

Urban destination image assessment – a cognitive approach. Case study: Craiova, Romania

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INTRODUCTION

The image of a destination is a fundamental factor when choosing tourist destinations, positive images being generally easier to be taken into consideration (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996; Chon, 1991; Dann, 1996; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo, 1973). Once at the destination, tourists' satisfaction depends on the comparison between the expectations based on the previously held images and the current reality they find in the tourist destination (Chon, 1991). Thus the identification, tracking, marketing and management of an image must be among the main priorities of tourist destinations because tourist images do not always reflect reality (Hunt, 1975, p. 2) and can drive away potential tourists. Thus, the image represents the totality of the perceptions and beliefs that individuals have about the respective destination, without implying a previous visit (or experience) in that destination. Because all destinations have a characteristic tourist image, an image analysis can determine the strengths or weaknesses of the destination, and tourism marketers can intervene in this regard and influence potential tourists. In fig. 34 some attempts to define the touristic image of a destination are presented.

STUDY AREA

Craiova city represents the polarizing center of Oltenia South-West Development Region, located in a geographic area at the contact between two major relief units – Getic Piedmont and Oltenia Plain, representing a favourable natural and socio-economic space for shaping a 1st rank urban settlement with multiple functions (fig. 1).

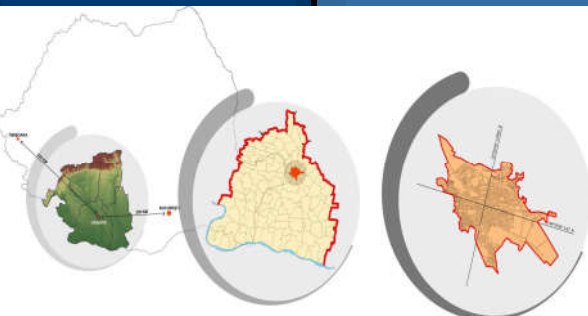
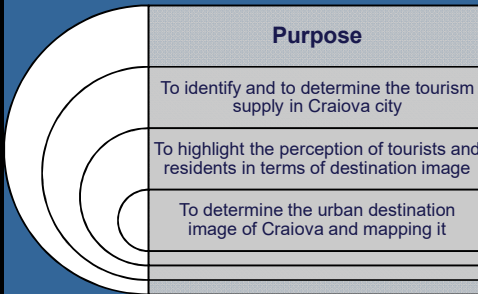
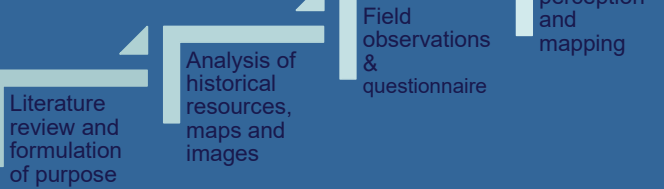
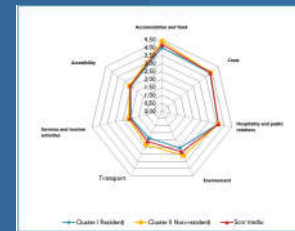
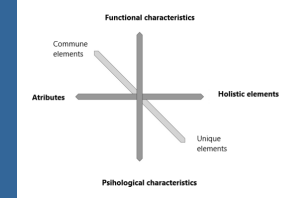


Fig. 1. – Geographical location of Craiova city at the national, regional and county level

METHODOLOGY



3. URBAN Destination image-tridimensional method

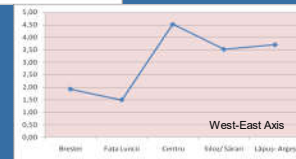
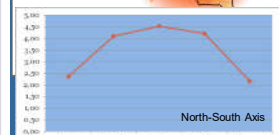
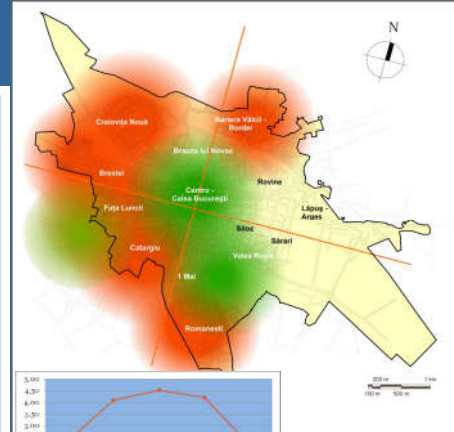


