

The Impact of Destination Image on Tourists' Satisfaction and Loyalty in the Context of Domestic Tourism

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ABSTRACT Tourism is an extremely complex field and in order to understand its complexity, none of its components should be left aside. That's why, as many other researchers have done before, the present paper aims to analyze the central element of the entire tourist activity: the tourist. Based on the impressions, opinions and thoughts of Romanian tourists, we tried to determine to what extent the image of the destination they have recently visited has an impact on the satisfaction and loyalty they have towards that destination. Therefore, this paper represents a market research aimed at assessing the image of the Romanian tourist destinations as perceived by the Romanian tourists who visited them and to what extent their satisfaction and intentions to revisit/recommend can be influenced by it. The sample consisted of 200 Romanian tourists, contacted both directly and through social networks, who have visited a tourist destination in Romania with at least one night of accommodation in the last 5 years. Following the statistical analysis of the answers provided, it was found out that there are a number of elements of major importance for the Romanian tourists, while other aspects have a slightly influence on their satisfaction and loyalty. The conclusions of this research should be taken into account by all the stakeholders involved in the development and promotion of tourist destinations in Romania, as the contribution of tourism to the economic and cultural development of a country is an important one, according to some official reports.

KEYWORDS:

Destination image; Satisfaction; Loyalty; Domestic tourism

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1. Introduction

Due to the fact that tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy, there are plenty of researches aimed to analyze and explain the entire phenomenon, its causes as well as its effects. But tourism research is not just about some economic indicators, because beyond the palpable and statistical results there are some influential factors that lead to obtaining those results. Some of these factors are the reasons and motivations that make people travel. It would be impossible to talk about travel and tourism without taking into consideration the main piece that makes all the other pieces fit into this large puzzle called tourism: the tourist. Tourists are the ones who search, analyze, buy, visit and give feedback to everything that the tourist industry is offering them in order to satisfy their needs. In an ever-ascendant world, this industry must keep pace with new trends to ensure its success, as modern tourists are looking not only for a bed and some food but for a real experience when deciding to travel. Given the fact that this experience is gained at a tourist destination, many theorists have tried to define both the tourist destination itself and other essential aspects that any destination should take into account in order to compete with other destinations. For example, one of the most competitive advantage a destination can have is a strong destination brand. Even though the

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destination brand was considered to be similar with destination image, previous studies show that these two concepts have different significance. Thus, this study aims at analyzing the destination image as perceived by the tourists.

Although international tourism has experienced a formidable development in recent years, the number of domestic voyages within the same state exceeds the international ones. In addition, the best promoters of a country's tourism are its citizens, which is why this paper pays particular attention on assessing the image of Romanian tourist destinations who have been visited by Romanians in the past 5 years. The market research was conducted through an online survey among a sample of 200 Romanian tourists. In order to collect the necessary information to serve the objectives of this research, a questionnaire was applied on an online platform amongst tourists of all ages as well as through face-to-face contact with them. The main objective of the research was to assess the image of the destinations the tourists have recently visited and to what extent it can influence their satisfaction and loyalty. Following the analysis of the answers provided, a series of conclusions were drawn regarding the most influential aspects, as well as a series of recommendations and several future research directions that could be addressed. Therefore, this paper represents a study on destination image and its impact on the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists in the context of domestic tourism.

2. Literature review

2.1. *The concept of tourist destination*

Over time, a number of theorists have tried to define the tourist destination. A classic and succinct definition would be the one according to which a destination is "a geographical area (country, region, city, etc.) that attracts tourists" (Medlik, 2012) or "places to which people travel and where they choose to stay for a particular period" (Leiper, 1995 cited in Kiral'ova and Pavlicecka, 2015). In this context, it is necessary to conceptually delimit the two terms, which are often confused: place and destination. On the one hand, the concept of place is a much larger one, which includes all economic activities in a well-defined geographic area, while the concept of destination is used in the context of tourism, having valences strictly related to tourist activities carried out in a certain geographical space (Briciu, 2013).

Qu, Kim and Im (2011) claim that any tourist destination is made up of both tangible and intangible elements. Tangible elements refer to natural attractions (beaches, mountains) or historical-cultural heritage, while intangible elements are represented by the culture, customs and the history of that destination. This statement is also supported by Lynch and Tinsley (2001) who consider the tourist destination "a system with many components such as tourist attractions, accommodation, transport, other services and infrastructure."

