

PROMOTING URBAN TOURISM THROUGH CITY BRANDING

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ABSTRACT: *Nowadays we are witnessing some sort of paradox with regards to the tourism practiced at the level of the big cities of the world. Regardless of the purpose of the journey: visiting historic landmarks, for pleasure and relaxation, on business, etc., tourists have become very irritating for the people residing in these cities and thus enforcing measures that would limit the number of tourists. At the opposite end, there are other urban destinations which, aware of the importance of a town's reputation in attracting tourists and of the advantages, especially economic ones, generated by tourism, seek to build and capitalize on the most representative town brand. In this paper we shall analyse the way a Romanian town within Hunedoara County has built its branding strategy around a historic landmark which is Deva fortress.*

KEY WORDS: *urban tourism, city branding, touristic potential, promotion strategy.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *L83, O20, R58, Z32.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In present days, commercial, financial and touristic activities are considered to benefit from an often “aggressive” marketing as banks, companies, cities and countries “are fighting” really hard to win over “clients”.

When speaking of a country or city branding, one will associate a logo that defines it. In a study called Country Brand Index 2014-15 [11] only 22 out of 75 countries “qualified” as *country brands* which, according to the authors, gives them an important competitive advantage over other countries. Thus, Japan, number one in the ranking is generally identified with technology and innovation; Switzerland – ranked 2nd, is renowned for its high living standard, natural beauties and financial services; Germany, which came out 3rd, is associated with advanced technology and automotive

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industry and the examples can go on. Although the leading country is Japan, top 20 is governed by European countries such as Switzerland and Germany, with Nordic countries also climbing up the ladder (Sweden – 4th place, Norway – 6th, Denmark – ranked 9th).

Another important conclusion of the study is the claim that "*An influential city is not enough to make a strong country brand (but it helps)*", the authors sometimes noticing that the respondents have associated countries like United Kingdom or the United States with their most popular cities (eg. United Kingdom with London). In fact, the association between countries and their cities reveals in most cases the mention of the capital city or the second largest city in the country. In other cases, when asked to list what cities they consider to be among the most influential in the world, the results achieved showed that many cities have outclassed the country (Beijing – third in the ranking, while China occupies the 28th place).

Currently, the situation is somewhat contradictory: there are large cities of the world which have known the benefits of a large influx of tourists and are now complaining of being "choked". The most frequent reasons brought as an argument when making decisions aimed at reducing the number of tourists refer to the effect of pollution associated with heavy traffic (noise, rubbish, exhaust gases) or the increase in prices or house rents near tourist attractions, arguments considered strong enough to generate restrictions that would limit tourism in these destinations or redirect it to other locations of the country (for example Barcelona adopted the "Strategic Plan for Tourism 2020", with the aim to relieve the congestion of streets and the city centre, and also to keep the prices and rents of flats under control by applying higher taxes on guesthouses, not granting permits to developers or owners of new holiday homes, putting up the prices of coach parks, prohibiting traffic and relocating terraces that no longer fit on the sidewalk [13] while Venice has installed gates at the ends of the two bridges which provide access to the city planning to close them on certain days when the number of tourists is overwhelming [12]).

Furthermore, local authorities in many capitals of the world have announced measures to limit tourism, in the very near future, thus giving in to pressures from residents as it is stated that tourism has exceeded the stage of seasonal discomfort by becoming permanent. At the opposite pole, a number of other cities are trying to find the most effective strategies to become more attractive in terms of tourism, and city branding is one of these strategies aimed at generating local prosperity, prestige or power, even with the price of some inconveniences paid by residents. A city brand can be built to promote it as a historic, entrepreneurial, cultural and entertaining travel destination.

In the work of Popescu R and Corboș R.A, citing CEOs for Cities 2006 [7], it is stated that "city branding is the total of perceptions and associations people have in connection with a particular city", meaning past experiences, movies, news, advertisements, weather, prices, the opinion of families and friends about that location. In many situations, the city's attractions are multiple, the natural and anthropic potential favouring more "promotional scenarios" however, in the case of other communities, choosing a landmark and making it into the 'motor' of local development can be a successful alternative.

