

Banat-Crişana as Micro-destination – Elements of Tourism Image and Tourism Identity*

Aurelia-Felicia STĂNCIOIU

Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies
stancioiufelicia@hotmail.com

Nicolae TEODORESCU

Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies
teodorescu.nicolae@gmail.com

Anca-Daniela VLĂDOI

Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies
anca.vladoi@gmail.com

Codruţa BĂLTESCU

“Transilvania” University of Braşov
mbaltescu@clicknet.ro

Marilena STOIAN

University of Agronomic Science and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest
maria.stoian@gmail.com

Abstract. *Geographical regions, according to some authors, are defined and delimited by criteria that vary from one geographical school to another. These criteria may be: scenic, functional, political-administrative, mental etc. (processed after Cocean cited in Neguţ, 2011, p. 157). They also can be combined according to the objectives/strategies that are elaborated for each branch of the economy: industry, agriculture, tourism, etc. In this regard, from tourism point of view, the region of Banat-Crişana was taken into consideration, that includes the following counties: Caraş-Severin, Timiş, Arad and Bihor. Due to the many land and air border points, it represents the first contact with the tourists coming from the West, with other words “its visiting card... crucial in formulating the first impressions regarding Romania” (Cocean, 2010, p. 201). The presented research aims to highlight the role of the image of the region of Banat-Crişana in building its own brand, by identifying its main tourist attractions and forms of tourism.*

Keywords: tourism destination; destination image; regional tourism brand; form of tourism; destination marketing.

JEL Code: M31.

REL Codes: 14F, 14G.

* The paper is part of a research presented in detail in no. 2/2011

Introduction

With important architectural, religious and folk treasures, the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana is located in western Romania and is bordered on the North by the counties of Sălaj and Satu-Mare, on the West by Serbia and Hungary, on the South by Serbia and the county of Mehedinți and on the East by the following counties: Cluj, Alba, Hunedoara and Mehedinți. Regarding the administrative-territorial division, the two regions (Banat, respectively Crișana) that form together the tourism micro-destination of Banat-Crișana cover the following counties: Caraș-Severin and Timiș (Banat), respectively Arad and Bihor (Crișana). The most important cities of these two regions are: Timișoara, Oradea, Arad and Reșița. The micro-destination of Banat-Crișana (named further as the historical region of Banat-Crișana) boasts many key-attractions, such as: caves (Wind Cave/Vântului Cave, Bears' Cave/Urșilor Cave, Meziad Cave, etc.), medieval fortresses (the fortress of Ziridava, the fortress of Arad) and medical spa resorts, some of them being famous on the medical spa market (Băile Herculane, Băile Felix, Moneasa, Beiuș, etc.).

The two regions were analyzed, from tourism point of view, as a stand-alone region (as, in fact, it is known throughout our millennial history), in order to ensure its representativeness.

Operational framework

The research conducted in October-December 2010 – January 2011 on a sample of 1,887 young people aged 20-24 years, with ongoing studies, aimed to identify the extent to which the perceptions of the residents coming from different Romanian regions related to the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana helps in the development of the identity within the elaboration process of the destination marketing strategy.

According to the classification of the forms of tourism proposed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO/UNO) in 1979, which takes into account the reasons guiding the choice of tourism destination (business and professional tourism, medical spa tourism, cultural tourism, leisure tourism, visiting friends and relatives and other forms of tourism), the respondents could chose the main form of tourism practiced within the historical region of Banat-Crișana.

According to the results, the distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana is as follows: 48.5% of the respondents considered the *medical spa tourism* as being representative for this region, 28.1% opted for *leisure tourism*, 7.9% chose *cultural tourism*, 6.4% opted for *other forms of tourism*, 5.2% chose *visiting friends and relatives*, while 3.9% of the respondents opted for *business and professional tourism* (Figure 1).

