

Dimensions of the destination's sensory profile. Case study: Muntenia

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Abstract. *The development of a destination sensory brand represents a complex process, given the multitude of product components, and, by integrating their specific sensory dimensions in their brand platform, can transform the interaction tourist – destination into a memorable experience. In this sense, the achievement of the destination's sensory profile constitutes the first step, in which its perceived sensory dimensions for the elements of attraction and for the representative types of tourism are analyzed. In this paper, it is attempted, based on some research, to outline the sensory profile for the destination Muntenia, starting from the sensory dimensions perceived by tourists.*

Keywords: sensory marketing, sensory dimension, sensory profile, experience, destination brand.

JEL Classification: M31.

REL Classification: 14G.

1. Introduction

Located in Southern Romania, the destination Muntenia⁽¹⁾ is delimited by the rest of the historical regions, by the Carpathians in the North, by the rivers Siret, Putna and Milcov in the Northeast, by the Danube in the South and East, and in the West by the river Olt. The composition of the destination includes the following counties: Argeș, Brăila, Buzău, Călărași, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu, Ialomița, Ilfov, Prahova and Teleorman, as well as Bucharest municipality, each of these components representing, in fact, an independent microdestination.

In the case of a destination at regional level, the organization in charge with the destination management and, respectively, marketing develops the brand by supporting the natural elements, the climate, the infrastructure, the history, the local culture, the gastronomy, as well as all the facilities which belong to the hospitality sector (Stăncioiu et al., 2011). Such a strong brand can be achieved in time, as far as in the mind of the tourist are formed intense and unique associations regarding the destination. Given the fact that a person experiences in the present relying on past experiences, so that what was once in the exterior of the person is now inside (Murray, 1938), the marketer needs to pay more attention to sensory marketing, which can result in the development of memorable experiences at destination level. Sensory marketing in tourism targets the first moments of the perceptual process, “expands” the assessment base of the tourist, contributes to developing experiences, improves product quality, offers support for the multi-sensory communication and can ultimately lead to tourist loyalty.

Since the purpose of the organization in charge of the destination management, and, respectively, marketing is to obtain a destination brand, supported by the synergy of sensory dimensions (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile), which makes the tourist loyal and transforms him into a vector image, it is necessary to determine the sensory profile of the destination Muntenia, as a first step, and afterwards, by the application of sensory marketing strategies, to obtain its sensory signatures.

2. Conceptual framework

In the current economy, a “leveling” of the performances of goods and services appears increasingly often, so that the solution of differentiation arises, actually, from the experience lived by a consumer, when interacting with the product (Pine II and Gilmore, 2010). The interaction between a person and the environment is based on the sensory information, consciously and unconsciously received, thus creating a framework for assessing and experiencing things (Schifferstein, 2010). Therefore, during a visit at the destination, the tourist experiences the place with

all his five senses (Markwell, 2001), practically consuming that certain atmosphere (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993).

The marketing branch which analyzes five sensory dimensions, in order to influence perception, reasoning and consumer behaviour, is the sensory marketing (Krishna, 2012). In this context, multi-sensory experience influences consumer perception over product quality, so that, as the sensory bandwidth is higher (Hill, 2010), i.e. the number of integrated sensory dimensions into a brand platform, the price is higher (Yoon and Park, 2012), the consumer being willing to pay for experience. Sensory marketing strategies represent ways through which multi-sensory experiences can be developed, and can be applied at product level (goods, services, events, places) as well as at communication level (Rodrigues et al., 2011).

The importance of sensory marketing is demonstrated by the decision-making process, controlled to a higher extent by the sensory and emotional components of the consumer, than the rational ones. Given the fact that “the emotional reaction = evoked senses x positive reaction x emotion” (Lindstrom, 2009, p. 214), it can be noticed the direct proportionality between emotion and the number of senses involved, which is why experiences become memorable. When a stimulus reaches the body of the amygdala and establishes an emotional connection, a new memory is then formed, which can be recovered after the event by the interaction with the original stimulus (Hill, 2010).

Knowing that the perceptual process starts right from the sensory inputs (Cătoi and Teodorescu, 2004), and in the first few seconds the limbic system is involved (the subcortical, unconscious layers of the brain), it is possible that the consumer's reaction to a stimulus, such as a brand, to be decisive in these first moments (Datculescu, 2006). The perception of a tourist regarding the destination is the result of receiving, selecting, organizing and interpreting the sensory information, on the basis of which the tourist forms an image of the destination, under the influence of previous experiences and recommendations of acquaintances (Andreu et al., 2000).

The tourist forms the image of a destination during the three stages of experience, as it follows: during the pre-consumption stage, he forms a fundamental image of the destination, by the experience of a mental “knowledge” of the place, over which the image induced by communication is overlapped (Gunn, 1988); during the consumption stage, the previously-formed image undergoes a major change as a result of experiencing the destination, visually, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile, in the contact points (Hyun and O'Keefe, 2012); during the post-consumption stage, the image stabilizes by means of the satisfaction being felt and of the entire experience's evaluation (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991).

