

SOUVENIRS - FACTOR INFLUENCING THE TOURISM ACTIVITY. CASE STUDY: OPINIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON SOUVENIRS

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ABSTRACT: *The capacity, or more precisely the “task” of concentrating, both from a functional and aesthetic perspective, the essence of a tourism destination into a single object, represents the main explanation why the marketing specialist of the respective destination attaches an enhanced importance to souvenirs. Therefore, due to synthesizing the important, or so considered elements, souvenirs significantly influence the image the potential consumers may form, as well their reiteration by the existing consumers. In order to find out the consumers’ opinions on the representativeness of the souvenirs sold in shops, deemed as the most important by the authors of this article, a quantitative, exploratory research was performed, whose purpose is identifying young peoples’ position on the image conveyed by means of souvenirs. The need for this research is incontestable in order to create a connection among the desired image, the conveyed image, the perceived image and the expected image.*

KEY WORDS: *image of Romania, image post-situ, souvenirs, Romania.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The process of creating an image is incontestably important for positioning the tourism destination Romania. To create an image congruous with Romania’s identity, at a conceptual level, represents the “desired standard”, whose attainment contributes

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to the fulfilment of the initial goal, namely that of conveying the tourism essence of the destination and of its products to the potential consumers. Starting from the idea according to which there should be no major differences between the desired, conveyed and perceived image, the specific promotion materials - i.e. the souvenirs, must respect, highlight and aesthetically transpose the image elements established within the process of creating the image, so as to represent a symbol and, at the same time, to remind the tourist of the most pleasant experience lived "in situ".

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Due to global competition and to the change in tourists' motivations and needs, to convey a positive image represents a priority in the management and marketing of the destination (Konecnik, 2002; Molina, Gómez, & Martín-Consuegra, 2010, quoted in Raffaella, Servidio, 2012, p. 19). Being an abstract concept, even in the case of building a strong, positive image congruous with the reality, its "materialisation" by means of a marketing plan is a key stage in attaining the objectives of the communication strategy.

Defined in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian language as "*items, gifts, signs that represent or evoke a memory*", souvenirs are the "final product" of a complex process - of creating and conveying the tourism image - within which numerous participants with multiple tasks (such as the National Tourism Authority, local authorities, tourist service suppliers etc.), should abide by a unitary guideline, coherent with the brand strategy of the destination. The differences existing between the desired and conveyed image, or between the conveyed and the expected image (deemed to be representative for a certain destination) could be caused by certain "noise" elements or by the breach of the interdependence between the image creation and image conveyance phase, this meaning that the values, the personality or the elements of the destination brand are ignored in the process of establishing the souvenirs profile.

Souvenirs have a status that transcends the state of mere products included in the tourism experience; besides the fact that they represent constitutive elements of any tourism product, they provide "solutions" compensating for two of the main features of services in general: perishability and intangibility. Since the tourism experience can be stored only in the consumers' memory, the souvenirs may represent the "physical evidence" which symbolically catalyses and synthetises the entire tourism experience. Thus, in time, souvenirs may become "deposits" of the main elements of a certain tourism destination or of a certain product in the mind of the consumer (and of the persons in his reference group), as well as objects that facilitate the remembrance of associate emotional states. This characteristic feature of souvenirs may result in a comeback to the destination through the mental reiteration of the main differentiation elements in the structure of souvenirs, or in the promotion of the destination by donation or by recommendation, from consumers to potential tourists, who have thus the opportunity to imagine the respective destination, or may wish to visit it, fact which can create "a spiral, with ever wider ellipses" of the developing of the image of the destination.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to comprehensively analyse Romania's image conveyed by means of souvenirs, the study focuses on the souvenirs sold in three locations of strategic importance in Bucharest, namely the souvenir shops at the "Henri Coandă" International Airport, in the "Universitate" passageway and in the Magheru Boulevard; these shops are situated in areas with busy traffic, significantly exposed to potential tourists and/or inhabitants of Romania or of Bucharest, on the one hand, and close to numerous tourist attractions, on the other hand.