A particular attention should be paid to the fact that promoting a city brand cannot be a unilateral matter that concerns only the local administration and the brand must be built upon consultation of all local stakeholders (community, businesses, NGOs, etc.). Undoubtedly there will be a mixture of interests and opinions, but the main role of the authorities is to be the mediator that can help merge these interests and opinions into a common goal supported by all these local “forces” [3], because otherwise, the experiences of tourists will be far from the ones promoted by the city brand. A correct and complete identification of all these interests, expectations, doubts and opinions can be complemented by arguments that positive issues prevail over the least favourable ones: local businesses will develop in the field of hospitality, food, trade and in that of leisure and related services (transport, currency exchange, etc.); this will create new jobs, will increase living standards and reduce unemployment and poverty, but it will also cause traffic congestion, dirt, it may increase the degree of criminality, destroy the natural habitat, etc. It is therefore necessary that all stakeholders work together to maximise the generated benefits and to minimise the “losses”.

2. THE CONTEXT OF BUILDING A BRAND FOR A SMALL TOWN

The municipality of Deva is the residence of Hunedoara County. Historians claim that its name relates to the Dacian term "dava", which means "fortress". Hunedoara County is located in the central Western part of the country, linking the Western counties of Banat (Timiș, Caraș-Severin and Arad) to Transylvanian counties in the centre (Sibiu, Alba), as well as to the southern counties of Gorj and Vâlcea.



Figure 1. Location of Deva Municipality within Hunedoara County

According to Monograph of Deva Municipality [1], Deva is the administrative - cultural residence of Hunedoara County, first recorded in 1269, and it lies in a picturesque natural setting, in the central part of the county, on the banks of the middle flow of the Mures River and at the foot of the last Northern ranges of Poiana Rusca Mountains, where they are separated from Apuseni Mountains by Mureș Valley.

The town is towered by the medieval Citadel Hill, which rises 187m above the town and 371m above sea level.

The municipality of Deva borders Simeria and the village of Harău to the East, Soimuș and Vețel villages to the North, Cârjiți and Peștișu villages to the West and Hunedoara municipality to the South.



Source: Adăscăliței F.M., Bara I.S., Lazăr I., Lazăr L. (coord.), (2016) Deva. Monografie, vol. I. Istorie și Economie, Editura Emia, Deva, p.13

Figure 2. Physical map of Deva and the surroundings

The city, which spans over 5884 hectares, also administers four villages Sântuhalm, Archia, Bârcea Mică and Cristur.

According to the criteria defined by Law No. 351/2001 on the approval of the National Landscaping Plan – Section IV – A Network of Towns, Deva municipality belongs to the 2nd category of towns. The inclusion in this category is the result of meeting various requirements relating to: population, coverage; access to means of communication, economic functions, facilities and equipment, political, administrative and legal decision-making institutions; education, scientific research; health and social

assistance; culture, trade, tourism, finance, banks, insurance; sport, recreation; environmental protection; religion; Transport/communications; public order and security.

According to the last census in 2011 there were 61.123 people living in Deva [18], which is less than the previous census in 2002 by 8.134 inhabitants.

Deva is the most powerful polarising center in the county, from an economic, social, cultural and administrative point of view. It has benefited from funding through the Regional Operational Programme 2007 - 2013 - projects contracted with a non-refundable total value of approximately EUR 40 million. Moreover, the progressive construction of the Nădlac-Arad-Timișoara-Lugoj-Deva-Sibiu-Pitești motorway optimizes the road connection along the Pan-European corridor IV – to the West with Hungary and the other Member States of the European Union and to the East with Bucharest and Constanta/Black Sea – and it will boost the economic development between Arad and Deva; this, alongside another project in progress – "Rehabilitation of the Border - Curtici - Simeria railway line, part of the Pan-European corridor IV for the movement of trains at a maximum speed of 160 km/h", which has the potential to attract investments in both cities and in the region [17].

The touristic potential of Deva is mainly represented by the anthropic potential of the municipality. Among the main attractions visited by tourists it is worth mentioning the following: the Citadel Hill, Magna Curia Palace (or Bethlen Castle) - the oldest historic monument building in Deva which today hosts the Museum of Dacian and Roman civilization of Hunedoara County, Dr. Petru Groza Memorial House, the Art Theatre, the "Bejan Forest" nature reserve, the "Saint Nicholas" Orthodox Cathedral alongside other churches, the statue of Decebal, the statue of Emperor Traian, Horea, Cloșca and Crișan Statues, the statue of gymnasts, the "AquaLand" Complex etc.

