

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Faculty of Philosophy

ICS-programme

Oana Roxana Mustata

Explore the Carpathian Garden  
A Multimodal Nation Branding Campaign Analysis

Master's Thesis

Vaasa 2013

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**UNIVERSITY OF VAASA****Faculty of Philosophy**

**Programme:** ICS  
**Author:** Oana Roxana Mustata  
**Title:** Explore the Carpathian Garden  
A Multimodal Nation Branding Campaign Analysis  
**Degree:** Master of Arts  
**Date:** 2013  
**Supervisor:** Daniel Rellstab

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**ABSTRACT:**

So far, all Romanian nation branding campaigns have been criticized for not showing the country's unique attributes and not painting a clear picture of its country image. *Explore the Carpathian Garden* is the latest Romanian endeavor into nation branding. This paper utilizes a multimodal semiotic analysis in order to provide insight into the way the Romanian country image is constructed in the latest campaign. The paper's hypothesis is that the problematic aspects of the previous campaigns are still present in *Explore the Carpathian Garden*. This thesis analyzes the construction of Romania's country image in the campaign, in order to uncover these problematic aspects, which can lead to confusion on the part of the viewer and perhaps even undermine the campaign's efforts.

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**KEYWORDS:** nation branding, advertising, tourism, national image, semiotics, multimodality



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research problem

During the last two decades, Romania has been going through a constant struggle to find a way to define its national identity and present it to the rest of the world in a meaningful fashion. As a post-communist developing country which is typically associated with poverty and corruption at worst and the myth of Dracula at best, the process of constructing a coherent identity has been an uphill battle. There have been several attempts at creating a memorable Romanian nation brand during the 1990s. However, none of them have been received well in the international press, and the desired outcome, which is to attract an increasingly larger number of international tourists, has failed to occur.

As Popescu and Corbos (2010) and Light (2012) point out, there are three main reasons why past Romanian country branding campaigns did not manage to fulfill their purpose.

Firstly, they failed to paint a clear and consistent picture of the Romanian national image.

Secondly, they seemed to be focused not on creating a solid national image in the mind of potential tourists, but on disproving negative stereotypes and counteracting unfavorable attitudes towards the country and its people. In other words, more emphasis was placed on what Romania is not, rather than on what it is.

Lastly, on top of that, some of them were overshadowed by circumstances which had nothing to do with the nature of the message – they were surrounded by controversies pertaining to ethics, which were discussed in the press far more than the campaigns themselves.

Romania's journey into nation branding started in 1995, when a picture album entitled *The Eternal and Fascinating Romania* was released. However, the event was clouded

by news of its producer being tried for embezzlement (Popescu and Corbos 2010: 2). The first actual nation branding campaign, *Romania, Simply Surprising*, which started in 2004, was canceled by the World Tourism Organization, because its message was unclear and its style was considered “obsolete” (Adevarul 2010a). The next campaign, *Fabulospirit*, launched in 2006, was criticized because of the same reasons as the previous one, and furthermore, because it implied that only Romanians possess fabulous spirit. (Popescu and Corbos 2010: 5) In 2009, another campaign was launched, *Romania – The Land of Choice*. However, it was shown that the slogan had already been registered before, which led to yet another press scandal.

In 2010, the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism (henceforth the MRDT) has released the latest and currently ongoing nation branding campaign, which bears the slogan *Explore the Carpathian Garden*. It is part of a wider project which seeks to improve the image of Romania on an international level. This project was funded by the European Union, and according to Tourism and Regional Development Minister Elena Udrea, it has been allocated a sum of 75 million Euros, which will be spent by the end of the year 2013. “I believe that all Romanians will be able to relate to our new nation brand, and recognize everything they love about their country”, Udrea stated in an interview. (Adevarul 2010b)

The campaign was launched at Expo 2010 in Shanghai, and it was developed by a Spanish-British joint venture, THR-TNS. *Explore the Carpathian Garden* is comprised of three television ads that focus on different themes which the MRDT website labels as *general*, *nature* and *culture*. They are played on three channels, CNN, Euronews and Eurosport. There is also a series of four leaflets, two of which correspond to the themes of the video ads – *nature* and *culture* – while the fourth is an introduction to Romanian medical spas, and the fifth provides information about certain Romanian cities.

Aside from the video ads and leaflets designed for international tourists, the MRDT has also published a manual which describes the thought process behind the campaign. This manual was intended for the use of potential investors, and it contains facts pertaining to

the market research which was conducted for the developing of the campaign, practical information, such as the correct usage of the logo, and finally, conceptual information about the image of Romania which the campaign is supposed to project.

The current campaign has had its share of controversy as well. It was discovered that a portion of the campaign logo was almost identical to that of a British company, and soon afterwards, a Belgian designer claimed to be the owner of the image, which is being sold online as a stock picture for \$250. The MRDT's response was that the logo had been developed by THR-TNS from scratch, and the similarity between the two images is merely a coincidence. Also, Minister Udrea was quoted as saying that the plagiarism scandal "promoted the brand in a way we wouldn't have been able to afford" (The Economist 2010).

The campaign was criticized for its lack of originality, especially when considering the fact that the EU had invested a large sum into the project. Even more worryingly, this incident has led to suspicions regarding the MRDT's use of European funding.

It is highly probable that the wider context has been more damaging to Romanian tourism than the quality of its nation branding campaigns. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the importance of the campaign message should be overlooked. The lack of ethics-related scandals surrounding a campaign would certainly be an improvement, but it would not suffice, and it should not be considered one of its defining qualities. A campaign which fails to present its message in a clear manner would still be criticized. The one campaign which was not associated with any press scandals, *Romania, Simply Surprising*, was cancelled for the very reason that its message was considered poorly developed.

Moreover, the past campaigns' messages have been criticized for the same reasons: lack of clarity and purpose, and the problem of uniqueness. This shows that mistakes related to concept and strategy are being repeated, and such a course of action can only be detrimental to the attempt to improve Romania's reputation in the world and increase the influx of international tourists.

At the same time though, a campaign which satisfies all the above-mentioned criteria and still has legal problems would also not have many chances of success. Ideally, the ethical and conceptual aspects should go hand in hand.

So far, there have been no in-depth studies showing exactly in what way the previous campaign messages have failed to provide an adequate image of Romania. The goal of the present paper is to analyze the way the Romanian national identity is constructed in *Explore the Carpathian Garden*.

Seeing as though past attempts have been criticized for not showing Romania's unique characteristics, this paper will place special emphasis on investigating the ways in which the concept of uniqueness is explored in the current campaign.

Another aspect which will be emphasized in the analysis is the portrayal of Romanian people in the campaign materials.

Furthermore, the paper also aims to contrast the findings of the analysis to the developers' expectations in terms of how the message should be interpreted, as expressed in the manual. In order to highlight these details, a multimodal semiotic approach will be used, seeing as the campaign contains both printed and video materials.

The hypothesis is that *Explore the Carpathian Garden* largely exhibits the same drawbacks as its predecessors, but to a much lesser extent. At first glance, the national image of Romania appears to be more tangible and there is less self-consciousness about the country's unfavorable reputation – or, at least, it is much less obvious. However, the approach is far from unproblematic, since the problem of uniqueness has still not been answered, and the image of Romania which this campaign projects is not as positive as it was intended to be.

## 1.2 Overview

The second chapter will provide general information about the field of advertising, starting with a brief history and a few definitions, followed by a description of its functions and purposes. Then, the chapter will explore the aspects of advertising which are connected to the field of marketing. A few key notions will be defined, such as positioning, market research, market segmentation and consumer behavior.

Since *Explore the Carpathian Garden* includes a video component, a description of the essential characteristics of television advertising will be provided as well. Lastly, the chapter will briefly explain the process of how an advertising campaign is developed, as well as list researchers' recommendations for successful campaigns.

The third chapter will focus on nation branding. It will provide various definitions of this phenomenon, as well as discuss debates on this topic from the field of tourism. While it is not certain whether nation branding can really generate results, this paper will provide both sides of the debate and argue in favor of neither.

The premise is that, regardless of whether nation branding works, campaigns are still being produced, and they usually draw the attention of the media, which, in turn, can also play a role in influencing potential tourists' choice of destination.

Moreover, it is arguable that, because nation branding campaigns usually represent an official interpretation of a country's image, it is worth studying their content in order to reveal details about the way that image is constructed.

This chapter will also provide definitions of the concept of country image, as well as discuss various theories on the subject of the tourist experience. Also, it will summarize the general guidelines and recommendations for the development of a successful nation brand according to literature.

The fourth chapter will focus on the methodology. It will start with a definition of semiotics, followed by a definition and a classification of the sign. It will also describe the field of social semiotics. Finally, it will provide a description of each of the methods of analysis which will be used in the fifth chapter, as well as an account of what the analysis will entail with regard to each of the campaign's materials.

The fifth chapter will consist of the actual findings and how they compare to the Ministry's manual, and also, the implications of the findings on the international reputation of the country. The chapter will start with an in-depth analysis of the campaign's logo and slogan. Then, each of the three videos will be analyzed in turn, mainly in terms of its structure, and they will be compared to each other.

Next, the brochures will be analyzed, firstly, in terms of their layout, and secondly, in terms of the characteristics of the photographs they contain. The photographs will be analyzed in terms of both their form and content. Afterwards, the chapter will discuss the overall differences between the country's portrayals in the videos as opposed to the leaflets. Finally, the chapter will discuss the characteristics of the Romanian national image as it is portrayed in the campaign, as well as compare it to the way it is described in the MRDT's brand manual.

The sixth chapter will provide a brief summary of the previous chapters and the conclusions of the paper.

