

## Marketing Strategies on the International Tourism Market Comparative Case Study between Romania and Spain

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### **Abstract**

*The paper presents an analysis of tourism in Romania and the importance of marketing in tourism. The main focuses of the paper are: the Romanian tourism offer and the image that Romania has on foreign markets. It describes the main promotional campaigns Romania has conducted so far, with an emphasis on "Explore the Carpathian Garden" and "Why don't you come over" campaigns. It also analyses a successful branding campaign run in Spain, the European destination leader. Last but not least, it examines the perception of foreign tourists about Romania as a holiday destination.*

**Keywords:** *tourism, marketing, country branding, Romania, Spain, foreign tourists' perception*

### **Introduction**

The importance of the tourism sector for the economic, social and cultural development of a country is generally acknowledged. At the European level, tourism has a total contribution of 9.6% of GDP and 9.1% of employment. For some European countries, such as France or Spain, tourism's contribution to the economy is even bigger, being one of the main industries generating economic growth. But why some countries manage to gain more from tourism than others? Is the tourism offer the only thing that matters? Of course, the offer is very important, but the product itself is not enough if you do not know how to sell it properly. The ability of a national economy to benefit from tourism depends not only on the tourism infrastructure (hotels, transportation, restaurants, attraction), but also on the way that a particular country knows how to market itself.

Therefore, this paper shows the importance of marketing in the field of tourism. Through this research I aimed to discover which the main values and the main negative aspects associated with Romania are, and if there are any differences between the image Romania wants to communicate and the one perceived by the target audience.

### Country Branding

A country is associated by the large public with certain characteristics. It is defined by a set of intangible elements such as *culture, traditions, beliefs, religion, language* etc. The perceptions that others have of a country determine the way the rest of the world will treat it. So, a country should pay attention to how its image is perceived by others. The specialty literature makes the distinction between “country image” and “identity of a country”. While the first concept refers to the “spiritual portrait, the amount of beliefs and impressions that people keep of the country”<sup>1</sup> the second concepts refers to how a country see itself.

The brand is an intangible asset that adds value to the final product or service allowing the seller to “charge more money for their products and services and maintain a strong, long-term relationship with their customers”<sup>2</sup>. A strong brand and a positive image give an essential competitive advantage to one country. The country branding has the role to “create, change or promote a distinct self-image and international reputation”<sup>3</sup>.

This is why country brands are directly related with the cultural heritage of the country. The country brand is “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences”<sup>4</sup>.

National Organizations make efforts in promoting country brands for three main reasons: “to attract tourists, to stimulate inward investment and to boost exports.”<sup>5</sup> Also, the brand has a significant role in the countries international relations. Countries have embraced distinct strategies to differentiate themselves from the others and to increase their performance in term of exports, tourism and inward investment. The country image influences the success a product has on foreign markets. In many cases the country of origin, along with the price and the benefits of the product, becomes the decisive factor in choosing one product over

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<sup>1</sup> Popescu, R.I., Corbos R. A, *Cresterea competitivitatii unei destinatii prin strategii de branding*, Ed. ASE, Bucure ti, 2013, p. 26

<sup>2</sup> Anholt S., *Brand New Justice. How branding places and products can help the developing world. Revised edition*, Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann, London, 2005, p. 1

<sup>3</sup> Prelipceanu, C., *Country-Branding in a Multicultural World. The Case of România*, Synergy vol. 11/No. 2/2015, Ed. ASE, Bucure ti, 2015, p. 1

<sup>4</sup> Dinnie K., *National Branding concepts, issues, practice*, 2008, London, Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Idem

another. Sometimes the national image of a country is synonymous with quality (e.g.: German cars, French perfumes etc.). The *country of origin* is the country that the consumer associates with a certain products, regardless the product's actual place of origin. For example, people perceive Japan as Honda's country of origin, even if Honda is actually assembled in SUA.<sup>6</sup>

Creating a country brand is a long term mission. "Managing a brand means positioning a country or nation in the minds of the public audience"<sup>7</sup>. The National authorities are the ones responsible with coordinating the country brand, although an efficient strategy implies a common effort made by the government, citizens and the private sector. The development of a strong country branding starts with an "umbrella concept" based on four dimensions: the foreign policy (public diplomacy), tourism, exports and foreign investments.<sup>8</sup> A coherent communication strategy is the key to success as the above elements are interconnected. An efficient branding strategy of one element has positive results on the others. Such a strategy is based on the usage of different communication tools (advertising, marketing, public relations) in a systematic manner to deliver the desired message in a simple, attractive and consistent way.

The most common means used in country branding are the symbols, logos, images, slogans (e.g. "Romania – land of choice"), websites, etc. The common mistake of country branding is that, often, countries rely on the same type of language and images transmitting the same feelings. In this situation is hard for a certain country brand to distinguish itself from the others and to position as unique in the consumers' minds. Tourists are attracted by different types of destinations depending on their personal preference or reason for traveling. The segmentation of the tourism market can be done by the attractions that motivates the tourists to visit it, "by areas, regions or locations, by seasons, by customer's characteristics or benefits."<sup>9</sup> A good branding strategy carefully defines the audience before launching the campaign.

