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# TOURISM PROMOTION FOR UNKNOWN AREAS IN ROMANIA

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The paper is an effort to unknown areas identity affirmation, through collaborative development of advertising mix, with an emphasis on virtual platforms as admissible solution for increasing visibility. Based upon comparative effective analysis of categories of communication particularities, it is suggested a positioning strategic solution, via virtual advertising platform as unique, integrated, complex and very attractive tourism product promotion, fitted for the internal and international tourism circuit. The active promotion of the specified territorial identity will launch a brand with an impact among tourists by using marketing techniques and innovating technical means and prioritizing tourism as a principal vector of local and regional development.

**Keywords**: tourism, Romania, strategies

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism promotion goes through a process of perfecting and adapting, being forced to adapt its strategies in order to position itself between a product with complex characteristics and a consumer with a diverse motivation and high demand elasticity, in market finding itself in a continuous process of transformation. Therefore, from product to consumer, through the respective market, these essential factors on the tourism promotion "path" show their specificity, complexity and change (evolution) based tendency. Thus, designing the promotional communication strategy at a tourism company level, its integration into the global strategy, conceiving a promotional mix capable to efficiently take advantage of promotion instruments constitute premises and rigors for coordinated, coherent and interdependent (intelligently correlated) actions in this field, which is essential for a tourism operator.

## 2. Tourism promotion – concept, features and objectives

Tourism promotion activities require important investments due to the considerable geographic spread of tourism markets, the presence of an acute international competition and the intangible character of tourism product. From this former perspective, it may be stated that the intangible nature of tourism services leads to the increase in importance of promotional strategy, its main element being investment (association) with tangible attributes of services, by connecting them to certain specific benefits. Thus, the means of communication must suggest the speed and efficiency delivered by tourism units, the high level of comfort assured by them, the images used revealing the interior and exterior aspect of lodging spaces, restaurants and modern recreation centers.

The possible sources of tourism information are diverse; however the biggest impact is attributed to personal communication. Thus, the decision of the tourist regarding the destination, the optimum travel period and the tourism agency to broker the tour is influenced by the recommendations and information, often subjective, of the people in their entourage (social networks) who have "experienced" the respective tourism products. In addition comes the information given by the sales force of the tourism unit (travel agents, welcoming structures, tourism offices), expert channels (pundits, prescriptors), as well as impersonal communication channels (media, "atmosphere" and "events").

The objectives of tourism promotion policy are differently compiled, depending on the state that the potential targeted consumers find themselves in, the goal being to lead them from the cognitive or affective state to the conative (behavioral) state, meaning the final act of purchasing the tourism product.

Similarly to other fields which imply endeavors of the same nature, the components of the promotional mix in tourism include tourism advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing and sales force. Each of these categories of communication means have, still, a number of particularities, fewer however when compared to those that marked the differences in price and product policies.

**3. Promotion methods in the tourism industry:**

**Tourism advertising**

An extremely important role in marketing is claimed by advertising, which is a quantum of activities of market promotion for an idea, a product or a service.

Advertising, an important variable of the promotional policy of the modern firm, represents one of the most used means of market activity - certain experts calling it the nerve center of a company's communication policy. It represents one of the means through which the company implicates itself and relates to the evolution of the market, encompassing an entire mosaic of techniques, related to several disciplines (sociology, psychology, design, graphics).

As a result of the intangibility of tourism products, it is observed that their advertising is more difficult to undertake, regardless of whether or not the advertising medium is print (press, fliers, guides, tourism boards, etc.) or electronic, audio-visual: internet, television or radio. The intangible nature, and, as a consequence, invisible nature of tourism services requires that their advertising must be made permanent, changing the message according to the goal and keeping certain symbols.

Advertising will focus on the affective side of the message, creating a climate of affective attraction around the tourism product, and, afterwards, in order to cement a favorable attitude, will fuel the cognitive side of it by information which supports the already created attachment.

**Tourism advertisement**

Undertaking an efficient promotional activity is only possible by aligning it with the coordinates of an authentic esthetic of advertising creation, in this context, the development of suggestive images, with evocative strength, is essential for the benefit of the tourism product. Best capturing the attention of the reader, photographs (an important field of tourism communication) must make the potential tourist dream, creating the desire to offer themselves the stay or tour proposed by the tourism agency.

The slogan of a tourism advertising message must express its essence in a concise, expressive, attractive and exciting way. It fulfills its purpose when it remains in the memory of the potential consumer and, of course, if it influences their decisions.

A number of more inspired slogans:

- Romanian tourism: "Come as a tourist, leave as a friend!"
- Călimăneşti Căciulata: "A resort for four seasons"
- Marshal Turism: "Any dream can become reality"
  - "At the seaside, a single season – the season of health"
  - "Hotel Sofitel – where perfection is an obsession"

The advertisement is one of the most powerful instruments at the disposal of the marketing specialist in his promotion activity. Its main purpose is to push the potential buyer to action, meaning to determine him to react positively to the advertising messages which are addressed to him and to buy the offered tourism product.

