

EVALUATING THE IMAGE OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS. THE CASE OF THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF THE CANARY ISLANDS

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Abstract

In the context of increased competition on the international tourism market, the assessment of destination image has become a research subject for both managers aiming to improve destination positioning and academic researchers. In order to obtain a competitive advantage, every tourist destination must identify, maintain and reinforce, through appropriate marketing policies, unique items that form and build over time "the destination's image". Accordingly, the ultimate target of the tourist destinations' promoters should be to achieve a high level of coincidence between the promoted or projected image and the perceived image of the destination, held by potential and actual tourists. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to illustrate promotional techniques and methods used by the authorities of the Canary Islands over the years (projected image), and to identify, through a survey among the citizens of Braşov, the image that they have of the Canary Islands (perceived image).

Key words: *Tourist destination, Destination image, Canary Islands.*

JEL Classification: *M31, M37*

INTRODUCTION

A major objective of any destination positioning strategy should be to reinforce positive images already held by the target audience, correct negative images, or create a new image (Pike and Ryan, 2004, pp.333-342). In fact, this understanding of destination image and visitors' perceptions is critical to a destination and provides the basis for more effective and efficient future strategic planning of the destination. Many studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between the attractiveness of tourist destinations and its image, either projected or perceived.

This paper intends to highlight the image that has designed over the time the Canary Islands' Autonomous Community, as a national and international tourist destination, but also to assess, through a marketing research among Braşov's citizens, the perceived image of this destination.

Given the importance of this objective, we started with a presentation of the conceptual aspects concerning the image of tourist destinations, as a result of a literature review. After a brief presentation of the Autonomous Community of Canary Islands, we analyzed this destination both from the perspective of the projected image and perceived image, which has been assessed using a quantitative research among the citizens of Braşov.

In the same vein, the present research aimed to identify the main advantages of the promotional campaigns conducted by the authorities of the Canary Islands (projected image). It also aimed to highlight the main features and characteristics of a tourist destination in the selection process by the citizens of

Braşov, the influence of personal factors in creating a preconceived image of a tourist destination, by identify the contribution of the tourist destination image, previous experiences, oral and external communication (perceived image) in the selection process.

1. CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE IMAGE OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Nearly 30 years ago, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) declared the importance of positive images to a country (WTO, 1979). Hunt (1975) was the first to demonstrate the importance of the "destination image" in increasing the number of tourists visiting destinations as much as, or even more than, tangible resources.

Destination image is one of the current issues in tourism marketing. A review of tourist destination image concluded with a proposal of a theoretical model defining image in terms of four characteristics: complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic (Gallarza, Saura et al, 2002). Della Corte and Micera (2007) highlight the importance of the image in the actual demand of a destination, not only in the mind of the potential tourists, defining destination image as "the whole of beliefs, ideas and impressions a destination can generate in potential and actual tourists' minds".

Milman and Pizam (1995) suggested that a destination image consists of three components: the product, for instance the quality of the attraction; the second one is the behavior and attitude of the destination hosts as an example; and thirdly the environment: weather, scenery, and facilities.

Many specialists have paid attention on analyzing the importance of a tourist destination image in the planning and strategic development of a certain tourist region. Some authors (Dolea and Tarus, 2009, pp.7-8) claim that "automatically we associate Paris with style and romance, Japan with technology, Brazil with samba, carnival and football, Switzerland with well-being and accuracy, Germany with punctuality and Africa only with poverty and hunger. These kinds of stereotypes, either negative or positive, are the fundamental basis of our tourist behavior. It influences our tourist elections, but also economic ones, and, based on it, we decide which country to visit". Therefore, the tourist advertising and, inherent, the image of a country plays an important role to reinforce the competitive level of a tourist destination to the others.

The possession of excellent tourist resources is not sufficient to attract an optimal number of tourists to a specific destination. The *image* they have in terms of a tourist region and their *attitudes* towards this are two relevant factors in selection process. Nevertheless, it is not easy to define the concept of tourist destination image, taking into consideration that some perceptions are more important than others. There is no universal definition, accepted and shared by neither the scientific community nor the government. But despite that, the different meanings given over the time to the image can be grouped, according to Capriotti (Ugarte Otero, 2007, p.82), in three categories as follows:

- Image as *fiction*. Supporters of this idea argue in favour of the image as something created, different from the reality which represents;
- Image as *icon*. From this point of view, the image is seen as a symbolic representation of an object;
- Image as *position*. A number of authors conceive the image as mental representation, concept or idea focused on person. Therefore, the image is based on several cognitive components, affective ones (feelings caused) and behavioral components (predisposition to act in a determined manner by the exposure to stimulus).