In the Romanian literature, a complex definition describes the tourist destination as "the physical space in which a visitor buys and consumes at least one night of accommodation. It also includes a number of other products and services, attractions and tourism resources located at a distance that allows tourists to visit them the same day. It has certain administrative boundaries, defining the competence limits of its management organization and associating a series of mental images and perceptions that define its competitiveness on the market (Cocean et al., 2014). Some authors consider that the ability of a destination to help at the development of tourism in a specific area consists of all natural and human resources which, together with infrastructure, constitute the tourist offer of a destination, region or country (Niță and Niță, 2008 cited in Kulcsar, 2012).

Other Romanian authors, on the other hand, lead the concept of destination to another level, that of philosophy of tourism. According to Rotariu (2008), this concept of philosophy is, on the one hand, a "tripartite philosophy": the tourist as a subject, local communities as beneficiaries and intermediaries as profiteers, and on the other hand, the destination is a unique philosophy, the same for all three elements.

Studies have shown that it is becoming more and more difficult for a destination to differentiate itself from competitors, relying solely on "hard" factors such as infrastructure, economy or accessibility, as the focus is on "soft" factors: the environment, the courtesy of the locals, entertainment and leisure services, cultural traditions, etc. (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2011) Thus, it becomes necessary for a destination to focus on providing a real experience to the tourists,

embracing all other material aspects. The tourist experience is defined by Schmitt (2014) as "particular events occurring in response to certain stimuli". Therefore, all tourist destinations start to position themselves as real "experiences" (Richards, 2001), supported by a series of emotional and rational factors (Kiral'ova and Pavlicecka, 2015).

2.2. Destination image

Destination image represented a real subject of interest for both practitioners and academics over time and since the '90s it has been studied in correlation with the destination brand (Almeyda and Babu, 2017). Though, between the concepts of destination image and destination brand there were often confusions as they were considered to be the same. However, numerous researchers claim that the image is just one of the pieces that make up the destination brand (Konecnik, 2007 cited in Schaar, 2013). In support of this idea, Ekinici (2003) affirmed that "the branding process of a destination begins when the assessment of destination image includes one strong emotional attachment." The author claims that although the two concepts seem to be similar, destination branding has an affective component of the destination image and only destinations that have a brand are able to establish an immediate emotional bond with consumers. Given this fact, the difference between destination image and brand is, according to Ban and Ozdogan (2010) that the brand tends to last longer than the destination image.

On the one hand, the destination image was defined by Crompton (1979 cited in Ekinici, 2003) as: "the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions a person has about a destination." A similar approach is Cai's (2002), who defines the image as "perceptions about a place reflected by existing associations in the mind of the consumer." Other authors supported the idea that the destination image is "multidimensional, with cognitive and affective spheres [...] an amalgam of knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations and impressions that people have about a particular destination" (Henderson, 2007 cited in Stăncioiu et al., 2011). However, Stăncioiu et al. (2011) claim that in order to fully evaluate the image of a destination, it has to be studied from the tourists' point of view, as well as the image that the residents have regarding that particular destination.

Besides, due to the fact that people are daily exposed to a multitude of influential factors, their perceptions can easily change. Manhas et al., (2016) state that an important role in the formation of the image is played by the word-of-mouth promotion, which can influence the perceptions of potential tourists. Intentions of recommendation to family or friends (who are potential tourists) are parts of the attitudinal loyalty tourists might manifest towards a destination they have visited and for that matter gaining their loyalty should be a priority for every destination. In another approach, Prebensen (2007 cited in Schaar, 2013) argues that the image of a tourist destination can be influenced by 3 sources of information, resulting the organic image, the induced image and the modified-induced image. Organic image refers to what people learn about a particular place at school or from mass-media, books or internet and highlights the fact that people have knowledge of one certain place not only in terms of a tourist experience. All the information about a place people have from external sources may play a role in a tourist's making decision whether to visit or not a destination. Induced image is, instead, the result of marketing efforts and promotional materials presented to potential tourists, aimed at informing and convincing them to visit a destination. Modified-induced image is the one formed as a result of an actual experience within the destination.

On the other hand, the concept of destination brand was defined by the authors Ritchie and Ritchie (1998 cited in Almeyda-Ibanez and Babu, 2017) as "[...] a name, symbol, logo or any graphic sign that identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it represents the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination". The promise the brand offers is even more important for a tourist destination, as it offers some comfort to tourists when they choose to visit a destination, anticipating to some extent the experience they will have (Blain, Levy and Ritchie, 2005).

