Investigating the Image of the Bihor Tourist Destination among Romanians in the Context of Increasing Economic Indicators of Tourist Activity

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Abstract: The concept of tourism destination image is closely related to the brand image of the destination. A good public image of a certain location is the first step in establishing or enhancing the branding of that destination. The image of the destination can be a primary, secondary or global one, the latter incorporating the first two. The sustainability of a positive image of the destination is based on both positive secondary image and positive global image. The purpose of this research is to separately analyze the two types of images for a given tourist destination (Bihor, Romania) that has registered, in recent years, a remarkable increase in the number of visitors. The increase in the number of visitors was accompanied by a substantial increase in tourism revenues, which drew attention, both for the policy makers and researchers, to investigate how the image of this popular place is perceived. The research is based on a questionnaire-based survey applied on a sample of 607 persons, residents in Romania. The research method used was the questionnaire-based survey, which was applied between May and June 2020 on online city groups. The collected data were processed with IBM Statistical package for social sciences version 25 and the results show significant differences between the two types of images (secondary image and global image), a dangerous situation in the medium and long term for destination management. The nuances in the perception of the image of a destination based on the two types of respondents (who experienced and who did not experience the destination) can be explained by the aggressive strategy of promoting the tourist destination, but this is an inefficient strategy for younger age groups. The study allows us to formulate conclusions and to propose measures to correct the situation.

Keywords: tourist destination; image; promotion; experience; Bihor; Romania

1. Introduction

The first established definition of the image of the destination is the one proposed by Crompton [1] which was later disseminated by Gartner [2]. The image of the destination is a "sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination" [1] (p. 18).

Interest in the image of the destination is related to its connection with the brand of the destination and the intention to visit a destination. We can say that a positive image is a step in branding the destination [3,4]. There is a strong link between destination image and branding but not an overlap of meanings [5,6]. "Destination branding is to select a consistent mix of brand elements to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building" [7].

Image research is focused on its variables with implications for destination management. Tasci et al. [8] conducted extensive research on studies which investigated the image of the destination in terms of research methods used (quantitative, qualitative or combination) and the components of the destination pursued by research. The main important

variables derived from the research which are influencing the image include the following: time spent at the destination/length of visit, satisfaction with the destination, previous visits, desirability of the destination, duration of travel planning, travel budget, probability of choosing the destination for the next vacation, motivation to choose the destination, socio-professional characteristics of visitors and others.

Some leading researchers in the field [9] propose to investigate the distinct image of visitors and non-visitors based on the idea that one's image of a destination can be secondary (from friends, acquaintances, formal promotion) or primary (formed from their own experience) or a combination of them. Following this approach, we understand that the image of a destination can be formed in the absence of experience regarding that destination, based on information gathered from different sources. In this context, these researchers are emphasizing the role of the promotional strategy: "In this manner, the various strengths, weaknesses, accuracies and inaccuracies of the existing destination image could be more effectively addressed in the design of the promotional strategy" [9] (p. 4).

Others [10,11] share the same view that the set of attributes that contribute to the image of the pre-consumption destination are different from the influential attributes in the post-consumption stage. Sirgy and Su [12] show that tourists perceive destinations differently when they are part of the typical destination clientele or are visitors. This stereotypical image of the type of people who usually visit a particular destination is referred to as the image of the destination visitor. The greater the similarity between the image of the visitor of the destination and his conception of himself, the more likely it is that the tourist will have a favorable attitude towards that destination and decide to visit this destination. This matching process is called self-congruence. Empirical research has concluded that previous visits to a destination or familiarity with a destination influence the perceived image of the destination [13–18]. After visiting the destination, images tend to be more realistic, complex and differentiated [13,14].

"Positive perceptions about a destination refer to the perceived attractiveness or salient aspects of a destination" [19] (p. 43). The way in which visitors perceive the attractiveness of a destination is related to socio-demographic characteristics such as age, previous experience and culture [20–22]. To these, some add education [23].

Tourist motivation, which underlies travel, influences the tourist image [23,24]. Depending on the reasons for the trip, the image of a destination is constructed in a certain way.

After analyzing previous studies, Gartner [2] concluded that a destination image consists of three different components: cognitive, affective and conative. In addition, there is a hierarchy between them, the affective evaluation being influenced by the cognitive one. The cognitive component of the image or cognitive evaluation (also called perceptual) refers to the sum of ideas and beliefs as a result of evaluating the destination from the perspective of its attributes. Evaluation or the affective component of the image refers to what an individual feels towards a destination, a reaction that can occur, more or less, as a result of cognitive evaluation based on the personal characteristics of the individual. The affective image is formed before, during and after visiting a place. Kleonsky [25] showed that before visiting a place, visitors form a more positive image if the emotions related to the destination match their own motives and benefits.

