TOURISTS' OR RESIDENTS' PRIORITY? A DOUBLE PERSPECTIVE ON AN EMERGING TOURIST DESTINATION

Nicolae POPA
West University of Timişoara, Faculty of Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Department of Geography, 4 Vasile Pârvan, 300223, Timisoara, Romania, e-mail: nicolae.popa@e-uvt.ro;

Mădălina GLONȚI[*]
West University of Timişoara, Faculty of Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Department of Geography, 4 Vasile Pârvan, 300223, Timisoara, Romania, e-mail: madalina.glonti96@e-uvt.ro

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine, evaluate and compare destination image using two independent samples, tourists and residents. A quantitative research has been conducted in Timisoara. The results have been processed using statistical methods and techniques (T-tests and the Pearson Correlation). In this research, a set of cognitive, affective and unique attributes, as well as the overall image, have been evaluated in order to analyze the perceptions, opinions and beliefs. The results indicated that the same tourist destination may be differently perceived by visitors and locals, with significant implications for the destination image and tourists' behavior.

Key words: Mental representation, Destination image, Tourists' perception, Residents' perception, Tourists' behavior, European Capital of Culture, Timisoara, Romania

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INTRODUCTION

Destination image is a multi-disciplinary concept strongly related to tourism, behavioral sciences, marketing and geography. This concept may explain, from a touristic point of view, the difference between space and place, taken into consideration that Tuan (1977) noted that space is a place with a certain meaning. To a broader extent, the image of a destination includes different perceptions and can be used as an indicator of the tourists' satisfaction in order to evaluate and improve the quality of the touristic services on the area in which the study takes place. This paper analyzes the tourist destination Timisoara, one of the most dynamic cities in Romania. Romania's third urban center, with approximately 326.636 inhabitants (data from 1st of July 2019, according to the National Institute of Statistics Romania, 2020), Timisoara is located in Western Romania, in the proximity of the border with Serbia and Hungary, in Banat, a region with old multicultural traditions (Neumann, 1997; Popa et al., 2007).

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[*] Corresponding author

The rich architectural legacy and the diversity of the cultural life have recommended Timisoara as the European Capital of Culture in 2021. This title adds to other strong points which make Timisoara a dynamic touristic center (with 46.7% more incoming tourists in 2017, in comparison to 2012), highlights its traditional European openness and contributes to building a successful destination image.

STATE OF THE ART

Destination image has been a constant preoccupation of many researchers – conceptualization of this notion, as well as conducting studies, in order to evaluate and measure it. Although the issue of destination image has been put into discussion in the early 1960s, the concept of destination image has gained more attention in the 1990s with the articles of Echtner & Ritchie (1991), (1993), (as cited in Tasci et al., 2007) and Baloglu (1996), Baloglu & Brinberg, (1997), (as cited in Marques, 2011).Reynolds (1965) agrees that a mental representation is built using different information sources – word of mouth, touristic promotional products as well as media (as cited in Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Mental representations are a result of imagination and could also be derived from "travel stories" (Su, 2010, p. 414). Among the first definitions of destination image is attributed to Crompton (1979), who has defined this concept as a total of beliefs, ideas, and impressions rather as a whole than through its parts (as cited in Tasci et al., 2007). Gartner (1993, p. 193) also states that „destination images are formed by three distinctly different but hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective and conative". Baloglu & Brimberg (1997, p.11) consider that „image is the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place or destination" (as cited in Tasci et al., 2007). After an extended literature review, Echtner & Ritchie (2003, p. 43) conclude that „destination image consists of functional characteristics, concerning more tangible aspects of the destination, and psychological characteristics, concerning the more intangible aspects".