Defined as a useful tool in differentiating one destination from another, the branding process of a destination is, in fact "the process used to develop a unique identity and personality that is different from all other competing destinations" (Morrison and Anderson, 2002 cited in Trost et al., 2012). In other words, destination branding is the selection of the right mix of elements to identify and differentiate a destination, helping to build a positive image of it (Cai, 2002).

2.3. *Tourist satisfaction and loyalty*

The tourist destination market is a very competitive one and in this context a particular attention should be paid to the tourist satisfaction as many authors sustained that this is an influential factor in choosing a destination and deciding to revisit it (Yoon and Uysal, 2005).

According to Kotler (2000) satisfaction represents “a person’s feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product’s perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations”. The idea is sustained by Kim et al. (2003) who define customer satisfaction as a “post-purchase attitude formed through a mental comparison of the product and service quality that a customer expected to receive in exchange.”

Other authors (Giese and Cote, 2000) suggest that satisfaction can be both measured and conceptualized considering only the product/service performance, without strictly comparing this to expectations, satisfaction being a summary affective response of varying intensity, with a time-specific point of determination and limited duration, directed toward focal aspects of product acquisition and/or consumption.

Regarding the tourist satisfaction, many authors claimed that it is measured upon the destination’s attributes and the manner they have met tourists’ expectations. These attributes are represented by natural and cultural attractions, accessibility, accommodation, activities, comfort facilities, safety, infrastructure, local community etc. and all of them have an impact on tourist satisfaction (Celeste and Vieira, 2011).

Furthermore, in a strong correlation with the tourist satisfaction is the tourists’ loyalty towards a destination as many studies found that satisfaction has an influence on the future behavioral intentions of tourists (Petrick, 2004; Prayag and Ryan, 2012). Both practitioners and academics assert that consumer loyalty and satisfaction are strongly and inextricably linked (Oliver, 1999). Moreover, in some instances, authors include satisfaction within brand loyalty measurement models (i.e. “the brand equity ten elements” of Aaker, 1991), while others suggest a conceptual overlap between satisfaction and loyalty (Dimitriadis, 2006).

According to Aaker (1996 cited in Moiescu, 2009) loyalty can be assessed on 4 coordinates: consumer’s satisfaction, consumer’s behavior, repurchasing intentions and intentions of recommendation. This aspect is also supported by Reichheld (2003 cited in Moiescu, 2014) who says loyalty is not limited to repeated purchases, as some consumers could do so from inertia, the lack of alternatives or indifference, and not necessarily because they are loyal to a product. When it comes to a destination as a product, some authors claimed that a destination’s success relies more on the tourists who come back after one visit, than to the first-time visitors (Schaar, 2013). Contrary to this approach, Boo et al. (2009) states that although the tourists have a positive experience at destination, it is not necessary for them to be loyal to that destination as many prefer to travel and discover more different destinations. However, according to the authors, they can show attitudinal loyalty toward a destination, recommending it to friends or family.

This aspect should be taken into consideration as the attitudes are guiding the consumption behavior, being much more stable over time, as opposed to behavior that can change under the influence of external factors (Christou, 2015). Furthermore, gaining consumers’ loyalty has not only the benefit of increasing awareness of the destination, but also improving the perceptions and existing associations in the minds of consumers (Moiescu, 2011).

Moreover, regarding the relation between destination image, tourist satisfaction and loyalty, some authors sustained that there is a direct link between the destination image and visiting decisions of tourists, given that satisfaction or dissatisfaction felt as a result of tourism consumption depends on consumption expectations (reflecting the destination image in the mind of the tourist) and the discrepancies between them and the actual experience (Hassan et al., 2010). Javier and Bign (2001) also stated that there is a direct relationship between the image, the perceived quality, level of satisfaction and intentions to return or recommend to others. Moreover, Gengqing (2002 cited in Rajesh, 2013) in his studies developed a theoretical model for building destination loyalty based on destination image and satisfaction.

Considering all the above, we issued a general research hypothesis stating that satisfaction and loyalty of tourists is positively influenced by destination image.