Based on the previously exposed information, the destination brand image is synthesized in the perception of the place, being supported by the associations retained by the tourist (Cai, 2002). Therefore, the management of the physical records, of the design and of the entire atmosphere of the destination aims at stimulating the five sensory channels of the consumer (Middleton et al., 2009). As the perceived services' quality is difficult to be perceived (because of their intangibility), the creation of an atmosphere that invokes colours and shapes, perfumes, melodies and elements pleasant to touch, can convert the experience into "something" tangible (Rushton and Carson, 1989).

The destination brand represents the memorable experience, uniquely associated to the visited place, which strengthens the emotional connection between a tourist destination (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998). In this respect, the role of the marketer is to turn the brand identity into a set of associations, which he will develop in the mind of the tourist as brand image (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000), while the tourist's experience represents the connection between the destination identity, the perceived image and its communication, seen as a way of consumption, being anchored at a sensory, emotional and rational level, both during an activity and in moments of contemplation and socialization (Govers and Go, 2009).

Starting from the remarkable experiences of tourists, the marketer can achieve and then communicate the sensory profile, which will be the basis of developing, in time, the brand of that certain destination. At the same time, designing experiences that can be accumulated in relation to the destination is based on achieving the sensory profile, resulting in the development of its own brand (Figure 1).

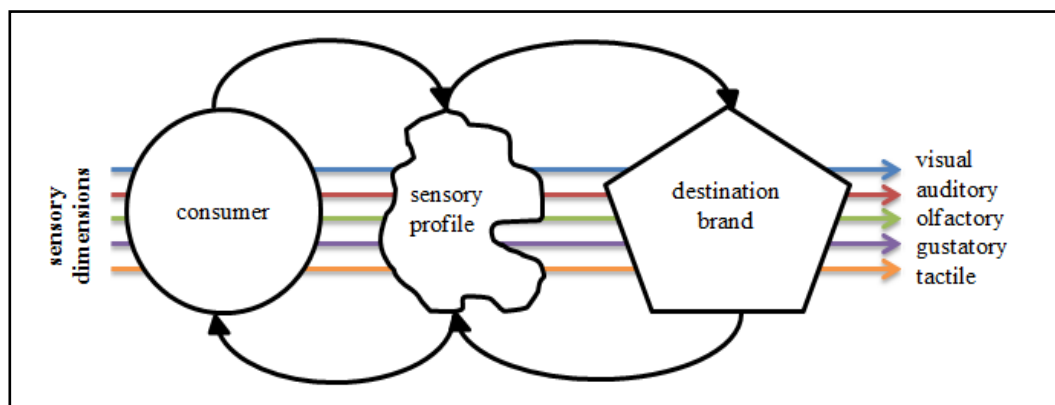


Figure 1. *The relation between consumer, sensory profile, destination brand and sensory dimensions*

Once the destination brand is formed, it is important for marketers to support/maintain the sensory profile (on the basis of its favourable sensory elements) or to change it (the unfavourable sensory elements) and, at the same time, to develop those activities “in situ”, by means of the sensory elements, characteristic to the tourist.

The interaction of all these elements imposes the necessity to study them in detail, taking into account all the factors, especially the subjective ones that influence them.

The marketer's design of memorable experiences of the destination, therefore, and the destination brand development in time, starts from achieving the sensory profile of the destination, on the one hand, helping to improve the perceived image of the destination and, on the other hand, the development, in time, of the sensory brand has as starting point the image perceived by tourists, through the sensory dimensions.

3. Methodological framework

The research aiming at evaluating the destination Muntenia, under the stimuli felt by tourists through each sensory channel and the positive, neutral or negative associations that they have formed in relation to the region, the comprised counties, the practiced types of tourism and the visited attraction elements (points of contact with the destination), was performed by the authors in the period March – July 2012. It was supported by another research, conducted in October 2010 – January 2011, on a representative sample of 1887 young people, aged 20-24 years, higher education graduates or with ongoing higher education, from all Romanian regions (Stăncioiu et al., 2011) in which there have been identified the elements of attraction and the representative types of tourism for the region/destination Muntenia.

The present study was conducted on a sample of 348 respondents (women – 77.9%; men – 22.1%), aged 20 – 24 years, higher education graduates or with ongoing higher education from the following regions: Muntenia (57.3%), Transilvania (15.6%), Moldova (11.5%), Oltenia (10.1%), Dobrogea (4%), Banat-Crişana (0.6%), Maramureş (0.6%) and Bucovina (0.3%). 84% of the subjects had visited Muntenia, while 16% have not visited yet the region for the following reasons: lack of material resources (33.9%), insufficient time (30.4%), lack of interest (16.1%), do not know (8.9%), insufficient information about the possibilities of rest (5.4%) and unfavourable information about the region (5.3%). The tourists who visited Muntenia would like to re-visit this region, with a share of 94.1%, in order to practice the following types of tourism: leisure, recreation and rest

(32.9%), visits to friends and relatives (30.9%), cultural tourism (16.8%), tourism for business and professional reasons (13.4%), balneary tourism (4.9%) and other types of tourism (1.1%).