The analysis of a country brand is made through research and opinion surveys that aim to check the target's perceptions upon the country image. Anholt has developed a system through which one can evaluate a

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<sup>6</sup> Popescu R. I., Corbos R. A., *op. cit.*, p. 17

<sup>7</sup> Prelipceanu C. *op. cit.*, p. 3

<sup>8</sup> Popescu R. I., Corbos R. A., *op. cit.*, p. 20

<sup>9</sup> Kotler p. Nigel Morgan, Annette Prichard, Roger Pride, *Destination Branding: Creating the unique destination proposition*, Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, London, 2004, p. 48

country brand. This tool is called the National Brand Hexagon and is used to measure the power of attraction of brands based on six elements: people, promoting tourism, exporting brands, foreign and domestic policy, inward investment, recruitment and culture.<sup>10</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

My objective has been to discover how Romania is perceived by young non-Romanians, and if there are any differences between the promoted image and the perceived one. The analysis of the promoted image was done by presenting the main tourism promotion initiatives conducted so far and in particular by describing the campaign “Explore the Carpathian Garden”. For a better understanding I have also analyzed the Spanish tourism branding campaign “I need Spain”, considered a successful one. For this chapter, I have also used *secondary data* collected mainly from the official tourism organizations: Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism and TurEspana.

To analyze the perceived image I have used *primary data* collected through a survey applied to non-Romanian persons aged 18-35 – one of the target audience category of “Explore the Carpathian Garden” campaign. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions (see Annex 12) having the following objectives:

- how is Romania perceived by the target audience? (Q4, Q8)
- what are the main values/elements the target associates with Romania ? (Q9, Q10, Q11, Q14)
- what are the main negative aspects the target associates with Romania? ( Q15, Q16)
- what is the notoriety of the branding campaigns and how the branding campaigns managed to position Romania in tourists’ minds according to the promoted elements? (Q5, Q6, Q7, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20)
- how attractive is Romania as a holiday destination? (Q3, Q12, Q13)

The questionnaire has been administered to 50 persons from 15 different countries: Portugal, Bulgaria, China, The Netherlands, Spain, Republic of Moldova, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, South Africa, Germany, United States of America, France, Poland and Finland. The selected sample was chosen randomly, the only criteria being the age category: 18-35 years

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<sup>10</sup> Anholt, S., *op. cit.*, p. 118

old. The survey was uploaded on a specialized online platform ([www.iSondaje.ro](http://www.iSondaje.ro)) and the link was sent to the target by the mean of the Facebook social network. After collecting the results, I had to leave aside 6 of the responses as the respondents did not fit in the age category I was interested in. So, in the end I relied on 44 answers. The questionnaire had opened questions, closed questions, five-point Likert scale (measuring the agreement or disagreement with a certain statement) and multiple choice questions. Three of the questions were personal, related to place of origin, gender and age. After collecting the responses, I interpreted them by means of excel charts and figures.

Moreover, I have distributed the questionnaire among my ex Erasmus colleagues, co-workers from abroad offices and Erasmus colleagues that have also studied in Romania. I have also asked colleagues and friends who study or work aboard to pass it to their non-Romanian friends. So, none of the respondents are truly remote from Romania taking into consideration that they know at least one Romanian person, who can have influenced their perception of the country.

### **Advertising a Tourist Destination on International Markets**

This chapter presents the image Romania has as a tourist destination on foreign markets. First, you will find a briefly analysis of the main country brand campaigns implemented since far in Romania and Spain by the national tourism and governmental organizations. I have chosen to compare Romania with Spain, as Spain is a European tourist destination leader. In 2014, it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most visited European country (after France) and 3<sup>rd</sup> most visited country at global level (after France and the United States of America).<sup>11</sup> Secondly, I will present the way in which Romania is perceived as a tourist destination by foreign tourists aged 18-35 and how effective the Romanian tourism campaigns were.

### **Short overview on Romania's country brand**

Before studying foreign tourists' perception towards Romania, we will first take a look at the main efforts made for creating a country brand. James Guning, one of the world's most important public relations

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations World Tourism Organization, *World Tourism Barometer – volume13*, June 2015 [online document: [https://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto\\_barom15\\_03\\_june\\_excerpt.pdf](https://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_barom15_03_june_excerpt.pdf)]

specialists considers that Romania does not have an image problem, as in many occidental countries people do not have any perception about it.<sup>12</sup>

Romania's first concerns about creating a country brand took place in 1996 when were made the first official steps to create a positive image towards foreigners. This initiative was called "*The eternal and fascinating Romania*" and has been materialized in a set of photos promoting Romania as a unique, still undiscovered destination. The target audience was formed by tourists from all over the world (first 1333 albums were given to political people as part of protocol activities). It is hard to establish the impact of this initiative; especially because media's attention on this topic was mainly focused on fraudulent misuse of funds linked with this initiative. The following initiative for promoting Romania's country brand was taken by *The Association for Promotion of Services and Goods – Romania* in 2000 and it was called "Made in Romania". The campaign was addressed especially to domestic audience and it aimed to rehabilitate the perception of Romanian food and services and to promote them as being qualitative. In 2005, this initiative collapsed due to the low number of domestic producers that have subscribed to it (they had to pay a tax of RON 10,000 which seemed to be too big for many of the Romanian producers).