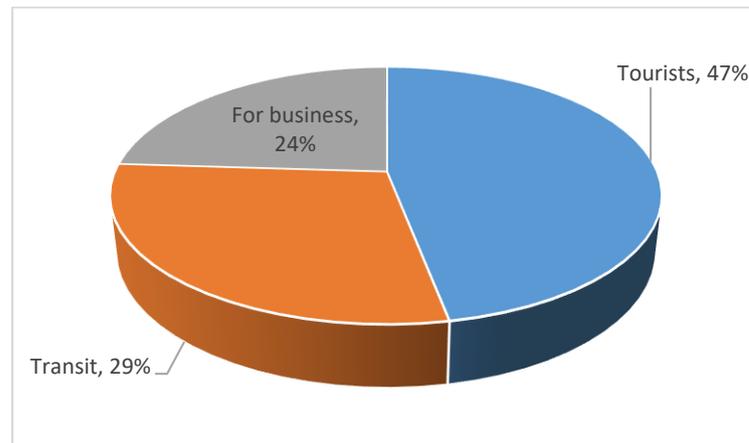


Figure 3. Distribution of the main categories of visitors of Deva

A research carried out among tourists who visited the municipality of Deva from April to September 2015 [14] was meant to assess the types of tourism practiced

by visitors, their motives for choosing Deva as a tourist destination, the sources of information regarding the sights in the area, tourist attractions in town – preferences and the intent to visit, the availability of tourists to recommend the most interesting attractions, and also the demands and expectations of visitors.

The study was conducted using a survey method, on a sample of 800 Romanian and foreign tourists aged between 18 and 60 years, and as a research tool, the questionnaire was used. A first aspect of the poll highlighted the fact that the vast majority of visitors of Deva planned their own holidays. Only 38% of respondents said they had used the services of a travel agency. Tourists visiting the city are also divided into three categories, with the following distribution: as a tourist – 47%; in transit to/from another destination – 29%; on business – 24%.

As far as the main sources of information regarding tourist opportunities offered by the municipality of Deva are concerned, almost half of the participants in the study (45%) said that they got their information from friends or acquaintances who had visited the area, and more than one third of them (36%) found out about the touristic attractions while being on holiday. Also, 12% of visitors took to the Internet for information, for another 4% this holiday destination was recommended by a travel agency and only 3% of the tourists visited the attractions on the residents' recommendations.

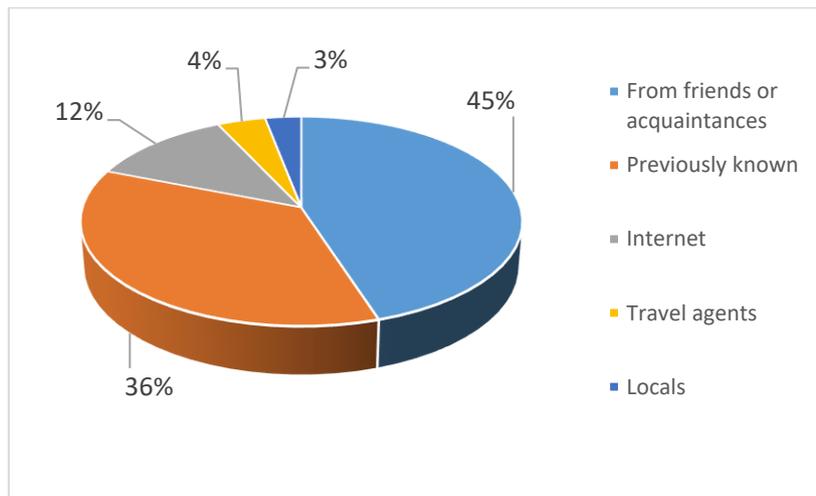


Figure 4. Sources of information regarding touristic attractions in Deva

The results of the research highlight another important aspect – most tourists (82%) who visited the municipality of Deva in 2015 had already visited the town at least once before, indicating a good degree of loyalty and sustainability of the tourism in the area. The analysis of the replies shows the reasons why visitors chose Deva as a tourist destination. The top three reasons are leisure and recreational tourism (36%), cultural-historical tourism (31%) and business tourism (19%), and lower percentages are registered by the spa tourism (6%), mountaineering (5%), sports (2%) and rural tourism (1%).