## 2 ADVERTISING

Advertising is everywhere – in the printed press, on the radio, on television, on the Internet, and even on the street. It has become a part of our daily lives. However, while it is easy to identify, it is much more difficult to accurately define.

### 2.1 General notions

Throughout the centuries, the views on what advertising is and how it operates have changed substantially. As C. Popescu (2005) points out, it is largely agreed upon that the beginnings of advertising can be traced to the 1770s, when newspapers first began to publish advertisements on their last pages. Nicola and Petre (2004) note that the processes of creating these first ads were not based on any kind of market research, as they are today, but on intuition and creative genius. According to C. Popescu (2005), the creative process behind advertisements was much simpler back then than it is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is because brands were fewer and products were much less similar, or, in other words, there was no actual competition. He states that, in the beginning, the purpose of advertising was purely to inform the public about a product's existence on the market, and the advertising message was phrased in a purely informative fashion.

It was not until the 1900s that advertisements began to provide arguments in favor of the product in question, and it was only in the 1950s that the advertising message became less strictly informative and more subtle. During that period, the advertising message started to rely less and less on arguments, which are based on reason, and began to appeal to the consumers' wants rather than their needs.

As advertising gradually became less of a novelty and began to take advantage of the emergence of new forms of media (radio and television), the complexity of the strategy behind it began to increase as well. The process can still be observed today, the prime example being the increasing significance of online advertising.

There are numerous definitions of advertising, most of which seem to originate from two areas of study – social sciences and marketing. C. Popescu (2005: 9) emphasizes the social aspect of advertising and defines it as “a complex activity which assigns symbolic dimensions to goods and services, with the purpose of persuading various groups of people to purchase them”. The American Marketing Association, quoted in C. Popescu (2005: 7), defines the concept of advertising as “Any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor”. Popescu explains that the term *non-personal* refers to one of the most important characteristics of advertising: there is no direct communication between the advertiser and the consumer. He further notes that the non-personal nature of advertising sets it apart from salesmanship, because the message is brought to the viewer through different media channels, such as newspapers, television, radio and online sources, rather than through one-on-one communication.

However, while the fact remains that the communication between the advertiser and audience is performed through media, Hopkins (2009) states that the governing principles behind salesmanship and advertising are actually not that different. According to him, “Advertising is multiplied salesmanship.” (Hopkins 2009: 10) By this, he means that advertising means selling to not just one person, as a salesman would, but to large groups of people. He further adds: “The reason for most of the non-successes in advertising is trying to sell people what they do not want. But next to that comes the lack of true salesmanship.” (Hopkins 2009: 12) In his book, Hopkins treats advertising as a science – techniques can be tested, and results can be measured. Schwarz (2004) agrees with this interpretation of advertising – he likens the work of advertisers to that of stock brokers and scientists. He considers that advertisers work with forces which are greater than they are:

In science, they are the fundamental energies of the universe. In speculation, they are the billion-dollar tides and currents of the market place. *In copy*

*writing they are the hopes and fears and desires of millions upon millions of men and women, all over the world.* (Schwartz 2004: xii)

One of the broadest definitions of advertising is provided by Baker (1998), which combines its social and commercial aspects. He defines advertising as follows:

Advertising is the science, business or profession of creating and disseminating advertising messages, a social institution that affects the daily life of each individual, a force that shapes popular culture, a component of marketing or a source of information about products, services, events, individuals or institutions. (Baker 1998, quoted in Nicola and Petre 2004: 18)

## 2.2 What does advertising do and how?

From the perspective of marketing, the primary purpose of advertising is to help increase sales.

Kotler et al introduce the concept of the marketing mix. They consider that advertising is subordinated to the overall activity of the marketing process. According to them, the marketing mix is “the set of controllable tactical marketing tools that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market”, and it consists of “everything the firm can do to influence the demand for its product” (Kotler et al 1999: 109).

It is comprised of four factors, which Kotler et al dub “the four Ps: product, price, place and promotion” (Kotler et al 1999: 109–110). Advertising falls under the latter of the four Ps: “Promotion means activities that communicate the merits of the product and persuade target customers to buy it” (Kotler et al 1999: 110).

However, definitions from the field of advertising studies identify several other purposes as well. Moldoveanu (1995), quoted in Nicola and Petre (2004), identifies six functions of advertising.

The first is the communicative and informative function, which refers to the fact that advertising introduces the product to the consumer.

The second one is the economic function, because advertising can facilitate and increase sales.

The third is the social function – as Nicola and Petre phrase it, advertising provides “tacit information about generally accepted rules, attitudes, and roles”, and it offers “models of social behavior” (Nicola and Petre 2004: 45). There is also a political function – advertising can help the consumer influence the economical balance, which in turn, has consequences at the political level.

Another function is the persuasive function, because advertising attempts to change consumer behavior. Nicola and Petre note that, as soon as the public began to think more critically before making purchases, the more difficult it became to influence consumer behavior – for example, product review websites provide more documentation and can influence the consumer’s decision just as much as an ad can.

The last function is the cultural function. The authors point out that potential consumers do not only pay attention to the informational aspect of an advertisement, but they are influenced by its aesthetic aspect as well, in some cases even more so – for instance, when products are very similar to each other in terms of cost and benefits, the aesthetic factor can help to differentiate them.

To these, Khan (2006) adds the following purposes of advertising:

1. It counteracts the competition’s activity;
2. It creates brand images in the mind of the consumers;
3. It aids consumers in their decision-making process and helps them establish their brand preferences. (2006: 266)

As for the extent to which advertising can persuade, most researchers tend to agree with Hopkins, who claims that advertising fails when one is trying to sell people a product they do not want. (2009: 12) The consensus seems to be that advertising cannot create desire. Schwarz (2004: 4–6) believes that the purpose of advertising should be to take advantage of desires which the public already possesses. According to him, “it can only take the hopes, dreams, fears and desires *that already exist* in the hearts of millions of people, *and focus those already existing desires onto a particular product.*” (Schwartz 2004: 3)

O’Guinn et al (2009: 30–32) show how, in some cases, advertising can actually create demand for a product which did not previously exist, such as in the case of VCRs in the 1970s. However, it can be argued that the reason why VCRs were invented in the first place is precisely because of an existing desire, namely, to re-watch programs. It is also true that sometimes people purchase products they do not really need; however, the act of buying is still motivated by underlying desires of which the buyer might not even be aware.

### 2.3 Advertising and marketing

As C. Popescu (2005) states, every category of products offers a multitude of options to choose from and the differences between them are often negligible. It would follow that the consumer’s choice between different brands should not be very difficult. However, the buying process is much more complex than that. The following sections will provide more insight into the factors which influence a person’s desire to purchase a certain product.

### 2.3.1 Positioning

As stated in Chapter 1, the previous Romanian campaigns were criticized for failing to show what makes the country unique.

The problem of uniqueness in advertising was not given much importance until brands began to diversify and advertising messages started to become much more subtle. In 1961, Rosser Reeves (quoted in C. Popescu 2005: 29–30) introduced the *unique selling proposition* (USP). According to Reeves, advertisements should have the following characteristics:

1. Each advertisement must make a proposition to the consumer. Not just words, not just product puffery, not just show-window advertising. Each advertisement must say to each reader: "Buy this product, and you will get this specific benefit."
2. The proposition must be one that the competition either cannot, or does not, offer. It must be unique—either a uniqueness of the brand or a claim not otherwise made in that particular field of advertising.
3. The proposition must be so strong that it can move the mass millions, i.e., pull over new customers to your product...!

This implies that, regardless of how similar a product might be to another, advertisers should strive to promote it in such a way that they offer an alternative to that of the competitor. This is especially important in the case of a tourist destination, which is much more complex than the kind of product to which Reeves was referring.

Since the introduction of the USP, the importance of uniqueness in advertising has only kept growing. In 1969, Trout introduced a new concept – *positioning* (C. Popescu 2005: 30). C. Popescu explains positioning as a company's attempt to place its products on the consumer's "mental map" (C. Popescu 2005: 30). He further notes that consumers do

not have a single map for all products and brands of which they know – there is actually a multitude of maps which correspond to different categories of products, and moreover, maps can overlap. Although this is not always the case, consumers tend to choose products which promote the same values, from the same area of their overlapping mental maps. (C. Popescu 2005: 31)

The advantage of positioning is that it allows consumers to form an impression of a brand or a product. On the other hand, once a product finds its place on the consumer's mental map, it is extremely difficult for it to move to another location. There are numerous examples in literature of both failed and successful attempts at repositioning products (Belch and Belch 2003, Kotler et al 1999, C. Popescu 2005).

However, according to Belch and Belch (2003), it is not impossible to reposition a product by means of advertising, but it requires extremely careful planning, and it usually only occurs over long periods of time, sometimes even several years.

Dionyssopoulou and Stafylakis (2007) have conducted a study on the results of country branding campaigns in Greece throughout the years. They concluded that fluctuations in advertising expenses and changes in the campaign message did affect the influx of tourists, but only that of visitors from countries which were not labeled as frequent customers. The authors showed how a decrease in advertising expenses led to a decrease in the influx of Russian tourists, while the rate of visitors from Western Europe, who are considered frequent customers, was much more stable. In other words, Greece already occupied a positive position on the mental map of Western European tourists, who kept visiting it throughout the years. On the other hand, the country did not occupy a fixed position on Russian tourists' mental maps, and consequently, changes in nation branding campaign messages influenced their decision to visit to a much greater extent.

The authors claim that tourist products imply a very high level of involvement on the part of a potential customer. This is mainly because of a property they call intangibility

– tourists cannot form an accurate impression about a destination until they actually reach it. Following their train of thought, the intangible nature of tourist products affects new markets to a much greater extent than it affects loyal customers. The less information customers possess about a certain destination, the more intangible it will appear, and consequently, the higher the chances of being able to influence their decision by nation branding advertisements.