Given that the process of destination image formation depends, in the first stage of the tourist experience, also on the induced communication, it is necessary to identify the modalities of promotion that help the tourist to experience the destination mentally. In this case, according to most respondents (76.6%), the way of promotion considered appropriate for the destination Muntenia is a combination of the traditional form of communication (offline) and online, while 16.5% opted for a promotion particularly in the online environment (websites, social networks), 5.1% of respondents believing that the offline promotion is appropriate and 1.8% choose another way of promotion. The information sources, which are considered trustworthy by the tourists, using them throughout the experience, are presented in Figure 2. Although the websites rank first place regarding tourist confidence, it can be noticed, that overall, the online environment (websites and social networks) and the offline environment (magazines and tourist guides) have each approximately half of the respondents.

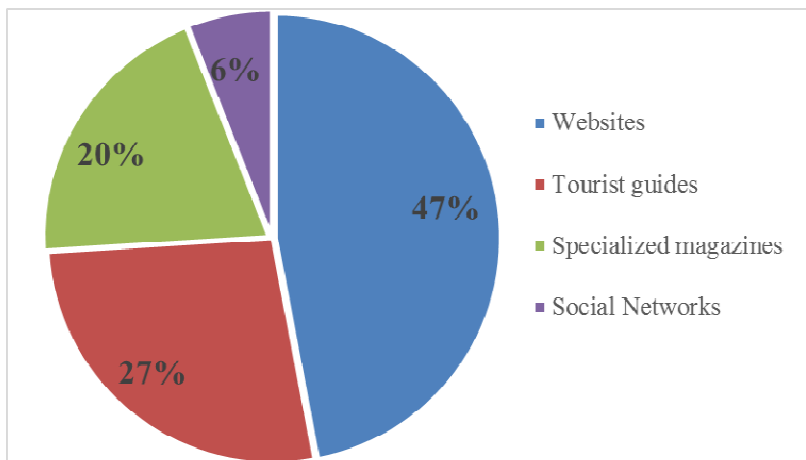


Figure 2. Tourists' confidence in the information sources they use

Along with visiting the destination and the consumption of atmosphere, the image formed in the mind of the tourist suffers a major change, so that the analysis of the elements that influence the perception of the tourism services quality (Figure 3), or of the satisfaction degree for each sensory dimension (Figure 4), becomes a priority for the marketer.

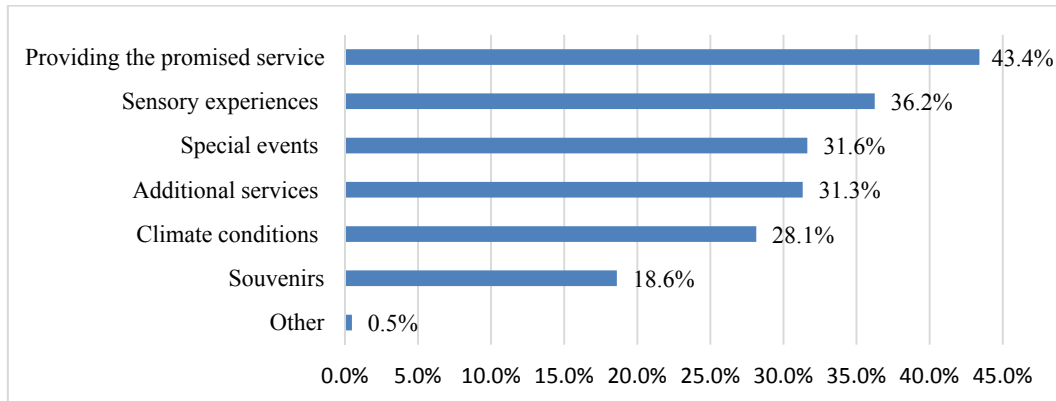


Figure 3. *The elements taken into consideration in perceiving the quality of tourism services*

If the elements considered by tourists when assessing the quality of tourism services (Figure 3) are: providing the promised services (43.4%), sensory experiences (36.2%), special events (31.6%), additional services (31.3%), climate conditions (28.1%), souvenirs (18.6%) or other (0.5%), the elements which negatively affect the perception of tourism services quality are: impolite personnel (49.9%), failure to provide the promised services (49.6%), inadequate infrastructure (33.4%), lack of leisure facilities (32.4%) and others (0.3%). Noteworthy in Figure 3 is that, after providing the promised services, the sensory experiences represent the marketer's solution to ensure the quality of the tourism product. Therefore, in order to ensure the tourist satisfaction, the points of contact (interaction between tourist and product) should be identified and transformed into memorable experiences. Tourists' satisfaction regarding the product Muntenia, decomposed on each sensory dimension (Figure 4), is presented as follows: visual satisfaction (43.5%), followed by gustatory satisfaction (39.5%). at an almost indistinguishable difference from the auditory satisfaction (39.2%). The proximity between the gustatory and the auditory satisfaction can be explained by one of the main reasons for which the respondents visited Muntenia, i.e. visits to relatives and friends, type of tourism that focuses on the component "meal", as an element of socialization.