In the same vein, it should be noted that the image of tourist destination (such as mental-cognitive structure) does not depend exclusively on the destination, but it is closely related to the image of various existing entities, given the fact that the tourists take, in general, the characteristic attributes of a larger entity – the province, region, community, country – as own destination attributes. Thus, a specific tourist destination will be identified by the individual as belonging or connected to an upper entity. Finally, each one of the attributes, whether or not they are directly associated with the destination itself, can be formed by a set of evidence (tangible) and

assumptions (intangible or unproven) (Traverso Cortés and Román Onsaló, 2006, p.54).

According to these assumptions, the image of a tourist destination is based on tourists' perception – referring to the stereotypes that, often "stamp on" a particular tourist destination. Destination image is also influenced by the national context; marketing specialists claim that "brand services marketing requires an additional competence, which is to convince your own personal to love the brand, to live it, to breathe it and thus to become personified manifestation of it when has to do with customers. For clients, "the person who represents the brand is the brand itself" (Dolea and Țăruș, 2009, p.33 apud Olins, 2006, p.69). In this sense, the population of a country must internalize their own values, history and culture in order to communicate those outside, every citizen being, in fact, a carrier of its own country image. Therefore, the behavior of citizens in relation to the foreigners can, also, lead to the formation of an authentic image. This is because, it is more real what happens when there is social interaction – direct effect to the interlocutor – than what it is said in general, where there is no direct contact and the interlocutor is not affected (Dolea and Țăruș, 2009, pp.33-35). Although, it should be noted that the image of a country still exists, with or without a conscious effort for a coherent and institutionalized achievement. Each country is perceived in one way or another – stronger or weaker, more clearly or vaguely – by international audience. Theoretically, the branding might help a country to improve its image, but in reality, there are many factors that affect perceptions (Dolea and Țăruș, 2009, p.40).

In general, people "create" their own image of a destination, thanks to their general knowledge and feeling, or from an external influence, such as friends and relatives, the advertisements, the intermediaries, or, also, their own past experiences. In this way, the image projected by tourist destinations through the promotional activities as well as all sources of information to their potential tourists is a topic of crucial interest to tourist destination bodies. The comparison between the projected image and the perceived image by the tourist has to be efficient because it represents a critical link (Andreu, Bigne et al, 2000). Thus, according to specialists (San Martín Gutiérrez, 2005, pp.47-49), the image of tourist destination can be considered as *projected* and/or *perceived*. The projected image of tourist destination, considered as a factor of "attraction", is transmitted to the target market through different channels. These include tourist offices, travel agencies and/or tour operator agencies, which are in close connection with destination. Thus, the projected image is constituted as an element of great importance to promote a destination, while the perceived image is related to a set of beliefs and impressions about a particular tourist destination.

The marketing specialists, as Kotler, Haider and Rein, claim that *the ultimate target of a tourist destination's promoters should be to achieve a high level of coincidence between promoted or projected image and perceived image*, this becoming a critical aspect in the promotion of a destination. The incompatibility between these two types of images leads to some changes on the effective positioning of the site and/or to the development of tourist products and services. The first alternative seems to be the most appropriate action to adjust the tourist image, while the implementation process of a new image after improving the attributes to destination is too complex, costly and long-standing (San Martín Gutiérrez, 2005, pp.47-49).

Therefore, the tourist destination image plays a fundamental role in the marketing process, because it provides important information about how the place is perceived by the tourist. The starting point of any image policy must consist in assessing the current perceived image, this because visitors are those who make the destination image and, based on this, they decide on to purchase or not that tourist destination packages. Thus, it is not enough to create a tourist package for selling the tourist destination, but it is necessary to know every time the image process and the factors' influence, but also the information channels used.

