

THE CREATION OF THE CIOCĂNEȘTI TOURIST DESTINATION BRAND

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Abstract: This paper aims at identifying and analyzing the main tourist attractions (natural and anthropogenic), the tourist infrastructure, the forms of tourism, and other elements of uniqueness, specificity and authenticity, in order to build the Ciocănești tourist brand destination. Currently, tourist destinations are more determined to build a competitive and unique image in the consumer's mind, but this requires an objective evaluation and realistic elements that confer specificity of the place, making it different from others. Ciocănești tourist destination has a range of tourist attributes with unique character, both tangible and intangible, which can differentiate it from other rural destinations in Suceava County. All these issues may be unique in Ciocănești brand identity elements, which can be promoted under the umbrella of the regional tourist brand of Bucovina.

Key words: tourist destination, destination identity, destination image, brand destination, tourist potential

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INTRODUCTION

The importance that brand destination has acquired in time has been anticipated more than a decade ago by Morgan & Pritchard (2001, p. 214), who stated that “the battle for customers in the tourism industry of tomorrow will be, yes, not for the price, but for customers’ hearts and minds - in essence, the brand (...) will be the key to success”. Market economy means competition, the competition being everything and everyone, including: products, services, people, cities, regions, countries etc., which will reach and behave on the market as a result of campaigns with brands promotion.

Nowadays when the market has become saturated with goods and services, and most have a high quality standard, the brand becomes a very powerful force. Due to the brand is possible the recognition of the each product, including the touristic product (the offer) as well as the differentiation of it from the ones of the competitors.

For a tourism destination, the brand is a very important element; it is more than products and services, it includes trust, experiences and emotions. Also, for a tourism

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destination to become a brand it is necessary for all tourism organizations to participate in the national, regional and local branding process in order to establish cooperation with all stakeholders. Attention should focus on the following activities: development of the infrastructure, development of competitive tourist products, protection of the natural environment and promoting tourism.

Ciocănești tourist destination has all the advantages to become a tourism brand. The tourist offer of this complex and competitive destination is based on tourism products, covering a wide range of tourist motivations (rest, recreation, learning, relaxation etc). To be known by tourists and differentiate from competitors, it should be promoted through a tourism brand. An important step in creating a destination brand is designing the visual identity of the brand. Therefore, we intend to identify those elements/aspects which confer specificity, originality and make unique the tourist destination Ciocănești, by analyzing natural and anthropic tourism potential, the natural and socio-economic conditions, the general infrastructure and the tourist specific infrastructure.

DATA AND METHODES

To achieve this work, classic research methodology was used, respectively consulting the geographic related literature upon the researched area, on relief, climate, geology, hydrography, vegetation and so on. Also, the economic literature referring to the tourist destination marketing has been studied, both international and national literature.

The field researches were focused on prospecting the natural resources and human exploration, tourism infrastructure, identification of specific local features, conducting interviews with both staff travel, and with tourists.

Tourist prospecting phase was followed by the laboratory in which the issues identified, located and described in the field were analyzed, synthesized and transformed into a final text which aims to create a model of the Ciocănești tourist destination brand.

RESULTS AND DEBATES

Theoretical aspects. Conceptual delimitations

Specialized studies in marketing gives us a multitude of definitions of the brand, the most frequently cited the definition of Aaker (1991, p.7), which claims that the brand is "a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods from those of competitors".

Brands and the practice of brand development are methods to differentiate the products on the market. Thus, the following types of brands can be distinguished: products (goods and services), spatial entities (municipalities, regions, countries/nations, tourist destinations) and individual entities (people, organizations, companies etc.). A product, a spatial entity or an individual entity are brands when their image transcends visual perception and remains permanent in the mind of the consumer/visitor, associating values and unique characteristics of the product that it represents.

Tourism brand is part of spatial entities brands and it appears often, as a brand destination. This, in addition to features in common with the other brands (goods and services), has a number of personal features.

Therefore, the development of a tourism brand will have many aspects in common with that of a brand of goods and services, and its own issues. Tourism destination brand marketing is a relatively new concept in the tourism industry and also a subject of academic research. The first studies on this subject appear in the late 90's (Gnoth, 1998). Among the first authors who deals with this topic, we remark: Chon, 1990; Ritchie J.R. & Ritchie J.B, 1998; Crockett & Wood, 1999; Hall, 1999; Buhalis, 2000; Pride, 2002; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002, 2003.

Tourist destination brand is a topic discussed in many academic studies of foreign literature. Theoretical studies aimed at various aspects of the destination brand, such as: brand image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Pike, 2002; Hankinson, 2005), brand identity (Upshaw, 1995; Saraniemi, 2010), strategic brand management (Kapferer, 1992, 2004), brand equity (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Ambler, 1995; Keller, 1993, 2001, 2003; Vicari, 1995) etc. Case studies and the applicative approaches, empirical studies, regarding destination brand are very well represented in the international literature.