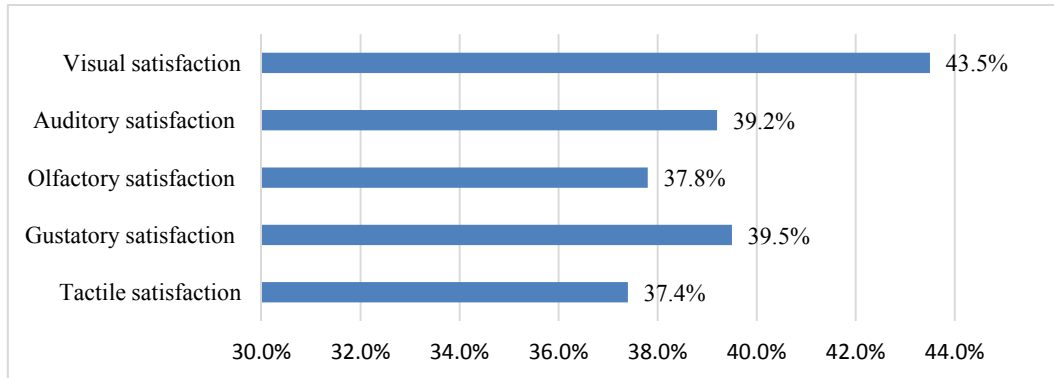


Figure 4. Tourist satisfaction for each sensory dimension in Muntenia

The main types of tourism practiced in Muntenia are: leisure, recreation and rest tourism, visits to relatives and friends, cultural tourism, tourism for business and professional reasons, balneary tourism. The sensory dimensions perceived by tourists for the types of tourism specific to Muntenia are presented in Figure 5.

The visual stimuli reach the highest values for the leisure, recreation and rest tourism, as well as for the cultural tourism. The auditory stimuli have a maximum point for the tourism for business and professional reasons. The olfactory stimuli, as it can be observed, have a special importance for the balneary tourism, as well as the tactile stimuli, showing a point of maximum for the same type of tourism, while the gustatory stimuli characterize best the type of tourism “visits to relatives and friends”, with similar values for the tourism for business and professional reasons or cultural tourism. Of all the types of tourism specific to the destination Muntenia, the leisure, recreation and rest tourism has the most balanced distribution of sensory experiences, as the tourist is experiencing diverse activities within this type of tourism.

The importance of measuring the sensory dimensions of the types of tourism in the destination is justified, mainly, by the process of the destination image formation in tourists’ minds. Therefore, the types of tourism represent the reason why tourists travel to a destination, thus being an important component in the formation of expectations, under which the tourist will perceive the destination, eventually forming the destination image. Measuring the important sensory dimensions for each type of tourism and attending the tourist’s senses which correspond to these dimensions is a solution for obtaining tourist satisfaction and creating a positive image of the destination in his mind.

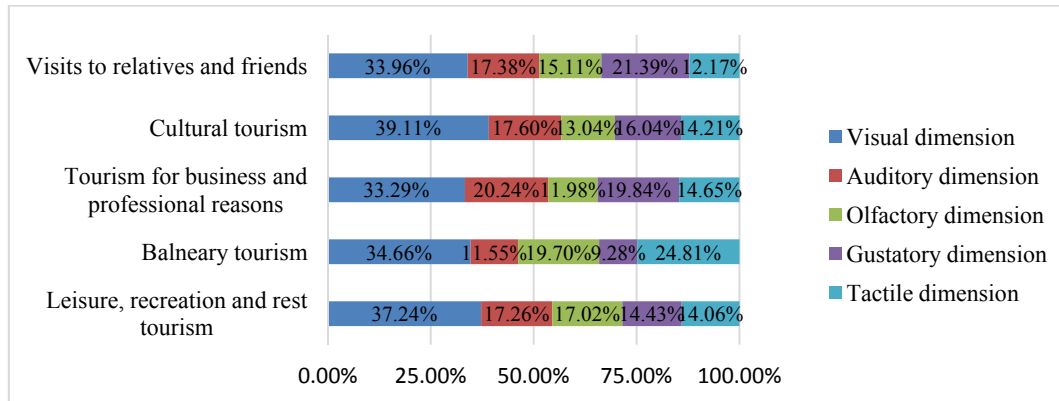


Figure 5. *Sensory dimensions perceived in the destination Muntenia*

Regarded as a macrodestination, the region of Muntenia consists in several microdestinations, namely, the counties of Argeş, Brăila, Buzău, Călăraşi, Dâmboviţa, Giurgiu, Ilfov (including Bucharest), Prahova and Teleorman. For each county, in Figure 6, there are presented the sensory dimensions perceived by tourists. The analysis of sensory dimensions at the county level is of interest from the perspective of destination management, and, respectively marketing organization at regional level, in the context of prioritization and development of certain types of tourism, so, implicitly of certain sensory dimensions, whose distribution should be monitored in the counties which include the points of contact tourist – macrodestination.

