

Fostering Public Attendance within Territorial Marketing Field - A Local Diagnosis Aimed at Providing Image Strategy Improvements to the Romanian City of Cluj-Napoca

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Abstract. *Market economy is a concept the meaning of which is strongly related to the word competition. In the context of globalisation, next to companies, small and medium-sized enterprises, territories also have to create an identity and furthermore to bargain it outside their boundaries. How can a local community reach the state of the art in terms of territorial marketing?*

This study attempts to demonstrate that more public attendance is stimulated in the local marketing process much easier the territorial branding challenge is faced by local administration. Moreover, the present paper seeks to identify the way that those pillars supporting an image strategy for Cluj-Napoca city of Romania can be found.

Keywords: *territory, marketing, diagnosis, analysis, public attendance.*

Raktažodžiai: *teritorija, marketingas, diagnozė, analizė, visuomenės dalyvavimas.*

Introduction

Cluj-Napoca is one of the most important cities of Romania and, for a long time, the most representative of Transylvania, a region located in the western side of this country closer to the Hungarian border. Being a very well-known academic and medical centre, Cluj-Napoca has been shaped for several years by an unprecedented rhythm of growth. Large number of students settled here in order to fulfil educational and career dreams and foreign investors running businesses in this part of the country vitalise the economy of the city and make this place different from the other Romanian county seats. An important percent of inhabitants consists in either students or academics, therefore numerous universities operating in Cluj-Napoca together form a strong and reliable industry.

For several years, an image strategy conception is still one of the main concerns of the municipal administration, round tables, conferences, brainstorming on this topic taking place quite often. Nevertheless, branding Cluj-Napoca does not seem to be such an easy task neither for local public administration nor for other categories of stakeholders. Thus,

there are voices claiming that branding Cluj-Napoca does not require strategic approaches, encouraging not necessarily a kind of inertia but a self and uncontrolled branding while other opinions support rather the opportunity of fostering more involvement of local governors. All the discussions related to this topic are focused on fundamental questions as to “who?” or “which?” In other words, “who has the faculty of taking territorial marketing decisions ascertaining what is suitable or not for branding this city?” and, meanwhile, “which of the several given branding outputs (logos or slogans, for instance) fits Cluj-Napoca?” However, a neglected question related to territorial marketing in Cluj-Napoca has constantly been “how?” a question asking for the kind of methodology that should be used in order to make sure that a local brand is legitimated and indeed representative for community apart from being funny and catchy which may be in a way related to superficiality. Regarding the issue of branding Cluj-Napoca, discussions and analyses have often lacked transparency, public attendance being rather neglected or at least superficially approached. Therefore, this paper pleads for more public attendance in the territorial branding field, stating that there is nothing more relevant and appropriate in promoting a city than community’s perception, because almost each inhabitant must identify themselves with the image of the place that they live in. As a promotional strategy for a product or service is founded on marketing researches, promoting a territory should be supported by similar scientific pillars. Certainly, a suitable brand of Cluj-Napoca doesn’t necessarily have to represent a complete and exhaustive radiography of the city.

As any other territory, this one also has its strengths good to be promoted and weaknesses needing amelioration. Creating a good image for the “product” named Cluj-Napoca requires an intelligent and effective exploitation of its qualities and strategic tools of handling its defaults. That is because, above all, a brand has – at least partially if not entirely – to “tell the truth” about a territory. For instance, we cannot lie that one of the main strengths of this city is the traffic, while the reality may demonstrate to the contrary. Therefore, without being sustainable, an image of a territory cannot be sold and, meanwhile, cannot convince potential tourists or investors.

Considering all of these thoughts or opinions, **the present paper provides an exercise of territorial diagnosis regarding the city of Cluj-Napoca.** This concept inspired by a similar investigation carried out in Granada, Spain [4] will be applied through an exploratory quantitative research based on survey. The research is aimed at identifying those elements justifying a further SWOT analysis of the city from the perspective of inhabitants. Thus, it may be considered that **the research has a double utility**: primarily, by emphasising positive features as strengths and opportunities it may provide for territorial marketing reliable tools, while secondly, by underlining negative characteristics as weaknesses and threats it may detect elements justifying new public policies. The research to be presented is not a representative one but it may be approached as a pilot project suitable for further enlarged investigations. In a way, this investigation may be considered what promoters so often name *a teasing*. Meanwhile, indicators to be used are strongly related to Cluj-Napoca and its peculiarities.