Most studies are focused on the analysis of urban tourist destinations brands (Hankinson, 2001; Mommas, 2003; Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2010; Dinie, 2011), as well as national ones (Szondi, 2006; Rausch, 2008; Pike, 2010). Studies for regional brands are relatively recent and, according to Dumbrăveanu (2010) and Ryan & Mizerski (2010), are limited in number. Some researchers address this issue are mentioned by Lucarelli and Berg (2011), who focus on time evolution of specialty studies regarding city branding, highlighting growing of their importance. In Romania, this issue has been addressed recently by: Ilieș et al. (2008), Groza et al. (2010), Herman & Wendt (2011), Stăncioiu et al. (2011), Țarcă (2011), Paftală -Ciubotărița (2012), Drule et al. (2013). These studies are generally focused on the analysis of regional tourism brands.

Regarding the rural destination brand, there are few attempts in this direction in the literature of Romania. Among the recent note on this topic, we notice the work of Vicol Otilia (2013): Branding rural destinations. Case study - Moldoviței Valley. The paper highlights the main elements of destination brand image forming Moldoviței Valley of Suceava. Although the destination brand is very little developed in Romania, there is a growing interest among the researchers, both in geography and in the economy in terms of its approach.

Until now, many researches were focused on comparing the destination brand of consumer product to distinguish whether the two practices are sufficiently different to require separate strategies.

The results of the researches highlight that the brand destination is sufficiently different from the brand of a single product; however, the lines of approach are still unclear regarding the relevant dimensions of brand destination.

Ritchie (1998, p. 103) defines the brand destination as “a name, a symbol, a logo, a keyword, or any sign that identifies and differentiates the destination at the same time, moreover, it expresses the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; (brand) serves to reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination”.

Buhalis (2000) considers that a tourism brand destination is seen by tourists as an **entity** (continent, country, region, city, tourist attraction etc.) **unique**, with a political and legal framework for the planning and promotion of tourism. Tourist destinations include a comprehensive range of tourism products, offering an integrated and unique experience to tourists. This amalgam of tourism products, and services offered by a destination is “consumed” by tourists under the name of **brand destination** during their stay.

Blain (2005) claims that “a brand destination includes: image, recognition, differentiation, consistency, message, emotional response and expectations”. Konecnik (2007) argues that “brands offers visitors a safe destination and a quality experience, and to destinations, a way to establish a unique offer”.

From the above definitions we noticed that the brand destination consists of two major components: **image** and **identity**. Since the two terms are often confused, we try to be clear: brand identity is created by the transmitter (the main role is of the destination marketer) and it is sustained by the natural and man-made tourist attractions, historical and socio-economic characteristics of the destination, in other words, all the elements

that constitute the tourist motivations and brand image is the way the brand is perceived by the receiver/tourist from its previous experiences and communication strategies of the transmitter (Kapferer, 1997, p. 32).

In conclusion, we can say that the tourism brand destination represents:

- a way to communicate to the tourists a destination's unique identity;
- a mean to differentiate a tourist destination from its competitors;
- a promise made to tourists and that should be respected;
- a name, a logo, a slogan, design or a combination of these, which shall be communicated to the destination brand values and promises;
- basically all the attributes that define a tourist destination.
- a collection of intangible elements (ideas, feelings, associations of words etc.) that is stored in our minds.

Framing administrative and physical-geographic study area

Ciocănești commune is located in the north of Romania, in the western part of the Suceava County. From the physic - geographical point of view it is framed to the corridor of the Transcarpathian Bârgău - Dorna - Gura Humorului, situated on the Bistrița Aurie Valley, between Obcina Mestecăniș and Suhard Mountains (Figure 1), at an altitude of 850 - 940 m (Barbu, 1976; Roșu, 1980; Ielenicz, 2011).

Ciocănești commune is bordered by the following communes: Cârlibaba at north; Fundu Moldovei, north - east; Pojorâta at the east; Iacobeni south; Dorna Căndrenilor south - west and Coșna in the west.



Figure 1. Administrative and physical geographic location of the tourist destination Ciocănești

Socio-economic aspects of the Ciocănești tourist destination

Because of the vast areas occupied by pastures and mountain meadows, Ciocănești fit in the first stage of its development, in the category based on agro-pastoral villages,

specializing in raising animals for milk and meat. Later, the rise of mining and logging town perform a mixed agro-industrial. After cessation of the mining and forestry activities decrease, residents of Ciocănești were oriented to tourism development, exploiting thus a sustainable, natural resources and human interest valence. Currently, the commune of Ciocănești fall within the agro-tourist villages' function.

The technical infrastructure equipment of the village is satisfactory, the Ciocănești commune benefits of water supply, sewerage system and waste management system. According to the latest census, 60% of households, out of 510, are equipped with bathroom and 70% are connected to the sewerage system and benefits of drinking water. Most households (90%) have a high level of media (mobile, television, radio), 25% of the houses have Internet (source: Ciocănești Hall).

