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**FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AND TOURISM**

**PhD THESIS**

**THE TOURISM IMAGE OF TRANSYLVANIA**

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# The Tourist Image of Transylvania

## The Summary of The PhD Thesis

*Key-words: Transylvania, tourist image, geographical and historical region, fiction and reality, geoliterary destination, myths and legends, tourist imaginary, Dracula*

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➤ **Introduction (motivational background for the choice of theme)**

Merely stating the European and international fame Transylvania enjoys has become a truism. The historical and geographical province of Transylvania has long turned into a quasi-universally renown brand, without having had the need of a rigorously elaborated and optimately tuned branding strategy. This constitutes the first and, most likely, most important element of the motivational background.

We believe that the PhD thesis entitled *The Tourist Image of Transylvania* is mainly anchored in the great interest it is to attract – and, we hope, it will indeed be so, under the condition of its being elaborated at a qualitatively high level – having the potential of establishing itself as an approach of not only national, but also wider interest, both theoretically, and practically, as it deals with an international brand: *Transylvania*.

Another motivational element is represented by the very dynamic present-day undertakings of the authorities of the city of Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania’s historical capital and its most important cultural, academic and economic centre. The first of these undertakings has already reached its goal, as Cluj-Napoca has secured the title of European Youth Capital of the year 2015. This project and other similar ones, carried out at a city level in Cluj-Napoca, have, as one of their main anchors, the identification with Transylvania, and the fame of the region might very likely be held accountable for the potential success of the projects, which, in turn, might bring forth important benefits regarding reputation and tourist-oriented imagery. Affirming his

own support for this praiseworthy initiative – of great importance for the imagery of Transylvania, considering the fact that it regards the unofficial capital of the region – the Rector of „Babeş-Bolyai” University, Academician Professor Ioan-Aurel Pop, stated the following in an interview taken in 2012: „In this undertaking, Cluj-Napoca needs to join hands with Romania and Transylvania itself, as a historical province which accounts for approximately 40%<sup>1</sup> of the surface and population of our country. Of course, ever since the times of Jules Verne (with his novel *The Carpathian Castle*) and the success of Bram Stoker’s novel (circa 1900), Transylvania has become a brand, based rather on elements of fantasy and make-believe than on real ones. The ‚Mihai Eminescu’ Foundation and Prince Charles have set out to bring new arguments in favour of this brand, and these arguments need to be used wisely.”

The actual cultural and event projects are on the status of Cluj-Napoca as capital of Transylvania, with all the advantages brought about by the mere utterance of the name *Transylvania*, from fame to the very sensation of its belonging to an area with downright mythical undertones.

➤ ***Instead of an argument***

“Transylvania is a splendid land, with a flavour of legend and myth, in which languages, cultures and confessions have met, such that the place resembles a miniature Europe [...], a prototype of European cultural diversity, of its values, right in the meeting place for West and East, for Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism, for the Romance world and the Germanic, Slavic and Finno-Ugric ones“<sup>2</sup>. (Academician Professor Ioan-Aurel Pop, Rector of „Babeş-Bolyai” University in the same interview)

➤ ***Major objectives of the study***

We enumerate 5 self-suggested objectives, formulated as questions, to which the initiator of this study takes the responsibility to offer, in the end, satisfying answers in the least, based on rigorous scientific research:

- What else do foreign tourists know about Transylvania besides the fulfilment of this historical and geographical region of Romania’s role as „land of Dracula”? Is the myth of Dracula a sine qua non of Transylvanian mythology or just a condemnable kitsch? How suitable would an attempt at legitimising it (via „folklorisation”, for example) be, an attempt at linking the legend of this mythical and literary character to reality?
- What is the tourist-oriented imagery of Transylvania at a continental level and what kind of impact does Romania’s EU membership have upon the brand image of the region?
- How can one explain the space/myth/product interaction and how could one obtain a greater degree of relevance from this relationship in the case of Transylvania?
- What is the role of the factor of *psychocultural distance*<sup>3</sup> in the formation of the tourist-oriented imagery of Transylvania and how can it be evaluated?

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<sup>1</sup> The term Transylvania is used, in this case, with a very wide meaning, encompassing Maramureş, Sătmar, Crişana and Banat. See point 3.1.

<sup>2</sup> Cosmin–Gabriel Porumb-Ghiurco, „The Tourist Image of Transylvania: from Fiction to Reality”, in *Thematic Tourism in a Global Environment: Advantages, Challenges and Future Developments*, (International Tourism Conference, March 27-29th), Belgrade, 2014, pp. 799-811.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning that the evaluation of the psychocultural distance is carried out via the attractiveness of the chosen destination – in this case, Transylvania – which is conditioned by linguistic familiarity, and by historical, political, economic and cultural relations.