As C. Popescu states, understanding positioning leads to awareness of the two-faceted nature of products; they have a practical-utilitarian side, and another which is cultural-symbolical. (2005: 35) According to him, advertising causes the latter to be introduced to the audience first. “The advertisement is part of the product, the product is bought together with the values with which it is associated by means of advertising” (C. Popescu 2005:35).

Belch and Belch (2003: 55–58) describe the development of the positioning strategy as follows:

1. Identifying competitors – in the case of nation brands, the competition would be the most visited destinations by tourists from the target markets;
2. Assessing consumers’ perception of competitors;
3. Determining competitors’ positions;
4. Analyzing the consumer’s preferences;
5. Making the positioning decision;
6. Monitoring the position

It is worth noting that the authors place the analysis of consumers’ preferences right before the making of the positioning decision. This is because positioning cannot be done without sufficient information about who the target consumer is; this will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

### 2.3.2 Consumer behavior and market research

Many researchers agree that, in order to produce successful advertisements, it is essential to understand the motivation behind people's decision to purchase the products they choose. It is generally agreed upon that consumers do not only buy products which fulfill their most basic needs, such as survival, and even then, some brands are chosen over others. "People do not buy things. They buy satisfaction of their wants and needs." (Altstiel and Grow 2006: 28)

Khan (2006: 4) defines consumer behavior as "the decision-making process and physical activity involved in acquiring, evaluating, using and disposing of goods and services." According to him, this process occurs in five stages:

1. The consumer acknowledges the need to buy the product;
2. The consumer tries to acquire more information about the product;
3. The product is compared to competing products in terms of advantages and disadvantages;
4. The product is purchased;
5. The consumer evaluates the product. (Khan 2006: 131–132)

Khan (2006: 132–133) distinguishes between three types of decision making, which vary in terms of involvement on the part of the consumer. Thus, when the level of involvement increases, so does the level of dissatisfaction if the product fails to meet the consumer's expectations.

The first category is habitual decision-making or routinised response behavior, which refers to products which are bought fairly often and are relatively low in cost, such as hygiene products.

The second is that of limited decision-making, which occurs in the case of moderately-priced products, which require a small amount of research before purchase, such as a television set.

The last category is extended problem solving, which involves products which are bought much less often, are extremely pricy, and require the highest degree of involvement and research before purchase.

Dionyssopoulou and Stafylakis (2007) describe tourist products from the point of view of the consumer as being intangible (their quality is difficult to predict), risky (because of the usually high costs involved), and they demand a high level of emotional involvement. From their perspective, tourist products would fall into Khan's last category.

Kotler et al (1999) dedicate a whole chapter to the great number of factors which influence a person's buying behavior. They list the following: "culture and subculture, social class, groups, lifestyle, personality, beliefs and attitudes" (Kotler et al 1999: 230–250).

The activity which can help a company to acquire more information about the (potential) buyers of its products is called market research. As Kotler et al define it,

marketing research is the function linking the consumer, customer and public to the marketer through information – information used: to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; to generate, refine and evaluate marketing actions; to monitor marketing performance; and to improve understanding of the marketing process. (1999: 320)

According to Kotler et al, market research is performed in four steps:

1. Defining the problem and research objectives;
2. Developing the research plan;
3. Implementing the research plan;

#### 4. Interpreting and reporting the findings.

Kotler et al state that, while many of the factors which influence the consumer's decision making process are completely beyond the marketer's control, they can still be useful in trying to determine the target consumers in order to adapt the strategy to their needs. "The company that really understands how consumers will respond to different product features, prices and advertising appeals has a great advantage over its competitors." (Kotler et al 1999: 229) At the same time, the authors state that market research is too complex to be completely foolproof, and the product might still be rejected.

#### 2.3.3 Market segmentation

C. Popescu (2005) states that the first stage of marketing and advertising research is establishing the product's market.

Kotler et al define the market as follows: "To a marketer, a market is the set of all actual and potential buyers of product or service. (...) Potential buyers for something have three characteristics; *interest, income* and *access*." (1999: 338).

C. Popescu and Kotler et al agree that an attempt to market a certain product to the entire market is bound to be unsuccessful. C. Popescu calls this "the majority fallacy" (2005: 16). The reason why such an approach is not recommended is because of the multitude of factors which influence consumer behavior, which have been illustrated in the previous section. The solution to this problem is the concept of market segmentation.

As Kotler et al explain, "through market segmentation, companies divide large, heterogeneous markets into smaller segments that can be reached more efficiently with products and services that match their unique needs" (1999: 379). The authors state that

“undifferentiated marketing”, which is the opposite of market segmentation, would lead to unfavorable consequences: the larger the number of companies which adopt this method, the more competition there is on the market. (Kotler et al 1999: 415–416)

A segment, according to Kotler et al, “should be the largest possible homogeneous group worth pursuing with a tailored marketing programme” (1999: 409). Berkowitz et al, quoted in Belch and Belch (2003: 44), add that a segment should be comprised of customers who have the same needs and will respond to the marketing strategy in a similar fashion.

Belch and Belch (2003: 44) describe the process of market segmentation as follows:

1. Grouping customers according to their needs;
2. Determining whether the company’s products do suit the consumers’ needs;
3. Making connections between the product in question and the consumers’ needs;
4. Selecting the segments to which the product can be marketed;
5. Attempting to reach the above-mentioned segments.

Market segmentation starts by dividing the total possible buyers according to four main variables.

The first variable is geographic – consumers can be divided into segments based on their location, from large areas such as countries to even extremely small ones such as neighborhoods.

The demographic variable refers to age, gender, level of education, occupation, social class, income and other similar factors.

The psychographic variable refers to the act of consumers are grouped according to shared psychological traits and lifestyles.

The last variable, which is behavioral, refers to whether or not consumers use the product at all and how often (Kotler et al 1999: 385).

Belch and Belch add a fifth variable, which is benefit – this refers to the specific benefits which the consumer expects from the product – for instance, two possible effects of toothpaste are breath freshening and tooth whitening (2003: 49).

Segmentation can then be taken as far as creating consumer profiles, to the extent that the typical consumer is described as an individual, although the profile is supposed to be representative for a whole group. As Belch and Belch (2003) point out, segmentation can actually be taken too far.

However, Keller and Kotler suggest that very small segments can be useful as well. According to them, a niche is defined as “a more narrowly defined customer group seeking a distinctive mix of benefits” (Keller and Kotler 2006: 242). They state that niches are defined by dividing segments into sub-segments. From their perspective, it is worth marketing to a niche if it has the following characteristics:

1. Niche consumers require specialized benefits and they are willing to pay a higher price in order to acquire them;
2. They are not interested in the competitors’ products;
3. There is a possibility for the niche to grow in size.

Kotler et al (1999) state that, in order for segmentation to be useful, it has to be performed in accordance with several criteria. The first is measurability – it must be possible for the size and buying power of the segment to be measured. The second is accessibility – the segment must be able to be reached. The third criterion is substantiality – the segment must be large enough. The last criterion is actionability – the budget must be large enough to accommodate all segments.

## 2.4 Television advertising

As the first section of Chapter 2 shows, advertising as we know it today has evolved in a great number of ways. It has become ubiquitous, the audience is much more difficult to convince, and the number of brands has increased enormously, leading to a very strong competition. Due to these factors, the difficulty in creating productive advertisements has increased as well. The characteristics of the different types of media have added yet another layer to the challenge of creating a successful advertisement. Each medium has its own unique advantages and disadvantages, and this is true about television as well.

### 2.4.1 Advantages and disadvantages

O'Guinn et al (2009) state that television has been the fastest growing medium in terms of popularity, and it has also been the most effective in influencing consumer behavior. Kellison (2006) and Chaudhuri (2006) agree that, for a great number of people, television might be the only source of information. "The TV set is a staple in most households. It's a familiar voice in the background, an antidote to loneliness", Kellison states (2006: XIV).

C. Popescu lists a number of reasons why so many advertisers prefer to use television as a medium. Firstly, television ads contain both sounds and moving pictures – this means that the viewers can use two of their senses instead of just one. Secondly, it has enormous coverage, and it is the most efficient medium in reaching large numbers of people simultaneously. Lastly, television ads can be played very frequently (C. Popescu 2005: 119–120).

To this, Nicola and Petre (2004) add that most of the time, television ads are watched at home, where viewers are more relaxed, and consequently, more likely to accept the advertising message.

According to McLuhan, “the medium is the message” (1964, quoted in Chaudhuri 2006: 55). Chaudhuri, who performed several studies on the role of emotions in the perception of advertisements, believes that television is the medium which demands the most involvement on the part of the audience. He has shown that television and radio, as opposed to print media, “elicit higher relative levels of emotional, affective response such as happiness and fear” (Chaudhuri 2006: 61).

However, there are disadvantages to television ads as well. According to C. Popescu, television ads are expensive, in terms of both production and purchased air time on at least one channel. They are also usually very short, thirty seconds at most (two of the *Explore the Carpathian Garden* ads are 19 seconds long, while the third is 29 seconds long). This makes the job of developers more challenging, because the format limits the amount of information that can be provided – thus, as Sutherland and Sylvester (2008) state, the audience has much less time to identify with what is going on on-screen. Lastly, television is considered an “ephemeral” medium – unless the ads are repeated often enough, they can be forgotten. (C. Popescu 2005: 120–121)

Nicola and Petre (2004) claim that the advantages of television can also have negative consequences. Firstly, the fact that the audience is usually relaxed when watching television may actually cause the ads to be completely ignored. Secondly, similarly to radio programs, viewers might multitask during the television programs and miss the ads. Television is also characterized by what is called the zapping phenomenon, which occurs when people switch channels as soon as the ad break begins. Moreover, it is actually more difficult to make sure that the ads reach the exact target audience, particularly if it is very specific. It can be argued that this is especially true in the case of niches. Lastly, in Bruneau’s words, “You must capture your audiences’ attention in

the midst of some strong competition. And what's your competition? A run to the kitchen for a quick snack." (2000: 96)

O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy state that viewers may think of ad breaks as an intrusion on the programs they are watching, and they might refuse to watch the advertisements altogether, as a form of "revenge" (2004: 3).