In terms of infrastructure access, a national road that crosses the village is presented in good condition, but the common streets are not paved and it is difficult to use cars, there are pathways to the tourist pensions.

According to the latest census, the population of the village had 1384 inhabitants, Ciocănești registering a significant decline from 2002, when it had 1519 residents. The age structure of the population is as it follows: 0 - 14 years old, 11.19%, 25 - 39 years old, 18.71%, 40 - 59 years old, 15.82%, 50 - 64 years, 20.73%, over 65 years, 17.77%. Active labour force is 60% of the total population (<http://www.suceava.insse.ro/>).

The main socio-economic problems that Ciocănești tourist destination is facing are:

- depopulation, unemployment, population aging, declining birth rates;
- human resources have a higher qualification in Ciocănești commune, most people are busy with farming, wood (in the background) and tourism. There is a predominance of labour inactive due to layoffs in the mining industry and lower activity logging operations.

Currently, there are a number of projects at the local council for the asphaltation of the local access roads, arranging a ski slope on the north eastern side of the Suhard Mountains, tourism promotion programs at local, regional and national levels.

Analysis of the tourist potential of the Ciocănești destination

a) Natural tourist potential

The location of Ciocănești commune on the Bistrița Aurie Valley, surrounded on one side by Obcina Mestecăniș and on the other, Suhard Mountains, confers it a varied landscape of great aesthetic value and multiple possibilities of leisure.

Obcina Mestecăniș site has a particular type of landscape geomorphology: altitude, gentle hills, the presence relief inversions named by the locals as "bâți". All these features are favouring tourism development through the contemplation of nature, mountain rural landscape, making marked hiking trails etc., meeting thus conditions for development of a rural tourism place in a pleasant, relaxing and refreshing way.

Culmea Mestecăniș, which forms the western section of Obcinei Mestecăniș and left guards the Bistrița Aurie Valley (Figure 2), is punctuated by a few rounded peaks (Căprăriei, 1249 m; Oița, 1250 m; Orata, 1360 m; Runcu Ciocănești, 1095 m), which can become particularly attractive vista points.

Suhard Mountains, whose western slopes gently down towards Bistrița Aurie, along which, on both sides, are arranged Ciocănești houses, the landscape is characterized by dark green coniferous forest, alternating with large areas occupied by pastures and meadows (Figure 3). The presence of subalpine, periglacial relief with very strange microforms (isolated rocks, debris covered the base) of towering peaks that may be true pinnacles (Fărăoane, 1715 m; Bâta Târșului, 1548 m; Văcăria, 1358 m), has led to several tourist routes, some of them having the starting point in commune of Ciocănești.

Bistrița Aurie Valley is very picturesque: meadows and pastures, covered terraces, slopes dressed in spruce forests and mountain meadows alternating with fragmented by many tributaries and the cozy houses with "ornamented" walls, creates a particularly attractive landscape favourable for tourism.



Figure 2. Culmea Mestecăniș and Bistrița Aurie Valley



Figure 3. Suhard Mountains

From the point of view of climate suitability for the human body, common bioclimate of Ciocănești fall tonic, stimulant, slightly sedative. Tourists in Ciocănești can make walking or mountaineering, thereby benefiting the curative properties of ozone-rich air, laden aerosol terpene (resin).

The hidrographic tourist potential valences of the Ciocănești commune, is conferred by other elements of the nature (topography, climate, vegetation). Bistrița Aurie and its tributaries (Suhărzul Mic, Orata, Oița, Pârâul Puiu, Pârâul Sătesc, Pârâul Recele, Scorușu etc.) supports practicing several types of recreational (fishing, rafting, “corking”), streams meander, sometimes, through people's yards, under small wooden bridge, giving the place a special charm.

In terms of tourism potential of the vegetation, meadows and grasslands meet, in full color, an important aesthetic function, landscaping, representing a great tourist attraction. They cover large areas, both in Obcina Mestecăniș and Suhard Mountains. Beauty is given not only by the many species of plants but also by the diversity created by alternating areas with wooded grassland. Coniferous forest becomes consistent on the slopes and peaks of the north-western end of the village, where it becomes compact in Suhardului forested slopes towards the base, to the edge of the village, and favours making hiking because of dense network of forest roads, horse riding and cure land (terpene aerosol presence, negative ionization). Glades or a clearing creates an environment conducive to relaxation and special visual effects.

Within the commune of Ciocănești there is the Nature 2000 site of “Bistrița Aurie” (375 ha), which was established to protect and preserve forests alluvial alder and willow (source: www.natura2000sv.com).