In 2004 the Ministry of Transportation, Construction and Tourism has launched the first actual campaign of country branding. Called "*Romania, simply surprising*", it was addressed to potential tourists aged 20-55 from Europe and United States. The aim was to change the negative perception about Romania and to promote the country as an attractive destination. Through this campaign were created the first logo, slogan and video promoting Romania as a tourist destination. The video was broadcasted on Discovery, Euronews, Eurosport and other five national TV stations. Also, it witnessed the setting up of the first official tourist site [www.romaniatravel.com](http://www.romaniatravel.com). The EUR 2 million<sup>13</sup> campaign was criticized by Richard Batchelor, the representative of the World Tourism Organization for "not communicating the essence of Romania to potential visitors"<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Alina Dolea, Adriana Tarus, *Branding România – cum ne promovăm imaginea de țară*, Curtea Veche, București, 2009, p. 41

<sup>13</sup> Digi24, *O nouă campanie de promovare turistică a României, în valoare de cinci milioane de euro* [online article <http://www.digi24.ro/Stiri/Digi24/Actualitate/Stiri/O-noua-campanie-de-promovare-turistica-a-Romaniei-in-valoare-de->]

<sup>14</sup> Alina Dolea, Adriana Tarus, *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 73

Figure 1. Romania's first logo 2004



Source: Ministry of Transportation, Construction and Tourism

In 2006 the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs created another campaign called "*Romania-Fabulospirit*". The campaign wanted to be more specific than the previous one, and it aimed to promote the Romanian joyful spirit of living. The main elements promoted were the flight (linked with Henry Coanda), the infinite (linked with Constantin Brancusi), the equilibrium (linked with Nadia Comaneci) and the natural monuments (linked with the Sphinx). Once more, the campaign was associated by media with corruption due to lack of transparency in choosing the publicity company and high costs (EU 3-5million). Nonetheless, it not even had a chance to be properly implemented as the project was abandoned at the end of 2006 due to political changes. The next campaign, "*Romanians in Europe*", was launched by the Agency for Governmental Strategies in 2008 and it aimed to reestablish the image of Romanian immigrants in Italy and Spain who were linked with crime, thefts, prostitution and fraud. The campaign was composed by two projects "*Hola, soy Rumano*" in Spain and "*Romania, piacere di conoscerti*" in Italy. Both of them were criticized for using actors instead of real Romanian immigrants.

In 2007, the Romanian Ministry of Tourism had launched another country-brand campaign: *Romania-the land of choice*. It consisted in promotional videos, print and outdoor advertising. In the commercial spots appear some of well-known Romanian personalities: Gheorghe Hagi, Nadia Comaneci and Ilie Nastase. The objective was to increase the interest of potential tourists in Romania. The first video creatively aims to generate mystery by short catchy lines such as "Romania, the only country in Europe where women have the right to marry four men at once"<sup>15</sup> and ending with an urge: "You really don't know anything about Romania, do you? So come and discover it."<sup>16</sup> The second video stars the same

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9y-3lAYi7Vg>

<sup>16</sup> Idem

personalities, but the emphasis is on some of the main attractions: mountains, monasteries, landscapes, night life, seaside, Danube Delta. The video ends with the motto: "One country, so many experiences. Come to Romania, the land of choice."<sup>17</sup>

### **Romania country-brand versus Spain country-brand**

Further on, we will take a look at a comparison between Romania's country branding campaign and Spain's country branding campaign. For this comparison we will use the Romanian campaign "Explore the Carpathian Garden" and the Spanish campaign "I need Spain" and other recent and creative initiatives.

"*Explore the Carpathian Garden*" campaign was launched in 2010 by the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, as it was called at that time. The *objective* was to define Romania's image and to improve it. The campaign targeted tourists from metropolitan areas who were looking for unique destinations that posed wild nature and authentic culture. The *audience* can be divided into two groups: *young travelers with judgment* (persons up to 35 years who prefer to enjoy independent journeys, love adventure and are explorers) and so called "*empty nesters*" (people that are enjoying good health, are alone without children and have a high financial potential and time for travelling.)

*Positioning*: The brand promise is to give a deep satisfaction and a high level of recognition as an explorer of an intact destination which is not part of the classic Europe itineraries. The aim is to create a difference between tourists who are visiting the popular European places and travelers who are visiting Romania. So, the aim was to make the tourist feel special for not choosing a mainstream destination, but an authentic unique one.

The *main elements of differentiation* are:

- *intact nature and unique geographic areas* (National Natural Parks, attractive and untouched landscapes (Danube Delta and Carpathian Mountains, rare species of fauna and flora, areas without tourist infrastructure etc.);

- *authentic rural lifestyle* expressed through traditions, simple rural lifestyle, organic food, traditional festivals, typical Romanian clothing etc.;

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzeKCMNYBew>



- *rich cultural heritage* expressed through UNESCO sites, Latin-Byzantine historic heritage, German cultural heritage, castles, monasteries, churches etc.