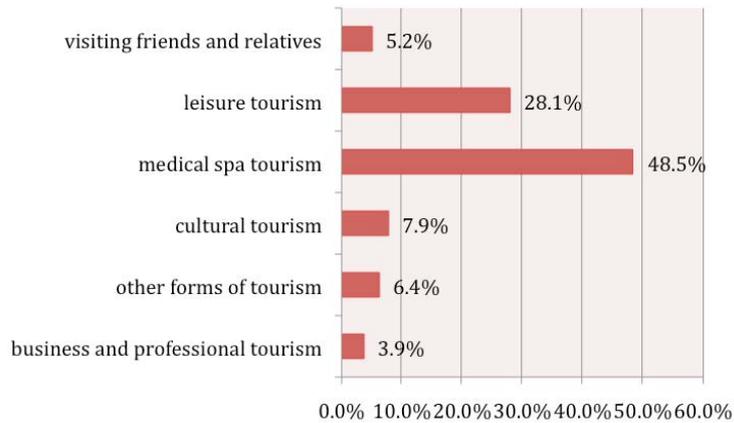


Figure 1. *The distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crişana*

Taking into consideration the region of origin of the respondents, it can be noticed that the *medical spa tourism* frequently holds the first position as representative form of tourism for this historical region, opinion that it is also shared by the authors, due to the reputation gained over time, especially by the two resorts, Băile Herculane and Băile Felix; the second place is occupied by the *leisure tourism*. The only exception, when the situation is reversed, occurs in the case of the respondents with Dobrogea as region of origin, fact that can be explained by the perception, in their subconscious, of the image of the resorts located along the Black Sea, considered by them as having the same characteristics as those located in the region of Banat-Crişana. The last place belongs, by order of frequency, to the *other forms of tourism*, *visiting friends and relatives*, respectively *business and professional tourism*. Regarding the established regional structure, the situation is as follows (Table 1):

- 1) Muntenia as region of origin (Figure 2):
 - 52.1% of the respondents chose *medical spa tourism* as representative form of tourism for the tourism micro-destination of Banat-Crişana;
 - 26.1% opted for *leisure tourism*;
 - 8.6% chose cultural tourism;
 - 6.2% opted for *visiting friends and relatives*;
 - 4.2% chose *other forms of tourism*;
 - 2.8% of the respondents opted for *business and professional tourism*.

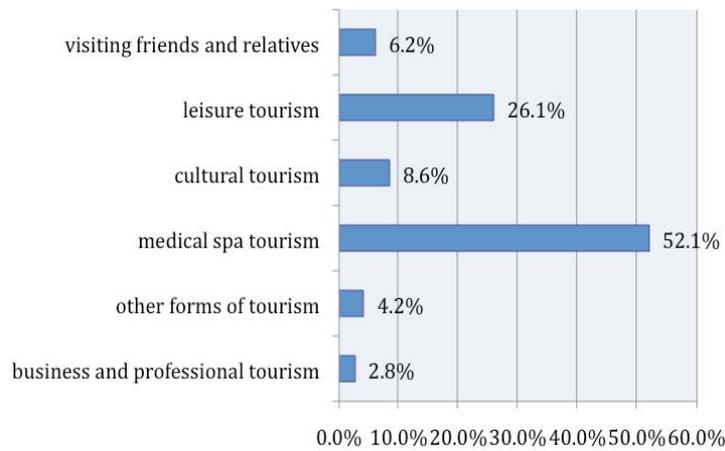


Figure 2. The distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana.
Region of origin of the respondents: Muntenia

2) Oltenia as region of origin (Figure 3):

- 40.4% of the respondents chose *medical spa tourism* as representative form of tourism for the historical region of Banat-Crișana (fact explained by the proximity of the two regions);
- 30.8% opted for *leisure tourism*;
- 10.6% chose business and professional tourism;
- 8.6% opted for visiting friends and relatives;
- 6.7% chose cultural tourism;
- 2.9% of the respondents opted for other forms of tourism.