Fauna that inhabits the sub-alpine and coniferous forest of Suhard and Obcina Mestecăniș is represented by mammals (deer, bear, lynx, wolf, wild cat, wild boar, fox etc.). Species of birds (mountain grouse, black grouse, golden eagle - declared natural monuments, sparrow hawk, owl, unruly, falcon, spotted eagle etc.) (Geografia României, 1983; Ielenicz, 2009). Fauna contributes to dynamic landscape and to the practice of some types of tourism, as well as some forms of agreement. Photohunting is the main form of entertainment that capitalizes this resource, followed by scientific tourism and less than the hunting, because the hunting reduced the species number. The ichthyofauna is represented by trout (found on Bistrița Aurie until the limits of the locality Ciocănești), huchen, barbel, grayling, European bullhead (*Cottus Gobio*) and broad snout. As a form of recreation, sport fishing is practiced, especially during the “National Festival of Trout”.

b) The anthropic tourist potential

Ciocănești tourist destination has a rich anthropogenic heritage represented by the unique features of the architecture of the houses, the specific character of the traditional household, the existence of traditional occupations and crafts, ethno-cultural manifestation.

The traditional household represents the expression of the socio-economic, natural and historical peculiarities. In Ciocănești the household belongs to the category of double backyard households: the first part is reserved for the house and its needs, and the second is the rearing and care of animals; the house is placed parallel or perpendicular to the street, followed by household outbuildings.

The components of traditional households are: the household itself (the garden, the courtyard with the house, the stable divided in spaces for cattle, sheep, horses and poultry, the wood store and the yard for the cattle), the agricultural land occupied by meadows and the fields outside the household occupied mostly by meadows, pastures and forests. The households are delimited from each other by log fences. The basement, present in each of traditional household was built in the ground, located either near the house or the garden.

Currently, the households have been modernized, but generally, the structure of the traditional model have been kept: in the first yard are usually located the garden with flowers, the residential house, the summer kitchen, the fountain and a new element: the garage for the car; the second part of the household includes related construction (stable/shed) destined to shelter the animals as well as the provenders that constitutes their nutriment during the winter time (hay store). The fence over the road is built in many cases as a combination of iron, wood and stone. The traditional construction techniques ("the fork" or "dovetail") are still present in the household, especially the outbuildings (stable, shed, hay store).

Traditional house architecture

The traditional house architecture from Ciocănești consists of the room - hallway - room type (Figure 4), the construction material is wood and the technique used in the construction is the one of houses in "forks" or "dovetail".

The entrance hall (lobby) is simple and separates the two rooms of the house. One room served as a kitchen and bedroom in the same time, the other being "the guest room". In front of the house there is the clay or the wooden terrace, enclosed later by a porch. It fulfilled many functions: increasing the living space, protection against weather, storage, and aesthetic role. The roof of the traditional house was made of wooden nailed weatherboard and the used technique was of the "whole - hip roof". The room - hallway - room with verandah house type appears later, the front of the house was endowed with a threshold where the door or the wicket was (Cojocaru, 1983).

The planimetric and volumetric evolution of the traditional peasant house was done in parallel with the evolution of the constructive systems, the evolution of the construction techniques and the materials used. Thus, the floor-garret houses had appeared by converting the attic into a garret and adding the "balcony" (Figure 5). In the architecture of the house are appearing the fretwork elements with geometrical figures or floral polychrome motifs; especially adorning the eaves of the houses.

The custom of decorating the exterior walls of the house began in 1950, when Leontina Țăran – a well-known local for her woven and embroidered folk costumes - decides to embellish the walls of the house with patterns present in the traditional folk costume. The custom of "painting" the houses increases; the exterior walls are embellished with floral and geometric decorations (Figure 6), of a rare artistic expression. Gates, as well as the edges of the eaves are richly decorated with folk motifs, carved or cut in wood. The porch disappears from the architecture of the house, being replaced by the verandah.



Figure 4. Room - hallway - room with porch house type



Figure 5. House with floor - attic and balcony

The house with floor of the urban type (Figure 7) is a modern building, inspired by urban architecture. The construction material used is the prefabricated; the houses are more often built on a wooden frame. They usually have 3-4 rooms or even 5-6, being houses with floor. The hallway was replaced with a wider or narrower aisle, the threshold with verandah, the porch with balcony and attic by the garret. The urban type house must be integrated “disguised” in a specific conception of the landscape of this place.



Figure 6. Traditional house with walls decorated with geometric motifs



Figure 7. House with floor, urban type

The interior of the traditional house reflects the material and the cultural level of the family, its mentality and taste for beauty. In the traditional house there can be distinguished: household woven (towels, tablecloths and pillowcases), decorated woven (the towels from the icons and dishes, wall carpet, rugs), ritual woven (the carpet on which the grooms are kneeling at church on, the carpet from the table where the dead is placed, towels and bag materials which alms at the funeral) and embroidery (on pillowcases, tablecloths, traditional costume).

Traditional occupations and crafts

Livestock farming (sheep, cattle), due to extensive areas of pasture and meadows has led to the development of grazing with all of its features (the fold,

making cheese, kitchenware, pastoral holidays etc.); manufacturing the woollen fabrics, the masks used in ritual dances at Christmas and New Year and not at least to the creation of a specific cuisine based on sheep and cows meat and dairy products.