The *key words* that reflect the *brand personality* are: green and rural, authentic, pure and innocent, helpful and warm-hearted people.

The *slogan* “*Explore the Carpathian Garden*” promotes the most attractive assets Romania has according to the researched made before defining the brand campaign. The *logo* aims to communicate a friendly attitude by imitating handwriting; the leaf aims to create a link with the nature and also with the mountains, while the blue line wants to create a link with the Danube. The colors also aim to represent the nature, the rich heritage of the rural area. The orange diacritical mark has the role of creating contrast, notoriety and vitality.

**Figure 2. Romania’s logo and slogan 2010**



Source: National Authority for Tourism

The new logo and slogan have created once again a scandal in the mass media. The critics were that the slogan was already registered at the State Office for Inventions and Brands and the logo was similar with an Irish project and the logo used in a poster by Oltchim Ramnicul Valcea.

The *tools* used in communicating the brand were: online, TV, radios, prints, speeches and presentations. There was a series of commercial videos and three documentaries named “*Wild Carpathians*” broadcasted on National Geographic.

The National Authority for Tourism is following the same main configuration in “*Guidelines for strategic development construction of national tourism brand 2014-2020*”. Since 2010, a new campaign was released called “*Here I feel reborn*”. It consisted in a series of commercial videos that aimed to promote the most competitive six Romanian tourism products: cultural itineraries, ecotourism, rural tourism, city-breaks, active tourism and spa tourism. The campaign was conducted between June 2014

and August 2016, and it was directed only towards domestic tourists (the video was broadcasted on seven national TV stations.)

Still, a country brand is not made only by Governmental initiatives and campaigns. A creative branding campaign was made by Gandul newspaper in 2013 as a reaction to the United Kingdom's campaign to deter Romanians and Bulgarians immigration to UK. The Brits considered launching a campaign called "You won't like it here" which was supposed to present the downsides of living in UK. The campaign was never launched officially as Britain was preparing then for the Olympic Games and they did not want to drive up the state's image. However, in the online area a set of images appeared, some of them at the request of the British newspaper The Guardian (see Annex 6).

Figure 3. "You won't like it here" posters



Source: The Guardian

However, the Romanian newspaper Gandul saw an opportunity there. It released a promotion campaign called "Why don't you come over?" having the slogan: "We May Not Like Britain, But You'll Love Romania". The campaign ran online (on Facebook), but also had outdoor media in UK. It consisted in short posts with attractive lines such as, "Summer here lasts three months, not three hours", "Our draft beer is less

expensive than your bottled water”, “Half of our women look like Kate. The other half, like her sister”<sup>18</sup>(See Annex 7).

Figure 4. “Why don’t you come over?” posters



Source: www.gandul.info

The campaign received a huge response and an application was launched, so Romanians can spread their own headlines. Also a website (<http://whydontyoucomeover.gandul.info/>) was created where Romanians can offer their coaches to incoming Brits and employers can offer vacant jobs. UK journalists came to Romania and wrote about it when they got back home. The campaign was in hundreds of publications worldwide and worth EUR 2 millions in free media.<sup>19</sup> This initiative was a success and was rewarded with a Gold Award at one of the Asia’s most important advertising awards festivals, AdStars.

### Spain’s national brand

The National Tourism Authority in charge with marketing Spain worldwide was created in 1984 under the name of National Institute for Tourism Promotion. In 1991 it changes its name in TurEspana and today it has 33 tourism offices outside Spain. These offices have double role: promoting the country and offering a platform for negotiations in the sector.

<sup>18</sup> Gandul. “WHY DON’T YOU COME OVER?”, 2013 [online document <http://www.gandul.info/stiri/why-don-t-you-come-over-raspunsul-gandul-la-campania-britanica-nu-veniti-in-anglia-update-10528548>]

<sup>19</sup> GMP Advertising, Gandul “Why Don’t You Come Over?” Case Film, 2013 [online video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzzB8C0ehO4>]

Still, the first initiative of Spain's tourism promotion was delivered in the 40s, under the slogan "Visit Spain". It consisted in several post cards written in different languages which were promoting flamenco, the Holy Week (Semana Santa), the beaches and the sky. (See Annex 8). Between the 40s and the 60s took place the campaign "Spain in different" (See Annex 9). The campaign was launched when the majority of the European countries were seeing Spain as an isolated remote country. The Civil War and the political isolation imposed by the dictator Francisco Franco had damaged the European's perception of Spain and Portugal. Some were saying that "Africa starts with the Pyrenees"<sup>20</sup>. Juan Valera, novelist and diplomat, was asked during his trips to other European countries if in Spain were haunting lions; and foreigners were explaining him what tea was, supposing that he had never seen such drink.<sup>21</sup> "Spain is different" campaign aimed to end this image and to promote the idea that Spain was an exotic destination, neither worse nor better, but different. The campaign managed to rebrand Spain in a certain way. Even if the Europeans were still seeing it as undeveloped, they also perceived it as a festive and different destination.