The purpose of this analysis is to identify young people's position towards the image conveyed by means of souvenirs, within each category according to the systematisation of the three shops' supply. The results obtained, premises of future detailed studies, can facilitate the comparison between the image conveyed through souvenirs and the image perceived by the market segment surveyed - young people considered, according to previous research, as the persons mostly travelling, around the country, as well as abroad; the noted differences may confirm the choices with reference to trading "official" souvenirs or reconsider them in their capacity as symbols or of representing regional or national tourism identity.

The survey is based on a quantitative, exploratory research performed in May-June 2013, on a sample of 248 students aged between 18 and 24[†]. The purpose of the survey was to identify the most as well as the least representatives souvenirs in the three shops, analysed within the selected categories, following the structuring of the supply, which include dolls, T-shirts, mugs, books, CDs, painted eggs, pottery, plates, folklore elements, figurines, badges, wooden items, illustrative items of legends, gastronomy-related items, cosmetics, postcards, bags, tourist guides etc.

4. RESULTS

The first shop surveyed (actually the one with the most varied supply) was that at the "Henri Coandă" International Airport. The most numerous souvenirs in this shop, presented to the students, were miniature dolls (numbered and graphically presented in Annex 1).

Table 1. Young people's opinion on the most representative "doll" - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	217	
Doll no. 19	29	13.4
Doll no. 20	22	10.1
Doll no. 13	21	9.7
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 20</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

[†] The questionnaires were filled in by the students of the Marketing Faculty - senior year, class 2012/2013, of the Academy of Economic Studies, to whom we extend our thanks.

The dolls they deemed as the most representative were: Doll no. 19 (13.4%), a set of dolls in national folk costumes, illustrating the authenticity and diversity of the regions' folklore, Doll no. 20 and Doll no. 13 (10.1%, respectively 9.7%), both having specific symbols such as the costume and the flax tow, symbol of Romanian rural authenticity (Table 1).

The dolls deemed as the least representative by the respondents (Table 2), were Doll no. 8 and Doll no. 2 (66.4%, respectively 13.0%) both wearing specific Russian folk costumes. The opinion of consumers (100% residents of Romania), as far as this category is concerned, focuses on elements of Romanian folklore. Although, probably, the dolls unrepresentative for Romania's image could end up not being bought, for other segments of consumers (ex. foreign consumers), they could be the elements of forming and of promoting elements that are not representative for Romania's tourist identity.

Table 2. Young people's opinion on the least representative "doll" - type souvenirs

% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	223	
Doll no. 8	148	66.4
Doll no. 2	29	13.0
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 20</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

With the "T-shirt" category, the respondents deemed as the most representative those with Romania's map contour, T-shirt no. 2 with Vlad Țepeș (Vlad the Impaler) (59.5%), and T-shirt no. 3 presenting the major tourist attractions within Romania's borders (Table 3).

Table 3. Young people's opinion on the most representative "T-shirt" - type souvenirs

% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	220	
T-shirt no. 2	131	59.5
T-shirt no. 3	84	38.2
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 3</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

T-shirt no. 1 was considered the least representative since it presents a graphic image which suggests the idea of vampire, accompanied by the slogan "You simply love it"; unlike the other two T-shirts, it does not present any of Romania's identity elements (Table 4).

Of the existing mugs, Mug no. 3 was considered the most representative with Romania's coat of arms accompanied by the name of the country (38.7%). 10.2% of the respondents considered Mug no. 2 as the most representative as it refers to the

“Dracula” myth, a graphic representation to be found also with the other categories of souvenirs.

Table 4. Young people’s opinion on the least representative “T-shirt” - type souvenirs

% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	228	
T-shirt no. 1	194	85.1
T-shirt no. 3	20	8.8
T-shirt no. 2	13	5.7
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbers from 1 to 3</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Table 5. Young people’s opinion on the most representative “mug” - type souvenirs

% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	225	
Mug no. 3	87	38.7
Mug no. 2	23	10.2
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 5</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Nonetheless, a more significant part of respondents (59.7%), considered that mug (Mug no. 2), with a wide-spread graphic concept, whose idea is represented by “the rejuvenation of the Dracula myth” by creating the word “Dracoola”, to be the least representative for Romania’s image (Table 6).

