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**Article**

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# PROPOSALS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF TOURIST IMAGE IN BOTOSANI COUNTY

Maria-Simona Cuciureanu\*

**Abstract:** *The article aims to highlight the main elements that make the tourism potential in Botosani County unique and the need to develop a touristic image of this area. The touristic potential of the rural areas is huge, but it is harnessed and exploited. We believe that through authenticity we can create an attractive territory for tourists. And that the existing potential of the rural tourism is an opportunity to improve the living standards, which should have three primary phases: identification, promotion and development. The study proposes the creation of several priority axes and an rural tourism brand, with the priority items identified.*

**Keywords:** tourism image; rural tourism; development potential recovery.

**JEL Classification:** L83; Y91.

## INTRODUCTION

The touristic image is the key to tourism development in a certain area, so identifying unique items and branding is a crucial step for tourist use.

The retrieval of touristic representative elements generates a positive impact on an area. In the case of the Botosani county we can speak about tourism identity identification and the promotion of county socioeconomic development. The local image can be perceived positively or negatively based on the promoting receiving area, but tourism is based on local identity and local uniqueness which is an asset to identify a brand.

The study aims to highlight the unique elements of Botosani county which can be attractive in terms of tourism and symbols can be key to creating a tourist pictures. Botosani enjoys a rich and varied tourism potential but poorly capitalized. It does not have a tourist image, although there are many unique elements which could be „ambassadors” capable to promote tourism. So as nationally there are cities or area is identified with a construction or customs, traditions and Science - Culture Palace, Brasov - Black Church, Bucovina - monasteries, Maramures – tradition, for Botosani there are no clear association in the minds of tourists although there are unique elements that are known to them. Thus the problem is caused by the lack of touristic images. To be clear, this can be solved by identifying key symbols and possible creation of tourist images that can address several categories of tourists, which will mean that every tourist will retain tourist symbol representing him.

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The need to propose priority axes, to create local touristic images and to promote them is determined by the economic importance of tourism and by the need to recover Botosani's touristic potential. The economic importance of tourism activities is a priority for the study area like the need to improve the socio-economic situation by capitalization of touristic potential.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature is vast in terms of touristic image, brand or rural tourism. So our paper will be summarized with the use of the clear concepts of brand and touristic image. Since the study is a multidisciplinary one the references are from the fields of economics, geography and social sciences.

Building and strengthening the concept of image is particularly important for achieving marketing objectives and default global policy objectives because they depend on communicative objectives. The image knowledge that buyers have about a product or service is of great importance, so image is an important factor that has been recognized and studied since the 1950. Philip Kotler in „Marketing Management” defines image as „all perceptions that an individual has vis-a-vis an object” but A. Denner defines image as „a halo of representations of ideas, feelings, attitudes and beliefs more or less explicit, more or less profound, more or less consciously, with emotional content more or less dense, more or less important. "image synthesizing definitions are all reflections of nature material or immaterial, rational or emotional content, objects or events, products or services, brands or companies formed over time in the consciousness of an individual (whether consumer or customer nonconsumer of the product or the company, employee or manager of a company or its competitors, representative of the media or the media).”

Image is important for all promotional strategies because it is a product or brand. Promotion should highlight the characteristics and authenticity of an object, place, symbol, defining the essence of the image: value, design and personality.

Significant interest in creating an image synthesis is carried out in that picture because elements must be cognitive, emotional, social and personal product among buyers.

In theory we can approach the concept of image in terms of an ideal image and the one real or perceived. Such differences always occur because of how well the image is promoted or received.

The concept of image has many meanings, but tourism is the impression made on a tourism product, a company or a tourism destination. „The image is an important element to be considered in destination marketing as bad or good image of a tourist destination will affect its popularity. Building a destination or tourism product image is performed using information sources such as

brochures, leaflets, tourism radio and TV programs, articles in newspapers, periodicals, etc. or by using the stories of recently returned travelers. In tourism the main marketing means are using concepts of „brand image” and „product image” representing the company or destination image, and that image services. To conduct business efficiently, tourism companies are trying to achieve and maintain a positive image permanently, notably through advertising and public relations”(Stancioiu).

