in Bucharest, as well as more matches held by Lucian Bute abroad.

Ministry of Rural Development and Tourism has developed in 2011 a broad campaign to promote tourism brand on three TV channels with international coverage, namely CNN, Euronews and Eurosport. According to data posted on the ministry's website, the three contracts cost about 5 million euro, VAT included. The tradition was continued by those who came to the Ministry of Tourism, as Eduard Hellvig allocated over 256.000 euros for brand promotion during BestFest concerts, Lady Gaga and Red Hot Chilli Peppers, organized in Bucharest. Withdrawal of funding for the three events made by MDRT could not take place, according to the minister, as Romania's image would suffer.

The drawing of the controversial logo of Romania (leaf) cost 96.000 euro and a large part of the amount agreed in the contract to achieve the country's tourism brand has been allocated to carry out telephone surveys carried out by the employees of the Spanish consortium THR & TNS. Finally, total contract value amounts to 900.000 euro. To determine the competitive advantages of Romania was paid the sum of 23.400 euro, and brand positioning strategy of the country were allocated over 71.000 euro, 40.500 euro for defining strategy and slogan, and 30.560 euro for building the brief visual identity. The ministry also paid about 109.000 euro for conceptualizing, creating and designing visual identity, i.e. 96.000 euro and 13.000 euro concept and design to testing it.

In 2013 was set the "Top 50 Romanian brands" according to Unlock Market Research and Biz Magazine.

On the 37th position we find TAROM. This is caused by the fact that only a few radio campaigns, outdoor campaigns and a few scattered appearances on TV commercials or cheap logo were made and were insufficient to enter into such an elite domestic brands.

If we were to go by the amounts invested in creating an image of Romania as a tourist destination, the number of foreign tourists and investors should be an obvious development. Perception of the image of the country in the period in which they invested the most money in this sector looks like this:

- ✓ in 2009, according to the classification made by Future Brand, placing Romania in ranks 81 of 102 countries analyzed as " a country without distinct profile, without being internationally known" In the same study in 2008 Romania is ranked 76 of 78 countries surveyed;
- ✓ according to the Anholt - GfK Roper Report from 2009, Romania is ranked 37 (with an index of 43.98) from the 50 countries analyzed, a slight increase compared to 2008 when we ranked 41;
- ✓ this system assesses perceptions of country image based not on questionnaires, but on mentioning the country in various media channels. In 2010 , it came to take the place of 140 out of 200 countries surveyed, with a score of 49.64, along with very small countries such as Uganda, Belize, Nigeria, Andorra, Ghana, Sri Lanka. Situation in 2010 shows a serious deterioration in the perception of foreigners due to the fact that in 2008 we ranked 47, then we fell suddenly ranked 140 in 2009 and we 've not moved.

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis, we find that the huge amounts spent on the strategy to promote tourism brand is not enough, as long as the proceeds from the tourism sector are not significant. The proposal would be branding and communication of places or regions as tourist destinations for Romania. Important would be to attract European financing to promote tourism brands flagship for tourism in our country, like the Danube Delta, Mamaia, the monasteries in northern Moldavia, Transfăgărășan (promoted by those from TopGear), Prahova Valley, Maramures, local traditions etc. However, priority should be to promote health tourism, cultural tourism and agrotourism.

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