Table 6. Young people’s opinion on the most representative “mug” - type souvenirs

% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	231	
Mug no. 2	138	59.7
Mug no. 1	34	14.7
Mug no. 4	25	10.8
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 5</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Of the books to be found in the shop at the “Henri Coandă” International Airport and presented to the respondents, (Table 7), Book no. 1, titled “Legendele sau basmele Românilor” (Romanians’ Legends or Fairy Tales), with an old and authentic look, was deemed the most representative (32.7%), followed by Book no. 5 - an album of the “Dimitrie Gusti” National Village Museum (27.0). Although the other books represent or inspire Romanian values (ex. “Basmel lui Petre Ispirescu” (Fairy Tales by Petre Ispirescu) - Book no. 2), representative were considered those whose title

specifically express the connection between the content of the book and the sense of belonging to the Romanian people.

Table 7. Young people's opinion on the most representative "book" - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	226	
Book no. 1	74	32.7
Book no. 5	67	27.0
Book no. 2	44	19.5
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 5</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The least representative books (Table 8) are: no. 4 (42.5%) and no. 3 (32.7%), both dedicated to children with no reference (in their title) to the specificity of Romanian fairy tales or legends.

Table 8. Young people's opinion on the least representative "book" - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	226	
Book no. 4	96	42.5
Book no. 3	74	32.7
Book no. 1	25	11.1
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 5</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The most representative CD, as deemed by respondents, contains the music of Maria Tănase (23.0%), unique personality and, at the same time, symbol of the Romanian music, which suggests, in the respondents' opinion, the way of living specific to the Romanians (Table 9). Likewise, the CD called "Greetings from Romania" (17.5%) or the CD called "Cu Iisus în celulă" (With Jesus in the cell) - Tudor Gheorghe (15,2%), are considered as being representative.

Table 9. Young people's opinion on the most representative "CD" - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	217	
CD no. 1	50	23.0
CD no. 8	38	17.5
CD no. 5	33	15.2
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 13</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

While CDs representing renowned musicians like Maria Tănase and Tudor Gheorghe, respectively, were considered the most representative, on a national and international plane, well-known personalities of the modern music (ex. CD no. 10 - Alexandra Stan), although famed, were not considered representative by the respondents (25.9%) - Table 10.

Table 10. Young people's opinion on the least representative "CD" - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	216	
CD no. 10	56	25.9
CD no. 6	24	11.1
CD no. 12	19	8.8
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 13</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The supply of painted eggs, present in most shops, is more uniform than that of other products; nevertheless, Painted Egg no. 4, in pastel colours and discreet, classic graphic symbols, was considered the most representative (Table 11).

Table 11. Young people's opinion on the most representative "painted egg" - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	215	
Painted egg no. 4	85	39.5
Painted egg no. 2	60	27.9
Painted egg no. 1	35	16.3
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbers from 1 to 4</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Although part of the same collection, Painted Egg no. 1 (Table 12), with modern graphic patterns, intense colours and an abstract model, was chosen as the least representative product of the collection (30.2%).

Table 12. Young people's opinion on the least representative "painted egg" - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	196	
Painted egg no. 1	59	30.2
Painted egg no. 3	56	28.6
Painted egg no. 4	43	21.9
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 4</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

As for the “Pottery” category, the product that best represents Romania is Pottery no. 5 (50.0%) - Table 13, representing a pack with various ceramic items (plates, specifically Romanian cups), together with a towel with Romanian patterns, the answers of the respondents confirming once more the synthetic capacity of souvenirs to express the essence of a significant part of the Romanian culture in one product.

Table 13. Young people’s opinion on the most representative “pottery” - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	224	
Pottery no. 5	112	50.0
Pottery no. 3	28	12.5
Pottery no. 6	28	12.5
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 6</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The only item in the set presented that substitutes folk motifs or Romanian crafts (Table 14), with the transfigured profile of Vlad Țepeș (Vlad the Impaler), so as to inspire fear - no. 4, is deemed the least representative ceramic item (31.9%).