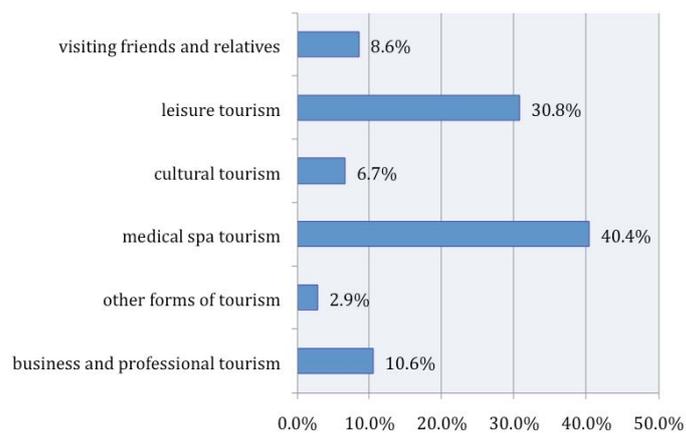


Figure 3. The distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana.
Region of origin of the respondents: Oltenia

3) Banat-Crișana as region of origin (Figure 4):

- 52.3% of the respondents chose *medical spa tourism* as representative form of tourism for their region;
- 24.4% opted for *leisure tourism*;
- 10.5% chose business and professional tourism;
- 5.8% opted for other forms of tourism;
- 4.7% chose cultural tourism;
- 2.3% of the respondents opted for visiting friends and relatives.

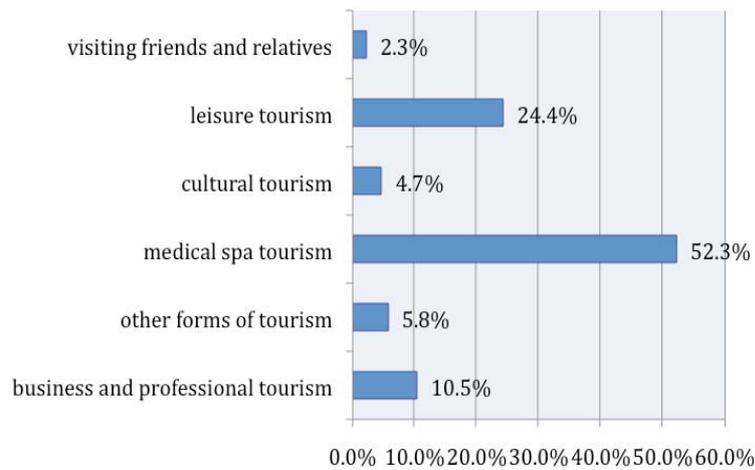


Figure 4. The distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana.
Region of origin of the respondents: Banat-Crișana

4) Transylvania as region of origin (Figure 5):

- 38.2% of the respondents chose *medical spa tourism* as representative form of tourism for the historical region of Banat-Crișana;
- 32.7% opted for *leisure tourism*;
- 12.7% chose cultural tourism;
- 8.2% opted for visiting friends and relatives;
- 5.5% opted for business and professional tourism;
- 2.7% of the respondents chose other forms of tourism.

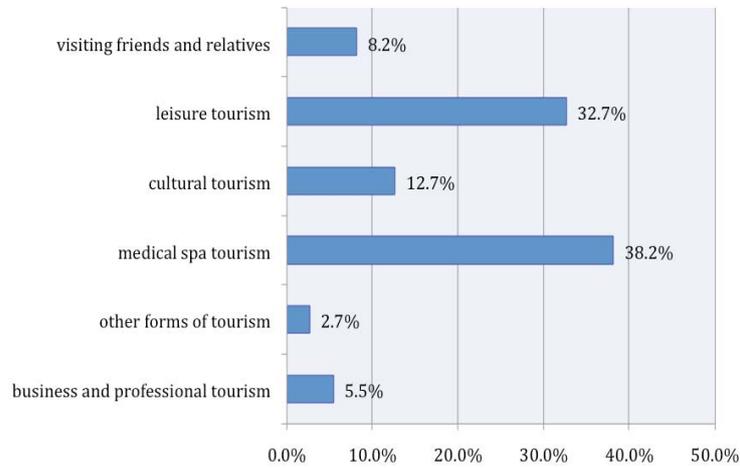


Figure 5. The distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana.
Region of origin of the respondents: Transylvania

5) Bucovina as region of origin (Figure 6):

- 36.2% of the respondents chose *medical spa tourism* as representative form of tourism for the historical region of Banat-Crișana;
- 22.3% opted for *leisure tourism*;
- 18.1% chose cultural tourism;
- 12.8% opted for business and professional tourism;
- 7.4% chose other forms of tourism;
- 3.2% of the respondents opted for visiting friends and relatives.