Many studies have focused on researching the cognitive component of a destination, expressed by attributes [26,27]. Quantitative methods and semi-structured questionnaires were used for this purpose. Other studies have followed the cognitive, affective component but also the global component [23,28]. The difficulty for following the affective component (positive or negative attitude) is that it requires either qualitative methods of investigation or quantitative methods with free (descriptive) expression of [29]. The affective perception is influenced by the psycho-socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Some propose the evaluation of the affective perception of the destination through a set of attributes (unpleasant/pleasant, asleep/full of life, gloomy/interesting, desolate/relaxing) [24].

Park et al. [30] showed that tourists' high satisfaction can influence their intention to recommend an attraction to their social network. Assaker and Hallak [31] pointed out that satisfaction plays a mediating role in the link among image and intention to recommend.

In this context, the aim of the research is to identify the perceived image of the Bihor tourist destination among its current visitors and the perceived image of the Bihor tourist destination among its potential visitors, highlighting the existing differences. The research was conducted on an administrative region of Romania, named Bihor. It can be reproduced for other similar tourist destinations, as well as at the country level. We chose this destination because has experienced a significant increase in tourism turnover in recent years. This research can also be reproduced at the level of other tourist destinations, provided that a sufficient number of people who have already visited the destination and people who have not yet visited it but know about it are responding to the questionnaires.

2. The Tourist Destination Bihor

Bihor County is one of the 41 administrative units (plus Bucharest) which are established at the regional level in Romania. Located in the northwestern part of Romania on the border with Hungary, it has a surface of 7544 km^2 and occupies 3% of Romania's territory [32].

The distant past of Bihor County is found in the Paleolithic, followed by the Thracian-Dacian era and the Romanization stage. In the IV–X centuries, during the defense of Bihor against numerous invaders, the center of resistance was represented by the citadel of Bihor, and then by the citadel of Oradea, whose ruins can still be seen today [32].

In Bihor County, there are all forms of landscape forms, including mountains (Bihorului, Vlădeasa, Pădurea Craiului, etc.), hills (as part of the Western Hills) and plains. The climate is continental-moderate.

There are two major tourist areas in Bihor County, which are considered as the main tourist destinations [33]:

- The built heritage from Oradea area—the spa resources and thermal springs exploited in Băile Felix and 1 Mai;
- The mountainous area, especially the area included in Apuseni Natural Park.

In Bihor County, there are valuable natural resources of geothermal waters (in Băile Felix, Băile 1 Mai, Mădăras, Răbăgani and Tămășeu) and mineral waters (in Tinca and Stâna de Vale). Băile Felix Resort is the largest spa in the country, in terms of the number of accommodation places [34].

In Bihor County, there are 40 approved mountain tourist routes under the care of Salvamont-Salvaspeo Bihor; another five are in the process of approval. The routes cross the main tourist areas in the mountains of the county. The Apuseni Natural Park covers the territory of Bihor County, which has the largest concentration of caves in Romania. Experts are considering it as one of the most important karst areas in Romania and Southeast Europe [34].

There are 431 registered monuments in Bihor County, of which 170 are sites and archaeological monuments, 221 are monuments and architectural ensembles and 40 are memorial houses and monuments of fine arts (Invest in Bihor, 2018). Most of them are located in the city of Oradea [34].

The population of Bihor County (in 2011) was 592,242 inhabitants with the following ethnic structure: 68.7% Romanians, 26.3% Hungarians, 3.3% Roma, 1.1% Slovaks and 0.6% other ethnic groups [35]. In recent years, the number of tourists in Bihor County has steadily increased to 549,014 in 2018, with a share of 12.98% for foreign tourists. In Oradea, the number of tourists increased by 250% in 2019 compared to 2008 [36].

We selected some key indicators to show the evolution of the tourism activity in Bihor County (Table 1) [37]. The number of accommodation establishments has also increased exponentially from 83 to 451. The biggest increase in number being recorded in case of pensions (188), rental apartments (109) and villas which reached 35 units.

Table 1. Some tourism key indicators for the Bihor County area.

Nr. Crt		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1.	Accommodation establishments (all types)	83	100	110	128	145	139	149	179	199	216	451
2.	Accommodation bed places	9984	9746	9152	9718	10,284	100,071	10,421	11,690	12,283	12,848	16,527
	Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments											
3.	Romanians	1,049,791	924,680	805,943	910,525	937,118	859,935	972,463	1,030,451	1,253,399	1,160,487	1,372,314
	Foreigners	78,368	73,958	79,510	9384	92,106	92,228	85,628	106,567	135,458	134,770	151,334
4.	Estimated revenue (in thousand Euros)	35,963,140	27,249,536	29,152,882	30,043,936	37,189,006	34,395,284	43,436,329	46,389,383	63,610,200	63,791,932	72,862,027

Data processing after National Institute of Statistics, http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/ (accessed on 26 June 2021).