As destination image is a dynamic concept, Kim & Chen (2016, p. 155) state that „destination image formation processes are continous mental progressions in which diverse sources of information converge". The paper focuses on the temporal dimension of the process, as the destination image may change in time – before, during and after the trip. Moreover, after the visit, Phelps (1986) found that the image of the destination becomes more complex and realistic (as cited in Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Different studies focus on the image of the destination as perceived by tourists (Hunt, 1975; Crompton, 1977; Goodrich, 1977; Crompton & Duray, 1985; Gartner & Hunt, 1987; Calantone et al., 1989; Gartner, 1989; as cited in Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Baloglu, 1996; Bigné et al., 2001; Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002; Bigné Alcañiz et al., 2005; Hosany et al., 2006; Su, 2010; Kulcsár, 2010; Qu et al., 2011; Prayag & Ryan; 2011; Ben-Dalia et al., 2013), only by residents (Lawton, 2005; Zerva et al., 2006; Stylidis et al., 2017). Also, several studies evaluate the destination image before and after the trip (Phelps, 1986, as cited in Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Destination image can also be evaluated when analysing the development strategies of the destination, generally developed by the authorities.

Such studies have been conducted in Slovenia (Konecnik, 2008) and in Poland (Kiryluk & Glińska, 2015). When comparing the perceptions of tourists and residents, identity and reputation can be used at the evaluation of mental associations of the destination (Fan, 2006). While identity may play a more "important role for residents, as identity is about self perception" (Fan, 2006, p. 4), reputation is more important to tourists in terms of destination image process. In these studies, the image of the destination is evaluated and measured using different attributes of the destination and the overall image of the destination. Echtner & Ritchie (1991), (1993) state that the destination image is not only composed of individual elements, but also from the general

impression, which has been created in the mind of the others (as cited in Tasci et al., 2007). In addition to Baloglu (1996), in which the overall image is composed of cognitive and affective attributes, Echtner & Ritchie (2003) introduce unique attributes, when evaluating the touristic image. Baloglu (1996) and Baloglu & McClearly (1999), formulate three hypotheses which summarise the process of destination image formation – the cognitive component influence the affective component and the overall image; also, the affective component influence the overall image. After the process of the destination image process is finished, tourists decide whether the destination had a positive or a negative impact on them. The image of a destination influences the tourists' behavior and their intentions to recommend or revisit it (Hunt, 1975; Goodrich, 1977; Calantone et al., 1989; as cited in Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989; Bigné et al., 2001; Bigné et al., 2005; Geng-Qing Chi & Qu, 2008; San Martín & del Bosque, 2008; Qu et al., 2011; Prayag & Ryan, 2011; Ajanovic & Cizel, 2016; Phucharoen et al., 2016). Bigne et al. (2005) formulate other two hypotheses, in which they state that the more positive the image destination is, the more likely it is for the tourists to recommend it or visit it. These two aspects are also analyzed in this study. In the last years, researchers have also focused on destination personality (Ekinci & Hosany, 2006; Ekinci et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2007; Pitt et al., 2007; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Kumar & Nayak, 2014; Ajanovic & Cizel, 2015). Many of these studies evaluate the dimensions proposed by Aaker (1997): „sincerity", „excitement", „competence", „sophistication" and „ruggedness". These dimensions can be evaluated in destination image studies, but this paper did not analyze these dimensions.

In terms of methodology, studies include both structured and unstructured techniques (Baloglu, 1996; Bigné et al., 2001; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; as cited in Tasci et al., 2007; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Structured techniques use standardized scales, which are easier to process with statistical methods. Several studies use Likert scale (Goodrich, 1977; Gartner, 1989; as cited in Echtner & Ritchie, 2003, Hosany et al., 2006; Qu et al., 2011) or the semantic differential scale (Hunt, 1975; Crompton, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Gartner & Hunt, 1987; as cited in Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). In comparison to structured techniques, unstructured techniques include open questions (Reilly, 1990; Konecnik, 2008; Kiryluk & Glińska, 2015), interviews or focus - groups and can identify easier the unique components of a destination, even though the answers depend on the availability and communication skills of each individual.

METHODOLOGY

The scientific approach is based on three hypotheses: First of all, we have started from the premise that destination image is composed of cognitive, affective and unique attributes (h1). Second of all, these attributes are perceived differently by tourists and residents (h2). Thirdly, tourists and residents have a different perception of the same destination – Timisoara (h3). To verify the hypotheses, the methodology of this study is based on quantitative research, as questionnaires were applied to both tourists and residents. The main aim was to evaluate the reflections in the respondent's mental, concerning a series of attributes regarding the tourist destination Timisoara.