3. Domestic tourism. National context

In the case of Romania, tourism has seen an important development in recent years, its effects on the national economy becoming increasingly important. According to an official WTTC (2018) report, in 2017 tourism had the largest direct contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the last 6 years, with approximately 12.2 billion RON (1.4% of the total). Expenditures for domestic tourists (58.4% of the total direct contribution) exceeded those of foreign visitors' (41.6%) and are expected to increase continuously by 2028. This may mean a development of domestic tourism, by attracting and motivating Romanians to give up their holidays abroad, in favour of domestic destinations. Concerning the workforce assimilated by the tourism sector, approximately 208,600 jobs were directly involved in the sector in 2017. But overall, tourism contributes with over 530,000 jobs to the labour market.

Domestic tourism, referring to "residents of a country visiting their own country" (Cocean, Moiescu and Toader, 2014) is an important part of tourism in Romania. The number of trips made by Romanians on the territory of the country, whether aimed at visiting relatives and friends, or spending holidays and vacations away from home, exceeded the number of arrivals of foreigners in our country, according to an official report "Travel in Romania" written by Euromonitor International in September 2017 (EIL, 2017). The same report mentions that among the factors that have contributed to the development of the domestic tourism in the last period are the low prices of the accommodation units in Romania (mainly those from rural areas, where the development of agritourism is observed), an increase in the number of domestic flights, especially direct flights to Constanta (that favoured short stays on the seaside), as well as the new legislative regulations on stimulating domestic tourism by granting holiday vouchers to public sector's employees.

Table 1. Evolution and forecast of domestic trips in Romania

Year	Domestic trips ('000)
2012	16212.5
2013	17291.8
2014	16939.1
2015	17735.9
2016	16274.3
2017	16261.7
2018	16408.1
2019	16696.2
2020	17071.3
2021	17524.6
2022	18053.6

(Source: Euromonitor International, 2017)

According to the data presented in Table 1, the number of domestic trips decreased by about 8% between 2015-2017, but for the current year 2018, there is an expected increase of nearly 147,000 voyages made by Romanians in the country. The trend is rising in the coming years, with more than 18 million domestic trips being estimated in 2022.

Given the evolution and the forecast of domestic tourism in Romania, it is necessary for the national and local authorities to pay attention to Romanian tourists and their impressions regarding the national destinations. A sustainable development of domestic tourism is only possible by identifying the major issues of the national destinations and subsequently their causes as well as measures of improvement.

4. Methodology

4.1. Questionnaire Design

The tool used to collect the necessary information was a questionnaire which included 15 questions, some of them referring to the attributes based on which the destination image can be assessed. The construction of these questions and the related response variants were carried out following the consultation of the specialized literature, which specifies the main attributes that can be used in order to measure destination image (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Tribe and Snaith, 1998): natural attractions, cultural heritage, accommodation facilities, cleanliness, personal safety, accessibility, locals' hospitality etc. A total of 35 items were identified in these previous studies and adapted to the current research context. Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate for each of these items their degrees of agreement (1= strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). Moreover, the questions regarding the demographic information (age, gender, occupation and monthly income) were placed at the end of the questionnaire.

4.2. Data Collection

The population surveyed was represented by the Romanian tourists who were, at least once during the last 5 years, on a vacation which included at least one night of accommodation in a tourist destination in Romania. The data collection method consisted of a questionnaire based survey amongst a sample of 205 tourists from the population surveyed. Moreover, due to the fact that there were some budget and time constraints we decided to choose the fastest and least costly sampling method, the questionnaire being self-administered by the respondents. Thus, the convenient sampling technique was applied, meaning the respondents were selected based on their availability to be interviewed.

The sample consisted of 205 Romanian tourists who visited and spent at least one night in a tourist destination in Romania in the last 5 years. After analysing the answers of the 205 investigated tourists, only 200 of them were included in the research analysis because of completing errors. The structure of the finale sample of 200 tourists is shown in Table 2. Therefore, three-quarters of the sample were women, and only 25% were male. In terms of age, most of the sample is represented by young people aged 18-21 (39%), while half of the sample (50%) has an average level of education (middle school, vocational school or high school). In addition, most respondents said they have a monthly personal net income of up to 2,000 RON.