- What images or characteristics do you have in mind when thinking of Craiova city as a tourist destination?
- Culture (63.2%)
 - Hospitality (43.4%)
 - Fountains (32%)
 - Roma community (25.5%)
 - Poverty (18%)
 - Traditions (13.4%)
- How would you describe the atmosphere or state of mind you expect to experience in Craiova city?
- Relaxation (55.1%)
 - Comfort (41.7%)
 - Historic (31.9%)
 - Disappointment (22.3%)
 - Messy (21.5%)
 - Organization (17.9%)
 - Entertainment (16.2%)
 - Pleasant (14.7%)
 - Attractive (13.9%)
 - Happy (12.9%)
 - Cultural (12.4%)
 - No hospitality (11.3%)
 - Curious (10.2%)

- Mention some landmarks and unique attractions of Craiova
- Landmarks (National Theatre, Oltenia Museum, Art Museum, Opera House, Mihai Viteazul Square, heritage houses, university, city hall, county hall etc.): 45%
 - Green areas (Romanescu Park, Botanical Garden etc.): 39%
 - Events (Shakespeare Festival, Craiova city days, Maria Tănase Festival etc.): 18%

The image positioning model of Craiova tourist destination, based on factor analysis

4. URBAN Destination image-city center-periphery method



The components of the tourist image of Craiova and the axes of analysis: center-periphery (green-attractive areas, red-repulsive areas)

RESULTS

1. URBAN TOURISM SUPPLY

Historical Monuments in Craiova city (2004 and 2010)

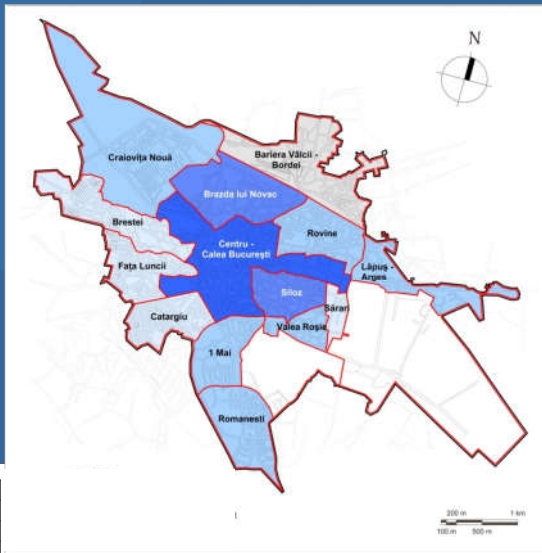
Landmarks	Historical monuments	2004	2010
Historical landmarks	City centre	1	1
	City Gate Towers	2	2
Religious landmarks	Churches	37	37
	Heritage houses	185	188
Green landmarks	Parks	1	1
	Palaces	5	5
	Hotels – heritage buildings	5	5
	Inns	5	5
	Banks	1	1
	Cinemas	1	1
	Monuments/statues	40	40
	Hospitals	5	5
	Schools	5	5
	Public Baths	1	1
Fountains	4	4	
Economic landmarks	Plants/factories	12	12
	TOTAL	310	313

Source: List of historical monuments 2004,2010, Ministry of Culture



The concentration of landmarks (%) in the neighbourhoods of Craiova

2. URBAN TOURISM ATTRACTIVITY



Is (Kv)	Values
Very high	>3
High	2-3
Medium	1,5-2
Low	1,2-1,5
Very low	0-1,2

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CONCLUSIONS

The tourist image increases from the periphery to the centre both on the north-south axis and on the west-east axis. Thus, the centre-periphery model demonstrates that the elements that form the tourist image are positioned in the centre of the city. The promotion of the periphery from a tourist point of view is also desired, and the approach should change in future tourist image strategies by creating or developing tourist activities in the peripheral area. The centre thus remains the main asset from the tourist point of view of the city of Craiova, and must be taken into account when conducting tourist marketing.