A significant increase was noted in the total beds owned by the accommodation facilities from Bihor County, which reported 16,527 accommodation places in 2018, most of them being located in the Oradea/Băile Felix region, a significant increase from the 9984 places reported in 2008. The evolution of overnight stays registered an increase of 30.72% for Romanian tourists and 93.11% in the case of foreign tourists.

According to the above table, the revenue from tourism more than doubled during the analyzed period. The estimation of revenue was realized based on the occupancy rate for each type of infrastructure and the medium prices per room, corrected with the medium annual exchange rate for RON/EUR.

In light of the particular increase in tourism revenues in the Bihor region, we intend to investigate the perceived image of this destination. The perceived image of the tourist destination is closely related to the attractiveness of the destination. This can be assessed from the perspective of the destination offer using different tools such as GIS and data modeling [38]. However, we did not intend to analyze the attractiveness of the destination by systematically evaluating the characteristics of the place that may be attractive to tourists. We were guided by the elements of destination perception that are spontaneously mentioned by tourists in connection with this place.

3. Research Methodology

The aim of the research is to determine the perceived image of Bihor as a tourist destination among its current visitors and the perceived image of Bihor as a destination among its potential visitors, highlighting the existing differences.

The research objectives that are subordinated to the research purpose are (Figure 1 Conceptual model of the research):

O1: Identification of the image of the Bihor tourist destination among those who have visited the destination, respective to the global image of the destination.

O2: Identification of the image of the tourist destination Bihor among those who have not yet visited the destination but found out about its existence in various ways, respective to the secondary image.

O3: Identification of socio-demographic characteristics that influence the image of the Bihor destination.

O4: Investigating the intention to recommend the destination of Bihor to others both among people with and without previous experience.
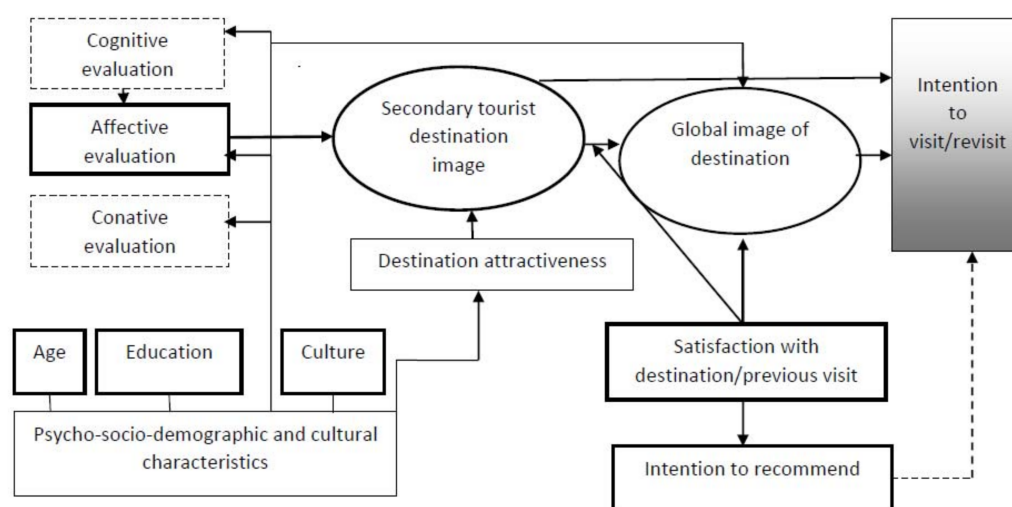
Figure 1. Conceptual model of research.

The components of the secondary image and the global image can be seen in Figure 1.

The secondary image is formed after cognitive evaluation and affective evaluation, which are influenced by psycho-socio-demographic and cultural characteristics.

The global image is composed of the secondary image, to which the previous experience with the destination, which may or may not be satisfactory, is added.

Both the secondary and the global image can lead to the intention to visit and revisit the destination. A positive overview can lead to a recommendation to visit.