- What about the role of the elements of cultural ethnicity – language, religion, „national” territory, specific *modus vivendi* and various combinations thereof – in the perception of the multiculturalism of the territory of Transylvania, both regarding the geographical space itself, and regarding the mental space, the former by both tourists and residents, the latter only by residents?

➤ ***Delimiting and characterising the geographical area to be studied***

✓ ***Etymology***

The regionym „Transylvania”, derived from mediaeval court Latin, is a composite of *trans* („over”, „across”) and *silva* („forest”), which, if translated, would result in the phrase „across the forest”. It was first mentioned in 1075 in the form *Ultra Silvam*, followed by *Ultrasilvanus*, in Anonymus’s *Gesta Hungarorum* of 1111. A new placename surfaces in the 13th century, that of *Septem Castra*, translated by the Saxons as *Siebenbürgen*, meaning „the Seven Citadels” (Kronstadt, Schässburg, Mediasch, Hermannstadt, Mühlbach, Bistritz and Klausenburg).

✓ ***Establishing Transylvania’s setting and delimiting it spacially***

Transylvania is a historical and geographical province of Romania, which borders the following historical regions: Bucovina to the north-east, Moldavia to the east, Wallachia („Muntenia”) and Oltenia to the south, Banat and Crişana to the west, Sătmar and Maramureş to the north. Delimiting this geographical region has been and still is a very complicated undertaking, as one could deduct from the specialised literature, the various works that deal with this region containing points of view at times very different in this regard.

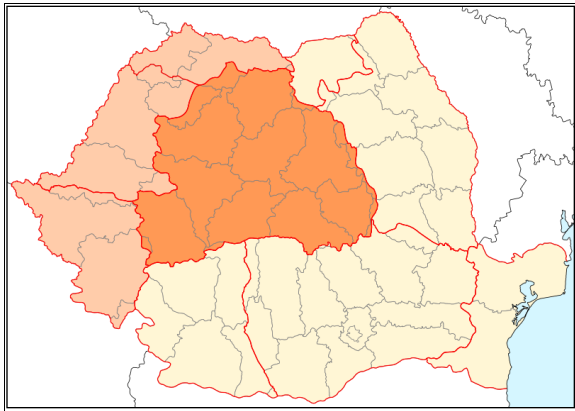
However, if one were to consult the literature on this topic, one would notice a certain convergence of opinions towards classifying the central part of the country (the Transylvanian Plateau and the Carpathian slopes leaning towards it) as inherently belonging to the Transylvanian area. Thus, the territory of Transylvania – considering its narrowest meaning, which will be used throughout this paper – covers the counties of Alba, Bihor, Bistriţa-Năsăud, Braşov, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita, Hunedoara, Mureş, 24 local units in the county of Sălaj and Lăpuş Country in the county of Maramureş (fig. 1). For pragmatic reasons and for the improvement of the degree of functionality of the concepts and of the work methodology, the county of Sălaj will be included in the study in its entirety (fig. 2).

➤ ***Defining Transylvania spacially***

The first variant of the regionym *Transylvania* refers to the macroregion which, during the Middle Ages, was branded as „The Voivodeship of Transylvania” or „The Transylvanian Voivodeship” (etymologically speaking, „the land across the forests”), its surface adding up to approximately 57,000 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of ca 4,300,000 inhabitants. Closely related to this opinion is the view that the term *Transylvania* can also convey a narrower meaning, pertaining strictly to the area flanked by the Carpathians (ie the similarly named Transylvanian Plateau), thus delimited by the Eastern Carpathians („Orientali”), the Southern ones („Meridionali”) and the Western ones („Apuseni”).

The second variant of the term is a more widely encompassing one, also including, at a much greater extent, Crişana, Sătmar and Maramureş, ie the „Western Lands” or „Partium”, which were added to the historical inner Carpathian nucleus after mid 15th century, together forming the Principality of Transylvania.

Sometimes the name “Transylvania” is postulated with an even wider meaning, being equated with those parts of Romania west of the Eastern Carpathians and north of the Southern Carpathians, thus including Banat as well.



**Fig. 1.** Delimitation based on geographical and historical criteria, authored by P. Gr. Pop (1997).



**Fig. 2.** Delimitation used in this study, for practical and applied purposes. Source: <http://www.celendo.eu>.

✓ **Natural boundaries**

The natural boundaries of the Transylvanian region: on the north it follows the tallest summits of the Prisnel Hills, the drainage divide between the Someș and the Lăpuș in the Ciceu Hills, and Breaza Summit (the boundary of Lăpuș Country), the southern and eastern slopes of the Țibleș and Rodna Mountains (the boundary of historical Maramureș). To the east, its edge corresponds to the western part of the Suhard Mountains, Dorna Depression and the Bistrița and Ceahlău Mountains and to the eastern part of the Giurgeu, Hășmașul Mare and Ciuc Mountains, the boundary of the tallest peaks which surround the Întorsura and Buzău Depressions to the south and southeast.