#### 2.4.2 The components of a television advertisement

Sutherland and Sylvester (2008) identify a series of features which set television advertisements apart from other advertising genres. The first feature is the connection between the linguistic and visual aspects. According to them, the process of acknowledging this connection is fast and spontaneous, and usually requires little to no effort on the part of the viewer. However, as they point out, the connection cannot be made if the advertisement has failed to draw the viewer's attention.

The second feature is the use of attention-getting devices. The three main devices listed by the authors are sex, humor and emotion. However, Sutherland and Sylvester also state that relying on them excessively might lead to the opposite effect on the viewer. In the case of a humor-based approach, for instance, the viewer might remember the joke better than the brand or product which is being promoted. This is why the authors recommend a balance between the attention-getting and persuasive aspects of an advertisement.

Television ads also contain music. Sutherland and Sylvester distinguish between the use of well-known tunes, and the use of jingles, which are advertising slogans set to music.

They also have a narrative aspect. The authors oppose two narrative methods, the talking face and the voice-over. In the first case, the narrator can be seen, while in the latter, the narrator can only be heard.

Also, the viewer can be addressed in two ways: directly, in which case the viewer becomes *the target*, or indirectly, such as when two characters are conversing on-screen, and the viewer becomes a *bystander*.

Lastly, television ads contain characters, who can be celebrities, actors playing anonymous roles, or animated characters.

#### 2.4.3 Production and key factors

Usually, television advertisements are produced by an agency, such as in the case of *Explore the Carpathian Garden*. As Cury (2005) states, ideally, the finished product should be the result of effective communication between the two parties involved, the client and the agency. According to him, the lack of communication can have disastrous effects on the efficiency of the advertisement.

The development process of a television ad consists of three stages. The first stage, preproduction, includes everything that relates to gathering information, which can be from the client or from the results of market research, and it also includes planning activities, such as choosing a production company and developing the strategy. The second stage, production, refers to the actual filming of the video(s). The third and final stage, post-production, refers to the process of editing the video(s), which leads to the making of the final version of the advertisement (Curry 2005).

Altstiel and Grow (2006) have compiled a list of tips for the development of television ads, which, according to them, have been shown to increase the efficiency of ads and may counteract the disadvantages of the medium.

They note that the first three to ten seconds are the most important when it comes to drawing the viewer's attention, which is why the essential information should not be saved for the end – by that time, the viewer may have switched the channel. Furthermore, the optimal rate is two to three different scenes for every ten seconds, and also, around two words per second – otherwise, the ad may be too cluttered.

They recommend leaving room for the viewer to interpret the ad: “let [the viewers] complete the creative equation” (Altstiel and Grow 2006: 292–296). They also suggest that, ideally, the characters should be shown interacting with the product. Lastly, they state that, if the ad is part of a campaign, the print and video elements should complement each other, and this also applies to subsequent ads as well – too much repetition should be avoided.

## 2.5 Advertising campaigns

Blakeman defines an advertising campaign as “a family of ads that shares a visual/verbal identity and promotes a single idea to a defined target audience” (2011: 6). She further specifies that, although a campaign can make use of various media, the “tone” of the campaign should stay the same. This is because “the total effect of a successful ad campaign is greater than any of its individual parts” (Blakeman 2011: 7).

O'Guinn et al provide the following definition: “An advertising campaign is a series of coordinated advertisements that communicate a reasonably cohesive and integrated theme” (2009: 12). They elaborate that, although each of the ads can make a different claim, they must be unified by an overall theme.

As Blakeman states, campaigns are usually extremely costly. However, they offer certain advantages over individual advertisements. According to her, the main reason why companies opt for campaigns is because, given the enormous amount of ads to

which the public is subjected on a daily basis, repetition is essential in order for the product in question to be remembered. An individual ad would use a single medium, but a campaign can make use of more media, which would allow for more exposure. Also, campaigns can help promote brands and products in the long term, whereas individual ads can be forgotten. In Blakeman's words, "one ad cannot build an image, promote reliability, or guarantee quality" (2011: 8).

### 2.5.1 The production of campaigns

According to C. Popescu (2005: 44–53), the development process of an advertising campaign has a very well-defined structure. As mentioned in the previous section, campaigns can be developed in-house by the company, if it includes an advertising department, or as in the case of *Explore the Carpathian Garden*, it can be produced by an advertising agency. He identifies a series of steps in the development of an advertising campaign.

Firstly, the developers should estimate the campaign's chances of success. This step includes determining whether the product is different enough from those of the competitors', and also, determining whether the company can provide enough funding for the campaign. This step is followed by market research, which includes identifying the top competitors, and how they are marketing their products.

The last step is determining the marketing objectives and advertising objectives. Marketing objectives refer to the client's economic objectives, such as increasing sales by a certain percentage, while advertising objectives refer to the way in which the client hopes to influence the consumer, for instance, drawing the attention of more target groups, or maintaining the interest of others.

Nicola and Petre (2004: 55) elaborate on the topic of advertising objectives, stating that they should meet a series of requirements. Firstly, both parties – the client and the

agency – should agree as to what the objectives are. They state that it is essential to make sure that the distinction between advertising and marketing objectives is clear. Furthermore, the objectives should be stated clearly so that misunderstandings can be avoided in the future. They should be realistic and the degree of their achievability should be measurable, and so should be the campaign's results as well.

The next step in a campaign's development process is creating the advertising message, and especially its theme. Then, the media which will be used should be identified. Usually, campaigns involve more than one medium. If this is the case the message should be developed in such a way that it is easily adaptable to each of them. The last step is evaluating the campaign's effectiveness, which is usually done by testing the campaign message with small groups of target consumers.

### 2.5.2 Campaign classification

Nicola and Petre (2004: 55) classify campaigns in three categories according to their purpose.

The first category is that of informative campaigns. They are mostly used for promoting new products or brands which have recently entered the market, and their purpose is to inform the audience that the product/brand exists. They provide the audience with a first impression.

The next group consists of persuasive campaigns. They are used when the competition on the market is very tight, and their purpose is to convince potential consumers to prefer the brand or product in question over the competing ones.

The last category is that of reminder campaigns. They are used either when the brand or product has an established position in the market, or when sales start to decrease. Their purpose is to remind the audience that the product exists.

### 2.5.3 Key factors of campaigns

According to Blakeman (2011), in order for an advertising campaign to work, it should have several characteristics. Firstly, the target consumer should be clearly defined. Secondly, the product's benefits should be noticeable in both the visual and the linguistic aspect of the message. Thirdly, a strategy must be followed in order for the objectives to be achieved. Also, the product's benefits must fit the target consumer's lifestyle, and the target consumer must be reachable through the chosen media. Moreover, the brand's image must be recognizable in each medium. Lastly, the message must be dissimilar from that of the competition, and it should be easy for the target consumer to interpret it as intended (Blakeman 2011: 13–14)

Conversely, there are also factors which can cause a campaign to fail to fulfill its purpose. For example, a campaign can fail to fulfill its purposes because of market research errors. As Kotler et al point out, the results of market research should be “relevant, accurate, current and unbiased” (1999: 326). Also, the same can happen if the message fails to draw and keep the attention of the viewer. Furthermore, if the message is too complicated to get its point across, or too simplified, it would make it uninteresting for the viewer. Another thing which could happen is that the media of choice might not reach the target customer. Lastly, a campaign can fail if there is a lack of coordination between the different elements of the campaign. (Blakeman 2011: 14–15)

### 3 NATION BRANDING

Most of the literature on the subject of nation branding defines this concept as the activity of applying marketing principles in order to increase national or international tourism to a given destination. As Wang et al (2006) point out, in order to perform such an activity, one must possess a thorough understanding of both tourism and marketing.

#### 3.1 Definitions and related terms

The Encyclopedia of Tourism (2000: 585) defines tourism as an industry and a phenomenon which focuses on three major aspects: the temporary movement of tourists from their home to a destination, the services which enable this movement, and the relations between the tourists' place of origin and destination. Nash (1996), quoted in Knudsen et al (2008), describes tourism as a discourse among three parties: tourists, locals, and intermediaries, such as ministries of tourism, travel agents, and guides.

Marketing, according to Kotler et al (1999: 7) is “the delivery of customer satisfaction at a profit”. They further comment that its goal is “to attract new customers by promising superior value, and to keep current customers by delivering satisfaction.”

Usually, marketing is the field where the term *branding* is encountered most often. The American Marketing Association, quoted in Heding et al (2009: 9), defines the concept of brand as follows: “A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.”

There are many terms which describe the above-mentioned activity or similar activities, and they are often used interchangeably, such as place branding, tourism marketing and destination branding.

The term which will be used in the current paper is *nation branding*, because the paper focuses on a campaign which promotes a country. It was coined by Simon Anholt, the founder of the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, which is a “system for measuring and managing national reputation around the world”, according to its website. Anholt explains the concept of nation branding as “a plan for defining the most realistic, most competitive, and most compelling strategic vision for the country, region, or city; this vision then has to be fulfilled and communicated.” (2004: 214)

Papadopoulos uses the term *nation branding* as well, and describes it as “the broad set of efforts by country, regional and city governments, and by industry groups, aimed at marketing the places and sectors they represent” (2004: 36).