For the evaluation of this Part II-Bihor Tourist Brand, 9 questions were used: two open-ended questions (one to capture the general spontaneous perception of Bihor and another to identify the three main competitors in the respondents' mind), five closed questions (one with options for recording the existence or not of previous experience, other two questions to capture the reasons for visiting or not visiting Bihor, one question with options for finding out known tourist attractions in Bihor and one question for finding out the intention to recommend or not recommend to others the destination Bihor) and two semantic differentials with 7 steps (for the general impression related to the experimentation of the destination Bihor and one for 6 attributes that characterize the destination Bihor). For evaluating the previous experience with the destination Bihor 5 years was the accepted time horizon. If the time horizon was more than 5 years, it was assumed that the experience was too distant to be used.

The sample was one of availability consisting of 611 people nationwide with 607 valid responses. The application of the questionnaire was carried out between May and June 2020 by combining several channels on the Internet. The respondents cover the whole country as their place of residence, most of them being from Bucharest, Iași, Constanța, Prahova and Dolj. Among the respondents, 52% are women and 48% are men. Most (40.52%) have 12 years / baccalaureate studies, followed by those with postgraduate studies (33.6%), then there are bachelor's degree graduates (15.81%) and then those who graduated between 8 and 10 grades (9.55%). 0.49% of the respondents did not go to school or took only 4 classes. Most of the respondents (45.46%) are below 35 years old, followed by those between 36 and 50 years old (37.23%) and then ages 51–65 with 17.29%.

The aim of this questionnaire was to record the global image and the secondary image. For the evaluation of the image, two components were targeted: the affective component and the cognitive component. In order to evaluate the global image, it was established how many respondents experienced the destination of Bihor in the recent past (past 5 years). A total of 195 respondents have been in Bihor in the past 5 years, representing 31.91%.

Respondents were asked to evaluate affective image by rating Bihor as a tourism destination with a synthesis of six feelings/impressions proposed (Table 2). Four of them propose the evaluation of the affective perception of the destination through a set of attributes

(unpleasant/pleasant, asleep/full of life, boring/interesting, stressful/relaxing) taken from [24], "developed by Russel and Pratt (1980) and Russel and Snodgrass (1987)" [24] (p. 321) and still used today [36]. The scale was 7-point semantic differential. We chose the Likert scale, which is an ordinal scale that uses 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 or 11 steps. It is most commonly used as a 5-step scale [39,40]. On the other hand, Leung [41] considers that the 11-step Likert ladder is the best (along with the 6-step) and closer to normal. Others consider the 7-stage Likert scale variant to be the best [42]. We chose the 7-step ladder. A 7-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree", including an 8 "I don't know/I can't answer" option in order to avoid false neutral evaluations.

Table 2. Scale for evaluation of affective perception of image.

Attribute									Attribute
Sleepy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	I don't know/I can't answer	Full of life
Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	I don't know/I can't answer	Interesting
Stressful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	I don't know/I can't answer	Relaxing
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	I don't know/I can't answer	Pleasant
For young people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	I don't know/I can't answer	For older people
For everybody	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	I don't know/I can't answer	Exclusivist

The registration scale of the affective component of the image was completed with an open question (answers related to those who did not visit the destination Bihor) Q22: "What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear about Bihor?" This assessment of the image of those who have not yet visited the destination Bihor forms the secondary image of the destination Bihor. It will be analyzed according to the characteristics of the other respondents (age, Romanian or foreign culture and level of education).

In this case, the affective image of the destination related to those who have not yet visited the Bihor destination forms the secondary image.

Global image is a combination of cognitive and affective components, to which the previous experience with the destination in question is added [43]. In our study, previous experience was measured with a single item. The question was: "Your overall experience with the destination Bihor was one ...". A 7-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from 1 "Totally unpleasant" to 7 "Totally pleasant", including an 8 "I don't know/I can't answer" option in order to avoid false neutral evaluations. Additionally, an open question has been added to record the overall picture: "What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear about Bihor?" In this study, the overall image is the sum of the secondary image (focused on the affective component) with the satisfaction related to the previous experience.

The last two destination evaluation scales in Table 2 belong to the holistic evaluation of the destination image, as defined by Echtner and Ritchie [9].

4. Results and Hypothesis Testing

In the research carried out, we started from the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses 1 (H1). *The overall image (those who visited the destination Bihor) is better than the secondary image (those who did not visit the destination Bihor) in the case of the investigated sample.*

Hypotheses 2 (H2). *The overall image of the destination Bihor is better among the public over 35 years old.*

Hypotheses 3 (H3). *The secondary image of the Bihor destination is better among the public up to 35 years old.*

Hypotheses 4 (H4). *The image of the Bihor destination based on the affective evaluation differs depending on the age of the respondents.*

Hypotheses 5 (H5). *The image of the destination Bihor is influenced by the level of training of the respondents.*

Hypotheses 6 (H6). *Previous experience with Bihor increases the chances that it will be recommended to others.*

Table 3 shows the research variables and their correspondence in the items of the applied questionnaire.