The southern boundary passes south of Predeal Pass and north of Omu Peak and goes on over Giuvala Pass (the boundary of the Bârsa Mountains), via the line of the tallest peaks of the Southern Carpathians, all the way to Lainici Pass, the Vâlcan Mountains and Godeanu Peak. To the west, the boundary between Transylvania and Banat passes through the Țarcău Mountains – The Iron Gates of Transylvania – and the tall plateau of the Poiana Ruscă Mountains, going across the Mureș Canyon at Zam, over the boundary between the Zarand and Metaliferi Mountains, and then moves ahead on the line between the two summits of Bihor and Vlădeasa up to Vadu Crișului and then follows the eastern slopes of the Meseș Mountains all the way to Jibou. (Pop, P. Gr., 1997)

✓ **Administrative organisation**

As stated above, it has been agreed, conforming to most points of view, that Transylvania includes 10 counties (Alba, Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Brașov, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita, Hunedoara, Mureș and 24 local administrative units in the county of Sălaj).

The 10 counties are further divided into 682 local administrative units, with an overall population of 4,293,238 inhabitants. Out of the 76 urban settlements, 23 are cities.

The unofficial, yet unquestioned capital of Transylvania is Cluj-Napoca, its main economic, cultural/artistic and academic centre. Moreover, Cluj-Napoca is also the historical capital of the region.

➤ **The tourism imagery or the imagery of the tourist destination**

In this paper, the concept of *tourist image* takes up a central role. The concept of *image* is endowed with numerous definitions which point out its complexity. As a multidimensional concept, of equally rational, emotional and social nature, the *image* is built up as a *profoundly subjective portrait, with complex and varied psycho-cultural implications*.

The raw material of tourism is the space. This statement legitimises any undertaking concerning the *discussions about and research on the tourist imagery of geographical spaces* with a genuine vocation for tourism, which can be considered tourist destinations. *Communication about spaces* is complementary to tourist imagery. Practically, the spaces “not communicated about” do not exist from a tourist-oriented point of view.

*The tourist destination* is any tourist-oriented space (country, region, city/town, village), be it large-scale or small-scale. The perception of a destination becomes intertwined with the perception of the activities it has to offer, with the type of accommodation facilities, the means of access or the natural or man-made sights available to it. The destination is both a territory, and an ensemble, a complex product which amalgamates the most tangible and physical data with the immaterial characteristics of the place. A destination is simultaneously a territory and a series of available activities and structures; the physical place is confused with its more or less tangible attractions.

Even though it is especially pointed out that an image is worth a thousand words, the opposite is also valid: mental images can be created by means of words.

➤ ***The contemporary tourist-oriented imagery of Transylvania***

The imagery of Transylvania, shaped mainly on a literary basis, is a bookish mental construct that tends, on a large scale (the scale of the mind-set of fantasy novel readers), towards disseminating a lugubrious, distorted, persistent, yet luring echo associated with the area. Most likely, this Romanian region owes its fame mainly to its deformed and fictionalised portrayal by Irish author Bram Stoker, on the turning-point of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (in his novel, *Dracula*, considered the best horror novel of all times).

The misconception of the inner workings of globalisation results in the depersonalisation of the receiving spaces. A sad, yet eloquent example regarding this is the fact that a large proportion of foreign tourists associate Transylvania with Dracula Land (“Țara lui Dracula”, in romanian), meaning a mysterious land populated by creepy characters. The danger per se is not represented by the tourists’ misconception, but by the obsessive enthusiasm with which Romanians have adopted the scenario of an Irish writer who did not prove out to be very well documented. In the context of the generalisation of the aforementioned association (especially through its promotion aimed at tourists and the complacency manifested by many Romanians towards such a superficial perception of a destination of regional rank like Transylvania), neither the severity of falsifying historical truth, nor the potential effects of promoting negative aspects as the hallmarks of the Romanian space, have been taken into account. Thus, it needs to be stressed out that the understanding of the cultural message equally depends on the emitter as it does on the receiver. It having been established that perception, on an individual level, is uncontrollable, one must at least bring forth, with due care and dignity, the redemptive proof of the capability and responsibility required for the selection of the valuable details of national culture, and thus promote those that are genuinely representative.