Table 14. Young people’s opinion on the least representative “pottery” - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	229	
Pottery no. 4	73	31.9
Pottery no. 3	53	23.1
Pottery no. 1	27	11.8
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 6</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Although there are only two products in the “Plate” category (Table 15), the fact that, symbolically, they are utterly opposed determined their separation into a new category: “plates”, Plate no. 2 (88.9%,) probably representing the architecture of the Bran Castle, topped the other option - Plate no. 1 (7.4%).

Table 15. Young people’s opinion on the most representative “plate” - type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	217	
Plate no. 2	193	88.9
Plate no. 1	16	7.4
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 2</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The last of them (Plate no. 1), which graphically illustrates the “Dracoola” concept, was considered as unrepresentative for Romania’s image (83.7%) - Table 16.

Table 16. Young people’s opinion on the least representative “plate” - type souvenirs

% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	221	
Plate no. 1	185	83.7
Plate no. 2	30	13.6

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 2

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Of the folk elements and symbols, the Romanian flags (Folklore no. 3 - 34.9%) were considered the most representative, special attention being attached, from the respondents’ perspective, to the Romanian hats and towels (27.5% - Folklore no. 4, respectively 25.2%, Folklore no. 1).

Table 17. Young people’s opinion on the most representative “folklore elements” - type souvenirs

% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	218	
Folklore no. 3	76	34.9
Folklore no. 4	60	27.5
Folklore no. 1	55	25.2

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 4

The difference to 100% = other variants

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The towel represented in the second segment of the category was considered the least representative (38.8%) - Table 18.

Table 18. Young people’s opinion on the least representative “folklore elements” - type souvenirs

% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	209	
Folklore no. 2	81	38.8
Folklore no. 1	65	31.1
Folklore no. 3	34	16.3

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 4

The difference to 100% = other variants

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The two figurines on display are representations of Vlad Țepeș (Vlad the Impaler) (Table no. 19), however of totally different approaches. Representative for

Romania's image was considered Figurine no. 1 (53.6%), representing Vlad Ţepeş with Romania's colours and wearing Romania's coat of arms.

Table 19. Young people's opinion on the most representative "figurine"-type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	151	
Figurine no. 1	81	53.6
Figurine no. 2	63	41.7

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 2

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Although the scores of the two figurines are tight (Table 20), Figurine no. 1 was also considered as the least representative (52.8), being followed by a representation of Vlad Ţepeş (Vlad the Impaler) (Figurine n. 2), distorted, which inspires fear as well as horror (44.4%).

Table 20. Young people's opinion on the least representative "figurine"-type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	180	
Figurine no. 1	95	52.8
Figurine no. 2	80	44.4

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbers from 1 to 2

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Badge no. 10, representing the major tourist attractions on Romania's map, was considered as the most representative (38.9%), followed by a badge with the Palace of Parliament (13.4%) - Table 21.

Table 21. Young people's opinion on the most representative "badge"-type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	216	
Badge no. 10	84	38.9
Badge no. 6	29	13.4
Badge no. 3	23	10.6

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 17

The difference to 100% = other variants

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The least representative badges belong to the sub-category of those that do not actually present, in a graphic manner, Romania's attractions, or its best known rulers, Badge no. 8 (representing a yellow and violet coloured mushroom) and Badge no. 16, with "Dracoola" layout, considered in all its forms as unrepresentative, were chosen by most of respondents as not fit for Romania's image.

Table 22. Young people's opinion on the least representative "badge"-type souvenirs*% of column total*

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	208	
Badge no. 8	112	53.8
Badge no. 16	40	19.2
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 17</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The wooden items considered the most representative by 61.1% of respondents (Table 23), are the only ones which, besides its recognised symbolism for the crafts and specifically Romanian way of life, also have a functional as well as an aesthetic value - wooden spoons (Wooden Item no. 3).

Table 23. Young people's opinion on the most representative "wooden item" - type souvenirs*% of column total*

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	226	
Wooden item no. 3	138	61.1
Wooden item no. 1	72	31.9
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 3</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The other two items in the same category (Table 24), are décor plates illustrating women from Romanian rural areas and considered less representative (53.8%, respectively 19.2%) than the wooden spoons.