Table 3. The variables of the research.

Variables of the Research	Correspondence in the Items of the Questionnaire
V1a—previous experience	Q23
V1b—lack of previous experience	Q23
V2—perception regarding Bihor	Q22
V3—overall satisfaction with previous experience	Q23c
V4—destination recommendation	Q27
V5a–V5f—affective evaluation	Q25(a–f)
V6—education	
V8—age	

Hypotheses H1, the overall image (those who visited the destination Bihor) is better than the secondary image (those who did not visit the destination Bihor) in the case of the investigated sample, was verified using three items: V1a—previous experience (highlighted by question Q23), V2—perception of Bihor (highlighted by question Q22) and the overall impression of the experience with Bihor (Q23c).

The image of Bihor from secondary sources (those who have not visited Bihor in the past 5 years) was analyzed compared to the global image of Bihor, an image consisting of secondary sources and primary sources (direct experience). From here, you can see that the perceived secondary image differs from the overall image. The experience with the destination can lead to a better perception of the destination if the promotion is correct and creates confirmed expectations. The promotion must attract and at the same time create expectations that are confirmed, maybe even exceeded.

Figure 2 shows the way the Bihor destination is perceived, starting from the first word associated with this destination by the respondents. The destination Bihor is associated with Băile Felix and 1 Mai (in overwhelming proportion), followed by the city of Oradea, the Apuseni Mountains and Stâna de Vale. As can be seen in Figure 2, Bihor is defined geographically and administratively and less by quality attributes.

In Figure 3, you can see the order of the elements that identify Bihor as a tourist destination, in the view of those surveyed, depending on the existence or not of previous experience. Those who had an experience with this destination linked Bihor to, in order, Băile Felix and 1 Mai (at a great distance from the others), Oradea, Stâna de Vale, Apuseni Mountains, nature, etc. Those who have not yet been to Bihor County identify this place by, in order, the city of Oradea, Băile Felix and 1 Mai, Stâna de Vale and the Apuseni Mountains, nature, traditions, positioning near the border, etc.
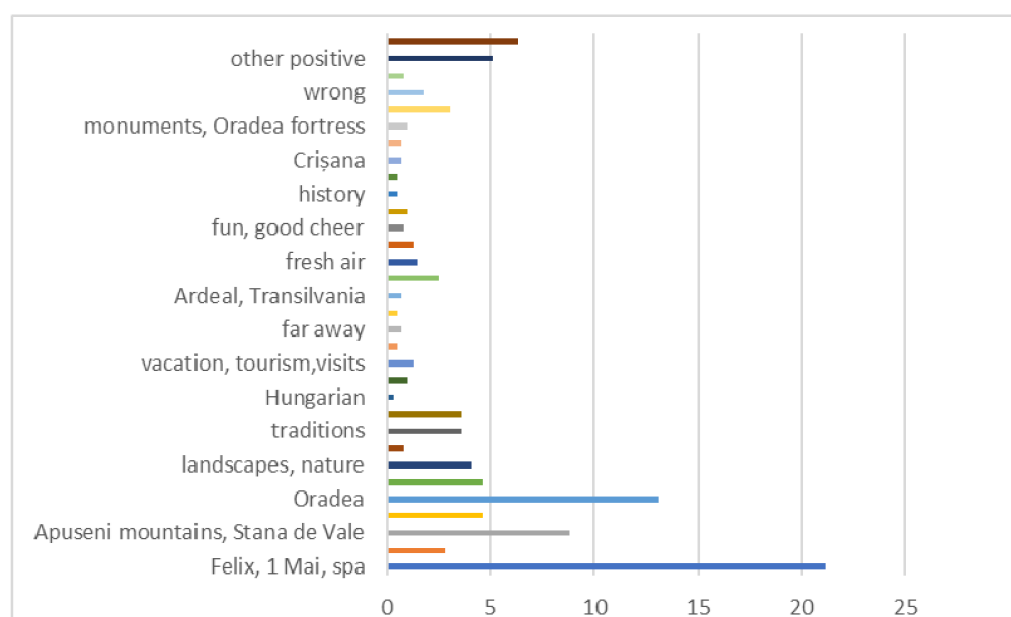
Figure 2. Distribution of all the answers to the question, "What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear about Bihor?".
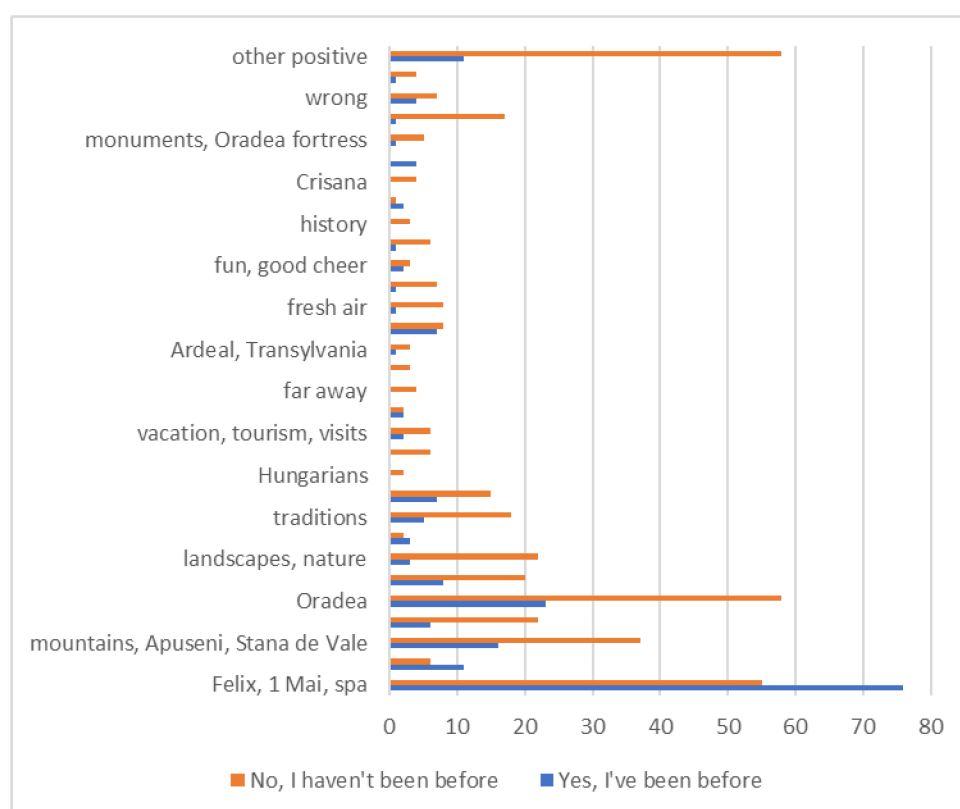