Currently, the tourist-oriented imagery of Transylvania seems to be sketched around the figure of Dracula, a character surrounded by a fictional/mythological aura, born from the conjoining of the rich imagination of a foreigner, the Irish writer Bram Stoker, with the at least equally prodigious imagination of the mind-set of the region under scrutiny’s inhabitants. What

then is the result? The result is the crippling of historical reality and the creation of a tourism product lacking in quality.

➤ ***Transylvania's vocation for tourism in postmodern reality***

Transylvania, as a regional spatial entity (of the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank), is centred on the homonymous Transylvanian Plateau, which, from the point of view of tourism, is an autonomous functional unit. The Transylvanian Plateau is surrounded on all four sides by tall massifs and connects itself peripherally, through the distribution and redistribution of the factors of its own system, with those of the surrounding areas (Cocean, P., 2010). Through its geographical position, the landscape unit under scrutiny fulfils its role as “central place” in the country, in the mechanism of the national territory's morphological dynamics.

Transylvania, as a geographical and historical region which manifests itself as a central entity, strongly individualised at a national level, benefits from its having been endowed by nature with considerable and varied natural resources that converge harmoniously with the equally considerable man-made resources.

Surrounded by the Carpathian crown, Transylvania appears as an unconquerable territory, the role of this Romanian region with the semblance of a “mega-fortress” – the cradle of the Romanian nation, for that matter - having been, throughout history, that of a protector par excellence of the human community it hosted, which enjoyed its natural “guardianship” both against natural phenomena, and against the vicissitudes of history.

The tourism patrimony of the Transylvanian Plateau, as the central unit of the region, is disproportionate, tipping the scales towards man-made attractions. This aspect is as natural as can be if one is to consider the age of the settlements and the succession of cultures in the inner area of the Carpathians. The tourism imagery of this unit is therefore based mostly on man-made attractions.

The richness of the man-made patrimony is the supreme argument pleading for the holistic development of cultural tourism in Transylvania. In a Transylvania in which globalisation is starting to become (if it hasn't already) a constant, acknowledging the universal character of this phenomenon, tourism is bestowed with the duty of restoring it from the point of view of identity, of reverting it to its origins, of bringing its cultural roots back in the spotlight and of underscoring the authenticity of its underlying cultural structure. This essential role has to be passed on to rural tourism, and the first step ought to be the sketching of a distinct tourist-oriented image, which should have the ethnic patrimony and the folklore patrimony of the Transylvanian village at its basis, with everything that is authentic about it.

➤ ***Transylvania's tourism resources***

The ensemble of tourism resources of this area shows an exceptional variety and complementarity, endowing Transylvania with the privileged status of a complex, yet unitary tourist region, conferred with an indisputable individuality concerning imagery and representation, profoundly inoculated in the collective conscience of tourists.

As a short overview, we shall enumerate the most significant categories of natural and man-made resources in Transylvania. We can thus identify the following *natural tourism resources*:

- *landscape with a scenic value: glacial or volcanic landscapes, landscapes based on limestone or conglomerates, Carpathian valleys, salt karst;*
- *climatic and bioclimatic resources: bioclimatic indices, aeroionisation as a physiotherapy factor, climatotherapy, the biological effect of climate, bioclimate;*



- *hydrogeographical resources: hydrochemical types* (carbonated water, salty or chlorosodic water, alkaline water, alkaline earth water, iodinated water, thermomineral water, hydromineral ores), *peloids, surface waters, the hydrographical network*;
- *biogeographical resources: phytogeographical* (vegetation) and *zoogeographical* (fauna, including game and fishes).

The most noteworthy *man-made tourism resources* are the *cultural/historical resources*<sup>4</sup>, of which we briefly mention:

- *archaeological vestiges pertaining to prehistory and the Dacian and Roman civilisations*;
- *mediaeval historical/cultural sights*;
- *cultural sights with tourism functions*;
- *economic sights dating from the modern and contemporary age, with tourism functions*;
- *resources belonging to traditional rural culture and civilisation*.

The complexity and variety of the patrimony with a potential for tourism, both natural, and man-made, corresponds to the heavily fragmented and exuberantly complex general landscape of Transylvania, which is territorially circumscribed and bordered by the “citadel” of the Carpathians and has its character potentiated by it, which establishes the frame of the geographical overall image, sketched mainly on a morphostructural framework. Proceeding to carry out a small exercise of classification of tourism imagery, with a systemic and didactic purpose, we can consider the overall image of the region as an “umbrella”, under the span of which there is a puzzle made up of a variety of lesser images (“sub-images”) of the various tangible and intangible components, relevant from the point of view of tourism, each with its own identity, contributing to the formation of the emblematic and prominent image of the area under research, but also benefitting highly from the fame and the promotion brought about by the greater visibility of the former.