The rhythm of the pastoral activities is in tune with the specific of the seasons: the cleaning of the pastures, milking and making of the sour cream and cheese, mowing and drying of the hay. In Ciocănești, there is one single farmhouse that trade these traditional crafts in tourism through various tourist animation programmes (initiation into the “art of making cheese”, trips to the sheepfold by waggon or horseback, milking sheep, grazing, counting, cutting and last but not least, tasting of sheep yard products: cheese, cottage cheese, smoked cheese, shepherds’ polenta, smoked cheese etc.).

Wood harvesting and processing does not know the extent of the past anymore, there is only one functioning local company profiled in the processing of wood and three carpenters. In the past, this occupation has led to the development of the **run logs on the Bistrița Aurie**, creating household items (barrels, looms, tools and kitchen furniture, benches), elements of decor in the architecture of the house (porch, wooden gates, crosses, wells), plants and agricultural tools (carts, rakes, forks), techniques and traditional tools (carving the wood by the ax, cutting and slitting of thick wood with a saw and backsaw, scrapers, chisels, drills). The use of horses for transport of wood from the forest led to the development of blacksmithing; to which Ciocănești identify itself with the historical past—related to the “ciocănari/hammers’s masters” of weapons, from the time of Ștefan cel Mare. Currently, there are four forges in the village, of which only one is functional.

Gathering from nature is a secondary activity that capitalizes species of mushrooms, herbs, fruits and leaves of bushes, through their use in folk medicine, to food, to obtain natural dyes used in textile dyeing and painting of the eggs etc.

Domestic pursuits, such as wool processing (washing, teasel, spinning, warping, and weaving) and dressing of the wool fabrics (making costumes, textile interior decoration objects) are traditional activities practiced only isolated in the village Ciocănești. Currently, some of these activities are capitalized through tourism by organizing within the National Museum of Painted Eggs of demonstrations of weaving or spinning wool.

Elements of Ethnography and Folklore

The traditional song includes the shepherd related repertoire (habits and specific games, “Goat”, “Bear”), wedding repertoire (“Song of the bride”, “Song of the groom”, “Chickens’ game”, “Dowry’s game”, “The great game”, “Mourning of the bride”, “Brides’ hora”, “The big hora”, “Wishing at the gate of the bride” and so on).

The traditional dance is present in the community during festivals, traditional holidays, family events, various manifestations of ethno-cultural. Artistic movements of the community are represented by folk ensembles “Bistrița Aurie” and “Bistricioara” in there Ciocănești School of Music “Ionică Țăranu”.

The Traditional Folk costume is specific to Bucovina with influences from two ethnographic subzones: Câmpulung Moldovenesc and Dorna Land. The traditional folk costume is present in almost every home, being worn at special events and community events (festivals, religious celebrations, family events) (Secoșan, 1984).

Ethno-cultural events

In Ciocănești takes place various ethno-cultural manifestations, the most important being the National Trout Festival, Winter Customs Festival and National Festival of Painted Eggs. Winter Customs Festival valorize the shepherd repertoire through a series of ritual dances such as “Bittern”, “Goat” (Figure 8), “Bear”, “Horses”, habits of life-cycle (“Wedding”) or related past history (“Gang of Jianu”, “Gang of Novac”). Winter habits are closely related to the way of life, with crafts, history, tradition and culture of these places.

Painted eggs Festival is held every year before “Lăsatul secului” (religious fasting). The art of eggs painting was transmitted from generation to generation, as well as the symbols used, the predominant color, working tools, raw materials and the process of obtaining substances pigmentation.

The festival program includes: eggs painting competition (Figure 9), nature crafts exhibitions, exhibitions and traditional cooking contests. Continuity of this craft is provided by local craftsmen in common and there is a school of art decorating eggs, which operates the Museum of painted eggs. Also, through the project “Ciocănești - living museum of folk art and traditions” is held annually in the period 22 to 30 June, the so called “închistrit” (painting) eggs camps.

National Trout Festival is the only festival of its kind in Europe and takes place on the feast of “Saint Mary”. The festival includes events aimed at knowing the traditions, folk, gastronomy and local crafts. In addition to know the material and immaterial cultural heritage, tourists are engaged in recreational activities and competitions related to the fishing and preparing of the trout, the contest of “gold screened” etc. On this occasion it is awarded the household that has the best preserved traditional features and the most beautiful flower garden. Also, it is revealed the hospitality of the Ciocănești residents: they are greeting with bread and salt the guests at the entrance to the village.



Figure 8. Popular masks parade – the “goat dance” (source: promotional DVD)



Figure 9. The eggs painting contest at the National Museum of Painted Eggs

Cultural tourist sites

National Museum of Painted Eggs (Figure 10) was established in 2007, the only one of its kind in the country. The museum contains a special section dedicated to the art of decorating eggs, this exhibition contains all the awarded painted eggs from all editions of the “painted eggs Festival”. The exhibition bears the name of the teacher Novac Norbert Ioan. There are also exposed folk art collections and traditional handicraft reflecting traditional occupations of the inhabitants of Ciocănești blacksmithing, run logging, carting, animal husbandry, weaving.