Figure 3. Distribution of all the answers to the question, "What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear about Bihor?" after existent/nonexistent previous experience.

It is very interesting that the city of Oradea outperforms the Băile Felix and 1 Mai resorts, a situation that can be explained by the insistent campaign to promote Oradea in the past 5 years on social networks and other online channels. Of the mentions regarding Bihor, only 16.08% refer to quality attributes of Bihor among those who have already been

to Bihor and 26.21% refer to quality attributes of Bihor among those who have not yet been in Bihor. We grouped these references into 10 categories, as seen in Figure 4.
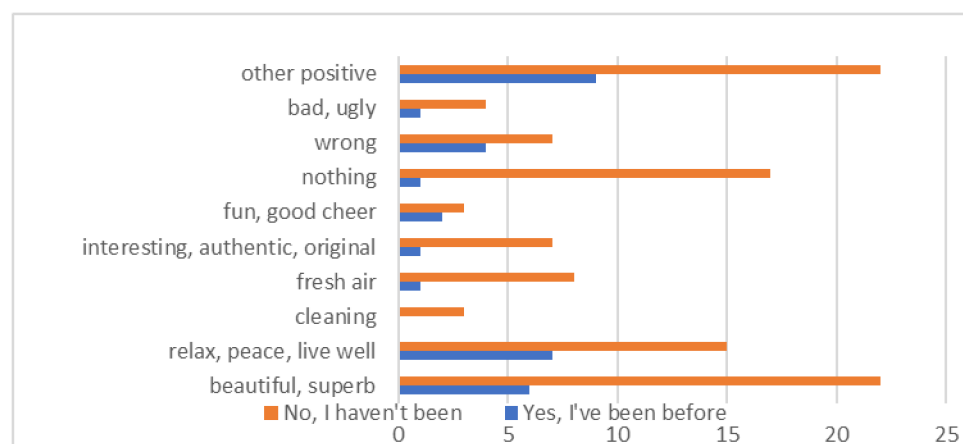

Figure 4. Associations regarding the destination of Bihor for those who visited Bihor and those who did not visit it.

It is very interesting that in all 10 categories, Bihor has higher values for those who have not visited it yet, including the two in 10 categories that mean negative attributes. It can be seen that those who have not yet visited Bihor have stronger impressions about this destination. Correlating Figure 4 with Figure 3, we can say that these impressions, predominantly positive among those who have not visited Bihor, are the result of the national campaign to promote the city of Oradea, an insistent and well-directed campaign carried out in the past 5 years. It seems that the secondary image of the Bihor destination is better than the overall image (result and experience).