Table 2. Sample structure considering gender, age, monthly net income and level of education

Gender	Age	Monthly net income	Level of education
25% - Male	39% - Between 18-21 years	24% - Up to 1,000 RON	50% - Gymnasium, high school or vocational school
75% - Female	25% - Between 22-30 years	38% - Between 1,001-2,000 RON	9% - Post-secondary school or similar studies
	15% - Between 31-40 years	20% - Between 2,001-3,000 RON	31% - Bachelor's degree
	21% - Over 40 years old	10% - Between 3,001- 4,000 RON	10% - Master's degree, postgraduate studies or PhD
		8% - Over 4,000 RON	

The questionnaire based survey was, however, conducted both online and offline. The questionnaire has been created on the online platform isondaje.ro and because of this, in the first phase we decided to distribute it on the Internet, especially using some of the most popular social networks. Moreover, in order to obtain answers from all categories of tourists, even those who are not using the social networks, we decided to contact them directly, face-to-face, in a public institution, where they have been approached and explained the purpose of this research. Thus, through direct contact with the respondents, the necessary information was gathered from 35 Romanian tourists.

In spite of the low and unrepresentative sample for the investigated statistical population, taking into account the purpose of this exploratory study (the analysis of the relation between the destination

image and the satisfaction and loyalty of the tourists), the sample size can be considered reasonable / acceptable, with certain limits. There are some previous studies on similar themes among similar populations based on small samples (Çoban, 2012; Mohammad, Alsadat and Hoda, 2016; Al Muala, 2017).

The whole process of elaborating the research plan, collecting the necessary data, analyzing them and drafting the final research report, took place over the course of 10 weeks between 17 March and 28 May 2018.

4.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis was made using the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics which allowed us to use the factor analysis (with Varimax Rotation) to identify the main attributes that measure the destination image and have an impact on tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

5. Results

As previously mentioned, one of the primary objectives of the study was to assess the image of the last national destination the tourist has visited and which of the aspects related to a destination have the greatest impact on their satisfaction and loyalty. However, there were 35 items/variables representing a destination's attributes, included in the questionnaire and given their large number, we decided to group them into a smaller number of variables, allowing us to test a multiple linear regression model. For this purpose, we used the principal components analysis (factor analysis) which allowed us to group the attributes into different latent variables.

Using this analysis all the 35 attributes were grouped into 8 different variables (see Rotated factor matrix – Table 3), as all of them exceeded the 0.4 threshold suggested by the literature as being optimal for sample of the size of the present (Hair et al., 1998).

However, some of the component items within a resulting latent variable were excluded from the final analysis because there were some logical inconsistency between them and the other items. For instance, in the second variable resulted, the item "Entertainment services" was excluded due to the fact that it has no correlation with the other items referring to destination's accessibility and transport facilities.

Moreover, the fourth and the eight variables were removed from the analysis because we considered the number of items grouped together being too small (only 3 items) with no correlation between them (i.e. in the eight variable the sport practicing possibilities refers to the services provided at destination, whilst natural attractions and climate are related to the natural assets of a destination).

Also, an important point to be made of is about the variable considered to be dependent: Tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. Although satisfaction (defined as the manner in which destinations' attributes met tourists' expectations) and loyalty (intention to repurchase or recommend to others) are generally considered to be two different concepts, the two were pooled in the current research as a single dependent latent variable, taking into account the high correlation between the variables' components. Incorporating, on a theoretical basis, the two concepts in the model as separate variables would have distorted the regression analysis due to their collinearity.

Also, previous research supports that in some cases there might be a conceptual overlap between satisfaction and loyalty (Dimitriades, 2006). Moreover, for the dependent variable we decided to renounce at the two items regarding the compatibility of the destination (although according to the rotating factor matrix they were grouped under the same variable with the items related to satisfaction and loyalty), since compatibility is a very different concept from the other two (satisfaction and loyalty of tourists).

Table 3 Rotated factor matrix, containing the 35 observable variables

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Accessibility of the destination			.682					
Natural attractions								.578
Architectural arrangements					.727			
Historical and cultural heritages					.839			
Festivals and events					.547			
Gastronomy					.563			
Destination's climate								.555
Destination's safety		.613						
Destination's cleanliness		.533						
Public transport within the destination			.696					
Car rental services			.657					
Road infrastructure			.589					
Agglomeration in car traffic						.853		
Agglomeration of people / pedestrians						.816		
Noise level						.633		
Local network of stores			.597					
The hospitality of local stores' staff				.601				
Telecommunications and network services				.817				
Internet services				.791				
Entertainment services			.519					
Dining possibilities at destination							.631	
The hospitality of restaurants' staff							.602	
Accommodation possibilities at destination							.710	
The hospitality of the staff working in hotels/motels/guest houses etc.							.658	
Tourist information obtaining possibilities		.501						
Sport practicing possibilities								.501
Local citizens' politeness		.770						
Friendliness of locals		.696						
How reasonable are the prices		.651						
Destination's compatibility with tourist's personality	.764							
Destination's compatibility with tourist's lifestyle	.755							
Level of satisfaction regarding the tourist experience	.723							
Choosing the same destination again because of the tourist experience had	.811							
Intention to spend another holiday at the destination	.812							
Intention to recommend the destination to friends / acquaintances	.841							