The slogan "Spain is different" was succeeded by others from which the most popular were "Everything under the sun" (1984-1990), "Bravo Spain" (1998-2001), "Smile, you are in Spain" (2004-2009) and "I need Spain" (2010).

**I need Spain** is the most recent large-scale tourism branding campaign. Through this campaign Spain was promoted as a holiday destination in 40 countries, targeting an *audience* of 400 million potential tourists. The campaign had as an *objective* straightening the Spanish leadership between European tourism destinations, *positioning* the country as a cultural destination and presenting the tourism offer diversity from a temporal, geographic and product point of view.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cesar Cervera, <<Spain is different!>>, el slogan que cambio para siempre la imagen de Espana, *ABC.es*, Madrid, 2013 [online document <http://www.abc.es/espana/20141221/abci-spain-diferent-201412181821.html>]

<sup>21</sup> Juan Valera cited by Cesar Cervera, *op. cit.*, 2013

<sup>22</sup> Ministerio de Industria, Turismo y Comercio, *Bajo el eslogan "I need Spain" – Nota de prensa*, 2010 [online document <http://www.minetur.gob.es/es-es/gabineteprensa/notasprensa/documents/npcampanaineedspain040310.pdf>]

Based mainly on *emotional branding*, the *key words* of the campaign are:

- (1) *Aspiration*: it aimed to position Spain in the mind of consumers emphasizing on the offer's diversity; also it aimed to retain existing customers giving them new reasons for visiting Spain.
- (2) *Experimental*: The campaign is directly related with the Spanish lifestyle, emphasizing on the experiences, emotions and feelings that make one visit or revisit it;
- (3) *Global*: It has a global role, trying to reach markets where Spain's image is weaker (e.g. India, Middle East).

The campaign was developed by McCann Erikson. The online communication is based on two directions. The first one is based on promoting Spain on online websites form all around the world. Also there have been developed 250 tactical campaigns in collaboration with tour operators, airlines and other tourist agents for promoting concrete offers and straightening Spain's brand online.

Figure 5. I need Spain camping – online advertising



Source: www. TurEspana.com

The second direction is concentrated on the so called “Spain addicts” – tourists that have already visited Spain. The Spain addicts like to share their travel experiences on web and they love to give travel advice to others. “I need Spain” campaign aims to make tourists the ones who promote the country by collecting their online posts (videos, comments, photos) in a website ([www.ineedspain.com](http://www.ineedspain.com)) dedicated to travelers that are preparing to visit Spain. In this way the tourists become Spain's

ambassadors. An editorial team is selecting the most relevant and inspiring content and publish it on the website. Other *online communication means* used in the campaign are: youtube channel, facebook and twitter pages, telephones and tables apps. Also, the campaign released 40 images promoting the large Spanish tourist offer, differentiating the various tourist products. In addition, there were released 4 promotional video broadcasted on CNN, FOX, National Geographic and Eurosport. (See Annex 10)

*The logo* has been the same for over 33 years: the red, black and yellow sun. "Black and red refer to the skin and the blood of a bull; red also means passion; yellow points to the Spanish sun, and green (greenish Spain) to our fields and prairies, that is, the colours of Spain from north to south. And the asterisk is something that always tries to call your attention."<sup>23</sup>

Figure 6. I need Spain logo



Source: [www.TurEspana.com](http://www.TurEspana.com)

In this campaign *the slogan* "I need Spain" was written in Chinese, Spanish, French, Japanese, Dutch, Russian, English and Polish (See Annex 11)

In 2012, TurEspana developed a Strategic Marketing Plan for each market type (North America, Ibero-America, Asia-Pacific, Northern Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and the Middle East) based on demand studies.<sup>24</sup> As almost 70% of the tourists that have visited Spain repeat their visit, the country has launched a loyalty program. The commercial cost of promoting the destination among existing

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<sup>23</sup> María Luisa Blanco-Gomez, Destination Branding: The case of Spain, *Romanian Economic and Business Review– Special issue 2013*, p. 119 [online document <http://www.rebe.rau.ro/RePEc/rau/journal/WI13S/REBE-WI13S-A12.pdf>]

<sup>24</sup> Gobierno de Espana, Ministerio de Industria, energía y Turismo, Secretaria de Estado de Turismo, *National Integral Tourism Plan 2012-12015*, [online document: <http://www.tourspain.es/es-es/VDE/Documentos%20Vision%20Destino%20Espaa/National%20and%20Integral%20Tourism%20Plan.pdf>]

customers is lower than promoting the destination to new customers. This program was launched to German and United Kingdom market as the tourists from these countries have the highest rate of revisiting Spain. "This system works in terms of a card points-accumulation system based on purchases made in any of the establishments associated with the points program. These points can then be exchanged for products or services in Spain or for Spanish products in their home countries."<sup>25</sup>

Besides the tourism promotion, the Spain country branding campaigns are much wider. "MarcaEspana is a long term State policy, aimed t strengthening our country's image, both among Spanish citizens and beyond Spanish borders." <sup>26</sup> 2016 saw the release of the campaign "We all make Spain brand" (Todos hacemos marca Espana). It is a 2.30 minutes video that presents the biggest Spanish achievements in all areas, from science to sports, images with well-known specific gastronomy (olives, jambon) and wonderful landscapes. This video aims to develop the national pride of the Spanish people through slogans such as "Our diversity makes us much stronger", "We are constructing the world", "We work for a better world", "Creating the future with Spanish accent".