The Encyclopedia of Tourism (2000: 378–379) provides an entry on destination marketing. It describes it as a government-funded activity, carried out by tourism organizations, which serves the primary purpose of creating an image for a destination in order to attract and influence prospective tourists. Similarly to other forms of marketing, this activity involves market research and promotion through various forms of advertising.

Short et al (2000: 318, quoted in Avraham and Ketter 2008: 5) provide the following definition: “Place promotion involves the re-evaluation and re-presentation of place to create and market a new image for localities to enhance their competitive position in attracting or retaining resources”.

There seems to be a major debate among researchers in this field, and namely, whether or not the activity of marketing a destination can actually generate an increase in the influx of tourists to it, and also, whether or not it actually can influence potential tourists’ opinions about the destination. Some researchers tend to be skeptical about the effects of nation branding campaigns, while others believe that they do, in fact, make a difference.

While there is a large amount of literature on the subject, Anholt, who was the first to introduce the term, believes that the idea of nation branding is greatly misunderstood. He even states the following: “Let me be clear: there is no such thing as ‘nation branding’. It is a myth, and perhaps a dangerous one.” (2007: 7) The reasoning behind this statement is that Anholt doubts that the principles of marketing can be applied in the same manner when it comes to tourism. According to him, the activity of promoting countries as tourist destinations does indeed have much in common with product branding; however, this does not mean that promoting a nation is the same as branding a product (Anholt 2010: 7–9). Govers and Go (2009) agree with Anholt on this matter, and point out that countries are much more complex than products. They have histories, cultures and governments, and potential tourists are bound to possess background knowledge about them, whereas a product can be introduced to the market as a complete novelty. Similarly, Wang et al (2011: 3) point out that tourism marketing does not occur in isolation; they state that the process of promoting a destination is affected by a number of factors, including political, economical and socio-cultural factors.

Morgan and Pritchard (2004), on the other hand, believe that nation branding is a very useful tool. They state that, because tourists are becoming increasingly more interested in gaining emotional fulfillment from their holidays, nation branding can help them choose their travel destinations in such a way that their desires are met. They also point out that “the battle for consumers in tomorrow’s destination marketplace will be fought not over price but over hearts and minds, and this is how places have moved into territories previously reserved for consumer brands” (2004: 61). This goes hand in hand with the way advertising is currently being utilized, namely, it insists on the values associated with a given product much more than on its advantages.

Moreover, there seem to be examples of countries which have utilized nation branding campaigns successfully, such as Spain and Ireland, according to Morgan and Pritchard (2004). Similarly, Dionyssopoulou and Stafylakis (2007) have shown how Greek nation

branding campaigns have influenced the increase of tourists from certain countries. At the same time, though, this study confirmed Anholt's claim that nation branding campaigns cannot change the mind of people who are already prejudiced towards a given destination. What the authors actually showed, however, is that there is in fact a group of potential tourists who can indeed be influenced, namely, those who were previously undecided.

Horner and Swarbrooke (2005) agree that the principles of marketing can easily be adapted to the needs of a tourism campaign. They emphasize the fact that tourism is essentially a service-oriented industry, and tourist products should therefore be regarded as services. They also point out that, while there are differences between services and products in general, it is also true that the line between services and products is often blurred, because some products share characteristics attributed to services and the other way around. This is why the authors support the view that it is acceptable to use product marketing techniques in the case of campaigns which promote services, including those related to tourism.

At the same time, Ward (2005) points out that, while most researchers seem to imply that this phenomenon is fairly recent, what he refers to as place selling has been happening for more than a century. The purpose of place selling was different in its infant stages – for instance, trying to convince people to move to colonized lands – but some of the so-called modern techniques such as advertising were already being used, and they did achieve their goals.

Even though it is debatable whether nation branding campaigns can actually be successful, numerous countries resort to them in order to improve their international reputation and attract more tourists.

### 3.2 Country image

Generally, literature suggests that the most difficult stage of developing a nation branding campaign is deciding how to create and promote the brand's identity – more precisely, deciding how to portray the country image.

According to Kotler et al (1993: 141), a country's image is “the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of a place”; an image is the result of the human mind's need to simplify large amounts of information about a given topic. However, the authors state that country images are not the same as stereotypes. In their opinion, stereotypes are much more simplified, whereas images have a more encompassing scope. Nevertheless, while the notions are not identical, Kotler and Gertner (2002) affirm that most country images are, in fact, stereotypes. Although they state that people tend to stick to their personal interpretations of country images and resist information which contradicts them, through confirmation bias, the authors believe that country images can still be changed.

Anholt agrees to an extent, and states that, more often than not, people's perception of a given country is “at least partly untrue and unfair, based on a whole mess of misunderstandings, prejudices, cultural differences and half-forgotten events from history” (2003: 109). He also agrees that country images can indeed change over time, but not necessarily because of nation branding campaigns. He suggests that promoting products which are easily identifiable with their country of origin in a clever way can help improve a country's reputation in a much more effective way. According to him, this is one of the reasons why Japan has managed to improve its image over time.

Kotler and Gertner (2002) state that, even when a country does not actively promote itself as a brand, people still have an image of it in mind. This image influences their opinion about a given country, which, in turn, determines their actions with respect to it, including whether or not they would visit it as tourists. Kotler and Gertner's research

shows that consumers tend to favor products from certain countries over others, and this tendency is based on the way country images are perceived. They refer to this phenomenon as *the country of origin effect*. Anholt (2003) points out that this phenomenon is paradoxical, because most of the time, the country of origin and the country where a product is manufactured are not the same, and furthermore, the former usually has a better international reputation than the latter. Nevertheless, the country of origin effect serves as an example of the importance of country image in people's minds. It is perhaps even more significant when it comes to choosing a travel destination; as Morgan and Pritchard (2004) as well as Dionyssopoulou and Stafylakis (2007) point out, the decision to travel is mostly governed by personal factors, such as emotion and personal opinions.

Govers and Go state that country images are “constructed through historical, political, and cultural discourses, and are influenced by power struggles” (2009: 9). Fesenmaier and MacKay (1996: 37) explain that “what is depicted or not depicted in destination image advertising, and on whose authority it is selected, involves a more complex question of what comprises the destination and who has the power to define its identity”. Following the same line of reasoning, Govers and Go conclude that there is a high risk of the decision of what to include in advertisements is “hijacked by power struggles” (2009: 9).

Govers and Go, as well as Fesenmaier and MacKay, highlight the complexity of determining the nature of the information which is presented to potential tourists. It is up to the developers to decide what features to include and how they should be presented. Furthermore, due to the limitations of tourist materials, a nation branding campaign can only present certain facets of the destination's image. Thus, the national image projected by nation branding campaigns and tourist materials is, largely, the developers' interpretation of the destination. However, according to Fesenmaier and MacKay (1996), the country's image as shown in nation branding is not interpreted only by its creators, but by the viewers as well.

### 3.3 The process of nation branding campaign development

There seems to be a consensus in literature on certain guidelines and recommendations for the process developing effective nation branding campaigns.

Avraham and Ketter (2008) state that the process of developing a nation branding campaign is almost the same as that of regular marketing campaigns, except for the fact that its goals are significantly different. Most literature on the subject of nation branding reiterates information about concepts and principles which have been discussed in Chapter 2 of the present paper – for instance, positioning and market segmentation. Similarly, most of the problems encountered in product marketing and advertising seem to apply to nation branding campaigns as well.

According to Morgan and Pritchard (2004: 68–69), the process of destination brand building is comprised of five steps:

1. Marketing investigation, analysis and strategic recommendations
2. Brand identity development
3. Brand launch and introduction
4. Brand implementation
5. Monitoring, evaluation and review.

Horner and Swarbrooke add the fact that the key to developing a successful campaign is to remember that tourist products are in fact services, which, according to them, have several properties.

Firstly, they have the property of intangibility, which means that they cannot be perceived with one's senses before purchase and not even with one's imagination.

The second property is inseparability – the service provider and the consumer are in direct contact.

The third is heterogeneity, which means that every instance of a given service will be different, depending on various factors, such as, for instance, a tour guide's performance.

Another property is perishability; services often experience fluctuations during different times of the year, and they need to be purchased during the time when they are available – for instance, certain touristic activities are only organized during particular times of the year.

Lastly, services are characterized by a lack of ownership – when paying for a service the customer does not purchase an actual item, but takes part in an activity (Horner and Swarbrooke 2005: 16–17).

Avraham and Ketter state that a nation branding campaign has three essential components: the logo, the slogan and the visual symbols (2008: 56–60).

According to the authors, the logo's primary characteristic is that it should be relevant to the destination's assets, especially those which the campaign seeks to promote. They point out that a significant amount of destination logos are much too similar because they utilize common elements such as basic shapes, which makes them more difficult for the potential consumer to recognize.

Moreover, they state that a poorly chosen logo can undermine the effect of the campaign. In their study on the branding strategy of cities in Israel, they came across the logo of a city near Jerusalem which was supposed to be advertised in opposition to it, but in fact, its logo contained elements which reminded the viewer of Jerusalem. They also provide the example of a town which was supposed to be promoted as a technological center but used agricultural elements in its logo. The authors state that a destination's logo should be creative, original, and easy to recognize and associate with the qualities presented in the campaign.

On the subject of a campaign's slogan, Avraham and Ketter state that one which is chosen wisely "can lay out a destination's vision, reflect its spirit and create enthusiasm and momentum" (2008: 58). They emphasize the fact that the slogan must be chosen according to the interests of the targeted segments.