Table 24. Young people's opinion on the least representative "wooden item" - type souvenirs*% of column total*

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	199	
Wooden item no. 2	113	53.8
Wooden item no. 1	49	19.2
Wooden item no. 3	33	16.6
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 3</i>		
<i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The most representative legends (Table 25) are three-dimensional representations of chivalrous scenes: Legend no. 1 - (63.9%) and Legend no. 2 (24.3%). Also presenting scenes with knights (Table 26), Legend no. 3, assessed as the least representative in this category (47.0%), has only aesthetic value, being in fact a collection of drawings, unlike the other two scene - more complex, actually

representing figures that can be used for a wider range of activities (ex. exhibitions, games etc.).

Table 25. Young people's opinion on the most representative "legend"- type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	202	
Legend no. 1	129	63.9
Legend no. 2	49	24.3
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 3</i> <i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Table 26. Young people's opinion on the least representative "legend"-type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	202	
Legend no. 3	95	47.0
Legend no. 2	74	36.6
Legend no. 1	29	14.4
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 3</i> <i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

As for the "gastronomy related items" (Tables 27 and 28), the respondents were presented both beverages and dishes specific to Romania. The most representative were specifically Romanian beverages, associated with the figure of Vlad Țepeș (Vlad the Impaler) - Gastronomy no. 3 (58.2%), and Gastronomy no. 4 (plum brandy from Zetea - a village in Transylvania - 20.2%).

Table 27. Young people's opinion on the most representative "gastronomy" - type souvenirs

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	213	
Gastronomy no. 3	124	58.2
Gastronomy no. 4	43	20.2
Gastronomy n. 1	34	16.0
<i>The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 4</i> <i>The difference to 100% = other variants</i>		

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The least representative gastronomy related element was "Cornulețe cu prune" (Plum dumplings) (Boromir brand, inspired, positioned and developed through and by traditional methods/tastes). The set of Gerovital hair care cosmetics (Table 29) was deemed the most representative (53.3%), due to this brand's strong association with Romania and to its extraordinary health effects, proved along the time.

Table 28. Young people's opinion on the least representative "gastronomy"-type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	221	
Gastronomy no. 2	94	42.5
Gastronomy no. 1	83	37.6
Gastronomy no. 4	25	11.3

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbered from 1 to 4
The difference to 100% = other variants

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

Table 29. Young people's opinion on the most representative "cosmetics"-type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	182	
Cosmetics no. 1	97	53.3
Cosmetics no. 2	85	46.7

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbers from 1 to 2

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The face cream (also under the Gerovital brand), the packaging of which shows only the name of the brand, was considered less representative than the hair care products (Table 30).

Table 30. Young people's opinion on the least representative "cosmetics"-type souvenirs
% of column total

No.	Total sample	Percentage
<i>Base</i>	221	
Cosmetics no. 2	73	54.9
Cosmetics no. 1	56	42.1

The souvenirs presented in the annex were conventionally numbers from 1 to 2

Source: statistical survey made by the authors

The survey related to souvenirs conducted at the Information Center at Universitate, had the following results: in the "Painted Items" category, Painted Item no. 2, illustrated in Annex no. 1 (52.7%), represents a painted egg, marked as an authentic object less representative than the painted plate with traditional patterns (no. 1 - 54.3%). As for posters, the one representing a poem by Mihai Eminescu (famous Romanian poet), accompanied by his portrait, was voted more representative (83.2%) than a plate with the name of Romania written in several languages (assessed as unrepresentative - 84.0%). Of the two albums presented in the "Books" category, both generically called 'Romania' the one in pastel colours specific to nature (blue and green) was deemed the most representative - Book no. 2 (81.7%), while the book with a dark cover illustrating Romanian crafts was considered as the least representative (78.7%).

Considering the "Desk Items" category, the most representative were the picture frames with images of tourist attractions in Bucharest (Romanian Athenaeum

and the Arch of Triumph) - Item no. 2 - 31.2% and Item no. 3 - 22.9%, the least representative item being an ink pot (Item no. 1 - 37.0%). The most representative wooden items (Item no. 1 - 32.7% and Item no. 4 - 23.8%) are the representations with the highest practical value namely a cart and a convenience box, while Item no. 3, the statue of a stag, is considered the least representative (31.2%) and acknowledged as unimportant for Romania's image.