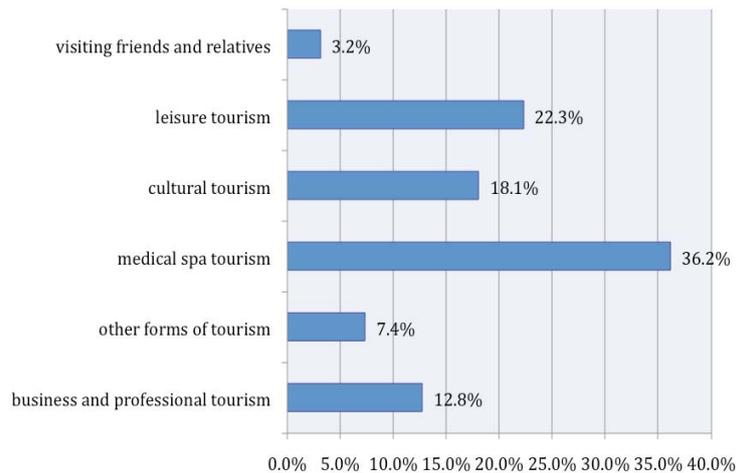


Figure 6. The distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana.
Region of origin of the respondents: Bucovina

- 6) Moldavia and Maramureş as regions of origin (Figure 7):
- 51.4% of the respondents chose *medical spa tourism* as representative form of tourism for the historical region of Banat-Crişana;
 - 19.4% opted for *leisure tourism*;
 - 13.6% chose cultural tourism;
 - 7.8% opted for business and professional tourism;
 - 4.9% chose other forms of tourism;
 - 2.9% of the respondents opted for visiting friends and relatives.

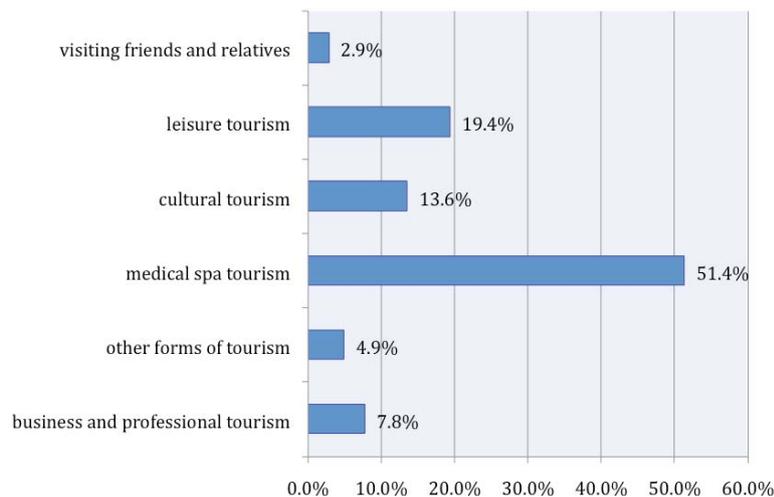


Figure 7. The distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crişana.
Region of origin of the respondents: Moldavia and Maramureş

- 7) Dobrogea as region of origin (Figure 8):
- 42.7% of the respondents chose *leisure tourism* as representative form of tourism for the historical region of Banat-Crişana;
 - 25.3% chose *medical spa tourism*;
 - 14.7% opted for cultural tourism;
 - 9.3% chose business and professional tourism;
 - 5.3% of the respondents opted for visiting friends and relatives;
 - 2.7% chose other forms of tourism.