Sampling

The study was carried out in Timisoara and the target of this study was visitors (105 questionnaires) in Timisoara and residents (103 questionnaires), in March 2017. Consequently, the study focuses on two different samples. The questionnaires were applied in the main areas of the city – at the International Airport Traian Vuia, Timisoara Railway Station, the center of Timisoara, student campus and other quaters of the city, through random sampling (personally administered to the respondents). The socio - demographic profile (Table 1) of the respondents shows that in the tourists'

sample, men accounted for 52.38% and women for 47.62% of the respondents; in the residents' sample, men accounted for 42.72% and women for 57.28%. In comparison, according to the National Institute of Statistics, in the demographic structure of Timisoara in 2018, there are 46.73% men and 53.27% women. As a consequence, the residents' sample is similar to the demographic reality of this destination.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Variable	Tourists (%)	Residents (%)
Gender		
Male	52.38	42.72
Female	47.62	57.28
Age		
18 − 24	44.761	71.844
25 − 34	17.142	16.507
35 − 44	13.333	3.883
45 − 54	16.19	5.825
55 − 64	7.622	0
>65	0.952	1.941
Education level		
Gymnasium school	0.952	0
Professional school	1.907	0
High school	22.857	38.837
Post high school education	4.761	1.941
University	60.952	57.281
Doctorate	8.571	1.941
Occupation		
Student	43.809	57.281
Unskilled worker	0	0
Skilled worker	10.476	7.766
Professor/doctor/ lawyer/ economist/ engineer	23.809	14.566
Entrepreneur/manager	6.666	5.825
Freelancer	3.809	0
Agriculture worker	0.952	0
Retired	1.904	0
Unemployed	0	0.97
Other	8.575	13.592

In both samples, the majority of the respondents belongs to the age group of 18 − 24 years (44.76% tourists and 71.84% residents). For this reason, when interpreting the results of the study, the average age of the samples (tourists − 32.9 years, residents − 26.6 years) has been taken into consideration. The interpretation of the results also considers the origin and the residency of the respondents. While all the residents live in Timisoara, for the tourists' sample, the place of residency is diverse, but the majority lives in Romania.

Questionnaire design

The survey for tourists consisted of 6 sections (characteristics of the visit and motivations, destination attributes, tourist attractions, events, touristic promotion and demographic questions) and 27 questions.

The survey for residents consisted of 6 sections (tourism activity in Timisoara, destination attributes, tourist attractions, events, touristic promotion and demographic questions) and 28 attributes. For this study, we only considered the answers from the section „destination attributes". The grid included different attributes (Table 2) – cognitive, affective and unique attributes of the city. Cognitive and unique components

were measured for both tourists and residents, while the affective component was measured only for tourists, as these attributes (A9. Residents' hospitality and A10. Tourist experience) can only be measured from the tourists' point of view.

Table 2. Evaluated attributes

Cognitive attributes	Affective attributes	Unique attributes
A1. Destination with high performance infrastructure	A9. Residents' hospitality	A11. Religious, linguistic and ethnic multiculturality
A2. Destination with various accommodation units	A10. Tourist experience	A12. The events from December 1989
A3. Cultural and historic diversity		A13. Influences from West Europe
A4. Interesting cultural activities		A14. Architectural legacy and urban landscape
A5. Gastronomic variety and quality		
A6. Customs and interesting traditions		
A7. Party & nightlife		
A8. Parks and green spaces		

All cognitive (A1 - A8), affective (A9 – A10) and unique attributes (A11 – A14) have been measured on a 5 – point Likert scale and are displayed in Table 2. The respondents were asked the question: *„On a scale from 1 to 5, how important are the following attributes in building the touristic image of Timisoara?".* The overall image (B1) has been evaluated also with the Likert scale (1 = boring destination / 5 = full of life destination).