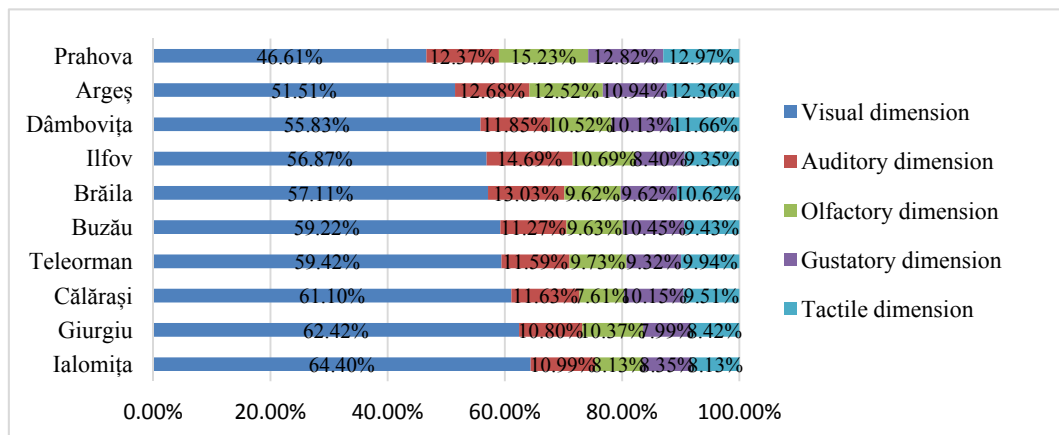


Figure 6. *Sensory dimensions perceived at the level of each county from Muntenia*

Each element of attraction of the destination Muntenia can represent a possible point of contact between the tourist and the destination. In Figure 7 the sensory dimensions of some items specific to the destination Muntenia are presented, which tourists associate, mainly, with a certain sensory dimension. The visual

dimension is considered by the respondents as being the most important and these results are reflected in the presented graphs. However, some stimuli are associated more to an element of attraction, than to other elements, such as the pairs: Palace of Parliament – visual experience, Romanian Opera – auditory experience, Tulips’ Festival – olfactory experience, Bucharest – gustatory experience and Mud Volcanoes – tactile experience.

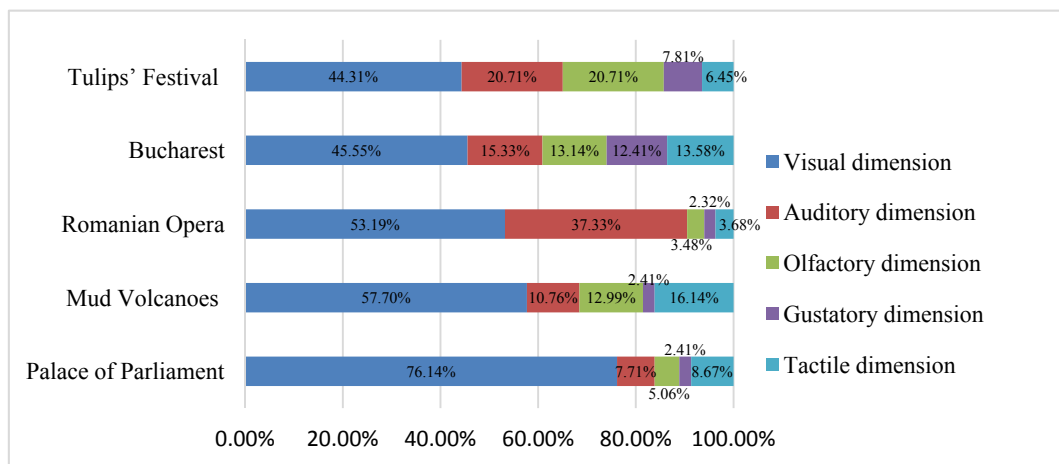


Figure 7. The sensory dimensions associated by tourists with elements of attraction from Muntenia

The interaction tourist – destination involves receiving the sensory information by tourists, through the sensory channels. From a sensory point of view, Muntenia has the following profile, achieved by aggregating all points of contact (Figure 8), similar model of the sensogram used by Lindstrom for brands (Lindstrom, 2009).