Observing it from the point of view of its concrete form of manifestation, the tourism advertisement is composed by message transmitting activities (spots, fliers, banners, etc.) broadcasted through different mediums of communication (press, cinema, radio, expos, etc.) towards the potential tourism clientele, with a goal to inform it regarding certain products or tourism destinations, in order to influence this clientele to view the certain products or destinations favorably.

The purpose of the advertisement is to transmit an idea about the tourism product being promoted. Transmitting these ideas, promises, etc. tries to offer the one receiving the message certain knowledge in order to determine, thus, the manifestation of attitudes or behaviors towards the direction desired by the one transmitting the message.

**Sales promotion**

Presently, there are a multitude of promotional sales which may be put into practice, limited only by the imagination of the marketing personnel. These techniques must, however, be used prudently, because sales promotion is not always adequate for all the forms of a product. Oftentimes, the advertisement is the most adequate as the main means of creating the entire image of the tourism unit and its products, while sales promotion is used to fulfill short term objectives, such as current stock flushing. What is important to observe is that sales promotion and advertisement objectives are not in conflict. The techniques of sales promotion have numerous elements, such as: representative sales, the sales staff which move towards brokers and, from there, towards clients and others.

There are hundreds of techniques which may be employed and currently we will outline those commonly used on the tourism and travel industry:

- promotions referring to company staff (bonuses, awards, contests and competitions)
- promotions targeting retailers or dealers, consisting of: offering of promotional items (pens, journals, calendars) which usually come from the manager; brochure launch; products that promote the name of the tourism unit being sold at a token price.

**Shows and Expos**

Expos play an important role in the travel industry, offering the opportunity for buyers and sellers of travel products to meet and do business.

One may identify 3 types of expos:

- public oriented
- commercial transaction oriented
- private, invitational expos

Strictly speaking, the tourism show is more of a type of expo which allows buyers and sellers from the travel product trade to meet and do business. The British Travel Show is most often organized by sponsorship form the National Tourism Council, with branches in whatever areas are most likely to have a sufficient number of potential tourists.

**Public relations**

Public relations are best defined as a set of technical communication elements which are designed to create and maintain favorable relations between agents and their public. Tourism companies want to build good public relations with their shareholders, with the suppliers of their distribution channels and, where applicable, the unions.

Public relations, as well as other communication tools play an important role in informing and directing people towards the tourism company and its products, so as to generate a favorable attitude for the unit, which leads to the purchase of its products.

By transmitting information, public relations knowing the needs and interests of the company, through its message it promotes official relations with the public. The objectiveness of public relations is given by effective activity, this media being what greets the public.

Because the purpose of public relations is the ensure the credibility of their messages, it is more convincing than advertisements and, long term, more probable to have a larger impact on sales. It is known that public relations are essential weapons long term and less with an immediate effect on the market of the tourism unit.

The double importance of public relations in tourism units comes with the moment when the clients become more particular and less receptive to the messages transmitted by advertisements.

Public relations in tourism come in two types, as follows: internal public relations and external public relations. As related to the first category, it may be stated that they are divided in three distinct perspectives, classified by experts thus: stockholder public relations, supplier public relations and personnel public relations.

Internal public relations represent an attempt to ameliorate interpersonal communication, as opposed to external public relations which are addressed, mainly, to the public and particularly to the clientele of the tourism units, and constitutes of the emission of a journal by the executives in charge of products.

In tourism practice, public relations endeavors supported within the company try to ensure the dissemination of a minimum amount of knowledge to all employees referring to the policy, concerns, orientation, tendency and interests of the tourism producers and, at the same time, to ensure the circuit flow of ideas in both directions, on the worker-tourist and worker-worker relations.

**Direct marketing**

Direct marketing represents the entire marketing activity of an economic agent directed towards the success of the promotional policy. Direct marketing is a term used in many ways. It may be defined as the activity through which products are presented to the consumer, them being, at the same time, encouraged to buy them directly from the interested company. This activity is done through press and television.

An alternative, and perhaps a more encompassing, definition would be that marketing is a communication which creates direct relations between the company and its clients.

The techniques of direct marketing are more and more used in tourism in many innovative forms, which do not necessarily imply a direct sale but the creation of a relationship between clients and company.

The most well-known techniques used in direct marketing are:

- mail order (generally uses catalogues from which clients may order products either via mail or from the company's sale centers);
- direct response advertising (direct advertising includes replacing mass media advertisements which encourage clients to respond quickly to the sender, usually using a coupon cut from a newspaper or advertising magazine);
- direct mail (a technique through which a company communicates directly to the potential clients through mail, in order to give them an important message. The advantage of this technique is that letters may be personalized and target markets may be clearly identified).