Two further questions were added in the tourists' questionnaire, referring to their intention to recommend (C1) or to revisit Timisoara (C2) (Bigné et al., 2005; Geng-Qing Chi & Qu, 2008; Qu et al., 2011; Prayag & Ryan, 2011; Ajanovic & Cizel, 2016; Phucaroen et al., 2016). The answers to these questions were dichotomous (yes/no).

The sum of the cognitive, affective and unique attributes creates the overall image; based on this overall image, tourists decide on their intention to revisit or recommend the destination. Moreover, we have to note that tourists have only a few days, a week, but maximum one month in which they can create a mental representation of the city, while the residents are already accustomed to the city and therefore, their image of the destination has been already built, but may suffer changes over time.

Data analysis

The attributes were introduced in the database and processed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 20. The answers were noted in the database, as each attribute works as a parameter: A1 – A14 = attributes, B1 = overall image, C1 = intention to recommend, C2 = intention to revisit. In total, a number of 208 entries were evaluated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A t-test for two independent samples was conducted, where all the requirements were met: independent variable (two different samples - tourists and residents), approximately normal distribution and homogeneity of variances. The null hypothesis states that the data from both samples do not connect between each other. The alternative hypothesis states that the data from both samples are connected. If the null hypothesis is rejected, it means that there are differences between the two samples. The two hypotheses were tested for each variable, with a 95% degree of confidence.

Cognitive attributes– comparison between tourists' and residents' perception

Only 2 attributes of the total of 8 (Table 3) rejected the null hypothesis. These

attributes are A1 (destination with high performance infrastructure, t(206) = 2.448, p<0.05) and A6 (customs and interesting traditions, t(206) = 3.035, p<0.05), which means that for these 2 variables, there is a significant difference in terms of perception between tourists and residents. The effect size, according to Cohen (1988), was calculated for both A1 (d = 0.34) and A6 (d = 0.42). The effect size between the two independent samples is small (around 0.20) for A1 and close to medium (0.50) for A6.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics – cognitive attributes

Variable	Tourists (N = 105)		Residents (N = 103)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
A1	3.35	1.01	3.00	1.05
A2	3.56	0.979	3.43	1.02
A3	3.88	0.963	3.90	0.880
A4	3.57	0.998	3.53	0.97
A5	3.55	1.05	3.48	1.03
A6	3.54	1.08	3.09	1.03
A7	3.74	1.03	3.85	1.14
A8	4.08	1.03	4.10	0.98

On the one hand, the difference between perceptions in terms of "high performance infrastructure" can be explained taken into consideration the reality of the city. The infrastructure seems more effective to tourists than to residents. The majority of the tourists in this study (52.38%) come from Romania and Timisoara has a better reputation (closer to the Western European culture than any other city from Romania, with innovative economy on a national scale and beautiful architecture) among other Romanian cities; the residents are generally less pleased and satisfied with the accessibility and the traffic in Timisoara, hence the lower score regarding the infrastructure. In a broader context, if we also include attribute A13 (Influences from West Europe), where tourists also had a more positive outlook than the residents, we can conclude that the city is perceived more "occidental" by tourists, than by residents.

On the other hand, the differences of perception for attribute A6 (Customs and interesting traditions) are explained by familiarity. The sample of tourists considered the traditions and customs in Timisoara more interesting than the residents, as residents are normally already used to the local traditions. For tourists, however, it is important they observe the traditions and customs as an element of originality.

For the other 6 variables (A2, A3, A4, A5, A7 and A8), the null hypothesis was not rejected, meaning that there are not significant differences between the tourists' and residents' perception. In addition to this, the descriptive statistics (Figure 1) show that the larger differences, when calculating the mean for every variable, in both samples, are found for A1 (with a mean difference of 0.35) and A6 (with a mean difference of 0.44). For the other variables, the mean differences are smaller and do not pass 0.2).