2. A GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF THE CANARY ISLANDS

The Canary Islands represent one of the 17 autonomous communities which are part of the Spanish Kingdom (Navarro and Pardo, 2006, p.168). These are a group of seven volcanic islands rising from the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of North Africa (Dillon, 2003, p.11), between 27°17'N to 29°25'N and 13°20'W to 18°10'W, being as the others natural Macaronesian Region archipelagos (Azores, Madeira, Salvajes and Cabo Verde). As a group, the islands stretch from east to west over a distance of 450 km (Dillon, 2003, p.11) and totals 7447 km² with a population in 2008 of approximately 2,075,968 inhabitants (Alonso Fernández, 2004, p.285).

In terms of climate, it prevails all over the islands the subtropical climate, characterized by a warm and humid climate, with summer rainfall due to moist air masses from the ocean.

Regarding the relief, the islands are characterized by high peaks of mountains in comparison with their surface, most of them showing dominant central peaks, excepting Lanzarote and Fuerteventura. Their profile is varied, as a result of volcanic origin. The provision of relief, in addition of the characteristics of an island territory located in the Atlantic Ocean, provides it a unique landscape with great beauty, with a variety of climates, soils, crops

and plants. Its privileged location between three continents became a landmark in historic routes between Europe and America. These and other factors are those that have given to Canary a unique feature which is reflected in the beautiful mosaic of varieties that make their landscape. From the statuesque Pico del Teide (3,718 m) which reach the top of Tenerife, to Maspalomas dunes of Gran Canaria; from the magic and sacred mountains of Fuerteventura - Tinadaya, through El Hierro or laurel forests of La Gomera; from the volcanoes that compose the unique landscape of Timanfaya - Lanzarote, to the impressive Caldera de Taburiente of La Palma, the Canary Islands is presented as a "miniature continent" that can accommodate any imaginable landscape. This is the beauty that made the ancient Greeks to consider the Canary archipelago as a "nymphs' garden" or "blessed islands".

This rich biodiversity has led UNESCO to pay attention on the Archipelago as an example of coexistence with nature. Therefore, three of seven islands (Lanzarote, El Hierro and La Palma) and a part of one (Gran Canaria) were declared a Biosphere Reserve. To this are added other references, such as declaring the Natural Park of Garajonay and El Teide as World Heritage of Humanity. But there haven't been taken into account only the natural elements, but also the hand of man, which means, for example, the inclusion of the city of La Laguna in the list of World Heritage Cities.

However, beaches are one of the greatest natural attractions of the archipelago. They were formed as result of the erosion of coasts or continuous accumulation of sand from the Sahara and other desert areas. The beaches of the eastern islands are more abundant than the western ones, and dominated by yellow sand beaches due to the direct input of sands south wind brought from the African continent. Among these we notice: El Papagayo and Murejes beaches in Lanzarote, Corralejo and Jandia in Fuerteventura or Las Canteras and El Ingles in Gran Canaria (www.gevic.net).

From an economic perspective, according to statistics provided by the Statistics Institute of the Canary Islands, over the last years the tourism sector represented an important factor in stimulating the overall economic activity, as can be seen from the growth rates achieved in expansion. For example, the tourism activity recorded in the Canary Archipelago generated, in 2009, 11.360 million €, bringing a percent of 27.4% in the local economy (Impactur Canarias, 2009, p.9).

Therefore, the Canary Islands represent a practical example of a region that economically developed mainly due to tourism activities. The advance from the tourist perspective was initiated in the '60s, particularly related to mass tourism associated with the seaside (Martín de la Rosa, 2003, p.105).

3. AN ASSESMENT OF THE CANARY ISLANDS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROJECTED IMAGE

Tourism is one of the main sources of growth of the Canary Islands Archipelago, being of great importance in economic and social development of the region. This is due, mainly, to the importance of both the geography and climate, which gives it the appearance of a unique tourist destination. The differential character of the destination, based on its special natural resources, showed that the implemented and developed management by the governing bodies of the archipelago had and has the aim to preserve and protect these resources, in order to create a competitive advantage. The Canary Islands Government has developed over time tourist policies and models that support and reinforce these natural features and allow, also, the progress over the tourism market (Plan Estratégico de Turismo de Canarias, 2007, p.65).