As a results of all these efforts, Spain's brand ranks first in Europe and second in the world according to Bloom Consulting. As a comparison, according to the same publication Romania brand ranks 31 in Europe and 78 in the world. In 2015, Spain's brand was evaluated at \$ 872bn, being the 16<sup>th</sup> most valuable brand in the world while Romania's brand was evaluated at \$ 141bn, being the 48<sup>th</sup> most valuable brand of the world.<sup>27</sup>

### **Foreign tourists' perception of Romania as a tourist destination**

The study below aims to find out what is the perception of non-Romanian young people aged 18-35 about Romania as a tourism destination, and to discover if there are any differences between the image Romania wants to communicate and the one perceived by the audience.

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<sup>25</sup> Gobierno de Espana, Ministerio de Industria, energía y Turismo, Secretaria de Estado de Turismo, (2012) National Integral Tourism Plan 2012-12015

<sup>26</sup> <http://marcaespana.es/en/about-marca-espana>

<sup>27</sup> [http://brandfinance.com/images/upload/brand\\_finance\\_nation\\_brands\\_2015.pdf](http://brandfinance.com/images/upload/brand_finance_nation_brands_2015.pdf)

**Objective 1: How is Romania perceived by the target audience?**

**Figure 7. Opinions about Romania**



From the results we can see that the audience perception of Romania is more positive than negative, the average mark is 3.7 out of 5. Still, 41% of the respondents have neither good nor bad image about the country.

When it comes to top of the mind word the respondents associates with Romania, the most frequent answers were: Dracula, friendly people, Bucharest, beautiful girls and amazing nightlife, Transylvania, the mountains, painted eggs, Targu Jiu and Sinaia. We can see that at first sight most of the images associated with Romania are positive. There are also people who cannot link anything with Romania, but no image is better than a negative image. The most common negative aspects associated with Romania are the gypsies. Also, other less positive aspects associated with Romania by a few respondents are the East European Bloc and poverty.

**Objective 2: Which are the main values/elements the target associates with Romania?**

**Figure 8. Personalities associated with Romania**

Figure 4.8. Personalities associated with Romania



Dracula and Nicolae Ceaușescu are the two public figures most respondents associate Romania with (48% associate the country with



Dracula and 27% with Nicolae Ceaușescu). 4% of the respondents cannot link Romania with any of the mentioned personalities (Nadia Comăneeci, Gheorghe Hagi, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Dracula, Ilie Năstase) and could not name anybody else. Other 4% of the respondents associate Romania with others than the mentioned personalities, such as Traian Bănescu and Mircea Crișan.

**Figure 9. Appealing Romanian attractions**

Figure 4.9. Appealing Romanian attractions



Transylvania is the most appealing Romanian destination to potential foreign tourists aged 18- 35, 20% would like to see it. On the second place with 18% each are Dracula’s Castle and Bucharest. Only 13% of the respondents would visit the Carpathians, so much promoted through the tourism campaigns, with one percentage less that the ones who would like to see the Black Sea.

**Figure 10. Tourism forms associated with Romania**



64% of the respondents consider visiting Romania for its potential cultural itineraries. Although, the recent tourism branding campaigns promote Romania as a green destination suitable for active tourism, only 11% of the respondents would visit Romania for this form of tourism.

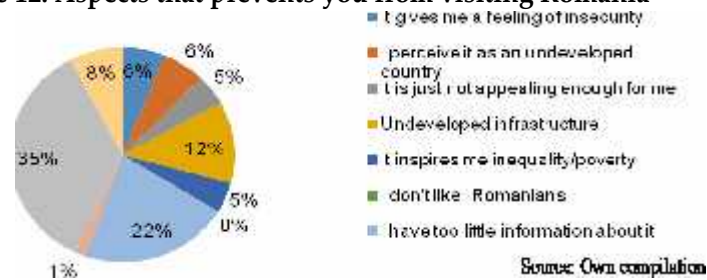
**Figure 11. Main advantages Romania has as a tourist destination**



25% of the respondents consider that the main advantage Romania has as a tourism destination is its low prices. 22% think that the wild natural environment (mountains, beaches, lakes, awesome landscapes) is Romania's biggest advantage when it comes to tourism. There is a category of 4% of the respondents that could not name which is the main advantage Romania has as a tourist destination.