Furthermore, they state that a slogan must be based on facts and not on fantasy, in order to prevent disappointment on the part of tourists. They point out that, just like in the case of the logo, the slogan must reflect the qualities of a given destination and express its uniqueness in a memorable way.

The third component mentioned by Avraham and Ketter refers to visual symbols. According to the authors, visual symbols can be buildings, monuments, artwork or any similar element which can help the viewer identify the destination, aside from the logo and the slogan. For instance, the Sydney Opera House would make the viewer think about Australia.

The authors point out that choosing a visual symbol for a campaign is not an easy task, and it might lead to problematic interpretations of the campaign's message. For instance, the authors cite the example of the Muslim Dome of the Rock, which was used to represent Jerusalem in a campaign, when in fact the city wished to present itself as a Jewish city.

Morgan and Pritchard (2004) have noticed a series of common elements among successful tourism marketing processes, such as in the case of Spain and Ireland. These are as follows:

1. Extremely careful planning over a long period of time, coupled with political, economical and cultural development;
2. Sufficient and well-invested funding;
3. Commitment on the part of individuals they refer to as brand champions, who can be politicians or members of a marketing organization;

4. Creative, cutting-edge advertising;
5. Consistency throughout the years.

Dionyssopoulou and Stafylakis (2007), who have analyzed recurring elements in successful Greek nation branding campaigns, have concluded that there is another factor which can influence the viewer positively. They have noticed that the increase of international tourists correlated to a change in the advertising message, namely, it included the presence of tourists in advertisements, and moreover, tourists interacting with locals. According to the authors, the presence of tourists in ads diminishes the intangibility of tourist services by showing them a small sample of what they can expect, and it also helps the viewers identify with the tourist characters and imagine themselves in their place. The authors imply that advertisements should ideally focus less on the actual destination and more on the tourist experience.

Also, they agree that the campaign message should be consistent throughout the years, even though the campaign's argument may change. For instance, Greek nation branding ads have kept a number of visual elements in all their campaigns, such as the sea and references to Greece's history and legends.

Kotler et al (1993) add another element to the list, which is the importance of positioning in nation branding – for instance, he would not recommend that a country present too many of its different aspects at the same time.

Govers and Go (2009) agree that the country image projected by nation branding should correspond to the reality of the actual destination. Otherwise, what occurs is what they refer to as a place brand strategy gap. According to them, such a gap occurs when “the images generated within the product offering and the way they are projected come to constitute a self-perpetuating system of illusions, which may appear as quaint to the local inhabitants as they do to the visitors” (Govers and Go 2009: 71–72).

It is also true, however, that even if a nation brand is carefully constructed and abides by most of the guidelines provided by literature, the developers' effort might not always generate the desired effects. For instance, events such as natural disasters, political issues and terrorist attacks usually undermine a country's efforts to attract tourists. Morgan and Pritchard (2004: 62–63) discuss the case of Nepal, a country which gained a large amount of international tourists by promoting its geographical tourist attractions such as Mount Everest; however, after a widely covered airplane hijacking in 2001, the same year as the September 11 terrorist attacks in the USA, the amount of visitors to Nepal dropped by a large percentage.

Most researchers agree on one aspect, which is that even in cases when nation branding does appear to succeed, it is not the sole contributor to the country's success. Morgan and Pritchard point out that a successful nation brand must be able to simultaneously maintain a consistent image throughout the years, while still being able to present itself as "contemporary and fresh" (2004: 64). Moreover, as Kotler et al state, trying to improve a nation's image "does not work if the place has not started to correct its deep-seated problems" (1993: 160). In short, as Torkildsen states, "Marketing slogans preach: 'it is not the product but the promise'. There is a need in leisure to be selling both the product and the promise" (1999: 443).

### 3.4 The tourist experience

In order to understand how consumer behavior works in the context of tourism, a useful way to start is by asking the question of why people choose to travel, and also, to understand the relationship between tourists and the place they are visiting.

Pearce (2005) points out that a distinction should be made between consumer behavior, as explained by marketing and advertising studies, and tourist behavior. One of these differences is that, according to Clawson and Knetsch (1966), quoted in Pearce (2005),

the tourist experience lasts for a much longer period of time than the experience of product consumers. According to them, the tourist experience is comprised of five stages:

1. The pre-purchase stage;
2. The experience of traveling to the destination of choice;
3. The time spent at the destination;
4. The return journey from the destination;
5. The recollection stage.

Pearce points out that the first stage can be very long – it can range from several months to several years. He states that this is also true about the last stage, which he considers essential because “the experienced product does not decay or wear out and may indeed be augmented by ongoing information about the site or by repeated visits” (Pearce 2005: 13).

Wearing et al (2010) explain that leisure tourism began in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and during that time, traveling was seen as a means of relaxation, taking time off from work, and escaping the mundane. According to the authors, most early tourism theorists also believed that one of the main motivations of travel is to experience something different from daily life. Also, most early theories involved various classifications of tourists, largely based on their personal reasons for traveling. Furthermore, theorists generally considered the above-mentioned characteristics of tourists as being universal. This line of reasoning has been criticized for being too rigid and failing to realize that the tourist experience is actually very complex.

### 3.5 The tourist gaze and the tourist landscape

Knudsen et al (2008) state that the basis for most current theories on why people choose to travel was formulated by Urry (1990), who introduced the formula *the tourist gaze*. Urry’s theory, in turn, was based on the work of Foucault (1973), who talks about

power relations which are based on gaze; he provides the example of a physician who presents his or her observations to students, which then become truth for the patients. According to Foucault, it is because of the power which the physician possesses that he or she is able to pass on knowledge obtained through the gaze as truth.

Similarly, as the authors explain, Urry utilizes this framework in order to explain the phenomenon of tourism, and the reason why people take part in it. He replaces Foucault's hospital setting with one pertaining to tourism – the physician's role is played by the tour guide, the students become the tourists, and the patients are the locals and everything that can be seen at a given destination.

According to Urry, tourists are being told how to interpret the sights at which they are looking by someone who has the power to impose a certain perspective. Furthermore, in the same manner that physicians focus their attention on people who are ill and therefore different, tourists are also invited to regard the destination as significantly different from what they are used to. This is how the activity of tourism involves what Urry calls “the spectaclization of place” (1992, quoted in Knudsen et al 2008: 3)

However, Urry's view on tourism has been criticized on a number of points, as Knudsen et al state. Firstly, the analogy to Foucault's concept of the gaze is unsuitable, because the tourist experience often involves participation to a great extent. Secondly, Urry's view does not take into account the fact that the tourist experience is not always carefully planned beforehand; moreover, as Horner and Swarbrooke (2005) point out, it would actually be impossible to organize it to such a degree, because the experience will be different for each and every tourist, due to the large amount of factors involved.

This is why Knudsen et al suggest a way to improve Urry's theory, which they call *the landscape approach* to tourism theory. They state that the object of tourism studies should be the landscape, which according to them is “the end result of a process of

social construction that has played out over a number of decades and perhaps centuries and millennia” (Knudsen et al 2008: 5).

They argue that there is no such thing as an objective interpretation of a landscape, but rather, its meaning is determined by each tourist in a subjective way. However, while the authors affirm that no two individual tourists may draw the exact same conclusions when interpreting a landscape, this is not the premise on which tourism in general is based. They argue that tourism relies, in fact, on a homogenized view of the destination. In this sense, they agree with Urry that there are power relations which influence the way tourists are invited to interpret the landscape.

At the same time, though, Knudsen et al state that the tourist experience “revolves around deciphering the identity of a place and its inhabitants from that place’s landscape, using all the tools available to the modern tourist (previous experiences, the internet, pocket histories, guidebooks, tour guides and so on)” (2008: 5). In other words, the meaning of a landscape is more complex than the homogenous image which is often presented to tourists, because through their participation and attempt to understand the place they are visiting, they are creating meaning as well.

### 3.6 Destination choice

However, before having the opportunity to try to decipher a certain landscape, the tourist must make the decision to visit it. As Dionyssopoulou and Stafylakis (2007) state, the intangibility of tourist products is one of the greatest challenges when trying to promote a certain destination. Due to this property, it is often not that easy for potential tourists to make a decision as to where they would prefer to spend their holidays. The authors state that choosing a travel destination is often a very difficult decision which requires personal involvement to a great extent. According to them, it is because potential customers are afraid of being disappointed by a tourist service which does not live up to their expectations. The authors believe that nation branding campaigns can

reduce the effect of intangibility, because they can provide more information to the viewers, thereby helping them identify what makes each destination unique.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

The analysis in Chapter 5 will be performed by utilizing methods and concepts from the field of social semiotics. This approach was chosen for the reason that the campaign features both printed materials – travel brochures – and video materials – television advertisements.

### 4.1 Semiotics – definition and scope

Semiotics is generally defined as the science which studies signs. The term originates from the Greek word *semeion*, which means “mark, sign” (Sebeok 2010: 4).

As Silverman (1983) and Deely (1990) point out, the origins of semiotics can be traced to Plato and Augustine. Hippocrates was among the first to actually use the term *semeiotics*, which he used to describe the practice of studying the symptoms of a medical condition (Sebeok 2010: 4). However, it only started to emerge as a science in its own right at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Ferdinand de Saussure is considered to be not just the founder of linguistics but of as semiotics well. (Chandler 2013). In his *Course in General Linguistics*, which was published posthumously by his students in 1916, de Saussure refers to the science of signs as *semiology*; however, as Sebeok (2010) states, the older term, semiotics, is generally preferred nowadays.