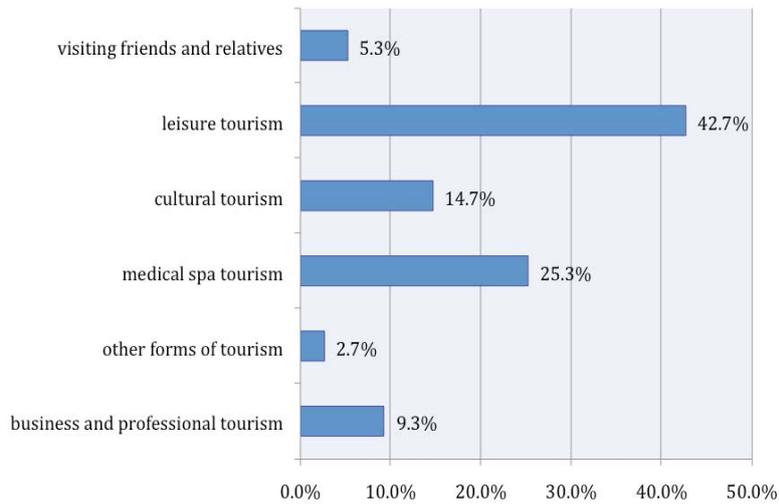


Figure 8. The distribution of the forms of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana. Region of origin of the respondents: Dobrogea

Table 1

The distribution of the responses by forms of tourism and by region of origin of the respondents

- % -

Forms of tourism / Region of origin of the respondents	Business and professional tourism	Other forms of tourism	Medical spa tourism	Cultural tourism	Leisure tourism	Visiting friends and relatives
Muntenia	2.8	4.2	52.1	8.6	26.1	6.2
Oltenia	10.6	2.9	40.4	6.7	30.8	8.6
Banat – Crișana	10.5	5.8	52.3	4.7	24.4	2.3
Transylvania	5.5	2.7	38.2	12.7	32.7	8.2
Bucovina	12.8	7.4	36.2	18.1	22.3	3.2
Moldavia and Maramureș	7.8	4.9	51.4	13.6	19.4	2.9
Dobrogea	9.3	2.7	25.3	14.7	42.7	5.3

The choice of the respondents for the *medical spa tourism* as representative form of tourism for the micro-destination of Banat-Crișana can be explained in particular by the existence of several springs of thermal water.

The references made by the respondents to the natural and anthropic tourism resources of the tourism micro-destination of Banat-Crișana are illustrated by order of relevance in Figure 9.

A. NATURAL POTENTIAL	% of respondents
<i>Topography:</i> Nerei Gorges, Vântului Cave/Wind Cave, Cetățile Ponorului Cave/Fortress of Ponor Cave, Urșilor Cave/Bears' Cave, Ghețarul de la Focul Viu Cave/the Cave of the Living Fire Iceblock, the Banat Mountains, the Almăj Mountains, the Zarand Mountains, the Semenic Mountains, the Western Plain, the Western Hills, etc.	15.8
<i>Climate/climatic elements:</i> warm summers, mild winters.	1.0
<i>Hydrography:</i> the rivers: Cerna, Bega, Timiș, Crișuri, Danube, etc.	7.2
<i>Flora and fauna:</i> "Domogled – Valea Cernei" National Park, Apuseni Nature Park, "Cheile Nerei-Beușnița" National Park, Nature Reserve Padiș, etc.	1.2

B. ANTHROPIC POTENTIAL	% of respondents
<i>Historical traces and art monuments:</i> the fortress of Arad, Șoimoș fortress, Ziridava fortress, Banloc Castle, etc.	4.6
<i>Elements of ethnography and folklore:</i> folk music, folk dances, folk costumes, gastronomy (Banatean salami), customs and traditions, etc.	3.8
<i>Cultural-artistic institutions:</i> the Metropolitan Cathedral of Banat, the Episcopal Cathedral of Oradea, churches, monasteries, the Romanian National Opera of Timișoara, Timișoara National Theatre, etc.	1.3
<i>Events:</i> Plai Festival, "Rachia" Festival, International Folk Festival "Hercules", etc.	0.6
<i>Contemporary constructions:</i> Rose Park, the West University of Timișoara, Border Crossing Point Nădlac, etc.	2.5
<i>Human settlements:</i> Timișoara, Oradea, Arad, Reșița, Băile Herculane, Băile Felix, Buziaș, Stâna de Vale, Moneasa, Băile Tinca, etc.	52.1