Tourists have been asked to evaluate the attractions of the town on a scale from 1 to 5. According to the results of the study, the Citadel (4.6) and Citadel Hill (4.5) are by far the most visited attractions, followed by the Statue of Decebal (3.7), the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization (3.6), the Statue of Traian, Magna Curia Palace, the Statue of Mihai Eminescu and "Saint Nicholas" Orthodox Cathedral (3.3 each) and the Reformed Church, the Art Theatre and the Franciscan Monastery (3.2 each).

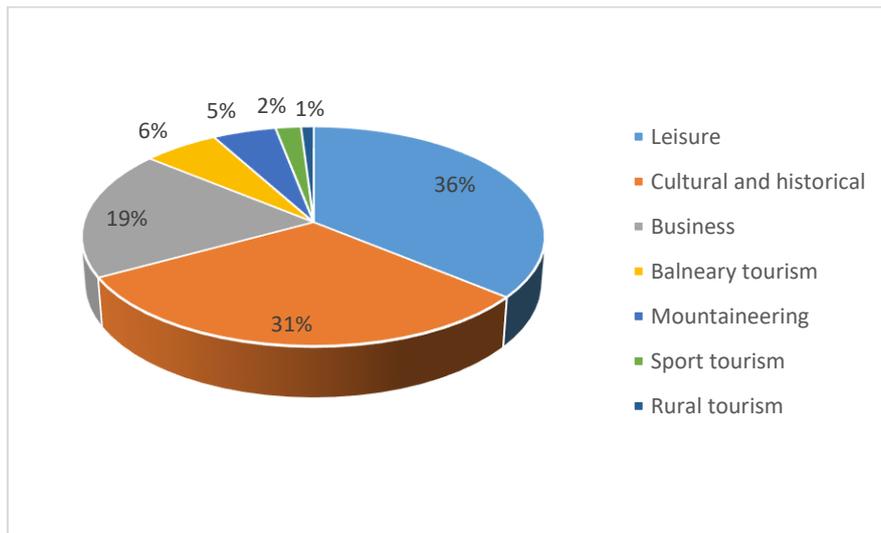


Figure 5. Forms of tourism taken into consideration when choosing Deva as a holiday

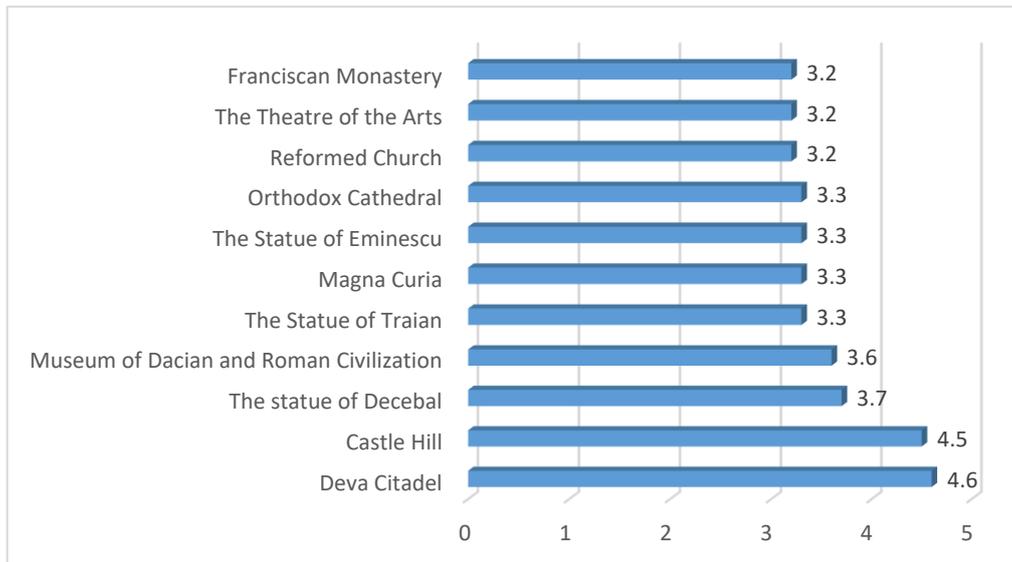


Figure 6. The points scored by the tourist attractions in Deva

Deva was chosen by tourists for its cultural-historical potential (31%), the natural environment (23%) and hospitality of hosts (16%). The historical framework was appreciated by most tourists (1st place in the order of preference), and the most popular services were, in this order, food, accommodation and hospitality of the hosts. Services which failed to meet the visitors' expectations are: transport in the area and the state of the road infrastructure. Other services that tourists would like to benefit from are: hiking and trips, cultural events, insurance and diversification of tourist information, customs and traditional gastronomy.