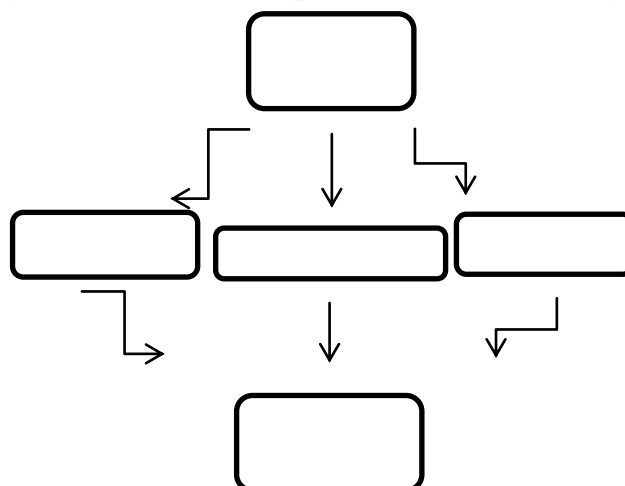
Developing an effective brand image for an area requires the inclusion of a generic term by which local products and services will be immediately recognized. Such a mark would help create an identity for the area symbolizing the connection in the minds of residents and consumers regarding the conservation of nature and community welfare, and the proper management of the environment and high-quality local products.

Tourism is a dynamic phenomenon due to expansion trend / regression, enhancement / mitigation rhythmic that it has along its evolutionary path, which does not affect the general plan of continuous development of regions with tourism potential and by their nature generate changes and transformations of goods and individual values, not least by cultural models. Tourism potential, represented by attractive resources and infrastructure is a static factor analyzed phenomenon, claiming its existence. Dynamic element of the process is provided by the qualitative tourists who exploit resources and use the services infrastructure (Cocean, 2002).

Types of tourism like the rural tourism and agro tourism types are appreciated and practiced internationally, but are also of scientific interest. So the interdependence of rural tourism and tourist image may be vital for the effective potential of tourism. In the same idea promoting unique elements and traditions in a given area depend on the touristic image created for this purpose.

Creating a turistic image involves several key elements such as the tourist icon outstanding at the place identity, authenticity and uniqueness.

**Figure 1 - The scheme implementation tourist image**



## **2. PRIORITY AXES TOURIS IMAGE BUILDING BOTOȘANI**

Using the uniqueness of Botosani County elements highlighted by diversity and richness, we can create an brand for tourism development. There are prospects for creating a positive touristic brand, by highlighting the three priority directions for creating tourist images: birthplace of some famous personalities of Romania, abundance of ponds and intact traditions.

### **2.1 Botoșani –realm evening stars**

Some of the county symbols are national and international brands that can be attractive for tourists (Eminescu, Iorga, Enescu, Antipa, Luchian, Bancila, and so on). These figures were international ambassadors of culture and science for the Botosani county. Analysing the great human values from this area, we can find in Botosani creative personalities of monumental dimensions: Eminescu - poet, Iorga - historian, Enescu - musician, Luchian - painter. To these we can add: Dimitrie Pompeiu and Octav Onicescu mathematicians, the great naturalist and botanist Grigore Antipa, outstanding figures of Romanian literature such as Ion Pillat, Demostene Botez and George Tăutu and the great painter Octav Bancila. They are part of the national gallery of great values that conceive the county for posterity.

Botosani county has many notable figures in world culture, is known as global brands (Eminescu, Iorga, Enescu and Luchian). Eminescu due to its importance should mean Botosani (as just about Barcelona Gaudi), and it should not be associated with other places than the native. The promoting of these great personalities can be achieved by organizing specific events: literary, cultural, music or painting large, which are now poorly promoted. They can be associated as ambassadors of poetry (Eminescu), culture (Iorga), music (Enescu) and painting (Luchian) at the level of the county or at a national or international level.

The image of these stars is used everywhere, whether in books or internet media, but the symbols are porley used in the county, that is why Botosani should create an image representative tourism to attract more tourists. (e.g. when Sibiu was the European Capital of Culture it has attracted an impressive number of tourists, promoting at international expansion).

Traditions are representative for Botosani because they were kept pure and as philosopher H.-R. Patapievici noted that this traditions are best represented here, and not in Maramures, where peasants still wear traditional costumes but simultaneously use cellualars and computers, but in

northern Moldavia, where the language and customs have not yet fallen victims of modern influences.

## **2.2 Botoșani - an oasis of pure and unaltered Romanian traditions**

Botosani county is recognized as a specific traditionally area where traditions and customs are kept perpetually popular. The county is characterized by the impressive number of folk festivals, some in the national circuit of cultural events. Traditions are highlighted through festivals and Botosani is recognized nationwide as one of the counties with a high number of festivals, being named by the media as „The County of Festivals”. Festivals arise from the desire to facilitate contact with residents in the city art culture, spirit, that opens new horizons for them, to bring them about artists and works that they would not like to meet them.

Festivals occur from the Botosani desire to preserve tradition and customs, folk values, thus emphasizing purity retention. Institutions showed interest in organizing and supporting festivals because they can highlight the traditions in this county. For preserving traditions, the Directorate of Culture, with the support of Popular Creation Centre wants to establish village museums, as cultural centers.