House - museum “Leontina Țăran” (Figure 11) reflects the traditional house typology of Ciocănești. However, this was the first house “painted” by Leontina Țăran, a local peasant woman; she is the one who laid the foundation of a new style in decorating the walls of the houses. Inside, visitors can admire the handmade things: carpets, tablecloths, rugs, towels, rugs, costumes etc.

Other cultural attractions in the Ciocănești village are: “Furnica” library, “Florin Gheuca” Culture House, the Eco - Museum and an impressive number of traditional houses, whose walls are decorated with geometric and floral paintings.



Figure 10. The National Museum of Painted Eggs

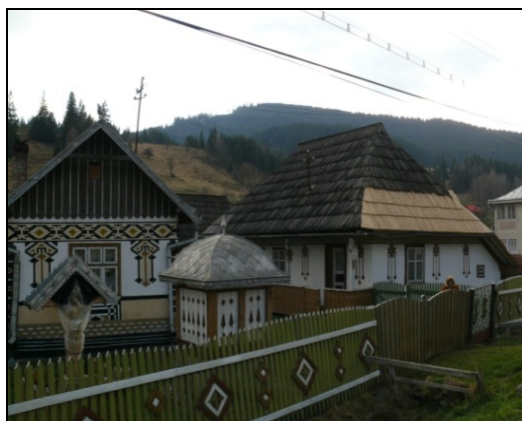


Figure 11. The house - museum "Leontina Țăran"

The traditional cuisine is specific to Bucovina, but there are some dishes with local specific: trout beet leaf tied with thyme, lamb, the cream cheese, chickens, cow sponge, and forest stew with garlic, served with polenta. As a form of tourism leisure, is practiced picnic with a housewife basket that actually brings in actuality a practice from the past. The food in basket for cork men former was transformed into a picnic basket for tourists. It contains foods that can be served cold: smoked bacon, fresh cheese, boiled eggs, onions, and meat scraps, homemade pies "hem the belt" curd cream etc.

c) The touristic infrastructure

In terms of infrastructure access, the commune of Ciocănești enjoys a very high potential position, being crossed by Route 18, which is drawn from European road E576 and connects the northern Moldavia with Maramureș Depression trough Prislop clough (1416 m). European road E576 connects northern Moldavia and Transylvania Depression by Tihuța clough (1201 m). Railway access is provided by Vatra Dornei or Iacoveni stations and air transport from the airport "Ștefan cel Mare" in the town Salcia, Suceava County.

Access roads to tourist destinations are the trails starting from Ciocănești to the sights in Suhard Mountains (peaks: Bâtea Târșului, 1548 m; Șveițăria, 1542 m; Văcăria, 1358 m; the pastoral cottage Recele etc.).

Also commune of Ciocănești is close to major tourist spa resorts and winter sports, namely Vatra Dornei (20 km) and Borșa (69 km) and of protected areas, namely: Maramureș Mountains Natural Park, Călimani National Park and Rodna National Park.

The accommodation infrastructure is represented by guesthouses and agrotourism pensions. Currently there are 15 units of accommodation operating of which two guesthouses classified three stars and 13 rural locations classified at two-three stars with a total of 151 beds (<http://www.antrec.ro/>). Also, to this are added about 70 households who are providing rooms for rent by hey are not recorded for tourism purpose. Basic nutrition is provided in most of the tourism and agrotourism pensions and in two restaurants (Gabimar and Melios). A traditional pastry shop with a snack bar and four grocery stores provides foods for the tourists.

d) Reception of tourists

Among the components of rural tourism, in addition to the natural and anthropogenic resources and tourism infrastructure, welcoming of the tourists has a significant role. The far-away welcome uses the following ways of tourist information: tourist local newspaper "Journal of Ciocănești" which provides information on major cultural events in the village, brochures, leaflets, street posters, internet, tourist

information point; indicators signalling the anthropogenic attractions on maps or panels, the existence of panels at the village entry with the term “village tourist” and “commune - museum”.