Around the same period, Charles Sanders Peirce, a philosopher, logician and mathematician, who is also known as the founder of pragmatism, developed his own model of a semiotic system. (Chandler 2013).

Although semiotics as a research field emerged from the field of linguistics, its scope is not limited to language. As Chandler (2013, 2007) points out, a semiotic analysis can be

applied to anything which can be considered a sign, for instance: imagery, sounds, gestures, objects, and anything which can be used to convey meaning.

Sebeok states that semiotics “is both a science, with its own corpus of findings and its theories, and a technique for studying anything that produces signs” (2010: 5).

Furthermore, semioticians are concerned with meaning as well – the way it is created and maintained, and how it relates to reality. Semiotics “can help us not to take 'reality' for granted as something having a purely objective existence which is independent of human interpretation” (Chandler 2013)

#### 4.1.1 What is a sign?

Ferdinand de Saussure defined the sign as the combination of a *signifier* – a sound, a word, a gesture – and a *signified* – an image or concept to which the signifier refers (Sebeok 2010: 5). De Saussure considers the signifier and the signified to be completely inseparable, like the two sides of a sheet of paper (Chandler 2013).

Peirce states that “we think only in signs” (1931–58, quoted in Chandler 2013). Furthermore, according to Peirce, nothing can function as a sign unless it is interpreted as such.

Unlike that of de Saussure, Peirce’s semiotic model is threefold: the *interpretant* identifies the *object* (which corresponds to de Saussure’s *signified*) which the *representamen* (the *signifier*) refers to. Peirce refers to the interaction between the *interpretant*, the *representamen* and the *object* as the process of *semiosis* (Chandler 2013, Sebeok 2010). This is why, as Deely states, the subject of semiotic research is “not just signs but the action of signs or *semiosis*” (1990: 105). He further explains that semiotics “contrasts with semiosis as knowledge contrasts with that which is known.

Semiotics is knowledge about semiosis; it is the theoretical accounting for signs and what they do” (Deely 1990: 105–106).

#### 4.1.2 A classification of signs

Peirce classifies signs into three basic modes, according to the relationship between the representamen and the object.

The first mode is the symbolic mode, in which case the meaning assigned to the representamen is purely conventional and must be learned in order to be understood. A few examples of symbols, according to Chandler (2013), would be language in general, alphabetic letters, punctuation marks, traffic lights and national flags.

The iconic mode – in this case, the representamen bears some resemblance to the object, such as in the case of portraits, scale models, metaphors and onomatopoeia (Chandler 2013).

The indexical mode – there is an observable connection between the representamen and the object, and furthermore, indexical signs represent evidence of the object’s presence. Chandler (2013) provides the following examples of indices: footprints, medical symptoms, photography, videos and handwriting.

Johansen and Larsen point out that, unlike iconic and indexical signs, symbolic signs are neither connected to the object nor are they similar to it; they state that symbols are “constructed or agreed upon to be used as signs for given purposes in the internal or external world” (2005: 43).

However, as Chandler (2007) points out, this distinction does not imply that the three modes should be considered completely separate. He states that they are not mutually

exclusive, because a sign can be classified under any one, two or even all three modes. Furthermore, a sign can be interpreted differently according to the context and the perspective of the interpreter.

On the subject of portraits, Peirce states that one can look at a portrait of a person one has not seen before and still consider it convincing. However, the fact that this is possible is not always because of the similarity between the portrait and the original, but for the reason that there are conventions as to what counts as a similar representation of the object (Peirce 1931:58, quoted in Chandler 2013). Johansen and Larsen state that the concept of similarity is problematic, because “anything can be considered similar to something else when seen from a certain perspective” (2005: 36). They conclude that “similarity only becomes apparent through the conscious or unconscious acceptance of some conventions regarding pictorial representation” (Johansen and Larsen 2005: 51).

Furthermore, paintings can be more or less iconic depending on style. Gombrich (1959, quoted in Stern 2004) states that some paintings may appear to be more symbolic than iconic, such as Picasso’s *Guernica*, while others, such as the *Mona Lisa*, tend to be perceived as iconic.

Photography can be considered to be both iconic and indexical, depending on the extent to which they have been edited. Peirce (quoted in Chandler 2013) states that unedited and spontaneous photographs lean towards the indexical mode, because of the circumstances under which they have been taken. Chandler points out that photographs are actually an index of “the effect of light on photographic emulsion” (2013), and furthermore, according to Deacon et al, the strength of photography and film “lies in its iconic signification” (1999: 188, quoted in Chandler 2013).

It can be argued, however, that it is not necessary for a photograph to be edited in order to have an iconic dimension, especially in the field of advertising. For instance, in the case of the nation branding materials which will be analyzed in Chapter 5, there is a

clear intention and purpose behind the choice of imagery, not just separately but as a whole as well. The photographs are chosen deliberately, which would mean there is nothing spontaneous about the way they were produced.

This is because, due to the purpose of nation branding campaigns, the imagery must highlight the destination's positive aspects, which makes for an incomplete picture of reality. Just like a painting cannot depict an object in a completely accurate way, because the object's representation is filtered through the artist's style, the imagery shown in nation branding campaigns is filtered through the developers' perception of the country, and additionally, through their assumptions about what the target audience would appreciate.

This is why it can be said that visual materials in a nation branding campaign are less indexical and more iconic, and symbolic as well. They are iconic because they can only depict certain parts of the landscape, from a certain perspective which was chosen by the campaign developers, and it may or may not coincide with the tourist's experience. On the other hand, they are also symbolic, because the viewer is invited to not just look at the imagery, but also to learn to associate it with the country in question.

Despite the fact that photographs are not always only indexical, they are generally interpreted as “‘objective’ records of ‘reality’” (Chandler 2013). For instance, as Chandler points out, photographs and videos are generally used as evidence, such as when videos shot with security cameras are presented as evidence in legal contexts.

The problematic aspect arises when the iconic and symbolic aspects of photographs are ignored and the viewer is expected to interpret them as only indexical; for instance, a potential tourist might look at the photographs in brochures and interpret them as an accurate depiction of the landscape, when in fact it may appear completely different when experienced in person.

According to Fesenmaier and MacKay, “photography represents a key vehicle for manipulating imagery by moulding what and how things are viewed (1996: 40). Furthermore, they state that, while potential tourists may see photographs as a reliable source of information, what they are looking at is “a subjectively mediated content and composition” (Fesenmaier and MacKay 1996: 40)

#### 4.1.3 Syntagmatic and paradigmatic analyses

As Chandler (2013) states, semiotic analyses often focus on structure. He states that such an analysis would involve “identifying the constituent units in a semiotic system (such as a text or socio-cultural practice) and the structural relationships between them (oppositions, correlations and logical relations)” (Chandler 2013). He states that de Saussure emphasized two kinds of differences between signifiers, which are called syntagmatic and paradigmatic.

The syntagmatic dimension concerns the position of the signifier’s components, while the paradigmatic dimension refers to the way components can be substituted with others of the same kind. Chandler states that these two dimensions are often represented by axes, with the syntagmatic dimension on the horizontal axis, and the paradigmatic dimension represented vertically. He explains the relationship between the two dimensions as follows: “syntagms are created by the linking of signifiers from paradigm sets which are chosen on the basis of whether they are conventionally regarded as appropriate or may be required by some rule system (e.g. grammar)” (Chandler 2013).

#### 4.2 Social semiotics

Van Leeuwen describes social semiotics as an interdisciplinary field – “it only comes into its own when it is applied to specific instances and specific problems, and it always

requires immersing oneself not just in semiotic concepts and methods as such but also in some other field” (2005: 1)

According to Van Leeuwen, semioticians do three things:

1. Collect, document and systematically catalogue semiotic resources – including their history
2. Investigate how these resources are used in specific historical, cultural and institutional contexts, and how people talk about them in these contexts – plan them, teach them, justify them, critique them, etc.
3. Contribute to the discovery and development of new semiotic resources and new uses of existing semiotic resources (2005: 3)

He defines semiotic resources as “artifacts we use to communicate” (2005: 3), which are not limited to language. He states that, in social semiotics, the term *semiotic resource* is preferable to the notion of the *sign*, because “it avoids the impression that ‘what a sign stands for’ is somehow pre-given, and not affected by its use” (2005: 3). Van Leeuwen emphasizes the fact that social semioticians are not just interested in the study of how semiotic resources are used, but their study also includes potential uses of semiotic resources, “as might be uncovered by the users on the basis of their specific needs and interests” (2005: 4).

According to Chandler, “contemporary *social semiotics* has moved beyond the structuralist concern with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations” (2013). This is because, as Preucel states,

“No semiotic form, material entity or event, text, or action has meaning in and of itself. The meanings are made in and through the social meaning-making practices which construct semiotic relations among material processes and social actions” (2006: 8)

Rafferty and Hilderley (2005) highlight the importance of the reader’s role in social semiotics. They point out that social semiotics acknowledges the fact that the meaning of a text is “formed from the interplay of polysemic signs and a range of reading positions” (Rafferty and Hilderley 2005: 81), which is why the reader’s interpretation of the meaning of the text may not necessarily be the same as that which the text’s

producers intended. Kress (2009) emphasizes the fact that any and all interpretations are culturally-bound.

### 4.3 Modality

Van Leeuwen describes modality as “the social semiotic approach to the question of truth”; he also states that the question which semioticians ask is not “how true is this?”, but “as how true is it represented?” (2005: 160). He explains that social semiotics is not concerned with what is true, but what is being presented as truth by creators of semiotic resources, and also, the way these resources are used to communicate what they propose as truth.

Chandler states that modality is “the reality status accorded to or claimed by a sign, text or genre” (2013). Rafferty and Hilderley add that this status is the result of the fact that “society is made up of many groups who have different positions of power, and semiosis is a process of imposing and contesting ideologically coded representations of reality” (2005: 81).