The main objectives of this part of paper were:

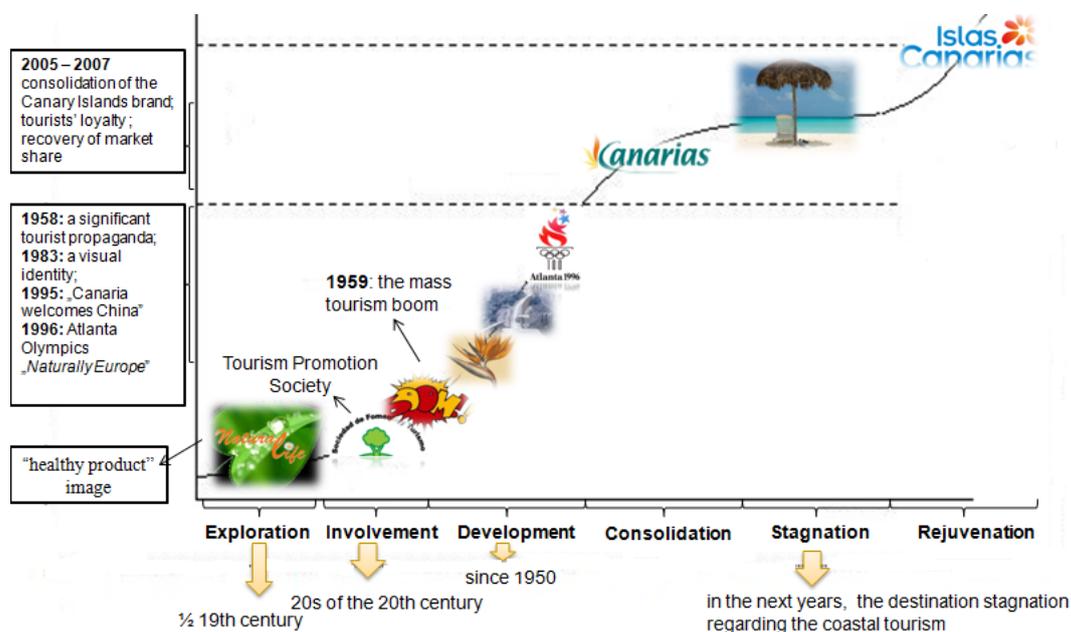
- The assessment of the Canary Islands tourist destination in terms of promotional tools;
- The development of the Canary Islands image over time in terms of visual promoted identity;
- The identification of the main promoted tourism products;
- The identification of the main elements that compose the visual identity of the Canary Islands;
- The identification of the stage of the Canary Islands' destination life cycle.

The evolution and the assessment of Canary Islands tourist destination in terms of the projected image were been analyzed going through the 7 stages of a tourist destination life cycle, a model designed and implemented by Richard Butler.

a) Exploration is the first stage of the tourist destinations life cycle and corresponds with the birth of the product, being characterized by the appearance of a small number of nonconformist tourists (adventurers) who feel attracted by the unique natural and cultural attractions of the place. In the case of the Canary Islands, the first actions of advertising were initiated in the mid nineteenth century, when, according to documents, this destination has begun to be frequented by tourists looking for natural health remedies offered by the climate and nature of this area. Thus, the premises were created for a medical tourism, through a "healthy product" image that appears in a spontaneous way in England press (Gabino Campos, 2002).

b) Involvement is the second stage of this process, which brings the growth of the number of visitors and the involvement of the local community and authorities in order to provide services for tourists. Therefore, it is considered that the archipelago promotional activity intensifies considerably since the 20s of the twentieth century, when it is established a company for this purpose – Tourism Promotion Society (Sociedad de Fomento del Turismo), which has the head offices in Gran Canaria and Tenerife. In 1958, the National Economic Council recognizes the importance of tourism in the islands and proposes significant tourist propaganda for the Canary Islands (Gabino Campos, 2002).

c) Development. The third stage is characterized by the appearance of a well-defined tourism market, made because of extensive and supported advertising actions. Thus, in 1959 it produces the mass tourism boom in the archipelago. In 1983, with the transfer of responsibilities to the community, it takes place the development and implantation of a strategic project. In the same year, the president of Canary Government argues that it is necessary to improve the advertising process of tourism industry.