Although there is a far-away welcoming system for tourists relatively well developed, we consider as necessary to establish a tourist booking office (dispatcher), which is equipped with computer connected to the Internet, a catalog of guest houses (owner name, phone, address, category of comfort, tourist offer) and the installation of street tourist boards containing a map of the village with the positioning of tourism and agrotourism pensions. Welcoming (hospitality) is an essential element in tourism, especially in rural tourism, where we can not speak of mass tourism, but a personalized tourism. Often we find phrases like “people of the place are hospitable” or “humanity” or “welcoming host”, each one trying to support their arguments on differentiation of the tourist destinations. Hospitality is a characteristic of the Romanian people, however, each ethnographic area, region, area, has its own “methods” or a certain specificity to define hospitality. Ciocănești people hospitality lies in the attitude towards the guests who visit the village. Tourist are perceived as guests of the household in addition to the services requested (accommodation) they have all the attention from the host, which makes it's a pleasure in everything, giving tourists the best in the house, putting himself entirely at its disposal, discreet and not ostentatious. In Ciocănești, every tourist is perceived not only as a guest of the house, but as a guest of the entire community, this being shown by the attitude of benevolent friendship, from each inhabitant, as if ready to respond to any requests from tourists.

e) Leisure and tourist animation

Tourist animation is the sum of activities deliberately or spontaneously manifested by the local community in order to enrol the tourist in the local life by experiencing moments of exceptional originality. Leisure is, along with accommodation, food, transport etc., an essential component of the tourist product. Tourist animation programs may include the following activities: mowing hay, tasting of alcoholic products specific site (cranberries, pickled raspberries), pastoral (sheep milking, dairy preparing the sheepfold, sheep grazing, catering to the sheepfold), learning of dances or playing traditional instruments, walking with “cork” on the Bistrița Aurie etc.

Ciocănești locality, through its tourist heritage, the opportunities offered by natural and anthropogenic patrimony, offers multiple ways of spending spare time, reflected in the ways and means of leisure tourism present in this area. Leisure tourism activities practiced in Ciocănești are: hiking, horseback riding, boating and raft rides animal-drawn vehicles, cycling, contemplating landscapes, photography, attending sporting events and competitions gourmet, practicing extreme sports (rafting, gliding study nature flora spontaneous knowledge, studying wildlife etc.), harvesting from nature (the harvesting of berries, mushrooms, medicinal plants), participation in festivals, celebrations, involvement in creative arts and crafts.

f) Forms of tourism in the tourist destination of Ciocănești

The main form of tourism in Ciocănești is the rural tourism, defined as “a particular form of tourism, based on a certain art of receiving tourists and a behaviour different from that practiced routinely in other types of tourism. From this perspective, rural tourism is a state of mind involving both the hospitality of the rural community and the respect and consideration for the countryside, from the tourist” (Petrea, 2004).

Rural tourism capitalizes rural tourism resources (natural, cultural and economic), tourist facilities and equipment, including rural tourist pensions, takes various forms with a wide range of activities: rest and recreation, transit, culture, knowledge, religion, the practice of sports etc. (Petrea, 2000; Glăvan, 2003). Rural tourism exploit local traditions, traditional architecture, social events of the community (religious feasts, weddings), crafts, craft creations, local customs and traditions (winter habits, Easter).

Agrotourism is “a form of rural tourism using accommodation and meals only agro hostels, benefiting from an unpolluted environment and scenic tourist attractions natural and cultural values - historical traditions and customs of the rural areas. Rural areas, through its components, satisfies a wide range of reasons: rest and leisure, knowledge, culture, sport, clean air or bathing, hunting and fishing, agrotourism providing a large area of coverage opportunities for leisure” (Glăvan, 2003). In Ciocănești, agrotourism exploits the availability of accommodation and food from local farms, trained and specially equipped to receive tourists. Farmhouses owners shall, in addition to accommodation and dining, leisure to provide activities with specific economic characteristics of the village and the household (close hay riding, eggs painting, preparing local cuisine dishes etc.).

Recreation tourism and leisure tourism combines features such as those of health tourism, through a series of specific activities: harvesting medicinal plants, berries, contemplating the landscape, spontaneous flora knowledge, marked hiking trails.

Sports and adventure tourism is characterized by the practice of sport activities: tourist-orientation, fishing and rafting on Bistrița Aurie, paragliding in the Suhard Mountains, “Suhard Cup” in football etc.

Religious tourism is practiced, especially during major holidays of the year (Easter, Saint Mary) and the wake of the church “Adormirea Maicii Domnului”.

Transit tourism capitalizes especially UNESCO monasteries both in Maramureș and northern Moldavia, spa resorts and winter sports, Vatra Dornei and Borșa, national parks or natural like Călimani and Rodna, Maramureș Mountains etc.

The creation of the Ciocănești tourist brand

Creating a tourism brand destination involves several steps, the most important phases of destination branding is based on defining and communicating the key values of the brand. To achieve these objectives, the first step of the branding strategy involves identifying the main elements that make up the brand and define the destination brand identity (Keller, 2003; Kapferer, 1997). Selecting the components of the brand represents an important phase of their consistency and relevance depending entire imaging process which in turn contributes to the strength and uniqueness of brand's identity (Cai, 2002).

A brand destination effectively highlights the following elements: natural and human heritage (attractions both natural and anthropogenic landscapes, favorable climate conditions for tourism, customs and traditions, and cultural events, traditional gastronomy, hospitality), tourism infrastructure (accessibility, bases of accommodation, meals and entertainment), the types and forms of tourism. All these aspects underpin tourism destination brand identity and will be further analyzed to create the visual identity of the Ciocănești tourism brand destination.