C. MISCELLANEOUS	% of respondents
<i>Personalities:</i> Horea, Cloșca and Crișan, Avram Iancu, Cristian Chivu, Mircea Malița, Traian Vuia, Daniel – Patriarch of Romania, Iosif Constantin Drăgan, Lavinia Miloșovici, Herta Müller, Sabin Drăgoi.	1.1
<i>Other elements/aspects:</i> the first city in Europe with streets electrically illuminated (Timișoara), revolution, business centers, hospitality, affiliation (relatives), Western influence, students, recreation, etc.	8.8

Source: adapted after Minciu, R. (2001). *Economia turismului*, Editura Uranus, București, p. 161.

Figure 9. Structure of the tourism potential of the region of Banat-Crișana

Conclusions

From the conducted research it can be concluded that the *medical spa tourism* is the representative form of tourism for the region of Banat-Crișana, although the sector did not "benefit" from a substantial promotion on the part of central and local authorities. The explanation lies in the special qualities and

international reputation of the water of the resorts, in the fresh air, in the other natural medical spa factors and in the way the folk traditions were kept alive within this region. From the other forms of tourism, leisure tourism holds a remarkable percentage (about 28%), being probably determined by the beauty of the places and by the anthropic elements of the region and can be combined with the cultural tourism (situated on the third place) in order to build a complex form of tourism – “edutainment” (“education via entertainment”), form of tourism that is increasingly preferred by the young people.

For an accurate assessment of the tourism micro-destination of Banat-Crișana and in order to elaborate appropriate strategies, similar researches should be constantly conducted for other categories of population, of different ages and with different level of education.

References

- Cocean, P. (2010). *Patrimoniul turistic al României*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca
- Datculescu, P. (2006). *Cercetarea de marketing*, Brandbuilders Grup, București
- Dobrea, R.Z., Ștefănescu, A.N., “Analiza competitivității industriei turistice din România în contextual globalizării economice”, *Economia seria Management*, 11(1), 2008, pp. 40-54
- Echtner, C.M., Ritchie, J.R.B., “The Meaning and Measurement of Destination Image”, *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 2(2), 1991, pp. 2-12
- Fan, Y., “Branding the nation: What is being branded?”, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 12(1), 2006, pp. 5-14
- INSSE (Institutul Național de Statistică) (2009). “Populație; Educație”, in *Anuarul statistic 2009* <http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/anuarstatistic2009.ro.do> (accessed 05.10.2010)
- Kapferer, J. (1997). *Strategic brand management*, Kogan Page, Great Britain
- Minciu, R. (2001). *Economia turismului*, Editura Uranus, București
- Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. (2001). *Advertising in Tourism and Leisure*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, UK
- Neguț, S. (2011). *Geografia umană*, Editura Academiei Române, București
- Pike, S., “Destination Image Analysis: A Review of 142 Papers from 1973-2000”, *Tourism Management*, 23(5), 2002, pp. 541-549
- Ritchie, J.R.B., Ritchie, J.B.R., “The Branding of Tourist destination. Past Achievements and Future Challenges”, *Proceedings of the 1998 Annual Congress of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism, Destination Marketing: Scopes and Limitations*, edited by Peter Keller, Marrakech, Morocco: International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism, 1998, pp. 89-116
- World Travel & Tourism Council (2011). “Economic Impact Data and Forecasts” http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Research/ (accessed 04.01.2011)
- World Travel & Tourism Council (2011). “Travel & Tourism Economic Impact. Romania” http://www.wttc.org/bin/pdf/original_pdf_file/romania.pdf (accessed 04.01.2011)