Following the above analysis, we can say that the H1 hypothesis is invalidated. Hypotheses H2, the overall image of the destination Bihor is better among the public over 35 years, was verified using three items: V1a—previous experience (highlighted by question Q23), V8—age of respondents and V3—satisfaction with previous experience to Bihor (Q23c). Hypotheses H2 was verified with the SPSS for Statistics program. The results did not show a clear link between the three variables. The data collected were also analyzed as an average by age categories as seen in Figure 5, the differences identified not being substantial. The hypothesis is invalidated.

Hypotheses H3, the secondary image of the destination Bihor is better among the public aged up to 35 years, was verified with the program SPSS for Statistics. The variables used were V1b—lack of previous experience (highlighted by question Q23) and V8—age of respondents.

The results showed that the worst secondary image is found among young people, respectively in the group up to 35 years old. We will conclude that the hypothesis is invalidated.

Verification of Hypotheses H4, the image of the Bihor destination based on the affective evaluation differs depending on the age of the respondents, was based on the evaluations of by all respondents, regardless of age. The variables used were V5—affective assessment (highlighted by question Q25) and V8—age of respondents.
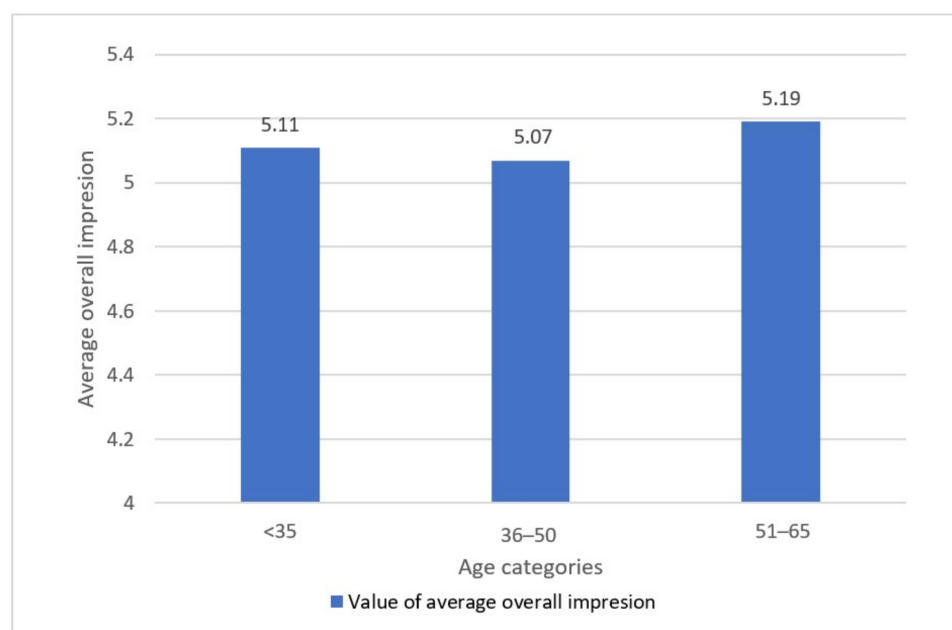
Figure 5. The average overall impression regarding the experience with Bihor by age categories (on a 7-step scale).

Figure 6 shows the average distribution of all answers on a seven-step semantic differential scale. The bipolar attributes used can be seen in Table 1. For all six attributes, Bihor was evaluated with a score above average, but still a maximum of five points out of seven possible were obtained.
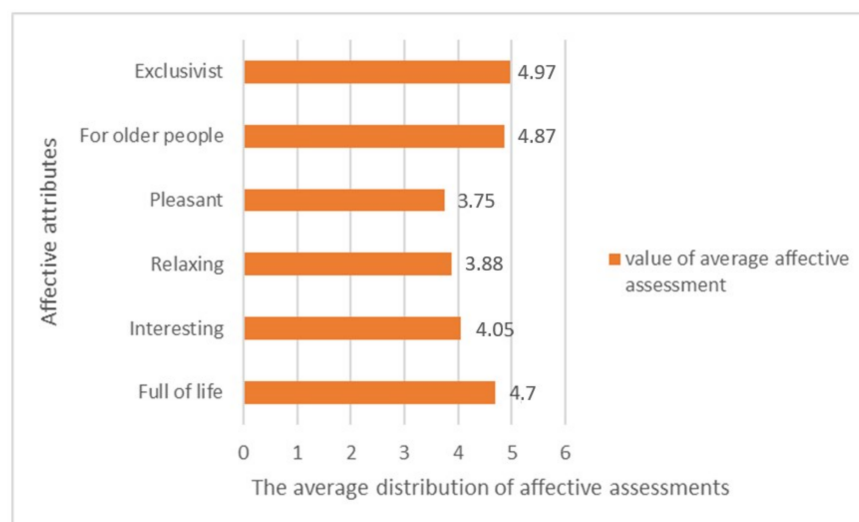

Figure 6. The average distribution of affective assessments valid for all respondents (on a 7-step scale).