Theoretical framework: territorial branding challenges

Cities, counties and regions compete with each other in order to attract investments, visitors or at least a bit of attention [7]. According to some statistics, it seems that in Europe there are more than 105 000 communities and 500 regions [6]. All of these territorial unities contest limited resources from the *quantity* and *quality* (diversity) point of view. Due to the complexity of contested resources, territories are determined to identify their own competition challenges consisting in other cities, counties or regions seeking to capture the same target group: tourists, investors and the like. For instance, a city of Budapest may represent a point of attraction for foreign tourists interested in exploring closer capitals, such as Vienna or Prague¹. Therefore, the existence of a common interest beyond a larger number of territories may influence them to act as private enterprises in order to reach more “customers” (to magnetise their own target-groups). The offer of each city is backed up by other type of offers related to *economy* (services or goods), *culture* (public events and the like), *infrastructure* (public services), along with *political environment* (rulers), therefore to everything that can determine the attractiveness of a local community. Thus, below the image of a territory there are distinguished elements, local peculiarities which must be expressed and represented.

In order to make all this complex of elements function, territorial marketing requires a type of leadership able to face some of the following challenges [7]. The first challenge is the hybrid character of the whole human and organisational mechanism involved in territorial branding. This mechanism may include economic actors, politic actors, marketers and, above all, citizens. Public attendance in the territorial marketing field is a prerequisite, a *sine qua non* condition for success. Another challenge consists in the equality of territorial branding stakeholders in terms of rights and statute. This kind of situation also requires consensus, cohesion and negotiation instead of dictations and commands. A feature like this converts territorial branding into a process difficult to control. Finally, the third challenge to be faced by a competitive territorial branding leadership [7] consists in creating harmony between *designed perception* – the way that a territory would like to be seen by its community, and *current perception* – the way that a territory is seen by others from beyond its boundaries. This last challenge is aimed at underlying once again that a territorial brand has no chance to be effective unless it is sustainable. For this purpose, an effective territorial marketing strategy should be developed in respect of four community pillars synthesised in a *territorial marketing mix* [5]: *infrastructure* (education, culture and the like), *networks* (transport, water supply), *architecture and design* (urban planning, constructions) and *society* (population, culture, history).

Above all, a target group is definitely a precondition for a good territorial marketing because a brand, whether its size and utility, cannot be universal. In 2008, for instance,

1 The idea of territorial competition between Budapest and other Central European capitals as Vienna or Prague was used by professor Mihalis Kavaratsis during a speech delivered at Cantabria University of Santander, Spain, on 11 November 2011

Berlin started a promotional campaign titled “be Berlin”. The whole initiative was aimed at strengthening the identity of their inhabitants along with their pride to live in this city [8]. The same campaign was carried on one year later but this time in order to attract foreign tourists or investors. This attempt of aligning the campaign to a larger target group was less successful. How could a tourist “be Berlin” without living there and identifying himself with the image of that territory? Therefore, a successful internal territorial marketing campaign turned into a fail *just* because it changed its target group. Therefore, in order to emphasise the importance of “customers” or target groups for territorial marketing, this study will agree with Erik Braun’s definition of place marketing consisting in the *coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city’s customer and the city’s community at large* [2].

Empirical research: territorial diagnosis of Cluj-Napoca

Methodology

The exploratory **empirical research to be presented in this article is a quantitative one based on survey**. Investigated universe is mostly formed by respondents aged 20-40 holding at least a bachelor degree. **The aim of this investigation is primarily to test the validity of the survey** and to set furthermore the range of necessary premises for forthcoming investigations based on larger study samples.

The core point of the survey was to collect opinions of respondents related to several indicators representing the infrastructure of Cluj- Napoca, such as public transport, traffic, promenade areas, buildings and the like. The total number of urban indicators proposed by the questionnaire is 16. Next to each one of them, measurement scales were suggested that valued from 1 to 5, therefore from *very weak* to *very good*.

In the current stage, the research has 30 respondents but its extended version is aimed at tackling 150-200 subjects under investigation.

Findings

The first question of the survey was the following: *is the image of Cluj-Napoca a topic raising your interest?* The unanimous answer to this question was “yes”, all the respondents claiming their concern with the image of the city they live in.