**Objective 3: Which are the main negative aspects the target associates with Romania?**

**Figure 12. Aspects that prevents you from visiting Romania**



35% would not visit Romania because it does not sound appealing enough to them. 22% of the respondents are prevented from visiting Romania because of the lack of proper information about it. 12% of the potential foreign tourists aged 18-35 consider that the undeveloped infrastructure represents an obstacle to visiting Romania. 8% of the respondents have other reasons for not visiting Romania, such as Visa issues or the fact that Romania is not on their top "to visit destinations" lists. To 6% of the respondents Romania gives a feeling of insecurity, although some of the ones who have already visited the country have acknowledged that during their stay they felt more secure than they had thought before they arrived at the destination.

Figure 13. Negative aspects associated with Romania



The main negative aspects associated with Romania are the “gypsies” (34% of the respondents make a link between gypsies and Romania’s image) and the “corruption” (22% of the potential foreign tourists aged 18-35 have associated it with Romania’s image). Still, 20% of the respondents said they cannot associate any of the mentioned negative aspects (corruption, gypsies, misery) with Romania. 7% of the respondents associate Romania with other negative aspects such as bad traffic, alcoholics and delinquency.

**Objective 4: Which is the notoriety of the branding campaigns and how the branding campaigns managed to position Romania in tourists’ minds according to the promoted elements?**

Figure 14. Romania has an authentic rural lifestyle

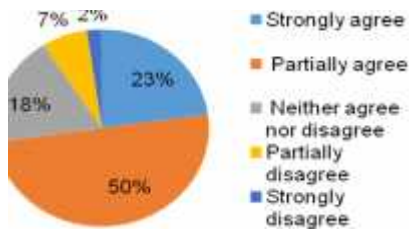
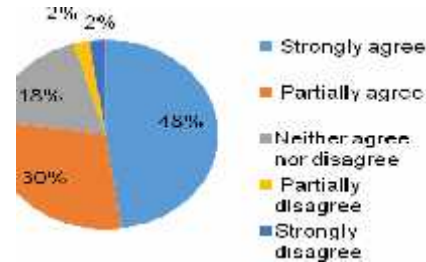


Figure 15. Romania has a rich cultural heritage



We can see that over 73% of the respondents strongly and partially agree with the following statement: “Romania has an authentic rural lifestyle (many traditions, simple rural lifestyle, organic food, etc.)”. 48% of the respondents strongly agree that Romania has a rich cultural heritage (castles, monasteries, churches, etc.) and 30% of them partially agree with the mentioned statement.

**Figure 16. Romania has an intact nature and unique geographic areas**

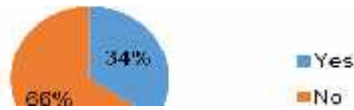


Source: Own compilation

34% of the respondents strongly agree that Romania has an intact nature and unique geographic areas and 39% partially agree with this statement, while 23% neither agree nor disagree.

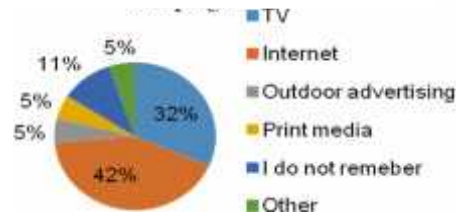
Overall, we can see that the respondents are more likely to agree that Romania has unique geographic areas, a rich cultural history and an authentic lifestyle. 18-23% of them neither agree nor disagree with the above statements, which might mean that they do not have enough information about Romania. Only a small amount of the respondents (between 4 and 9%) partially or strongly disagree. Therefore, we can say that most of the potential foreign tourists aged 18-35 associate Romania with the three main elements of differentiation promoted by the “Explore the Carpathian Garden” campaign.

**Figure 17. Have you seen any campaign that promotes Romania?**



Source: Own compilation

**Figure 18. On which media channel have you seen the campaign?**



Source: Own compilation

Out of all the respondents 66% have never seen any campaign that promotes Romania as a tourist destination. The most efficient medium for the promotion campaigns is the internet (42% of those who have seen a promotion campaign have seen it online), followed by TV (32%)

Figure 19. Which message/image do you remember from these campaigns?



Source: Own compilation

Most of the respondents who have seen a campaign promoting Romania as a tourist destination (30%) have recognized the slogan “Explore the Carpathian garden” and 26% of them remember the image of beautiful natural landscapes.

Figure 20. Aspects associated with the logo?

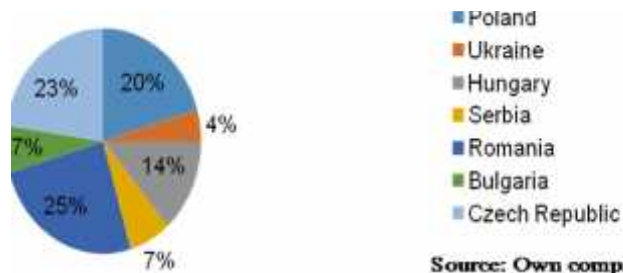


Source: Own compilation

80% of the respondents the slogan of the campaign “Explore the Carpathian Garden” has been associated with nature and/or the mountains. So, that the slogan has been successfully associated with the desired images by most of the respondents.