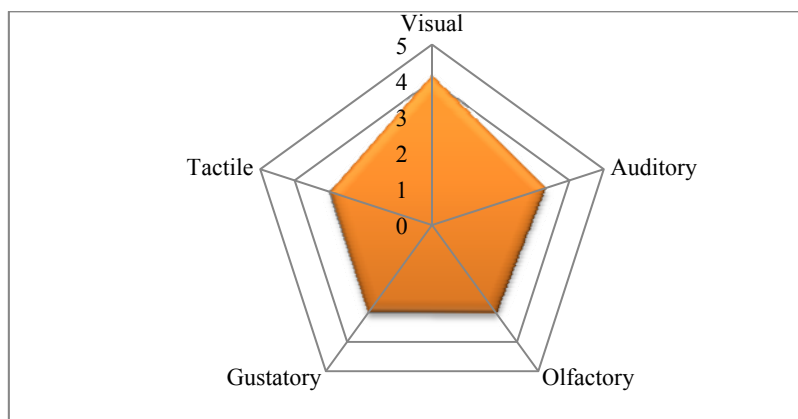


Figure 8. Sensory profile of the destination Muntenia

Noteworthy is the fact that the sensory profile of the destination Muntenia (Figure 8) is moderately developed, having no sensory signature (unique and powerful association created in tourist's mind in relation to a visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile specific to the destination). The visual dimension is the most developed, with the best chance to obtain a visual signature, reason for which the marketer (the destination management and, respectively, marketing organization) should act towards maximizing the visual dimension of Muntenia, while improving the tourist experience for the other sensory dimensions. The points of contact between the tourist and the destination Muntenia are exactly the elements of attraction, so that, pursuing the perceived sensory dimensions for each element, tourist's interaction with the destination in those points of contact can be improved. For the destination Muntenia, as well as for the microdestinations such as counties, the whole experience can be improved, also by developing stimuli for the sensory dimensions which are low perceived or which, conversely, create a negative impression for the elements of attraction, respectively, for the corresponding types of tourism.

In order to identify some signatures for each sensory dimension, the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile elements are analyzed, in order, under the form of sensory experiences, which occur in tourist's mind when he mentally experiences Muntenia.

Within the first dimension, the first visual "element" that tourists associate with the experience Muntenia is Bucharest, according to Table 1, however this is a destination, that can be "decomposed", in its turn, in different attractions. The next element, being a general one – landscapes, cannot become visual signature, so that the stylizing of the "element" Palace of Parliament (correlated with the destination Bucharest, as well) can represent a visual signature of the brand Muntenia, in the case of sustained communication and, of course, of developing other experiences in the destination, intended to support the signature. From Table 1, a few more points of contact can be delimited, in which the tourist experience can be improved, thus contributing to strengthening the brand: Curtea de Argeș, Bucegi Mountains, Peleş Castle, Mud Volcanoes, the Danube and the Sphinx.

Table 1. Visual elements that “compose” the experience in the destination Muntenia

		% from total column		
	Visual elements	Total	of which	
			Men	Women
	<i>Base</i>	348	77	271
1	Bucharest	8.6	7.8	8.9
2	landscape	5.7	3.9	6.3
3	Palace of Parliament	5.5	7.8	4.8
4	plain	4.6	7.8	3.7
5	Curtea de Argeș	4.6	7.8	3.7
6	Bucegi Mountains	4.6	5.2	4.4
7	Peleş Castle	3.4	2.6	3.7
8	Mud Volcanoes	3.4	1.3	4.1
9	Danube	2.6	3.9	2.2
10	The Sphinx	2.6	1.3	3.0
11	crowd	2.0	2.6	1.8
12	good visual experience	2.0	3.9	1.5
13	Other elements	44.0	37.7	45.8
14	Do not exist/I do not know	6.3	6.5	6.3

The auditory dimension (Table 2), according to the respondents’ opinion, records a negative experience, i.e. the noise. The auditory element that can become, in time, auditory signature for the brand Muntenia is the Romanian Opera, and the points of contact in which the auditory dimension could be improved are Urlătoarea Waterfall, Romanian Athenaeum and Bucharest.

Table 2. Auditory elements that “compose” the experience in the destination Muntenia

		% from total column		
	Auditory elements	Total	of which	
			Men	Women
	<i>Base</i>	348	77	271
1	noise	9.8	10.4	9.6
2	quietness	4.9	1.3	5.9
3	music	4.9	0.0	6.3
4	Romanian Opera	3.7	2.6	4.1
5	concert	3.2	2.6	3.3
6	folklore music	3.2	1.3	3.7
7	Urlătoarea Waterfall	2.9	3.9	2.6
8	Romanian Athenaeum	2.6	0.0	3.3
9	Bucharest	1.7	2.6	1.5
10	pleasant	1.7	1.3	1.8
11	birds	1.4	1.3	1.5
12	traffic	1.4	3.9	0.7
13	good auditory experience	1.1	1.3	1.1
14	Other elements	41.7	41.6	41.7
15	Do not exist/I do not know	15.8	26.0	12.9

The olfactory experience for Muntenia means fresh air and freshness. The olfactory signature of the brand Muntenia, according to the results in Table 3, could become the Tulips' Festival in Pitești and the points of contact with the destination in which the olfactory experience could be improved are Lacul Sărat and Bucharest.