Local authorities, believe that festivals can contribute to a local image that can determine a development of tourism, especially rural tourism. Since the media called this area as „The county of festivals” which highlights traditions, this means that festivals are seen as tourism potential.

The most important festivals that occur annually are: „Hold Gold” - June 29 (Tudor), „Inherited from elders” - May and „Forest Festival” - September 8 (Vorona), „Hora from Flamanzi” - 15 august (Flamanzi), „Festival Village Hearth” - 15 august (Stauceni), „Proud village garden” - 15 august (Bucecea), „Watermelon festival” - 15 august (Rachiti, Lunca). Botosani days - April 23, „Fair craftsmen” - April 23 (Botosani) and „Winter Traditions Festival” - December (Botosani). Some festivals coincide with a major celebration, which demonstrates people's faith and respect for these holidays, especially if the day chosen for the festival coincides with the feast of the village, it is an additional cause for celebration for the locals. There were other two important festivals but were stopped for pecuniary reasons: Carp Festival (near the pond Dracsani) - Sulița and Garlic Festival- Copalau.

Choosing names for the festivals plays an important role in attracting tourists, because the name suggest if traditions are involved, and that will increase the interest of people to participate to

this festival. Some festival sames suggest that the people's of the villages are important in terms of tourism.

Traditions were kept intact despite the facilities of nowadays broke in less accessible places, which means that traditions disappear or lose value. Traditional culture is trying to survive under the aggressive burden of modernity. The traditions behind the modernity have highlighted the efforts of those who seek to restore the natural rights traditions, customs and habits, our symbol of continuity in this region.

It can be seen that there is a symbiosis between tradition and festivals, eventually taking them in evidence and promoting them. Building a local image that is based on complementing traditions and festivals can be a tourist attraction.

For example the Garlic Festival, held between 2001 and 2004, promoted primarily the traditions implied by the culture of garlic and other traditions of the area. Concrete consequences of the festival were: establishment of professional associations „Garlic-successful attempt to adopt rules entailed rural tourism” (which proves that rural tourism or rural tourism based on garlic crop in this region can developed) have set up an ethnographic museum and an outdoor sculpture camp, agricultors had the opportunity to sell at wholesale prices the garlic cultivated by them, which allowed them to gather the money to paint the exterior of the village church and to repair the bridge over Miletin. It can be seen that after this festival people of this community have benefited from numerous economic advantages. This festival was promoted in other countries, and organizers kept in touch with organizers of similar festivals such as The wine and garlic festival from Antherst, Virginia U.S.

Even though the festival stoped for a period after 2004, the organizers were thinking to focus on producing and commercialization of numerous garlic based products such as garlic-flavored ice cream. These specific products can be a reason for tourists to visit the area and taste them and see how they are produced.

Tourism activities can develop in Botosani County by creating an image that has as a defining element pure and unspoiled traditions, highlighted by the festivals as they give authenticity to the places.

### **2.3 Botoșani –land ponds**

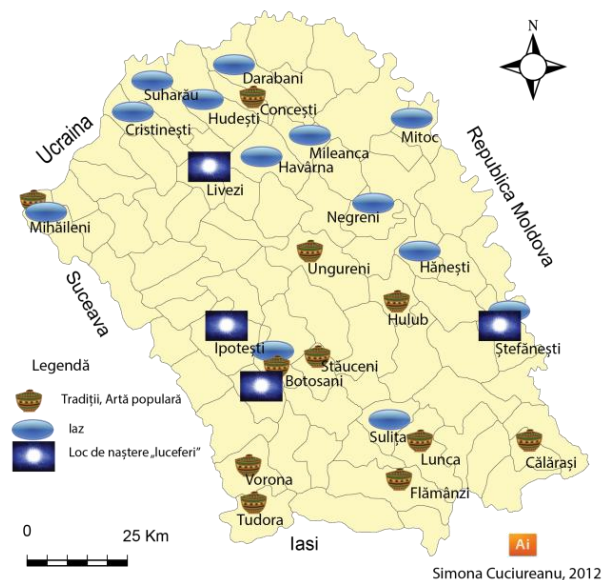
Botosani country is famous as the county with a large water surface, the second country after Tulcea county. Moldavian Plain ponds (Botosani) on streams and rivers valleys of this region are

very picturesque and are a great number of small and medium oportunities. The largest pounds are: Calul Alb, Negreni - Baseu river, creek Mileanca – Podriga and Catamarasti and Dracsani - Sitna River. You can add to these stretches of water the lake from Stanca -Costesti (Botosani county), one of the largest water reservoirs in Romania. It covers an area of 140,000 hectares, and it is the largest lake on the River Prut and the second in the country, after the Porțile de Fier Lake. The dam is Stanca - Costesti customs at the border with Moldova. The lake view is impressive for the visitor and the place is often frequented by fishermen and archaeologists (Ripiceni area). Therefore its image might be called Botosani-land ponds and used to build an accurate brand.