The second question was aimed at finding out whether the respondents consider or not that designing a local brand of Cluj-Napoca is an opportune issue for this city. An overwhelming majority of 85% answered positively, while others answered in the negative, thereby denying the importance or opportunity of branding Cluj-Napoca.

The third question included in the survey challenged the respondents to a word association exercise. Thus, each of the investigated subjects was asked to write the first thing

coming into their mind when faced with Cluj-Napoca. Ideas resulted through this exercise were complex and diverse, therefore it was impossible to detect a clear tendency. However, most of the respondents (25%) said “home” because they lived or were born in Cluj and 20% wrote “university” either because they were students or due to their awareness of Cluj as an important academic community. Some respondents also wrote “Transylvania” (therefore, a name instead of a word) emphasising that Cluj-Napoca represented primarily a region of Romania. Considering that most of the selected respondents were young people, 10% of them wrote the words associated with “good time” (fun, entertainment and the like). Apart from those respondents, there was an important share of 30% embodying the subjects who responded: *culture*, *Romania*, *the Statue of Mathias Corvinus* (a landmark of Cluj) or *vargabeles* (a Hungarian dish, very popular in Transylvania). Therefore, this question was aimed at stimulating the emotional memory of respondents in order to figure out the kind of mental associations that they were able to make while talking about Cluj-Napoca. Those kinds of answers from Mathias Corvinus to Transylvania or from university to *vargabeles* may be used as emotional stimulus for potential tourists or investors. By associating Cluj with the word “home”, we may suggest that Cluj is the type of warm and hospitable place making any passer-by to feel at home regardless of their cultural background. By using another word “university” we may suggest that Cluj is a place able to provide high level education and meanwhile, an attractive life for students. Finally, the frequency of associating Cluj with Transylvania may symbolise that this city embodies well enough the spirit of the whole region it represents. This finding may reanimate discussions regarding boundary limits of territorial marketing. What kind of approach may be more appropriate for Cluj: a city-limited branding or a widespread territorial marketing strategy embodying the whole Transylvania?

Another question included in the survey was related to some representative features of the city. This item of the questionnaire challenged the investigated respondents to select one of the following prevailing features of Cluj: academic centre, centre of Transylvania, multicultural city, medical centre, historical city, sports centre or other characteristic, if they consider that none of those is suitable or representative. An overwhelming majority of respondents (60%) considered that being an academic centre is fairly the most representative characteristic of Cluj. Another share of respondents, 25%, were those stating that the centre of Transylvania is the feature that fits Cluj-Napoca better. Some of the investigated respondents have chosen multicultural and medical centre (a share of 5% in each case).

The following open question of the survey asked respondents to name a city of Romania which they considered to be similar to Cluj-Napoca. Each of the selected respondents was allowed to choose any comparison criterion in order to answer to this question. As one of the previous items related to word association, this question was a psychological one inviting respondents to associate Cluj-Napoca to any kind of Romanian city, whether county seat or not. Most of the questioned respondents, 35%, avoided giving a clear answer, claiming that Cluj was so unique that comparisons were not justified. In equal percentages of 20%, respondents have chosen Sibiu, a former European Cultural Capital and Timisoara, another very well-known academic centre of Romania. Meanwhile 15%

o respondents gave Brasov in their answer, a city situated in the central part of Romania having an historical “flavor” similar to Cluj-Napoca. Finally, the rest of respondents, 10%, answered Iasi, the most important city of Moldavia, another representative region of this country. Meanwhile, Iasi is known of providing an intense academic live, same as Cluj and Timisoara. All of these cities are either academic cities or towns situated in Transylvania, thus we may state that the respondents are tempted to associate Cluj to other Romanian cities characterised by these two features.

Preserving the same algorithm, by the following question the respondents were asked to determine a foreign city able to be associated with Cluj. The majority of them, 65%, also consider that this city is unique, while other 10% consider that the Austrian capital, Vienna, is comparable to Cluj-Napoca. Moreover, there has been an important share of respondents (25%) who selected such cities as Bologna (Italy), Madrid (Spain), Nurnberg, Stuttgart (Germany) and Prague (Czech Republic). Respondents were challenged to associate their city with other cities of different countries, cultures, architectural styles and this task was not that easy. Moreover, Cluj is not a capital and that is why it is difficult to compare it with other cities of the same level. However, the tendency of considering Cluj as unique and incomparable city is a promotional opportunity. The further challenge from now on is to find the elements justifying such uniqueness.