Table 3. Olfactory elements that “compose” the experience in the destination Muntenia

		% from total column		
	Olfactory elements	Total	of which	
	<i>Base</i>		Men	Women
1	fresh	5.5	2.6	6.3
2	fresh air	4.0	2.6	4.4
3	pollution	3.4	2.6	3.7
4	dust	2.9	3.9	2.6
5	Tulips' Festival in Pitești	2.9	2.6	3.0
6	good olfactory experience	2.0	2.6	1.8
7	pleasant	1.7	1.3	1.8
8	Lacul Sărat	1.4	0.0	1.8
9	bloomed linden	1.4	2.6	1.1
10	fir tree	1.1	1.3	1.1
11	Bucharest	1.1	1.3	1.1
12	Other elements	50.3	46.8	51.3
13	Do not exist/I do not know	22.1	29.9	19.9

The gustatory dimension (Table 4), represented by the traditional food, cannot reach, in this shape, the gustatory signature of the brand Muntenia, since none of the elements presented in the table is uniquely associated with the destination Muntenia, however, starting from one of these “elements”, e.g. borsch or grilled minced meat rolls (“mici”), it can be identified / developed / created a unique recipe or a specific product, that, after the implementation of sensory marketing strategies, should become a symbol of the gustatory dimension for the region.

Table 4. Gustatory elements that “compose” the experience in the destination Muntenia

		% from total column		
	Gustatory elements	Total	of which	
	<i>Base</i>		Men	Women
1	traditional food	7.8	0.0	10.0
2	good gustatory experience	3.7	1.3	4.4
3	flavour	3.2	0.0	4.1
4	sweet	2.9	1.3	3.3
5	fast-food	2.3	2.6	2.2
6	stuffed cabbage rolls (“sarmale”)	2.0	2.6	1.8
7	shaorma	2.0	5.2	1.1
8	borsch	1.4	0.0	1.8
9	diversification	1.4	1.3	1.5
10	dumplings (“papanasi”)	1.4	0.0	1.8
11	bitter	1.1	3.9	0.4
12	grilled minced meat rolls (“mici”)	1.1	1.3	1.1
13	Other elements	45.1	48.1	44.3
14	Do not exist/I do not know	24.4	32.5	22.1

Under the impact of high temperatures, the tactile experience in Muntenia is marked by warmth and drought. In fact, the only element that can be, in time, a tactile signature of the brand Muntenia is represented by the attraction Mud Volcanoes, these having themselves a barren aspect (Table 5).

Table 5. Tactile elements that “compose” the experience in the destination Muntenia

		% from total column		
Tactile elements		Total	of which	
			Men	Women
	<i>Base</i>	348	77	271
1	warm	13.5	6.5	15.5
2	temperature	5.2	3.9	5.5
3	drought	3.2	1.3	3.7
4	Mud Volcanoes	2.6	3.9	2.2
5	pleasant	2.0	0.0	2.6
6	good tactile experience	1.4	1.3	1.5
7	dust	1.4	1.3	1.5
8	grass	1.1	0.0	1.5
9	park	1.1	1.3	1.1
10	Other elements	44.0	46.8	43.2
11	Do not exist/I do not know	24.4	33.8	21.8

The sensory signatures (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile) create in the tourist’s mind and soul strong associations with the destination, which leads to the development of a strong destination brand that integrates all the sensory dimensions. It is obvious that, in order to create these signatures, it is necessary, first, to formulate sensory marketing strategies, for each dimension, strategies that are congruous and supported throughout the entire tourist experience, respectively in the pre-consumption, consumption and post-consumption phase.

At the end of the experience, if the tourist is satisfied, he will return to the destination or recommend it to friends and acquaintances, offering a favourable opinion. In Figure 9 there is presented the degree of tourist satisfaction regarding the sensory experiences in the destination Muntenia. The visual experiences have generated the most satisfaction, while the tactile experiences, the lowest satisfaction.