Brand identity explains more or less detailed, subtle or direct, the elements that define the brand inherently resorting to associations with other elements, background. To fulfil this role, coherent identity needs of a close and harmonious relationship between the elements that compose it, on the one hand, and between itself and associations evoked, on the other hand, influences the perceived quality of the brand and the identity helps the brand associations, brand voice and audience designs.

After analyzing Ciocănești tourist destination, we identified the following elements of differentiation needed to create Ciocănești tourism destination brand's identity: traditions and crafts, traditional cuisine, Bucovina specific mountainous countryside and hospitality. To create the brand identity of Ciocănești destination, we used the following brand elements: brand name, logo, isotype, slogan, text and background.

The logo is represented by a graphic - egg - classified as tourist destination name - Ciocănești - by substituting the letter “O” (Figure 12).

Argument: the egg symbolizes tradition (“Închistritul” - Easter egg painting), authenticity (the egg painted, specific for Ciocănești - black background), traditional

house architecture - houses “painted”, presented by the diamond symbol, highly stylized; wood carving elements are shown by irregular contour of the egg; the top of the egg has a mixture of colours that suggest artistic creation reflected in the art of painting eggs, in folk costume and decorating exterior house walls; also suggests attractive valences of the natural, polychrome meadows, although the change of the seasons of vegetal notes and not the least suitability for tourism in all seasons. The egg is the symbol of perfection, of love, fertility and the cyclical nature life.



Figure 12. The visual identity of the Ciocănești tourist destination brand
(Source: own processing with the Adobe Photoshop CS3 software)

The isotype is the second graphic element - two rows of gentle and parallel hills - symbolizing Obcinele Bucovinei, suggesting dark green coniferous forest. Under the izotyp appears the name of regional brand “Bucovina”, underneath of which umbrella is intended to promote the brand “Ciocănești”. Bucovina is already an established brand through which the brand of Ciocănești can be recognized, located and can benefit from the confidence gained from it.

The slogan - “Together we continue the tradition” - is a brand promise made to the tourists. This is simple, concise and catchy.

The text contains two fonts that reflect the arching artistic letters represented in models painted on the exterior walls of the houses, in models sewn on the traditional costumes, the painted Easter egg. The colours are brown and green text specific for Bucovina. For the slogan, was used a different color - red - to be more visible, but also because this colour is found on decorative fabrics, folk costume and on the “painted” egg.

The background is made up of a collage image, and the following aspects:

- the first plan reflects: the traditions and crafts (eggs painted, decorating the exterior walls of the houses with motifs from folk costume, manufacturing of the textile objects for interior decoration, masks and folk costumes, habits of the New Year and Easter); traditional cuisine (suggested by the presence in the forefront of Easter basket).

- the second plan reflects: the traditional household (rustic fence, fence with geometric patterns applied and painted, well, crosses, home, yard, barn, hay barn, meadow); rural architecture and painting custom houses;

- the third plan reflects: the specific mountain countryside of Bucovina, by the arrangement of village and household organization; highlights the diversity of the landscape given by Obcinele Bucovinei, Suhard Mountains and Bistrița Aurie Valley and the possibility to practice many forms of leisure tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

Creating a brand is a complex process, whether it is about products, services and travel destinations. One of the main phases of a tourism destination brand is the brand identity development, which involves identifying those elements that confer unique tourist attraction, specificity, originality, distinguishing it from others. This can be achieved through market studies, which involve the identifying of those attributes that tourists consider to be valuable, and will then be promoted, but also by analyzing the tourism potential of the respective destination. For the tourism destination brand of Ciocănești we approached the latter, based on a study of the geography of tourism.

Our analysis identified the following specific elements that can define the brand identity of Ciocănești:

- the custom of decorating the outer walls of houses (over 70% of houses have walls painted);
- crafts and traditional activities well preserved: eggs painted (specific fonts white and black), manufacture of textile articles for interior decoration of houses, masks and folk costumes (specific elements: geometric and floral motives: diamond, tree of life);
- habits of the New Year and Easter;
- traditional cuisine (dishes of Bucovina, with some local characteristics);
- traditional household (specific items: fence with geometric patterns, fountain “dressed” in wooden with geometric sculptures painted);
- the traditional architecture of the houses (houses with floor - attic).

All these attributes contributes to support the brand promises that Ciocănești, emphasizes with the slogan “Together we continue the tradition”. To the logo of the tourist destination name - Ciocănești, has been integrated a graphic element highly stylized - “the egg” by substituting the letter “O”. The second graphic element (isotype) - two rows of gentle and extend hills represents Obcinele Bucovinei and appears above the regional brand name.

In conclusion, we can say as a tourist destination, Ciocănești enjoy all the attributes to develop a strong and competitive brand through which will be able to promote the tourist offer, both internal and international.

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