Source: TALC (The Tourism Area Life Cycle) Model Adaptation
Figure 1. The life cycle of Canary Islands tourist destination

The Canary Government, also, opts for a visual identity of the whole islands, represented by the Strelitz Reginae – a plant from South Africa – as a symbol for the advertising image, decorating the letter "r" in the word CANARIAS. In 1996, during the Atlanta Olympics, the Tourism and Transport Council of the Canary Islands Government initiated a promotional campaign in United States of America, a campaign which followed an increase of the tourist offer of the Canary Islands, by selling them as an ideal place for practicing golf (Gabino Campos, 2002).

d) Consolidation aimed to create a marketing plan, *Canarias 2005 – 2007*, which focused on the planning of a tourism promotional process on a medium term. The development of this plan, also, aimed to reinforce the Canary Islands brand, by increasing the notoriety and improving the region's image as a tourist destination, integrating all the islands and bringing out all their resources and attractions; a diversification of advertising channels, through the intensification of the alternative marketing channels, especially those virtual (internet) as a bidirectional access and individualized channels; the loyalty of tourists and, last but not least, the improving of air links. It was also desirable the increasing of number of tourists arriving in the Canary Islands, the increasing of demand from alternative markets, particularly from Spain, the diversification of tourist products in order to satisfy new needs and motivations of tourists and to attract new segments of demand (Plan Estratégico de Turismo de Canarias, 2007, pp.92-93).

e) Stagnation is the stage when the number of tourists no longer increases and the mass tourism becomes the dominant form of tourism. In the case of the Canary Islands, according to global statistics, we appreciate that mass tourism, especially the coastal tourism, at the end of the twentieth century reached a maturity phase.

f) Rejuvenation occurs when the Canary Islands authorities consider a change of image and, also, a reconsolidation of the archipelago necessary among destinations increasingly competitive. Thus, the first years of 21st century brings significant changes, from the rebranding of the region, to the change of the tourist products. The year 2008 brings to the forefront the approach of a new brand. According to marketing specialists, the graphic promotional symbol is focused on the differentiation word, which adds value to the destination. Therefore, it has incorporated the word "islands" in order to differentiate it from other tourist destinations. It is also waived the legendary Strelitz Reginae, as the visual symbol, adopting an orange flower with seven petals to symbolize these seven islands which form the archipelago. The colors adopted describe in the best way the available resources: sun, sea, landscapes, hospitality, etc. Overall, the promotional logo illustrates the archipelago features such as: they are a group of seven islands, offering quality services and

incomparable tourist resources. In this period, it is waived also the promotion of islands as an ideal destination for coastal tourism, are brought the premises for development of tourist products that surprise the features of islands and which contribute to sustainable economic development, given that there was ascertain an erosion of environment of this region. Thus, the islands will be promoted under the following slogans (www.turismodecanarias.com):

- *Islas Canarias: Family Welcome*, which highlights the island as an ideal space for the family. The variety of families that exists today makes family tourism the third slot in the market in Spain, and involves around 20% of all tourism. Most families are mainly interested in sunshine and beaches, but statistics show that this type of tourism has reached its peak. In relation to this, the Canary Islands have very attractive offers that combine the beach with complementary activities such as excursions, boat trips, nature routes or culture, gastronomy, leisure activities, etc.
- *Islas Canarias: Volcanic Experience*. Among the main values that differentiate the Canaries as a tourist destination, there is one that stands out: the natural wealth of the archipelago, and more specifically, the exceptional and unique kind of natural resources of volcanic origin. In fact, these Atlantic islands are one of the most interesting active volcanic regions in the world. For this reason, this alternative form of tourism – volcanic tourism – is a priority for the promotion of the Canary Islands, both in terms of its capacity to bring a fundamentally differentiated value to the Islands, as well as its ability to contribute to promoting tourist fidelity.
- *Islas Canarias: Water Sports Experience*. The islands guarantee ideal natural conditions for water sports throughout the year, as they enjoy a spring-like average annual temperature, and steady wind conditions. The islands guarantee ideal natural conditions for water sports throughout the year, as they enjoy a spring-like average annual temperature, and steady wind conditions.
- *Islas Canarias: Wellness Delight*. The beginning of tourism in the Canary Islands in the second half of the 19th century is linked to the work of doctors and scientists who travelled to the islands to study the climate, the atmospheric conditions, and the special characteristics of the mountain regions that could be used to cure illnesses such as T.B., asthma and respiratory diseases in general. As far as the services are concerned, within the range of activities

based on water treatments, it can be distinguished: spa centers with or without accommodation (hydrotherapy centers), thalassotherapy centers, and health resorts (using thermal-mineral-medicinal waters).