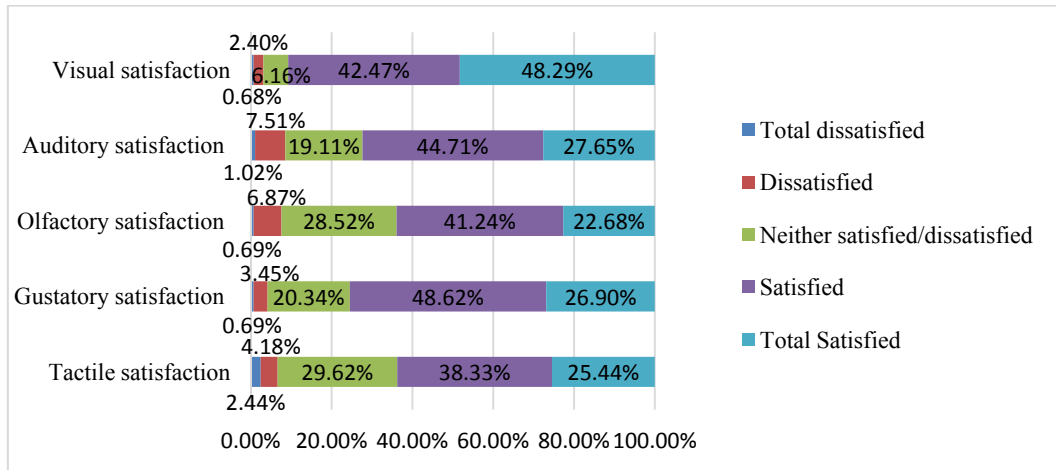


Figure 9. The satisfaction degree of the respondents regarding the sensory experiences from Muntenia

Achieving the sensory profile of the destination involves the analysis of sensory experiences of tourists, starting from the elements of attraction characteristic to the administrative-territorial structures (county, region etc.), by aggregating all the points of contact.

This represents the first step in the development of sensory marketing strategies, so that the designed profile leads, in time, at obtaining the sensory signatures of the brand Muntenia, and therefore, based on the associations made by the tourist, as a result of the exposure to the stimuli “sensory signature” and respectively, “lived experience”, at the formation of a favourable image in his mind.

4. Conclusions

The sensory profile of the destination Muntenia indicates the fact that the sensory dimensions are developed to a similar level, without excelling in any category. The visual dimension is better defined, however a visual signature is not attained. Therefore, the destination Muntenia, from the sensory point of view, is limited, to a greater extent, to generic stimuli (e.g., drought, noise, freshness etc.), than to punctual attraction elements, that represent those unique and powerful associations that tourists make in relation to that certain destination. However, there are elements such as, Bucharest and the Palace of Parliament (visual experience), Romanian Opera and Urlătoarea Waterfall (auditory experience), Tulips' Festival and the tulips (olfactory experience) or Mud Volcanoes (tactile experience) that can become, in time, powerful associations with the destination Muntenia.

Knowing the sensory profile of the destination, the sensory signatures are communicated, as well as other specific elements that help favour a mental experimentation of the destination (that is because the tourist's experience starts from home, from the moment he gains information about the destination and according to the fundamental formed image, the tourist perceives the destination). Furthermore, the consumption atmosphere at the points of contact is improved (i.e. the integration of all sensory dimensions within the elements of attraction, their convergence to the dominant desired associations and then, providing the promised services), and, finally, tourist satisfaction is measured (for correcting the initial communication and the projected profile as well as for increasing the quality of the consumption atmosphere).

The purpose of the marketer which is concerned about the destination management and, respectively, marketing is to develop a sensory brand of the destination, through the interference of the associations that tourists form towards a tourism destination, under the influence of the experienced sensations, leading to emotions, thoughts and memories. However, until the creation of such brand, continual research is necessary in order to measure the perceptions of tourists and to identify the optimal sensory profile, as well as the sensory marketing strategies or the sensory experiences that support the development of the sensory brand of the destination.

The limits of the research derive both from the approached field, the sensory one, as in the Romanian specialized literature there are very few studies in sensory marketing, due to the fact that the perception is individual, each individual having its own "reality" and from the absence of a sensory scale able to quantify any free expression of the respondent regarding the felt sensation (as consumers have a great difficulty in identifying the type and intensity of the perceived sensation). To this, it can be added the fact that the destination represents a complex product, difficult to be standardized, marketing being difficult to apply.

Therefore, in this respect, future directions should focus on developing an instrument that simultaneously measures the sensory dimensions, using as inputs, actually, the free expression of the consumer. Also, it is desirable to achieve the function that overlaps destination image (through the five sensory channels) over the destination identity.

The future directions of research should contain, besides the sensory profiles already achieved, that of the destination Bucharest (Dițoiu et al., 2012; Stăncioiu et al., 2012) and that of the destination Banat-Crișana (Dițoiu and Căruntu, 2013), also the sensory profiles of the other destinations of Romania, respectively, Oltenia, Transilvania, Moldova and Dobrogea so as the touristic resources, so

diverse, specific to Romania, are developed in the sense of supporting the destination brand.

As far as Muntenia is concerned, the other segments of age should be subjected to research, which form the target-public of the destination, in order to complete the sensory profile, afterwards measuring the gap between projection and perception.

Note

- ⁽¹⁾ Due to the complexity of the destination Romania (comprising numerous microdestinations), historical and geographical criteria were taken into consideration in delimiting this destination, according to which Muntenia, alongside the other regions, form the macrodestination Romania.

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