We can develop an image based on the name „land of ponds” to promote the existing fish resources. Thus we can organize themed festivals or fishing competitions, promoting that way many forms of tourism including: fishing tourism, sports tourism, leisure tourism, and tourism birdswatching (travel forms approved by tourists).

The location and spread of the main towns in the territory and of the major touristic points of intereset were represented on the map in Figure 2. Apparently the places with unique values are concentrated in the north-east, but places with unique element traditions are sometimes identified with localities that have representative ponds (Mihaileni Hanesti, Catamarasti Deal). The combination of unique elements can lead to the creation of a brand able to exploit all that is unique and authentic, with a significant impact on media level.

**Figure 2 - Locations of major touristic destinations in Botosani**

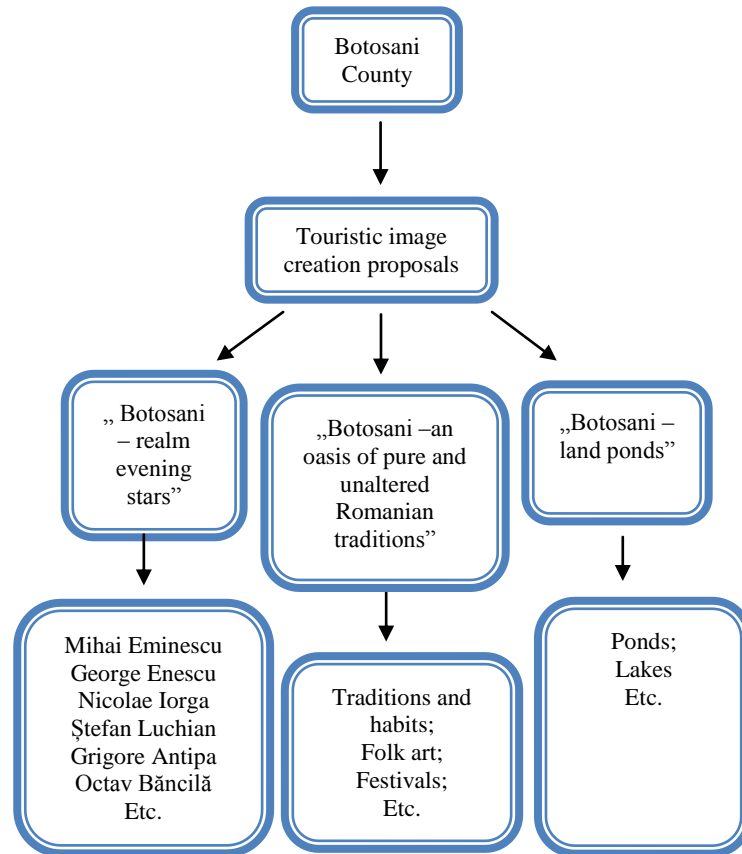


Proposals for tourism development and for the creation of touristis images, containing unique elements of Botosani, can be summarized in a diagram which reflects the potential of the county



touristic brand. For the creation of the brand we can follow three directions to create distinct touristic images, depending on the tourist market addressed, or we may combine them to offer a single view of the Botosani county, including all the unique and defining characteristics of this area.

**Figure 3 - The scheme of Botosani county touristic brand**



The prospects for the development of tourism are based on unique and local identity, and on the diversity which highlights the authentic elements from the studied area.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Botosani county should create a defining tourism image to develop and promote tourism as a competitive economic activity. Several steps are required in defining a touristic image: indentifying unique symbols, creating an image or multiple touristic images and promoting the uniqueness of places. The expected effects of these efforts are to create a specific identity of the county at local and regional level and to attract tourists.

The touristic brand aims to be the visual identity element for this territory. The creation of a touristic image will have an important impact on the development and promotion of the Botosani county, and it is a solution to transform this area into a competitive one.

The proposals for the creation of a touristic image for the Botosani county are an important stage for the development of tourism and for the transformation of tourism activities into productive and competitive economic activities. This study can be deepened by investigating current tourism projects and proposals that aim to develop tourism in conjunction with targeted markets, by investigating the types of touristic proposals based on their potential and existing facilities, by identifying of diversified tourism potential and by modern touristic facilities.

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