More than half of the tourists (53%) would like to return to the area. Most visitors come from other cities in Romania, while 34% come from other countries in Europe and Asia (Hungary, Italy, Germany, Austria, France, England, Switzerland, Israel and China). The majority of the interviewed visitors are aged between 30-50 years (42%), 61% have higher education, 67% are married and 56% are male.

A statistic of accommodation units in the municipality of Deva reveals an upward trend between the years 2001 and 2011 (maximum value: 26), however it was interrupted amidst the global economic crisis which had inevitably affected tourism, slightly decreasing in year 2013 (by 3 units). The overall evolution of accommodation units was carried out in particular on the basis of two types of establishments – tourist villas and urban tourist guest houses.

In 2016, in Deva there were 4 hotels, 3 motels, 7 holiday villas, 7 urban guest houses, 1 hostel and 1 summer camp for pupils and students which could accommodate approximately 1800 people.

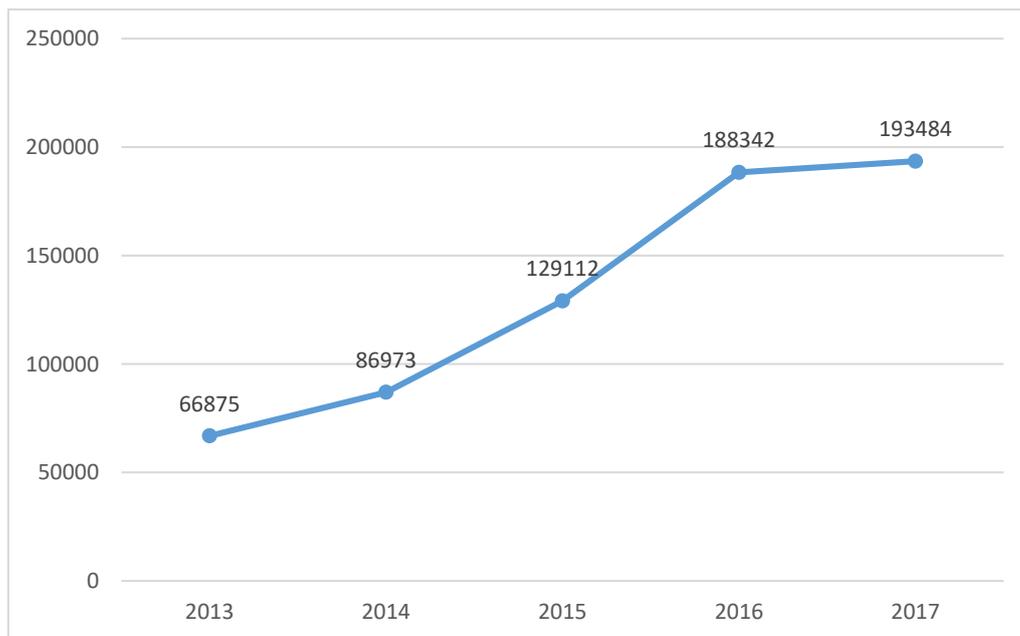


Source: *Strategia integrată pentru dezvoltare urbană a municipiului Deva 2014 – 2023, versiunea iulie 2017, Deva 2023: cu încredere spre viitor*, pp. 318

Figure 7. Types of accommodation units in Deva in 2016

Just little over 20% of the tourists visiting Deva chose to spend night in the hotels, motels, guest houses and tourist villas in the area, according to statistics presented in the Sustainable Development Strategy of Deva Municipality 2014-2020 [15]. At the same time, the number of tourists stopping in Hunedoara County did not exceed 100,000 taken in to consideration the fact that the main five landmarks of the area gathered together 450,000 visitors. The largest number of tourists in the county was registered in September – 11,145 people, this category comprising all those who checked in at least one night at the hotels and guest houses in the area.