One of the characteristics shaping Cluj-Napoca and distinguishing this city from other Romanian county seats consists in its large range of squares, monuments or other points of attraction, each one being considered in its own way the centre of the city. However, an interest expressed through this study was to identify the place, image, or element that could be more representative of Cluj. As the Tour of Belem, for instance, is a representative image of Lisbon, Cluj-Napoca also needs a visual distinguishing element. This question, partially an open one, had suggested some options of answers for respondents, each one representing landmark of this city. Among them, the Statue of Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus, who was born in Cluj-Napoca, the Orthodox Cathedral, the roman catholic Saint Michael’s Church, the recently built stadium of the city, Eroilor Avenue or Cetatua park, a place offering the best landscape of Cluj. The latter one seemed to be the most representative, according to an important share of respondents (30%). Furthermore, 15% of the investigated respondents have been rather tempted to associate Cluj with Saint Michael’s Church and an equal percentage to Unirii Square. 10% of respondents have selected the Orthodox Cathedral and other 10% the National Theatre or the Stadium. There also was a 5% share of respondents pleading for the statue of Matthias Corvinus. It is important to note that Saint Michael’s Church and the statue of Matthias Corvinus are both located in the Unirii Square. Therefore, summing up the percentages obtained by each of the three proposed landmarks, we will obtain a substantial share of 35% of respondents relating their answers to the Unirii Square which represents, according to investigated respondents, the most visible place of Cluj-Napoca.

The following part of the research will present the findings related to the 16 urban indicators included in the survey. In the case of each one, respondents were asked to make a valuation from 1 to 5, 1 representing “very weak”, 2 “weak”, 3 “average”, 4 “good” and

5 “very good”. Therefore, each of the selected respondents had to fulfill a task consisting in valuation indicators, such as: public transport, traffic, leisure, academic life, culture, sports, medical services, spaces and services for relaxation, shops, walking areas, green spaces, aspect of modern buildings, aspect of historic buildings, inhabitants, cleanliness and tourism. Therefore, the following table will tackle the findings linked to these indicators.

Table 1. Perception of respondents regarding the 16 urban indicators related to the image of Cluj-Napoca

Urban indicator	Very good	Good	Average	Weak	Very weak
Public transport	0%	30%	55%	10%	5%
Traffic	0%	20%	55%	20%	5%
Leisure	35%	35%	30%	0%	0%
Academic life	45%	55%	0%	0%	0%
Culture	25%	40%	35%	0%	0%
Sports	25%	40%	25%	10%	0%
Medical services	25%	40%	30%	5%	5%
Spaces/services for relaxation	15%	40%	35%	10%	0%
Shops	45%	45%	10%	0%	0%
Areas for walking	5%	35%	35%	20%	5%
Green spaces	0%	30%	60%	10%	0%
Modern buildings	10%	25%	40%	20%	5%
Historic buildings	0%	35%	30%	30%	5%
Inhabitants	15%	45%	30%	10%	0%
Cleanliness	5%	55%	30%	10%	0%
Tourism	5%	25%	15%	35%	20%

Source: author

In analysing this table and in attempting to achieve a hierarchy regarding those items with the largest amount of “sympathy”, we can conclude that such items as academic life, shops or leisure are indicative of the better perception of the respondents under investigation. This entitles us to believe that branding Cluj-Napoca should definitely rely on these features, the city being perceived by an overwhelming majority of respondents rather as an academic centre but also a city providing leisure and good time. However, indicators related to infrastructure such as tourism, public transport, green spaces and traffic are obstacles or features with “bad reputation” that need to be improved in order

to make Cluj an internationally competitive city. Meanwhile, although being perceived as an historic city, Cluj-Napoca suffers of bad evaluation regarding the aspect of historic buildings because many of them are badly maintained providing thus an unpleasant image for a tourist or any other kind of passer-by. Therefore, Cluj-Napoca has to start by improving its management in order to succeed achieving territorial marketing progress.