For a better understanding of the statistics values which are reflected into the touristic phenomena, attributes A1 and A2 can be grouped in a distinct category "equipment and infrastructure". Even though only for the attribute A1 important differences of perception were observed, the variety of the accommodation units was more positive perceived by both samples, in comparison to the infrastructure. Attribute A4 (Interesting cultural activities), A5 (Gastronomic variety and quality), A7 (Party & nightlife) and A8 (Parks and green spaces) can be grouped into an extended category – "free time and services". There are not significant differences between the two samples, the perception is generally favorable, each attribute with a mean score above 3.5, which means that Timisoara offers, as a tourist destination, multiple possibilities of spending

free time. The variable with the highest mean score was A8 (Parks and green places). Even though there are no significant differences between the two samples, the values over 4 mean that the city is perceived as a space with many green areas for both tourists and residents.
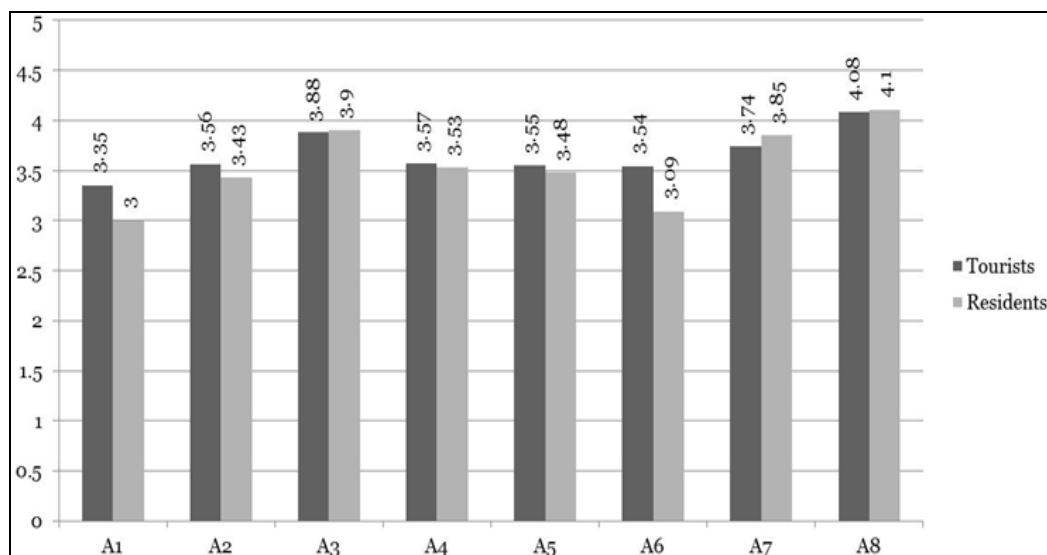

Figure 1. Mean values of cognitive attributes

Unique attributes – comparison between tourists' and residents' perception

Two attributes of the total of 4 (Table 4) rejected the null hypothesis. These attributes are A12 (the events from December 1989, $t(206) = -2.224$, $p<0.05$) and A13 (influences from Western Europe, $t(206) = 2.250$, $p<0.05$), which means that for these 2 variables, there is a significant difference in terms of perception between tourists and residents. Cohen's D was calculated for both A12 ($d = 0.31$) and A13 ($d = 0.31$).

Table 4. Descriptive statistics – unique attributes

Variable	Tourists (N = 105)		Residents (N = 103)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
A11	3.96	1.03	3.85	1.17
A12	3.84	1.22	4.21	1.12
A13	4.01	1.04	3.69	1.06
A14	3.98	1.06	3.88	1.01