## 4. Actual means of tourism promotion in the Polovragi area in Gorj County

**Area presentation**

The township of Polovragi is located at the south-western base of the Căpăţânii Mountains, in the basin of the same name, on the north-eastern side of Gorj County, on the left bank of the Olteţ river. The Polovragi Basin is part of the Olt Sub Carpathian Basin. The Olteţ Valley divides the Parâng Mountains (on the west) and the Căpăţânii Mountains (on the east), through a steep, limestone relief about 200-300m high.

The administrative territory of the township has a surface of 8.783 ha and spreads northward up to the main crest of the Căpăţânii Mountains, neighbored by: the city of Horezu to the east, Mălaia to the noth, Baia de Fier to the west and to the south, Alimpeşti and Slătioara. Between these limits, the altitude varies between 420m to the southern end and 2.108m and Nedei peak, on the main crest of the Căpăţânii Mountains. Polovragi township is made up of two villages: Polovragi, the seat of the township and Racoviţa. The goal was the promotion of this zone through the use of a specific tourism product presented in this paper under the name of "The land of Zamolxes" which is located to the north of Polovragi, in Gorj County. The tourism product "The land of Zamolxes" is placed on the territory of Polovragi village, being an integrated product, made up of the following components:

POLOVRAGI MONASTERY – located at the northern end of Polovragi, in an exceptional natural environment. Over 500 years old (the latest scientific research in the matter dating it to 1505 AD), the monastery is an important religious site of sub-Carpathian Oltenia, its indisputable value being supported by its vast and eventful history as well as the exceptional and, in some places, unique religious architecture.

POLOVRAGI CAVE – located north of Polovragi, on the left bank of the Olteţ River, in the canyon of the same name. The cave, with a total length of 9000m is an old subterranean loop of the Olteţ River. Under this level, the erosion of the river led to the increasing depth of the riverbed and the formation of a veritable canyon. Along with the different forms that the stalactites and stalagmites take in this cave, one can find the painting "Moartea cu coasa" [lit. "Death with a scythe"]. Within the cave, speleologists could identify the different and strange forms harmoniously sculpted along the years. Walking through the galleries one can distinguish shapes of snakes, eagles, elephants and even "Santa Claus". From the main gallery, several lateral pathways lead away partly cogged up with alluviums. Along the gallery three sectors can be distinguished, the most important being the one on the right, called the "Bat aisle". The gallery, electrified in 1984, has widths of approximately 10m and heights of 2-8m. Collapsed areas, horns and ceiling leaks are frequent. The second sector, named the Ogive Sector, is bordered by the Pillar aisle and the Suffocating aisle. It starts after approximately 400m from the entrance and along it the gallery maintains its width, but loses some height (up to 0.5-2m from the ground). The last sector, between the Suffocating aisle and the northern end of the gallery continues the cave up to the almost cogged up

strainer. In this portion, both width and height are reduced, the serpentine nature becomes more acute and more cave-ins and alluvial material can be observed. The cave carries important interest from a geo-morphological and aesthetic point of view.

**Promotion opportunities for the Polovragi area**

The goal of this paper is to find the most efficient ways to promote the Polovragi tourism area which, as we have seen previously, has plenty of relevant assets. Unfortunately, this area, as well as many others in this country, does not benefit from adequate promotion which would, first and foremost, put the spotlight on the riches that the respective areas have to offer from a tourism perspective.

We consider beneficial the inception of the promotion campaign through classic means, meaning by using instruments of promotion, starting with media relations through press tours, to study tours for tourism agencies, promoting tourism conferences, organizing meetings and events and, especially, being present at the most important holiday and tourism shows and expos, participating in promotional events along with tourism operators, undertaking advertising campaigns focused on general tourism image and specific products. Promoting stamps of quality and eco-stamps for an increased business and consumption responsibility (tourism is an economic activity within which there is a close relationship between service suppliers and consumers).

Market research is an essential instrument which brings specific information, and which also allows for the possibility of using quantitative and qualitative research of the tourism sector in question and of tourism trends in general.

By creating a system of monitoring and evaluating for the purpose of verifying whether the performance and objectives have been reached; in order to be and remain competitive, small tourism areas with insufficiently exploited potential must connect to a larger network. Collaboration and partnership conducted in a professional manner are key elements of success.

A surprisingly high number of potential tourists search for tourism information on the internet, in contrast with the initially method used by everyone, printed material. The big difference between these two means of promotion is that information on the internet is available at any time, wherever and for whoever wants it. The only impediment is the necessary technology which is not universally available but becoming increasingly more popular.

For the authentic tourism product "The land of Zamolxes" the creation of a website would be extremely important, in order to present and promote the product. The website would be designed by a specialized firm, with the technological and multimedia capability as well as the professional know-how necessary for its creation and upkeep. The website would have two versions, one in Romanian and one in English, for increased accessibility.