The complementarity of resources has in all historic periods been a *sine qua non* condition for human communities to become well-established in the midst of the territory occupied by them. Thus, restricting this fact to sphere of interest of tourism, we can affirm that one of the key factors of the progress and of the sustainable and durable development of a tourist destination is represented by this very attribute, that of the complementarity of the resources with an inclination for tourism, ie the coexistence of a multitude of varied resources, both natural, and man-made, which are to condition and complete one another in what concerns the attractiveness of a destination, magnifying it and generating the development of a balanced offer of tourism services, which should cover an array of tourists as wide as possible, given the vastness of the range of motivational factors and of practically innumerable preferences and tastes.

The unitary whole of the available territory, constituted by the totality of the natural resources, is backed by the man-made ones, the two intertwining components having the potential to lead to ample development in tourism, under the condition of sustained interest and firm enterprise, rigorously orchestrated for this purpose. Were this development to be considered for the benefit of durability and the increase thereof, the first step should be the creation of a clear, authentic, representative, viable and widely encompassing imagery of Transylvania to

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<sup>4</sup>These are included in the cultural and historic patrimony with a tourist-oriented value foreseen by the specialised legislation, law 40/1995, which establishes the following categories: archaeological monuments and sites; architectural monuments and ensembles; reservations of architecture and urbanism; memorial buildings, monuments and ensembles; monuments of fine art and commemorative monuments; technical monuments; historic places, parks and gardens.

reunite and symbolise this highly particular quality of a tourism puzzle, which could lead to the definition and inoculation of a sharp and strongly particularised image into the social mind-set.

This section represents an abstract of the undertaking of structuring the arguments concerning the role of the complementarity of tourism resources in the Transylvanian geographical region in shaping an image with a unique, syncretic and unmistakable personality, of remarkable compositional eclecticism, a mirror portrait of the complexity and variety of tourism resources in the territory.

The objective established for this section is that of offering an instantaneous veridical image of a geographical region renowned for the complexity of its attractive resources.

*The complementarity of Transylvania's tourism resources. A personalising factor for the tourism imagery of the region*

The component entitled as such establishes itself through its fundamental function as the basis of the scientific background for the PhD thesis mentioned above.

The premiss and the assumptions we have started out from in establishing the decisive role the factor of **complementarity** of tourism resources has in sketching a personalised image of Transylvania are the following:

- The majority of Transylvanian tourism resources is represented by those of man-made origin, which bear the personal mark of the three great coinhabiting ethnicities: Romanians, Hungarians and Germans. Not in the least inferior, the natural tourism resources confer a legitimate and natural background matrix to the former, by authenticating and complementing them.
- When you say Transylvania, you say multiculturalism, this organic attribute which is so specific to the region under scrutiny exhibiting itself in the guise of admirably complex and varied mosaicking landscapes.
- Given the virtually unchanged perpetual state of affairs of the Transylvanian landscape ensemble, one should not be surprised by the perennial character of the mythical/legendary aura which has been accompanying this land for over one hundred years in the dissemination of its fame, which has led to this macabre halo being deeply rooted in the international collective mind-set with the strength of the archetype/stereotype.
- Grafted and embroidered upon such a combination of varied, yet harmoniously intertwined tourism resources, the notion of *Transylvanian tourism-oriented imagery* appears as what is likely the most complex dimension of the perception of this space. The panoply of elements of attractiveness demand the formation of a faithful, simple, dense and responsible tourist-oriented image imperatively, an image which should take into account the vastness of attractive resources it needs to engulf, to synthesise them by representing and identifying with each and every one of them and which should feel a different type of multiplying effect on behalf of tourism, that of the limitless potential of “capabilities” of perception. Perception, as a fundamental, unique and complex means of sensory knowledge and, simultaneously, a means of propagating impressions, cannot be anything but profoundly subjective.
- Furthermore, the tourism-oriented image of Transylvania needs to be planned and based on the triad *desired image – natively experienced image – perceived image*, out of which only the last distinguishes itself as imagery understood in the sense of tourist perception, of reflection upon the collective mind-set of those who do not live there. That very triad, as a unitary ensemble, considerably complicates the attempts at investigating and

operationalizing a concept that is already “hard”, qualitative by its own definition and thus multidimensional – *the image*.