The effect size shows that between the two independent samples, the effect size is small (around 0.20) for both variables. In this set of attributes (Figure 2) the highest mean score belongs to A12 - residents. In other words, the residents of Timisoara believe that the events from December 1989 are the most important to the image of the city; moreover, for this variable, there is a mean difference of 0.36 between residents and tourists. These values can be explained highlighting the importance of the events from December 1989 for Timisoara, as well as from the population living there. December 1989 is still a powerful moment in the history of the city and has remained in the memory of the residents with a significant meaning. Therefore, the residents consider this attribute more important to the image of the city than tourists' perception of the same attribute.
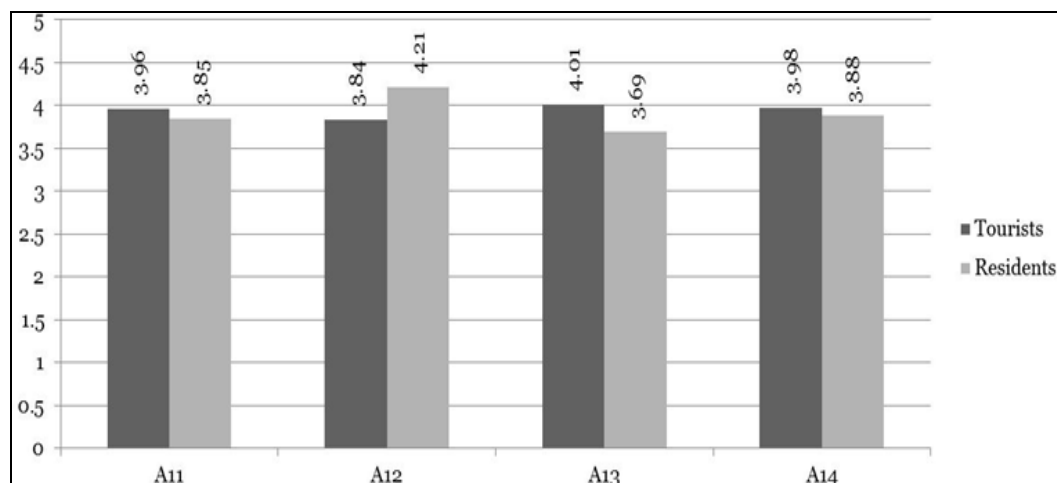
Figure 2. Mean values of unique attributes

For the other 2 variables (A11 and A14), the null hypothesis was not rejected, meaning that there are not significant differences between the tourists' and residents' perception. Even though there are not significant perception differences between the samples, these attributes are very important to the identity of the city. Multiculturality, along with the architectural legacy, the urban landscape and the historical heritage are considered some of the premises for which Timisoara has won the title of European Capital of Culture in 2021. Consequently, these features differentiate Timisoara from other destination and are fundamental features in the process of image destination.

Overall image – comparison between tourists' and residents' perception

Respondents were also asked in the survey to evaluate the overall image of Timisoara. The t-test for the two independent samples did not reject the null hypothesis, meaning that there are not significant differences in the perceptions of the overall image of destination Timisoara, between the two samples. Tourists' perception is slightly more positive than the residents' perception (Table 5) with a difference of 0.20. The mean score for tourists is 3.96 and even though the value is not closed to 5 (on Likert scale, a value of 5 means a destination full of life) Timisoara has a positive destination image.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics – overall image

Overall image	Tourists (N = 105)		Residents (N =103)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	3.96	0.83	3.76	0.87

Also, tourists had a better overall perception of the city than the residents, as residents are already familiar with the city and its space. First of all, tourists only have contact to the central and touristic areas which are generally more attractive, clean and dynamic and not with peripheral neighborhoods. Secondly, residents are familiar with the city center, as well as with other neighborhoods. Therefore, for the residents of Timisoara, the city is not so attractive and "full of life" as it has been perceived by tourists.

Affective attributes

The affective dimension of the destination was measured with two attributes: A9 – residents' hospitality and A10 – tourist experience and was evaluated only for the sample of tourists (N = 105), using a 5 point Likert scale (Table 6). Tourists have evaluated the tourist experience with a score of 3.95 (where 5 is the maximum score and

means a very pleasant tourist experience). Residents' hospitality were evaluated with a mean score above 4 (4.12). Of all the attributes evaluated by tourists, this is the attribute with the highest mean score. In the process of image destination formation of Timisoara, the residents, their openness to touristic activities and their behavior towards tourists is very important and has a very positive influence.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics – affective attributes

Attribute	Mean	SD
A9	3.95	1.10
A10	4.12	0.755

Pearson Correlation

Each attribute evaluated for both samples was correlated with the attribute B1 (overall image) (Table 7). The Pearson correlation (under normally distributed values, $p<0.001$) shows the following results:

Table 7. Pearson Correlation

	Tourists (N = 105)	Residents (N = 103)
A1	0.436	0.534
A2	0.251	0.272
A3	0.403	0.517
A4	0.467	0.375
A5	0.320	0.244
A6	0.333	0.404
A7	0.267	0.475
A8	0.215	0.300
A9	0.302	
A10	0.605	
A11	0.210	0.309
A12	0.231	0.259
A13	0.189	0.226
A14	0.195	0.234

The effect size was calculated using criteria from Cohen (1988): a very weak correlation (r = 0.20), a weak correlation (r = 0.40), reasonable correlation (r = 0.60). The strongest correlations between overall image and attributes are recorded for:

For the tourists' sample, Pearson's coefficient is for attribute A10 - residents' hospitality: r = 0.605, p<0.001. Therefore, between residents' hospitality and the overall image there is a reasonable correlation. Furthermore, residents' hospitality is the attribute with the highest mean score. As a consequence, this attribute significantly influences tourists' perception of the city. For the residents' sample, Pearson's coefficient is for A1 – destination with high performance infrastructure (r = 0.534, p<0.001) and for A3 – historic and cultural diversity (r = 0.517, p<0.001). Moreover, historic and cultural diversity (A3) is linked to religious, linguistic and ethnic multiculturality (A11).

If grouped, these two attributes and A14 (architectural legacy and urban landscape) can be included in an extended category "history and culture". Among these, significant differences for Pearson coefficient between the samples are displayed for the attribute A11 (religious, linguistic and ethnic multiculturality) and the overall image (residents r = 0.309 and tourists r = 0.210). Another difference for Pearson coefficient between the samples (residents r = 0.475 and tourists r = 0.267) was recorded for A7 (party and nightlife), even though between the overall image and this attribute there was a very weak correlation for tourists and a weak correlation for residents. This difference can be explained taken into consideration the respondents' age – the majority belongs to the age group of 18 – 24

years and are more interested in entertainment, parties, nightlife and music. Between the overall image and the unique attributes there are not significant correlations for the two samples and the effect size is very weak. For the residents' sample, the only connection with a higher value, even though it remains a weak correlation, was recorded for A11 (religious, linguistic and ethnic multiculturality, with a mean score close to 4).

Intention to recommend and to revisit

Tourists' behavior after visit is an indicator of destination's attractiveness. The more attractive a destination is and the more positive perceived is, the stronger the intention of the tourists to recommend and revisit it (Bigné et al., 2001). According to the structural model proposed by Qu et al. (2011) the tourists' behavior is influenced and determined by the overall image of the destination. The intention to recommend (C1) and to revisit (C2) are the most important consequences of the process of creating a touristic image: on the one hand, we have to consider tourists' loyalty and their intention to revisit; on the other hand, positive recommendations attract a higher number of tourists (Qu et al., 2011). Both these aspects determine the development of touristic activities. The tourists answered two different dichotomous questions: *„Would you recommend Timisoara to others?"* and *„Would you like to revisit Timisoara?"* The answers show that almost all tourists would recommend or revisit Timisoara (Table 8). What is surprising is the higher number of tourists who would revisit Timisoara than recommend it. As almost all the answers were positive, we can conclude that Timisoara offered an experience which was pleasing enough for tourists. There was something about Timisoara that determined this behaviour – the overall image of the city or even an attractive, original or surprising element.

Table 8. Intention to recommend and to revisit

	C1. Intention to recommend (%)	C2. Intention to revisit (%)
Tourists (N=105)	95.24	98.1

CONCLUSIONS

As European Capital of Culture in 2021, it is expected that more tourists will arrive in Timisoara. It is important that we analyze the touristic image of the city, highlighting the strong points, seen as advantages and elements that differentiates Timisoara from other urban destinations and positively contributes to the touristic perception. The hypotheses were totally or only partially confirmed. The first hypothesis (h1), in which it is stated that destination image is determined by cognitive, affective and unique attributes was confirmed. In order to create a general perception of the destination, tourists and residents are in contact with the set of attributes in the survey, without whom the process of creating a touristic image cannot be finished.