Within the same Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Municipality of Deva 2014-2020 it is clearly defined as a general objective - *the development of tourism in the Municipality of Deva* - an important factor for increasing the quality of life of the population, and as one of the specific objectives - *the creation of a tourist brand of the area*, alongside others such as: promoting projects with external financing; improving tourist infrastructure in the municipality of Deva; increasing the number of tourists; capitalisation of ethno-cultural traditions; improving the quality of services offered to tourists; professional promotion of Deva municipality as a tourist area; preservation and enrichment of heritage; promoting partnership and volunteering.



Source: Deva Town Hall

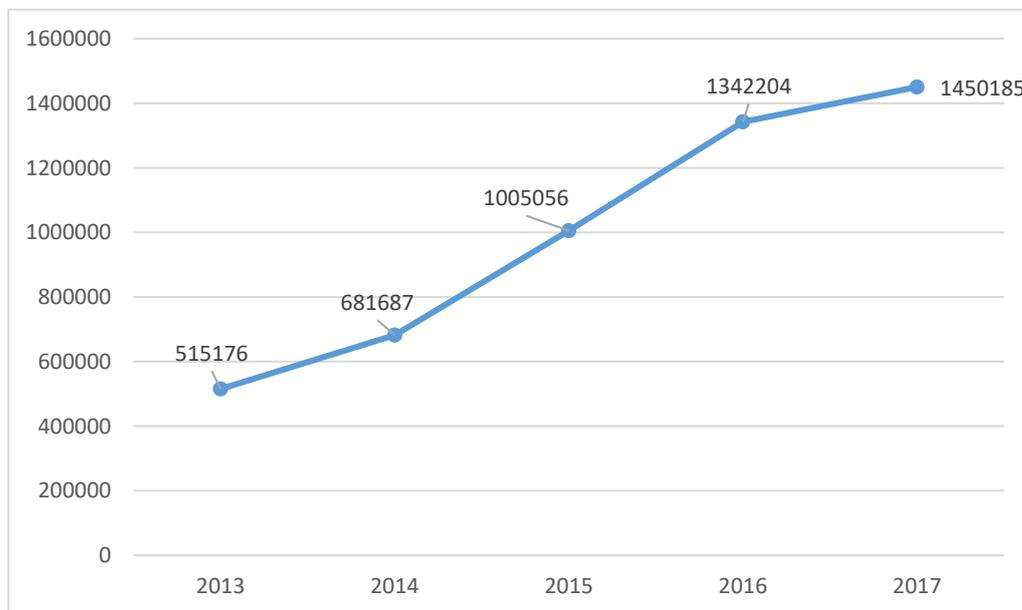
Figure 8. Evolution of the number of tourists at the Citadel during the period 2013 - 2017

The conclusions based on analyses carried out at the level of Deva municipality, aimed at the current context and prospects of tourism development, at the existing sustainable development strategies [15],[16], at the tourist offer and investment opportunities, emphasised the fact that although the “tourist potential of Deva (especially the size of cultural-historical tourism) is remarkable, the data (both

statistical and sociological) indicates insufficient exploitation of this potential”; moreover, “the downward trend of the number of tourists for the last 6-7 years and the average duration of the visit is worrying and denotes the need for an integrated and comprehensive approach to correct it” [16].

Due to the Citadel being under the administration of the local authorities it allowed them to access a non-refundable financing of RON 38,428,182.03 in 2010 [17] which enabled the restoration of two of the three premises of the fortress. The estimated date for the completion of the project was 12.08.2015.

In spite of the fact that during the period 2010-2015 the project for restoration of premises II and III of the Citadel was underway and that access to the Citadel Hill was only possible up to the intermediate platform as a result of the works, during 2013 and 2017, the Citadel was visited by 664,786 Romanian and foreign tourists, with an upward trend in the number of tourists and income made over the entire period analysed.