### 3. Conclusions

As preliminary statements meant to conclude this section of the study, we enumerate:

- In the enterprise of defining a new tourism-oriented image of Transylvania, one needs to follow up on the mental individualisation through geographical and historic landmarks, and, moreover, on the natural and man-made tourism resources of the area.
- The case given is approached and analysed without any claim of its being exhaustive regarding the topic.
- Because of the multitude of varied, authentic and unique tourism resources, of both natural, and man-made origin, having correspondences based on imagery and representation completely in accordance with their nature and combining to establish a particular harmony of the landscape, we can affirm that their visual identity resides in the landscape construct, compiled by the organic connexion between the natural landscape and the cultural one (especially with a vernacular profile), and this fact – we consider – validates the claim of the existence of a mosaicked and strongly individualised tourism landscape.
- A durable and unitary development of Transylvania for tourism could not be carried out without an enterprise of shaping a clear, authentic, viable, encompassing and representative image, prior to the development itself.
- Transylvania, as a former province and current historical and geographical region of Romania, whose fame has travelled the world long before the validation of its real image and without having at least been accompanied by the essential information of its association with Romania, in terms of ownership, is currently exposed to an inflated image in comparison with the other Romanian (geographical/historical) regions of its rank, even with the country itself, but this imagery lag between them and the region under scrutiny is, unfortunately, sometimes due to elements without any correspondence in reality, which could nonetheless be straightened out if those entitled to correct them did not bow to them subserviently, for reasons which are most often mercantile.
- Transylvania most probably does not need its legendary and phantasmagorical aura to flourish from the point of tourism. The mere observation that there exists a panoply of tourist attractions may certify its vocation for tourism, independent of the all too frequent association with condemnable make-believe which is parallel to the territorial reality. Of course, we do not deny the great importance of the fictional, mythical/legendary component in attracting tourists, not only in Transylvania, but anywhere else, as well. For that purpose, we consider that a viable alternative likely to be offered in opposition to the improbable and vain attempts at dissociating the “despotic” image of Dracula, the Transylvanian vampire – who often even coincides with the imagery of the region – from the external tourism-oriented imagery of Transylvania, would be to recover it from the point of view of folklore, a step that would legitimise it, would fortify the autochthonous element in it, identifying Dracula with characters acknowledged by the Romanian rural collective mind-set.
- We consider that the mental image of Transylvania could best be illustrated in the form of a regional symbol/brand. The visibility of this geographical space would be assured

and sustained most wisely through the transposition of its meaning in tourism into a strong, representative, prominent, all-encompassing and viable brand to faithfully render, in a visual, written and verbal fashion, the authentic, profound and unobscured identity of an ancient, wild, syncretic and palimpsestic Transylvania, multicultural thanks to the synthesis of cultures and civilisations brought together osmotically, a genuine *miniature Europe* and *cradle of the Romanian people* in whose collective conscience it is uplifted to a level of sacredness.

## **First Part (Chapters I-VIII)**

### ***Chapter I. Prolegomena: ideas, arguments, premises, hypotheses and scientific objectives***

In the initial chapter, we made known the reasons of choosing of the topic, the motivation and arguments, as well as the premises and assumptions from which we started and which we tested and the scientific objectives we wanted to achieve.

### ***Chapter II. General theoretical and conceptual framework and scientific foundation***

The chapter consists of two components: in the first phase, an inventory of the main general philosophical and cultural trends that have influenced and some still influence the evolution of scientific knowledge throughout the history of humankind and human thought. In the second phase, the main general paradigms of science are reviewed, which correspond mainly to the currents. Within both sections, emphasis is placed on what is considered of interest for this study.

### ***Chapter III. Geography as a science: theoretical and conceptual framework and terminology***

In this chapter we make an incursion into the history of the evolution of geography as a science and establish theoretical bases of the present study. Geography is one of the oldest sciences, and the amount of knowledge accumulated and structured over time have brought it to its present form, when it has a clear object of study, it is a complex discipline, by itself, with methodology and its own terminology.

Science is a dynamic phenomenon that constantly adjusts to the historical, cultural, economic, political and social circumstances that define the evolution of society. It can be said that, practically, until the close of the twentieth century, geography was a "unique" science, undifferentiated by branches and disciplines, tributary to large-scale monographic studies, which bring together a multitude of problems, mainly of general order, dedicated to the knowledge of some territories as wide and as little researched. In the short term, however, the general progress of science and the technological revolution would accelerate the contemporary process of exponential growth of the volume of information, both vertically and horizontally, in all fields of knowledge.

### ***Chapter IV. Tourism geography: theory and concepts***

In this chapter, we have made an overview of the geography of tourism as an emerging field and framework of the present research. We make a brief history of the emergence and development of the geography of tourism as a scientific field, at the global and national level, and we have carried out a review of the main conceptual notions.

### ***Chapter V. Regional geography: theory and concepts***

Within this chapter, a synthesis of the main theories and concepts of regional geography was made, which by its synthesis character resembles the geography of tourism. The integration of this chapter is justified by the administrative-territorial unit of regional rank on which this research is carried out. Due to the fact that this study approaches a geographical-historical region - Transylvania -, we consider this theoretical-conceptual approach of one of the oldest, most used and complex concepts of geography - the region imperative.