Once the internet-related phase of the authentic tourism product is fully implemented, the promotion of the web address is necessary in order to popularize it among potential tourists or interested persons. This promotion will be conducted by including the address in the most important online search engines, as well as through link-exchange with other profile websites. Thus, the number of visitors on the website will rise and it will be able to fulfill the purpose for which it was created.

Info panels will be placed at a corresponding height and brochures from the tourism facilities will be accessible, offering information in other languages, visual and illustrated symbols as well as words being used.

In the absence of a possibility of access to diverse attractive elements of the Olteţ Canyon, different means of offering visitors the experience of the area will be employed, such as DVDs in information centers.

The members of the local communities will be the first to benefit from employment opportunities, this project would also encourage the tourism services suppliers to diversify their activities and use local workforce, including among the underprivileged groups, encouraging the suppliers themselves to use local suppliers.

The advertising and information campaigns of the Olteţ Canyon tourism zone promote equal opportunity by supplying information, if necessary, in many formats and minority languages. For this purpose local press and radio stations will be used to promote the project and transmit positive messages about accessibility and equal opportunity.

**The main promotional objectives**

The main objectives for the promotion of the Polovragi area are:

1. The identification, evaluation and selection of the most valuable elements of national natural, historical, cultural and religious heritage from the Olteț Canyon area with the purpose of tourism exploitation. This objective can be realized through the following activities:

- Mapping the elements of potential tourism interest in the Olteț Canyon area.
- Tourism evaluation of the natural, historical, cultural and religious national heritage components, through the use of benchmark tourism markers and marketing scaling techniques.
- Establishing and quantifying the possibilities of improving the draw power of the elements with tourism potential in the area.
- The rigorous selection based on performance and tourism attraction criteria of the most valuable and attractive tourism objectives.
- The compiling of a solid database of tourism information (including GIS maps) which may be accessed by specialists and tourists through the use of the UMTS terminals.

2. The creation of a unique, integrated, complex and very attractive tourism product "The land of Zamolxes" and evaluating the possibilities of introducing it in the internal and international tourism circuit, which may be realized by:

- Gathering historical data, written and spoken legends and other information sources regarding Zamolxes, the Dacian god, in order to create a magnetic pole for tourism attraction for the future product.
- Compiling a monograph of the Olteț Canyon tourism area.
- Running a marketing research campaign on the impact on tourists of selecting and adapting the theme for the future product and testing the preference and exigencies of tourists regarding the exploiting of the tourism potential in the area.
- Establishing the components of the tourism product "The land of Zamolxes" and conceptualizing an integrated and particularly attractive tourism product.
- Conducting a study regarding the possible use of connected tourism products, in order to extend the addressability among tourists (hiking, river rafting and tubing along the Olteț river, climbing, paint ball, zip lines, etc.)
- Designing tourism programs based on the product "The land of Zamolxes".
- Studying the possibilities of creating a cultural and religious routes and introducing a new tourism product in the offers of internal tour operators.
- Establishing the possibilities of integrating the tourism product "The land of Zamolxes – God of the Dacians" in the international cultural and religious routes.

3.As a final objective of major importance in the active promotion of the Polovragi area, we count the aggressive promotion on modern managerial principles of the tourism offer of Olteț Canyon and launching a brand with an impact among tourists by using marketing techniques and innovating technical means and prioritizing tourism as a principal vector of local and regional development.

- Organizing a workshop for conceiving a brand related to the tourism product "The land of Zalmoxes" with an impact on tourists
- Conceptualizing and designing advertising materials characteristic to the tourism area of Olteț Canyon and their distribution at events programed through the project.
- The creation of a website for the tourism area, creating links as wells as specialized debate areas such as Wikipedia.
- Organizing two tourism events for promoting the Olteț Canyon and, specifically the tourism product "The land of Zamolxes".
- Producing a 3D movie in order to exploit the Olteț Canyon tourism area and its distribution to important domestic and foreign tour operators.
- Organizing two press conferences for promoting the Olteț Canyon tourism area among pundits.
- Organizing roundtables inviting local authorities with a purpose to garner their supports for the upkeep and promotion of the area.
- Promoting the Olteț Canyon tourism area on local and regional radio and television stations as well as a central television station.
- Inserting articles for promoting the Olteț Canyon tourism area in high circulation local (3), regional (3) and national (2) newspapers.

## Conclusions

We consider that through these actions, the area proposed for promotion will become known and appreciated by tourists, an aspect which will lead inevitably to the development of the area from an economic perspective through the tourism activities which will take place there.

Also, through these endeavors one may significantly contribute to the consolidation of a favorable image of Romania abroad, an image seen as the sum of local brands thus developed.

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