Therefore, out of the total latent variables resulting from the grouping of factors, only 6 out of 8 were included in a multiple linear regression model, in which the latent variable related to the satisfaction and loyalty of the tourists was considered dependent and the other five variables were factors / latent explanatory variables. The latent variables included in the multiple linear regression model as well as their components are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The latent variables resulted and their components

The name of the latent variable	Components
Satisfaction and loyalty of tourists	Intention to spend another holiday at the destination Intention to recommend the destination to friends / acquaintances Choosing the same destination again because of the tourist experience had
The comfort of the destination	Level of satisfaction regarding the tourist experience Local citizens' politeness Friendliness of locals Destination's safety Destination's cleanliness
Infrastructure and transport	Public transport within the destination Accessibility of the destination Local network of stores Car rental services Road infrastructure
Accommodation and food services	Dining possibilities at destination The hospitality of restaurants' staff Accommodation possibilities at destination The hospitality of the staff working in hotels/motels/guest houses etc.
The discomfort of the destination	Agglomeration in car traffic Agglomeration of people / pedestrians Noise level
Tourist Attractions	Historical and cultural heritages Architectural arrangements Festivals and events Gastronomy

The results of multiple linear regression are as follows:

Table 5. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.628 ^a	.394	.378	.760

The Model Summary table (Table 5) contains information about the correlation coefficient and the standard error of the estimation. The multiple correlation coefficient $R = 0.628$ indicates that there is a strong correlation between the satisfaction and loyalty of the tourists and the variables included in the regression model. The value of the coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.394$ indicates that 39.4% of the variance of the dependent variable, Satisfaction and loyalty of the tourists is explained by the regression equation.

Table 6. The ANOVA test

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	72.949	5	14.590	25.228	.000 ^b
	Residual	112.196	194	.578		
	Total	185.145	199			

The ANOVA test table (Table 6) provides the F test for the null hypothesis that none of the explanatory variables are in a correlation with the Satisfaction and loyalty variable. This hypothesis is, however, categorically rejected, given the value of $F = 25,228$ ($p < 0.05$), and it can therefore be concluded that at least one of the explanatory variables is correlated with the dependent variable.

Table 7. Multiple linear regression results

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.414	.381		1.088	.278
	Destination's comfort	.534	.084	.442	6.352	.000
	Infrastructure and Transport	.039	.080	.031	.488	.626
	Accommodation and food services	.206	.093	.152	2.219	.028
	Destination's discomfort	-.010	.059	-.010	-.163	.870
	Tourist Attractions	.180	.070	.165	2.550	.012

a. Dependent Variable: Satisfaction and loyalty

Unstandardized Coefficients-B (Table 7) predicts to what extent the dependent variable Satisfaction and loyalty changes when one of the explanatory variables increases with one unit, all other factors remaining constant. However, it is necessary to analyze the last column of the table showing the significance coefficients. It can be noticed that there are only 3 out of 5 explanatory variables with a significance coefficient < 0.05 . Thus, the variables *Destination's comfort*, *Tourist attractions* and *Accommodation and food services* have a significant influence on the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists towards a destination, the greatest impact having the Destination's comfort. On the other hand, *Infrastructure and transport* as well as *Destination's discomfort*, although important for any destination, appear not to be a determining factor for Romanian tourists in forming the overall image of the destination.

6. Discussions

Following the results aforementioned, it can be concluded that:

The hospitality and courtesy of Romanians, also recognized internationally, seem to have an important effect on Romanians when visiting domestic destinations. It appears that the warm and welcoming atmosphere of the destination plays an important role in shaping the overall image of the destination.