In conclusion, it can be noticed, on the one hand, a diversification of tourist offer in terms of current needs of tourists, and, on the other hand, a redirection of the Canary Islands to new market segments. Therefore, the Canary Islands are in a stage of relaunch the tourist product.

4. THE CANARY ISLANDS – AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DESTINATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PERCEIVED IMAGE

The study of the perceived image is necessary for a better understanding of the destination's image. The main research objectives were:

- To identify among the citizens of Braşov the issues that define the Canary Islands as a tourist destination;
- To determine the reasons that led to the choice of the Canary Islands as a holiday destination;
- To identify the main issues which had an impact on tourists after they visit the Canary Islands;
- To assess the tourists satisfaction level of those who visit the Canary Islands;
- To determine the target audience, who could purchase the tourist package to the Canary Islands;
- Overall, to achieve a comprehensive assessment of the Canary Islands as a tourist destination image.

4.1. Research methodology

The present research, both quantitative and descriptive, has been accomplished using the face to face method based on a questionnaire applied to Braşov's citizens, aged over 18 years, who attended to the tourism fair "Transylvania Tourism Fair" in the period 13 to 15 May 2011. Considering that the entrance to the fair was free, an exact number of participants couldn't be estimated, in order to determine the size of the studied population. Taking into account that the research had a didactic character, the sample size was established at 100 people, and as a sampling method we used the random sampling method. As such, the results of this research cannot be considered representative for all Braşov's citizens.

The data collection aimed:

- In the first part of the questionnaire, to identify the main channels of communication that can influence the

selection of tourist destinations, but also their impact on tourists' choices;

- In the second part of the questionnaire, to determine the canary islands image among the Braşov's citizens, who have information about this tourist destination from friends, from advertising campaigns, from the internet or from other information sources;
- The impressions, opinions and attitudes of people who visited this region, all experience reported to an after visiting.

4.2. Survey outcomes

According to the results obtained, it was noted that the projected image through a destination brand design, promotional materials, participation in fairs and sponsorship held by a specific destination, isn't a benchmark for the interviewees in order to choose the destination, although it attaches a great importance to promotional campaigns in the media. The friends' recommendations, the promotional offers and value for money are the factors that have a high enough importance in the decision of election process for the interviewed people of Braşov.

Based on this finding, it was noted that **86%** of respondents have heard about this tourist destination, most respondents (61,6%) claiming that they were informed about the Canary Islands from *the mass media* (TV, newspapers, magazines, etc.); *friends and acquaintances* have had a part in creation of the preconceived image, 46,5% of those surveyed indicates this, and *the internet* as an information source that can cause a preconceived image of the Canary Islands, was indicated by a percentage of 41,9% of all subjects.

The results also indicated that the *Tenerife* Island is the most popular among Braşov's tourists (88,4% of all subjects), followed by *Gran Canaria*, chosen by 53,5% of respondents, and *La Palma*, which has accumulated 30 responses (i.e. a rate of 34,9% of those who mentioned it).

In terms of tourism activity of this destination, **63 of those surveyed** believe that the main activities offered by this destination are those related to *coastal tourism*, followed by *adventure tourism* (accumulating 38 points), ecotourism, cultural tourism, rural tourism and, finally, business tourism.

The main characteristics assigned to this destination by the 86 subjects were been analyzed through the question "What characteristics come to your mind when you think about Canary Islands as a tourist destination?" Thus, the most mentioned aspects have been associated to the Canary Islands natural environment, among them including the *beaches* ("beach with soft and golden sand", "sunny beaches"), the *sea* ("blue water"), *the nature and landscapes* available ("beautiful landscapes", "greenery", "wonderful scenery").