The correlation of the answers with the age of the respondents was determined with SPSS for Statistics, the results showing the existence of a correlation, the most critical evaluations being among people up to 35 years old. The hypothesis is validated.

Hypotheses H5, the image of the destination Bihor is influenced by the level of training of the respondents, was verified with SPSS for Statistics and the results were irrelevant, thus, the hypothesis cannot be validated.

Hypotheses H6, previous experience with Bihor increases the chances that it will be recommended, was verified using the following variables: V1a—previous experience (highlighted by question Q23), V1b—lack of experience (highlighted by question Q23) and V4—recommendation of destination and others (Q27).

The correlation was verified with SPSS for Statistics and the results show a correlation but with reservations regarding the causal relationships. The hypothesis could not be validated.

5. Conclusions

The aim of the study was to evaluate and compare two image types of the Bihor destination, the secondary image and the global (overall) image. The results showed significant differences between the two types of images, a situation that can become dangerous in the medium and long term. On social networks, Oradea and Bihor County enjoy intense promotion, which is adopted and supported by the residents of Bihor County. This positive image has spread throughout the country, creating a strong and positive secondary image. The analysis of the data collected from respondents with a good territorial distribution in Romania shows significant discrepancies between the secondary image (created indirectly from different sources) and the global image (created from the secondary image and direct experience with the destination). The virtual audience, comprising the consumers of the secondary image, appreciates the objectives more intensely promoted and evaluate the destination more emotionally and positively. Table 1 shows the evolution of some key tourism indicators, which demonstrate an increase in the number of overnight stays in Bihor and increasing revenues from tourism. However, those who visited Bihor in 2020 had a less positive image than those who had only heard about Bihor. The implications for the destination management are related to the need to bring the two images closer because creating expectations that are not satisfied by reality will lead to dissatisfaction and loss of credibility of promotional messages.

The age of the respondents has an important impact on the perceived image, as seen in other similar studies [44]. The analysis of the two types of images by age categories (under 35, 36–50 and 51–65 years old) revealed another worrying situation, namely the more critical evaluation of the destination by the youngest and potential segment. The under-35 segment considers the destination to be "boring", which is not a positive signal. The implications for destination management are related to the design of activities that are valued by this age group. The Bihor destination is best appreciated among Romanians over 36, particularly, 51 years old who have never been to Bihor at all or recently (in the past 5 years) and who appreciate the improvements that this destination has undergone, especially Oradea and Băile Felix and 1 Mai.

We started from the idea that the level of education also influences the perceived image and performed a correlation analysis [45]. According to the analyses performed, it was not possible to establish a correlation between the formed image and the level of education, and the target group of the destination is still uncertain. A more precise targeting of current and potential consumer segments is needed, focusing on their specific needs.

Previous experiences with the destination have a major impact on the perceived image [46,47], which is why we analyzed the image separately for the two categories of respondents. We discovered that the image of Bihor is better among those who have not visited the destination, which could cause problems in the future. Although the overall experience of Bihor as a tourism destination is a good one, with an above average value, there is still no strong connection with the intention to recommend the destination to others.

In our research, we started from the idea, which has been put forward in the literature, that the image of a tourist destination is determined by affective and cognitive aspects [48,49] and we followed the evaluation from the perspective of the affective aspects. From the perspective of the six attributes in question, Bihor obtained an above-average score, but no more than five out of a possible seven points.

The implications for the management of the destination are related to the pursuit of the goals of visitor satisfaction, their loyalty and their conversion into sources of promotion of verbal marketing.

The limitations of the research are related to the use of a non-statistical sample, which is, however, characterized by good territorial coverage. Another limitation of the paper

is the lack of image analysis by respondents' country of origin, especially since previous studies have shown the importance of cultural factors [50]. It may remain in the category of future research.

Future research could delve deeper into the administrative units of the Bihor destination to identify problem areas if subzones with different images are discovered.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to the fact that the analyzes in the study used data which was provided without any identifier or group of identifiers which would allow attribution of private information to an individual.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data for this research are not publicly available.

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