The second hypothesis (h2) stated that the same attributes are perceived differently between tourists and residents. This hypothesis was partially confirmed. Of a total of 14 attributes, only attributes A1 (destination with high performance infrastructure), A6 (customs and interesting traditions), A12 (events from December 1989) and A13 (influences from Western Europe) rejected the null hypothesis and are perceived different between the two independent samples. The last hypothesis (h3) was not confirmed. The overall image of Timisoara is not perceived differently between the two samples. Consequently, the first two hypotheses highlight the fact that there are significant differences between residents and tourists for some attributes, but not for the overall image. A positive touristic image also influences the tourists' behavior, as more tourists are likely to recommend the destination or to revisit it. Almost all tourists would recommend or revisit this destination. The surveys, the statistical analysis and the interpretation of the data focus on one urban tourist destination, which is not well known

yet. Until this moment, there have not been conducted any studies regarding destination image for Timisoara. This study could become a starting point for future research.

Using two independents samples for the same destination helps identifying common perceptions, as well as different ones. Moreover, the two samples contributed to a better understanding of the touristic perceptions of Timisoara. Local institutions which are involved in the touristic activity of the city can use these perceptions to develop and build marketing strategies (touristic promotion focused on strong points or market segmentation). In perspective, the research regarding destination image of Timisoara should be extended with qualitative research and open questions, which could identify the particular features, the spirit of the destination and its personality, as well as the most dynamic areas, the most attractive or the least attractive areas, from a touristic point of view (including mental maps). Some elements were already put into discussion in the surveys, but for a better understanding of destination image of Timisoara and what the destination expresses, it is necessary we conduct qualitative research.

This paper brings actual contributions to the knowledge of tourist image of a city, in which an emerged tourism has been developed. The innovative approach is based on the comparative analysis of two independent groups of respondents – tourists and residents. In the international literature, tourists' perceptions and attitudes regarding tourist destination have been analyzed by researchers (Baloglu, 1999; Geng-Qing Chi & Qu, 2008; Murphy et al., 2014; Kim & Chen, 2016 etc.). Only several studies focus on the residents' perceptions of their place of residence as a tourist destination. In many cases, the perspective of residents is overlooked in favor of the common good and investors' interests (Renda et al., 2014; Plumed et al., 2017). Consequently, the paper brings a series of contribution to the process of building the tourist image. There are highlighted not only the similarities and the differences of perception, but also the factors on which these perceptions are based. In fact, these factors take into consideration the differences when building a mental representation on image: on the one hand, there is the perceived space; on the other hand, there is the living space (Lefebre, 1976; Soja, 1989).

Even though tourists have a certain destination experience, it is episodic and, in most cases, this experience is strongly linked only to the tourist areas (Romero, 2018). Therefore, the tourists' experience can build only partly a destination image, whereas for residents, the destination has ample significances. Residents have a more profound experience with the living space and in time, they were the target group of many campaigns for destination image or destination brand (Zenker & Braun, 2010; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013), in which there were conducted systematic and specific actions on a local level, especially for emergent destinations (Williams et al., 2014).

The comparison between the two samples, using statistical methods and techniques, emphasized the attributes of the destination which are more important to tourists or residents, as well as the attributes perceived differently by the two samples, from a scientifically point of view. The main conclusion is that the attributes focused on an affective experience, strongly related to a deep significance for the residents, may not have the same meaning for tourists as well. Moreover, "visible" attributes or the attributes based on current experience have a higher chance to be congruent, if before they have not been included in the process of building or deconstruction the destination image.

Another finding suggests that based on location and their cultural values, tourists may differently evaluate the destination and may have closer or farther perceptions from the residents. With the afferent limits, the findings of the study can be extrapolated and verified in order to emphasize a more general approach. Therefore, for future research, it is important we conduct other studies to better understand destination image. These studies may be focused on a detailed analysis and may include different types of tourists –

or residents. This approach has not only scientific meaning, but also a practical use, for better results of the local politics involved in branding and marketing.

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