The experience of a Romanian tourist and subsequently his perceptions and beliefs regarding the destination depends largely on the cleanliness he finds there, but also on the safety that the destination inspires. Thus, some tourist destinations in Romania, despite the numerous tourist attractions, may not have a positive image among tourists if they do not feel safe there or do not have the expected hygienic conditions.

The tourist attractions of a destination, whether historical or cultural attractions, architectural arrangements or even gastronomy, are very often the main reason for choosing a particular destination to the detriment of others. If these elements intertwine harmoniously with the rest of the aforementioned elements, it is very likely that the destination's image as well as tourists' satisfaction will be improved.

The tourist satisfaction depends to a large extent on the offer he finds at the destination. The more the destination provides its guests with a variety of accommodation facilities and other basic services, the greater the chances for the tourist to show loyalty to that destination and to want to come again. Also, human interaction has an important role, which is why the employees in the destination should be more focused on the needs of a tourist, as he might recommend the destination to his acquaintances, who are also potential tourists.

The traffic in the country's major cities and high noise level are factors that determine Romanians to often seek peace in a natural setting away from urban agglomeration. However, there are also tourists for whom the dynamism of urban centers and being surrounded by many people are the best way to satisfy their need to escape from the daily routine. Thus, once they arrive to a destination, even if it is overcrowded and noisy, these negative aspects have a less impact on their overall assessment after the visit.

The problems encountered in transport to and from the destination due to poor infrastructure, insufficient public transport means or the impossibility to rent the means of transport in some destinations even if can negatively affect the destination image, it does not seem to have an impact on satisfaction and loyalty of the Romanian tourists, as the results of the research show. It can be said that Romanians' satisfaction and thus, their loyalty are not affected by the negative aspects encountered at a destination if there are other elements such as relaxation possibilities, natural and cultural attractions or locals' hospitality that compensates.

7. Conclusions

The current study shows that destination image has, indeed, an impact on tourist satisfaction and loyalty in the domestic tourism context, offering a better insight into the relation between these concepts, by trying to determine which constructs have the most influence on tourists' satisfaction and their intention of revisiting and recommending the destination.

The results of this study on destination image and its impact on the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists in the context of domestic tourism can be useful to several categories of stakeholders at the level of the Romanian destinations. Firstly, local, regional and national authorities, as well as Destination Management or Marketing Organizations should take into account the issues raised by the 200 tourists as being deficient in Romanian destinations. For example, although it has been shown that the infrastructure does not jeopardize the tourists' impressions regarding the destinations nor their satisfaction, it remains, however, one of the elements reported to be deficient in the national destinations. Authorities should take action on this issue because not only Romanian tourists but also foreigners visiting our country may be reluctant to choose to visit Romania if they do not have adequate road infrastructure to facilitate access to the destination.

Secondly, the economic agents at the destination could take into account that Romanian tourists say they are satisfied when they have a wide range of services to choose from. Thus, an opportunity for these agents would be the development of tourist services that do not exist or are poorly developed in some destinations.

Moreover, the research revealed that for Romanian tourists the quality of the human interaction within the destination is of great importance. If the locals at a destination are hospitable to the tourists who arrive there it might influence the quality of their stay and the tourists' intention to spend another holiday in the same place. Although locals may consider tourists responsible for overcrowding, rising prices or environmental destruction and therefore be less hospitable to them, they should also consider the positive effects that tourism brings to their community: infrastructure development, economic growth, new job opportunities etc.

8. Research limitations and future research

The research was limited by the time and budget constraints that influenced the choice of the convenience sampling method to the detriment of others. Also, for this reason, the data collection was made through a questionnaire survey, as it enabled us to collect the answers quickly, with the costs involved being kept to a minimum. On the other hand, the population surveyed is a large one, as millions of Romanians travel annually, so the results obtained after analyzing the answers of the 200 tourists included in the sample cannot be generalized to the whole population. However, the results of the research may be starting points in formulating future strategies for the development of Romanian destinations.

As future research directions, the study could be adapted and implemented in the context of inbound tourism, in order to observe the opinions of foreigners who choose to visit our country, as there might be differences between Romanians and citizens of other states due to the cultural

background and different economic development from one state to another. In addition, in a more elaborate version, the research could focus on assessing the behavioral loyalty of tourists, both in the context of domestic and inbound tourism. This research evaluates only a few aspects of attitudinal loyalty (the intention to revisit or recommend), but the approach of behavioral loyalty captures the actual actions taken by tourists (e.g. if and how many times they have revisited a destination).

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