Among others, the survey also included a question challenging respondents to associate Cluj with any famous personality born in the city or living there, whose positive national or international reputation may be a promotional capital. The range of given examples is a large one from actors, sportsmen, politicians to movie directors. Clearly, VIPs are necessary for branding a city, but they are completely insufficient because the “life cycle” of a famous person is far shorter than the one of the projected image of the territory. However, through his or her image a famous actor, singer, dancer or politician can bring some benefits that a local community can take advantage of. Meanwhile, a famous personality can also be toxic for a community if his or her image is affected by unpleasant public scandals that can be transferred to the image of the whole community.

Conclusions/further discussions

1. Testing public perceptions regarding territorial marketing approaches with regard to Cluj-Napoca is a technique that can convert itself into a reliable tool of supporting further debates related to a territorial branding strategy of this city. Primarily, this investigation may help us identify the main strengths of the city and furthermore to prioritise them as elements justifying a promotional strategy. Same as in the case of a product whereby we seek to launch and promote it by popularising its qualities, Cluj-Napoca definitely needs a promotional strategy embodying its strengths. However, it is important to be aware that its qualities or positive features have to *differentiate* the city from other potential competitors. There is no doubt that cleanliness, for instance, can be perceived through the findings of the study as one of the main strengths of the city but is this strength able to make Cluj different from other European cities? Generally, European tourist cities are well enough maintained. Therefore, cleanliness should rather be a sign of normality and civilisation than something original. Thus, in order to make Cluj-Napoca visible anywhere outside its boundaries, it is important to find and define this place in terms of a target group and *competitors* consisting of similar cities able to be alternative perspectives for potential tourists or investors of Cluj. The idea of ascertaining competitor cities may raise other appropriate questions, such as “what kind of tourism should be Cluj-Napoca able to provide?” Let us presume, for instance, that a city as Christchurch, New Zealand, would hypothetically embody some features similar to or comparable with those of Cluj-Napoca. Being an attractive city, Christchurch has a large number of tourists coming from Wellington, the capital of the country, inhabitants of this city being thus a target group for Christchurch. Is it worthy to attempt convincing those tourists that somewhere at many hours of flight interchanging 3 airports there is a similar city in Romania named Cluj-Napoca which may provide them

with more attractiveness? Would that be a wise approach? If predictably the answer is “no”, we should therefore attempt to set some clear *competition distances*. These are some of the logical questions arising out of this research. In the end, this paper keeps pleading for the double utility of a territorial diagnosis research justifying a SWOT analysis of Cluj-Napoca. Therefore, those strengths and opportunities may identify promotional opportunities while weaknesses and threats are pillars supporting further public policies aimed at raising the quality of life within this community.

2. The findings of this research may lead us to the conclusion that, according to the respondents, Cluj-Napoca is defined by two main characteristics: an academic centre and a city representing Transylvania. The last of the two features requires thus a stronger connection between the city and its surroundings. These two characteristics are recommended by the paper to be used as promotional opportunities because they fit the culture, civilisation and the history of this place representing thus its profound identity. However, some infrastructure-related weaknesses may produce important difficulties in carrying out a territorial marketing process. According to the main tendency of the selected respondents, what is good with Cluj is rather related to its community (nice inhabitants, intense cultural and sporting life or good environment for entertainment), while what is wrong with Cluj seems to be more correlated to the administration of this city (mediocre public transport, badly organized traffic for drivers wishing to cross the city by car or unsatisfying tours for foreigner visitors). Therefore, the phenomenon of branding Cluj-Napoca has to be supported by better local management able to improve some neglected functional aspects. A place branding strategy for such a city cannot be effective unless it is sustainable.

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Andrei Țigănaș

**Visuomenės dalyvavimo teritoriniame marketinge skatinimas –
Cluj-Napoca miesto įvaizdžio strategijos tobulinimas**

Anotacija

Sąvokos „rinkos ekonomika“ reikšmė yra glaudžiai susijusi su žodžiu „konkurencija“. Globalizacijos kontekste ne tik stambios kompanijos, smulkiojo ir vidutinio verslo bendrovės, bet ir teritorijos turi susikurti savo identitetą ir naudoti jį anapus savo ribų. Kaip vietos bendruomenė gali pasiekti šio teritorinio marketingo tikslo?

Straipsnyje siekiama parodyti, kad kuo labiau yra stimuliuojamas visuomenės dalyvavimas vietinio marketingo procese, tuo lengvesnis yra vietos administracijai teritorinio brendo kūrimo iššūkis. Be to, straipsnio autorius ieško Cluj-Napoca miesto įvaizdžio strategijos kūrimo būdų.

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