It was also ascertained that the respondents associate the Canary Islands to coastal tourism, this fact has been pointed out from the preponderance of the words "*sea*" and "*beach*" through the features set, but also through the tourism activities that can offer Spanish coast.

Moreover, the Canary Islands is, according to the indicated remarks of the respondents, a tourist destination which could offer, in opinion of Braşov's population, "*luxury hotels*", "*quality service*", "*impeccable service*", "*good mood*", "*ambience, fun*", "*fun*", ways to "*relax*".

Despite this, the Braşov's respondents indicated that it is "*an expensive destination*", with "*high prices*" (a rate of 47% of valid responses considers it as **a very expensive tourist destination** in relation to our prices and standard of living, 27,7% of the respondents found it very expensive and 25,3% enough costly).

The third part of the investigation captures the impressions, opinions and attitudes of people who visited this region (6 respondents – a very small number, which is not representative for the studied population), all reported to the gained experience by visiting this destination.

The main reasons that this tourist destination has been chosen were: *knowledge of new places, new experiences accumulated, knowledge of the natural environment* (beach, sea, mountains and natural areas), *rest, value for money and friends recommendations*.

Regarding the grade given for assessing the *satisfaction level* that they had, the average is **9,83**.

The tourists of Braşov who visited one of the seven Canary Islands mentioned as the **main positive aspects** the following:

- *Favorable climate*;
- *Landscape*, featuring a unique landscape, very well-equipped beaches, ideal tourist attractions;
- *Geographical position*, that it has access to the ocean and it has one of the largest ports in Europe;
- *Human resource*, the welcoming people and the hospitality;
- *Appropriate management of the main administrative activities*, from a very well organized transport network, to a very good organization of tourist flow in major of the protected areas.

Although it enjoys a positive image among the Braşov's population, those six scored some **negative aspects**, of which we note: *location* - large distance from the continent and, especially, *overcrowded tourist resorts* and *modification of special areas* (Maspalomas dunes) in order to create tourist infrastructure.

In conclusion, it is noted that 86% of respondents have heard of this tourist destination, the perceived image being a positive one. Most of the respondents consider it as a modern destination with

unique landscapes, but most of them sustain that Canary Islands is a destination too expensive for their standards of living, their monthly income ranging being between 91 to 1,500 lei. Thus, it appears that is a destination addressed especially to those whose monthly income exceeds 3,000 lei.

5. CONCLUSION

The considerable increase of the global tourist destinations' number, and the diversification of the tourism offers, determines an increased competition between incoming destinations and receiver countries. Thus, the enhancement of natural potential and the exploitation of anthropogenic potential, through the creation, development and planning of tourism activities in order to attract the attention and interest of citizens, is the primary objective of any tourist destination. Therefore, this research work aimed on the one hand the impact of the projected image of tourist destinations, such as Canary Islands, among the Braşov's citizens, and on the other hand, to identify the perceived image of the Canary Islands among the citizens of Braşov.

In the early nineteenth century this destination was frequented for the natural health remedies. In the twentieth century has produced a boom of the mass tourism in the archipelago. With respect of this, in addition to an effective management developed by the Government of the Canary Islands, it has a good marketing planning and it constantly improves tourism promotion. In this period it is also chosen a visual identity of the whole islands represented by *Strelitzia Reginae*, decorating the letter "r" of the word *Canarias*. Since 2008, the Canary Tourism Council waived this symbol, adopting a new graphic identity by incorporating the word "*islas*" and its representation through an orange flower with seven petals. What has been pursued by this new identity is a unit of the seven islands. Thus, it was wanted a reinforcement of the archipelago through a relaunch of a tourist offer which surprises the needs of today's tourists. What we want to point out would be that the approach of a new visual identity is taken into account only when it is found that the destination is in a decline phase.

Regarding the image of the Canary Islands among Braşov residents, we can claim, on one hand, that it is a positive one, taking into consideration that it is an ideal destination for leisure, but, on the other hand, the majority of respondents consider it an expensive destination in relation to our standard of living. Even if the number of Braşov's citizens who visited the Canary Islands is very small, this tourist destination has a clear projected image, as it is considered a destination offering good quality tourism services, well-equipped beaches, as most of the respondents have positioned it as a coastal destination.

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