## **Chapter VI. Marketing and communication in tourism**

The fields of communication and marketing are essential to combine their contribution in the process of studying the tourist market, needs, preferences and perceptions, as well as in the construction and promotion of the tourist image and destination branding. Both areas are capital for tourism.

### ***Chapter VII. The image versus the tourist image. Theoretical approach of some multidimensional concepts***

Within this section, we explored, for the purpose of elucidation, the relationship between *the image paradigm*, which propagates in postmodern society and a particular component, the *tourist image*, both being extremely complex concepts, based on formation mechanisms that require long-term research efforts.

### ***Chapter VIII. The holistic approach of the tourist image***

Foreign tourists form a global and unified image (holistic, isomorphic), while domestic tourists are sensitive to regional, regional, local differences, forming a more dispersed, more specific image. The image is always individual, so it is mainly subjective.

From the disciplinary (formal) point of view, the subject of the thesis is placed in the sphere of tourism geography - the field of tourism communication and image. Both the geography of tourism, as a framework domain, as well as the communication and tourism image, as a subfield circumscribed to it, has a strong multidisciplinary character, due to the complexity and multidimensionality of the tourism phenomenon.

Research in the field of tourism image and communication must necessarily include inter- and multidisciplinary approaches, which, in addition to geography, as a framework - itself extremely complex, with various inter- and multidisciplinary connections - , they must also use concepts and working methods from the fields of: psychology, sociology, economics, ecology, regional development, marketing (especially branding) management, imagology, the field of the imaginary (collective imaginary, historical imaginary, imaginary literary, social imaginary, etc.), travel literature, tourism journalism, semiotics, the anthropology of communication, the anthropology of the image, heraldry, iconography, ethnology, ethnography, political sciences (geopolitics) signalectic, etc., plus some postmodern fields of geography: mental geography (psychogeography), social geography, cultural geography, imaginative geography, etc.

## **Second Part (Chapter IX)**

### ***Chapter IX. The methodological system used in conducting and elaborating the research***

Within this section, we have systematically, faithfully and completely followed the research methodology typical of tourism geography, emphasizing its strong inter-, multi- and multidisciplinary character.

In science, research methods are ways to develop information, strategies, principles, laws, paradigms and new theories. At present, there is a tendency to universalize the methodology and scientific methods in all fields of research.

At present, the methodological specificity of the sciences has been greatly diluted, against the background of the emergence of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary domains, the tourism field itself being part of this new paradigm.

## **Third Part (Chapters X-XX)**

### ***Chapter X. The image of the country brand versus the tourist image of Romania***

The image of the country brand is the frame, the "dome" under which they are housed and which subordinates the micro-images and all (sub) brands from its spatial-geographical scope. In the case of the relationship between the image of Romania and that of Transylvania, a more special relationship is noted, often the image of the latter succeeding to be more prominent than the country's, to superimpose it or even to subordinate it. The present approach could not be conceived without the investigation of the country brand, and this is precisely the purpose of the present chapter.

***Chapter XI. Transylvania - historical-geographical considerations correlated with the tourist image of the region***

From the approach of a geographic-historical region could not miss the considerations that make the title of this chapter - the geographical and historical. Next, I correlated the two mentioned components with the tourist image and researched, commented and reproduced, dividing them into counties, some text posts and official images of the general presentations used on the County Councils websites.

***Chapter XII. The holistic and functional image of the tourist brand Transylvania***

Researching the image of the tourist destination Transylvania - which should not be confused with the tourist one of the region - starts from several premises. The purpose of this study was to establish the most appropriate way in which the three-dimensional model imagined by Echtner and Ritchie can be used as a tool for measuring and operationalizing the destination image of Transylvania from a holistic perspective. To fully correspond to the conceptual model in question, the destination image of Transylvania has been imagined as being structured on two main components: one based on attributes and one holistic. Each of the two components of the destination image includes functional (tangible) and psychological (abstract) characteristics. The images of the destinations can also vary from those based on common psychological and functional characteristics to those based on more distinctive or even unique characteristics, as well as events, feelings and aura.

In the case of Transylvania, to capture all these components, a combination of structured and unstructured methodologies was used to measure the complex, multidimensional image of this tourist destination.

In the enterprise of defining a new tourist image of Transylvania the mental individualization through the geographical and historical landmarks, in general, and the natural and anthropic tourist attractions of the region, in particular, was pursued, assuming that Transylvania probably does not need its mythical and spooky aura to flourish in tourism, but it cannot and should not be dissociated from it.