**Objective 5: How attractive is Romania as a holiday destination?**

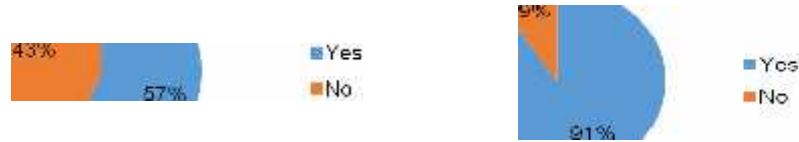
Figure 21. Attractiveness of Central-Eastern European countries



Source: Own compilation

From the above Central – European countries (Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and Czech Republic), 25% of the respondents are interested in visiting Romania more than other mentioned country.

**Figure 22. Have you ever visited Romania? ...** **Figure 23. Recommendation for Romania as a holiday destination**



Source: Own compilation

Source: Own compilation

57% of the respondents have already visited Romania and 91% of those who have visited the country would recommend it as a holiday destination to friends or relatives.

As a conclusion, the findings of the research have shown that the key values promoted since the launched of the “Explore the Carpathian Garden” campaign (authentic rural lifestyle, rich cultural heritage and unique and intact nature) have been associated with Romania. This means that the campaign has found and has focused on the proper elements. Also, the logo has been associated by the target with the desired elements (mountains, river, and nature).

Taking into consideration that there are more respondents who have no image about Romania than the ones who have a bad image, future campaigns should be rather informative than redefining. Also, according to the findings of my research, in future campaigns Romania should focus more on Dracula, Ceausescu and Transilvania, promoting cultural itineraries. Moreover, it should highline its low prices and the natural environment as these are the main Romanian’s advantages perceived by the target.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

I think Romania can learn from Spain's campaigns and the national authorities should collaborate more with the private sector. Both the national authorities and the private sector should develop a series of tourism packages which can be promoted online (e.g. in online foreign newspapers), under the country branding slogan. Also, Romania should inspire from "I need Spain" campaign and it should try to make tourists its ambassadors. In order to do so, it could organize a social media photography contest. Foreign travelers should upload on Facebook a selfie photo made during their visit in Romania. The one gathering most likes will win a free city break or a discount on the next trip to Romania. In this way, the tourists can be encouraged to share their photo with as many friends as possible, so they can collect as many likes as possible. In this way they will become Romania's ambassadors.

In addition, as an ex-Erasmus student, I think that young people who are travelling to a foreign country to study can become successful ambassadors of that country when they return home. The national authorities in collaboration with the universities and youth organizations can create a special program designed to encourage Erasmus students to travel to as many places as possible. The program should start with a conference to present the main tools the students can use to organize their journey (such as the website <http://www.romania.travel/>) and where they receive a document designed as a mini passport. Then, on every trip they make to other cities in Romania, they should pass by the tourist information center to collect a stamp on their passport. At the end, the ones who have collected a certain number of stamps will receive a prize. For example for 5 stamps (meaning 5 cities visited) they receive a movie ticket, or a free train journey to what Romanian destination they wish. For 10 stamps on their passport, they receive one night free accommodation in a certain Romanian destination.

After analysing the tourism branding campaigns, I have developed a research applied to a part of the target audience of "Explore the Carpathian Garden" Campaign (non-Romanian young people aged 18-35). We have seen that the perception of the target audience about Romania is rather good than bad, but a big share of the respondents have neither a good nor a bad perception. This is not a drawback, as having no image at all is better than having a bad one. Creating an image is easier than repairing a damaged one. This indicates that future tourism branding

campaigns should concentrate on raising awareness of Romania by promoting its key values. As the most efficient media channel was the internet, followed by the TV, future branding campaigns should be directed to the online area and to the TV stations.

In the future campaigns, Romania should promote the cultural itineraries more and it should lay emphasis on the image of Dracula, Nicolae Ceausescu and Nadia Comaneci as well as on Transylvania and Bucharest as these were the most often associated elements with Romania. Moreover, Romania should exploit its main advantages: low prices and the wild natural environment. Besides this, Romania should try to counterbalance the aspects which prevent foreign tourist from visiting the country, such as the lack of proper information and the undeveloped infrastructure. Additionally, it has to diminish the negative aspects associated with the country. This can also be done by awareness campaigns. Still, the promotion of one country is not made only by the efforts of the tourism branding campaigns. I think collective efforts should be made to correct the bad images associated with Romania. An example in point is given by the news and the TV shows we promote. In the last years, most Romanian TV shows have been promoting non-values. Foreign TV stations have taken these news and have spread them further. We should start promoting the real values, such as the performance of Romanian students in international mathematics, physics and other competitions. I think the Spanish campaign "We all make Spain brand" is again an example that Romania can follow. Moreover, I think foreign journalists and well-known bloggers should be invited to discover our country. Any press article promoting our country is a step forward in diminishing the lack of information about Romania.

For further studies, I would recommend researching the perception of certain nations about Romania. Based on their results specific campaigns should be created for each of the studied country, such as the 2006 campaigns "Hola soy Rumano" conducted in Spain and "*Romania, piacere di conoscerti*" conducted in Italy. These personalized campaigns would aim to counterbalance the negative aspects associated with Romania in different countries.



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