As for the survey on the souvenirs sold in the shop in Bulevardul Magheru, the results are: with the "Bags" category, Bag no. 2, with the name of Romania written on it, was considered the most representative (83.9%), unlike Bag no. 1, with a collection of flags belonging to several states, which was considered the least representative (67.2%). The most representative mug was the one with the name of Romania on it against a yellow background (Mug no. 5 - 45.8%), unlike the same model but against a black background (Mug no. 6 - 52.5%). As for "Postcards", the most representative was that illustrating the Romanian Athenaeum, the best know attraction among those on postcards (56.6%), while the one with the Stavropoleos Church was deemed the least representative (74.4%). In the "Figurines" category, most representative were considered those of bears, in various graphic forms, making reference to the Bears' Cave (Figurine no. 34 - 37.7%), the respondents assessing them as a tourist attraction worth being presented as a major element of Romania's image. On the other hand, the ashtrays were the least representative decorative items (38.3%).

5. LIMITATIONS

The survey regarding the consumers' opinion on souvenirs representativeness as related to Romania's image, at a certain moment, is deemed necessary in order to picture the current status of the relationship between the elements of the desired and the conveyed image, but the results over this short lapse of time are not sufficient for giving solutions or making recommendations on a medium/long term, since the motives for buying souvenirs are diverse, and perceptions may be "distorted" accordingly. Nevertheless, the study should be resumed periodically, taking into consideration the fact that the supply of souvenirs diversifies or changes relatively quickly, as do several segments of consumers (ex. foreign tourists) as well as the communication and marketing objectives of the destination.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Given the major importance of souvenirs for the development or revitalisation of the image of a certain tourist destination, their role is conveyed by the integration of representative elements, from the perspective of both differentiation and unique elements and that of the relation between them and potential tourists, in order to identify these elements practically conveyed in an abstractly conceptualised image. With regard to this study, most of the souvenirs deemed representative for our country were those differentiated within their categories by elements of reference (ex. flag, coat of arms, Romania's name) which hold a central place within the graphic design of the souvenirs. Likewise, the souvenirs which contain very famous urban tourist attractions

generally valid for Romania's representation were chosen (ex. The Romanian Athenaeum, the People's House) or items illustrating traditional patterns, folk costumes or trades, crafts specific to the Romanian people. The main colours chosen were those of the Romanian flag, or combinations of pastel colours, specific to nature. It is important that the results of this research be further used to obtain a detailed image of the souvenirs referring to Romania and to compare (the traded souvenirs and those considered to be representative by the respondents) with the goals of Romania's promotion programme.

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Annex no. 1. SOUVENIR SHOP AT "HENRI COANDĂ" AIRPORT

DOLLS



POTTERY



PLATES



FOLKLORE ELEMENTS



FIGURINES



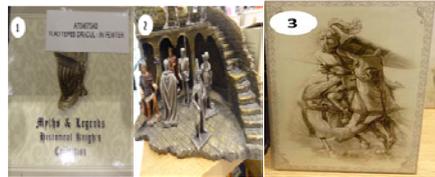
BADGES



WOODEN ITEMS



ILLUSTRATIVE ITEMS OF LEGENDS



GASTRONOMY-RELATED ITEMS



COSMETICS

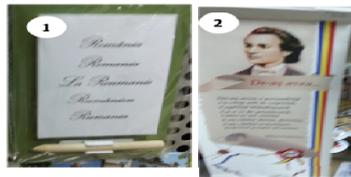


TOURISM INFORMATION CENTER AT "UNIVERSITATE"

PAINTED ITEMS



POSTERS



BOOKS



DESK ITEMS



WOOD ITEMS

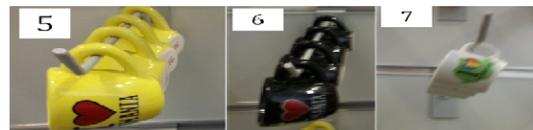


SOUVENIR SHOP AT MAGHERU BOULEVARD

BAGS



MUGS



POSTCARDS



FIGURINES