***Chapter XIII. The historical, social, cultural-artistic and religious image of Transylvania***

The tourist image of Transylvania, in its complexity, is not limited to the perception of the geographical space and the attractive attributes that characterize it, in its case the necessity of investigating its diachronic evolution, in relation to its historical, social, cultural-artistic and religious multidimensionality, is manifested.

***Chapter XIV. The literary, cinematic and legendary image of Transylvania. The reality-fiction report***

Literature is both an inexhaustible source and an effective tool of geographical research. The emergence of literary geography, at the interface of geography with literature, is a fact as edifying as possible regarding the mutual relation, complementarity and interdependence, between the two domains.

In this section, we aim to offer an overview of a famous geoliterary destination - Transylvania. The wide affirmation of the European and international fame of this former Romanian historical-geographical province has become a truism, which, by itself, has become a universally recognized universal tourism brand.

***Chapter XV. Tourism potential - a fundamental component in building the image of the geographical-historical region Transylvania***

The tourism potential of Transylvania consists of the natural and anthropic heritage and the specific material basis of tourism - the component of accommodation and food, the spa-therapeutic and recreational-recreational component -, to which is added the general character component (communication potential). In this context we have approached the component that generates tourist attraction - the natural and anthropic heritage.

***Chapter XVI. Types and forms of tourism practiced in Transylvania, tours and other thematic tourism products***

In this chapter, we reviewed, exemplified and illustrated the predominant types and forms of tourism in the studied region. The richness and variety of natural and anthropic tourist resources in Transylvania led, naturally, to the development of all types of tourism, except the coastal one, and a great diversity of their forms, and this aspect is worthy of a tourist destination of a planetary rank and notoriety.

The geographical and tourist area of Transylvania represents an area of interference of major types and forms of tourism. In the urban perimeter of the region, cultural tourism is noted alongside recreational one, which are the major components that largely subsidize the development of the tourism phenomenon. Between the two types of tourism, interconditioning relationships are established, due to the association or frequent overlap (with varying weights) between their attributes, which give a mixed (multipurpose) character to tourism, in general, at regional level.

Some of the types and forms of tourism are already established at local, county or local level, while others have started to manifest relatively recently, being in the process of crystallization (football or bridal tourism), and others (the case of balneoclimatic tourism). already consolidated, having a long tradition. We do not claim that the list of types and forms of tourism we have drawn up is exhaustive.

Finally, we attach some examples of Transylvania-Dracula themed tours and other themed products.

***Chapter XVII. Construction of the tourist image of Transylvania***

There are many ways to build the tourist image. No less diverse and numerous have been over time and are still presently the cartographic representations of Transylvania, on which the attention of reputed cartographers and geographers has been directed.

The cartographic reflection of the overall image is extremely important in geography, in general, as the map is one of the oldest and most well-known representations of the world.

In this chapter we have inventoried and presented the results of the research on the forms of representation of Transylvania and of its tourist image on the temporal axis paleoimage - current image.

***Chapter XVIII. The tourist image of Transylvania in postmodernity. Profile and dynamics***

The tourist image is an extremely dynamic and changing socio-cultural construct, resonating with any socio-economic and political change that may affect it. In the present chapter

we set out to sketch the profile and dynamics of the tourist image of Transylvania in postmodernity and to foreshadow the desired image in the future.

As we saw in the initial chapters, the "raw material" of tourism is space. This statement legitimizes any approach aimed at approaching and researching the tourist image of the geographical areas with a real tourist vocation, which can be considered tourist destinations. The tourist image is complementary to the communication about spaces. Basically, the spaces that "do not communicate" about do not exist on a tourist level.

The image of Transylvania created primarily as a bookish mental construct, which competes on a large scale - at the level of the collective mindset of the readers of fantastic novels - in the propagation of a grim, distorting, persistent, but captivating echo associated with this region.

#### ***Chapter XIX. Policies and strategies for communication, image, branding, marketing and promotion***

A policy and strategy to create a new tourism image, unitary, representative, totalizing and truthful or to search and consolidate the identity pillars of the already existing Transylvania brand must include, however, the identity, communication, marketing, branding and promotion components.

Among the main objectives of a coherent policy and strategy at national, regional or county level, to communicate the image of Transylvania, it is necessary to create the tourist image based on its multicultural identity, taking into account the geographical attributes ("Carpathian citadel") historical (palimpsest) and cultural, by its celebrity based on a mysterious aura and a tourist mythology of literary origin.

#### ***Chapter XX. Conclusion***

The conclusions consist in confirming the hypotheses and offering the appropriate answers to the question-objectives that were the basis of the present research, in presenting the research results, valorizing and disseminating them. Finally, we have attached the two own graphic models we have developed, the one of the structure of the mental tourist space of Transylvania and the conceptual model entitled Roza of the tourist image of the geographical-historical region of Transylvania.