Source: Deva Town Hall

Figure 9. Evolution of earnings between 2013 and 2017

Although the authorities' assessments are positive regarding the results achieved, it is acknowledged that they need to be strengthened, one of the measures being a set of actions based on the city brand, the objectives of which can be summarised as follows:

- Transforming the Citadel into a tourist landmark of the town and registering it with OSIM;
- Creating an interactive site with information about the fortress (attestation, the 5 major stages of construction, legends and mysteries

related to fortress, documents, maps, sketches and photographs from different periods of its existence and information about the owners who have managed it along the years, trails, possibilities and unique visitation offers);

- organizing thematic events in the fortress – temporary or exceptional exhibitions (showcasing ceramic objects discovered during the restoration of enclosures II and III, Dacic bracelets discovered at Sarmizegetusa Regia and considered the most important discovery in Romania after the hoard of Pietroasele, the Koson silver coins discovered in the county), medieval festivals (tourists can be attracted to the idea of a "travel in time" with characters in medieval robes, specific cuisine, archery lessons, blacksmith workshops, carpentry and pottery) or exceptional cultural events at the open air theatre within the Citadel (eg: „Opera Nights” Festival, the biggest open air opera festival in Romania which has become very popular in Deva);
- bespoke offers for different categories of tourists – rock-climbing on the southern walls of the Citadel Hill made of andesite; a spyglass set in the highest point of the fortress, showing visitors the surroundings in detail, from the Mureş Valley to the woodlands and the towering mountains; a 3D animation of the fortress as it looked before the explosion in 1849, which can be watched in the exploded warehouse, alongside a collection of old arms and armour; even the simulation of an explosion, meant to impress tourists; paths for cross-country enthusiasts, including the 113 steps that climb from the base up to the fortress; a tour through the tunnel dug into the rock near the monument, for the courageous tourists, ending with the free offering of a souvenir-symbol or a photo in a medieval costume; paragliding over the fortress (through a partnership with the airfield near Deva) or even a free tour of the Citadel offered to tourists visiting the monument during the celebration of the "Days of the City";
- The addition of the Citadel in the national and international tourist circuits of special landmarks, as well as in a tour of religious monuments (hundreds of Hungarian tourists visit the fortress every year at the end of November to commemorate the first bishop of the Unitarian Church in Transylvania, Ferenc David, who died in the torture chambers of the fortress);
- Renting out spaces, on the plateau in front of the monument, for food traders serving traditional dishes;
- Enriching the database of the National Centre for Tourist Information and Promotion Deva, located at the foot of the hill, with information, photographs, flyers and interactive maps showing the fortified monuments in the surroundings and promoting the cultural events carried out throughout the county through the electronic notice board of the centre;

- Including optional activities in the program of tourists visiting the fortress of (e.g.: horse riding at Archia Manor or a boat ride on Cinciș Lake) and issuing a voucher that allows visits to the monasteries or museums in the area at a discounted price (especially Prislop Monastery and Corvin Castle).

When choosing a city brand which will form an image in the 'heads' of tourists one must consider several aspects, such as: what people think when they hear the name of the city, in what ways is the city different from other cities, what are the aspects that make it unique and attractive, how to maximize the strengths and existing opportunities, in parallel with minimizing weaknesses and threats in order to transform the city into a pole of tourist attraction.

A strategy for development and promotion of tourism in the municipality of Deva must be linked to the city's sustainable development plan. At the same time, the strategy must be complex, focused on several directions – both on the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and professional promotion of tourist attractions and on the diversification of tourist offers.

3. CONCLUSION

Often, local and/or central authorities believe that opening and promoting a tourist attraction (e.g. a castle, a fortress, a ski resort, Aqualand, organizing a festival, or a fair, etc.) is enough to transform a city into an attractive tourist destination, not taking into account a complex of factors competing to ensure the success of an area from a tourist perspective (e.g. the existence and quality of accommodation, food, transport, utilities, entertainment derived from the residents' perception of tourists, etc.).

Nevertheless, the role of public administration in building a city brand cannot be ignored, accepting the seven roles of the public authority highlighted by Chris Ryan [8]: a source of planning, a source of legislation and regulation, coordinating body, entrepreneur, stimulator of tourism development, facilitator of economic activity and protector of the public interest.

The most attractive landmark of Deva has been overlooking the city for eight centuries. In 2017, it attracted over 193,000 visitors, despite the restoration work that kept the viewers at a distance. This is a record figure, one that ranks the Citadel among the 5 most visited attractions in Hunedoara County, alongside the Corvin Castle of Hunedoara, the Dacian fortresses of Sarmizegetusa, the Dinosaurs Geopark and Hateg Country.

Despite the upward evolution of the key performance indicators in tourism (number of visitors, earnings, duration of stay) and the optimism of the authorities, there still is much to be done for the prestige of the Citadel and Deva to position it favourably in the minds of tourists not only within the country, but also from abroad.

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