Machin and van Leeuwen (2009) state that modality ranges from high to low, depending on the extent to which one is supposed to interpret a semiotic resource as true or real. Modality can be evaluated in different ways depending on the “specific criteria for what counts as ‘real’” (Machin and van Leeuwen 2009: 58) pertaining to each mode.

A mode, according to Kress, is “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning”, for instance, “image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack and 3D objects” (2009: 79). Kress explains that each mode has a different potential of expressing meaning, and the choice of mode determines the effectiveness of the message. For instance, as it was stated in Chapter 2, television advertising has numerous limitations which must be overcome in order to get the advertising message across in an effective way. Kress calls “the question of potentials and limitations of a mode” *affordance* (2009: 84).

#### 4.3.1 Photograph analysis

According to van Leeuwen (2005), performing an analysis of visual modality factors can help identify the extent to which the imagery in question is supposed to be considered real and authentic. These factors are as follows:

- the amount of detail;
- the degree to which the background is filled;
- color saturation (the amount of gray present in the image, ranging from grayscale to full color);
- color modulation (ranging from flat colors to fine nuances);
- color variety;
- perspective;
- light and shadow (van Leeuwen 2005: 165–167)

Furthermore, van Leeuwen (2008) proposes a method which seeks to answer two questions about the representation of people in photographs, namely:

1. What is the relationship between the viewer and the image?
2. How are the people in photographs depicted?

To help answer his first question, van Leeuwen introduces three variables:

- Social distance: the distinction between close-ups and photographs taken from the distance;
- Social relation: the angle at which the people are photographed;
- Social interaction: whether or not the subjects make eye contact with the viewer.

As for the second question, the variables are as follows:

- Exclusion (some categories of people are photographed rather than others)
- Inclusion – if people from a given category are included, they can appear as:
  - agents (who perform actions) or patients (who are subjected to actions)
  - specific (individuals) or generic (stereotypes)

- individually or as part of a group
- they can be identified by either cultural characteristics (for instance, traditional clothing) or physical characteristics (caricatures).

Dreyfus et al (2010: 134–136) propose another variable which can modify the semiotic potential of an image, namely, balance. This factor refers to the extent to which an image is filled and the position of its components. According to them, a composition can be:

- a) Centrifocal – when the image’s elements are located in a single portion of the image;
  - a. Centralized – when they are located in the center;
  - b. Polarized – when they are distributed along an axis, which can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal;
- b) Iterating – when the image’s elements are distributed throughout the whole area of the image;
  - a. Scattered;
  - b. Aligned.

#### 4.3.2 Video analysis

Van Leeuwen (2005: 181–197) describes two factors which can be used to analyze multimodal texts such as video materials – rhythm, which refers to time and stress patterns, and layout, which refers to the spatial aspect of a composition.

According to van Leeuwen, both rhythm and layout are essential elements of multimodal semiotic resources, because they help get the message across more efficiently. Also, van Leeuwen states that rhythm “provides cohesion, segments the speech, or the action, or the music, into the communicative moves that propel the semiotic event forward” (2010: 169). This is why an analysis of the stress pattern in an

utterance can help identify key features of the message. According to van Leeuwen, rhythm is an essential factor in a multimodal semiotic analysis, because it “provides the framework with which the signs of other semiotic modes are aligned (2010: 169).

Chandler (2013) points out that another way of analyzing video materials is by utilizing the distinction between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions. For instance, as Chandler explains, the choice of transitions between shots is a paradigmatic distinction, while the relationship between a certain shot and what occurs before and after it would be situated on the syntagmatic axis.

Baldry (2004) shows how video advertisements can be analyzed from a multimodal perspective by dividing them into phases, for the purpose of keeping track of narrative changes and the relationship between these changes and other modes of conveying meaning. He also explains that transitions between phases are essential in a multimodal analysis of video materials, because they can help identify the advertisement’s message.

He points out that, while transitions are generally understood to mark the end of one phase and the beginning of the next, they do not necessarily have to be reflected in the visual aspect of the video, but they can be marked by changes in soundtrack as well, for instance.

He states that transitions are “have to do with the constant interplay between the expected and unexpected in film texts”, because they are “ultimately bound up with the expectations that the viewer has about the text and often guide the viewer vis-a-vis these expectations to the right conclusion” (2004: 94). He also adds that these expectations are “inherently *multimodal*, the result of the interplay between many resources” (Baldry 2004: 94). For instance, Baldry showed how the moment of conflict resolution in a video advertisement is signaled by both changes in music and the movement of characters on screen.

#### 4.4 The data

The data which will be analyzed in Chapter 5 consists of three parts.

The analysis will begin with a discussion on the Romanian nation brand's logo and slogan. The logo will be analyzed in terms of Peirce's distinction between the three modes (symbolic, iconic, and indexical) and their implications for the viewer's interpretation of the campaign's message. The analysis of the slogan, on the other hand, will focus on grammatical patterns, especially the differences in choice of phrasing in English as opposed to other languages.

Secondly, the paper will provide an analysis of the three television ads, which the MTRD website dubs "Nature", "Culture", and "General"; this analysis will focus on the distinction between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, and it will also utilize van Leeuwen's method of analyzing rhythm and stress patterns (2005), as well as Baldry's observations on the importance of transitions (2005).

The third part will consist of an analysis of the four tourist brochures, entitled *A Journey into Nature*, *A Cultural Journey*, *A City Journey* and *Guide to Spa Resorts*. The analysis of the brochures' content will focus mainly on the photographic imagery they feature. The purposes of the analysis are the following:

1. to determine how the four brochures differ from one another in terms of the nature of the photographs they contain;
2. to create a basis for comparison between the imagery in the brochures and the corresponding television advertisements (in the two cases in which this is doable, namely, the nature and culture-themed materials);
3. to analyze the depiction of people – both tourists and locals – in the photographs, the way they relate to each other, and the possible problematic aspects which may arise.

The photographs will be discussed in terms of van Leeuwen's factors of visual modality (2005), as well as his variables which refer to the representation of people, and the descriptions of the factors which determine the balance in a photograph introduced by Dreyfus et al (2010).

Another aspect of the brochures which will be discussed is the layout, by comparing different variables in each of them – the amount of text, the number and size of photographs and their placement and the number of locals and tourists shown in the photographs.

The final part of the analysis will consist of a discussion of how each of the three above-mentioned elements of the campaign contribute to the campaign's portrayal of the Romanian country image, and how they compare to each other in terms of their semiotic potential.

## 5 ANALYSIS

The concern of the present paper is to determine the characteristics of the country image of Romania according to the way it is portrayed in the informative tourist materials pertaining to the nation branding campaign *Explore the Carpathian Garden*, according to the vision of its developers.

A semiotic analysis requires a premise, and that of the present paper is that the choice of elements which are featured in the campaign and the way they are organized can help provide a clearer picture of Romania's country image. A second premise is that the representation of people and places in the campaign, as well as its logo and slogan, are, to an extent, problematic.

### 5.1 Romania's positioning and the targeted segments

Firstly, a few details about the campaign's development will be provided, more specifically, the market research which was conducted, according to the MRDT's brand manual.

The manual called *Driving Values and Visual Identity* (MRDT 2011a) lists market research as one of the steps which lead to the development of the current nation brand. According to the manual, both qualitative and quantitative research has been conducted. The qualitative research consisted of "Nearly 100 in-depth interviews and 2 focus groups with key stakeholders in Romania and its key markets: tour operators, travel agents, journalists, academics, and other opinion leaders." (2011a: 25). The quantitative research consisted of "1.200 interviews in Romania; 10.800 in international source markets: Austria, Germany, UK/ Ireland, USA, Russia, Hungary, France, Italy." (2011a: 25)

The market segmentation method for the *Explore the Carpathian Garden* nation branding campaign, as described in the MRDT's manual (2011a: 8) can be represented as follows:

Segment 1 – *the discerning traveler*

- Segment 1.1 – *the young discerning traveler*
- Segment 1.2 – *empty nesters*

As Table 1 shows, some of the five variables listed by Kotler et al (1999) and Belch and Belch (2003) were emphasized more than the others.

**Table 1.** Segmentation

Segment/ Variable	S. 1 <i>the discerning traveller</i> [sic]	S.1.1. <i>the young discerning traveller</i> [sic]	S.1.2. <i>empty nesters</i>
Geographic	“most of them city dwellers”	Same as S.1	Same as S.1
Demo- graphic	Divided into S1.1. and S. 1.2.	“25–35 years old”	“<<finally>> without children again”; “high spending potential”
Psycho- graphic	“independent and curious, often well educated”, “open-minded and cosmopolitan”, “opinion leaders and trendsetters”	“more adventurous”	“enjoy good health”
Behavioral	“they reject massive and artificial tourist destinations”, “frequent travellers [sic] with an extensive experience abroad”, “they consider themselves travellers [sic], not tourists”, “the first to come to experience our country”, “their off- and online recommendations will lead the way to always more visitors”	“loves to enjoy independent travel”, “always eager to push their horizons and embark upon voyages of discovery”	“plenty of time for traveling”
Benefit	“ seek a place which is like no other”;“their dream is to explore	Same as S.1	Same as S.1

	wild nature and immerse themselves in authentic local cultures”, “true experiences and deeply moving emotions are what they are after when travelling”; if city dwellers, then “longing for natural landscapes and lifestyles”, “interested in cultural life and historical sites”		
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Being a nation branding campaign, the segmentation by nationality is essential, and the manual defines the target nations very clearly – Austria, Germany, UK/ Ireland, USA, Russia, Hungary, France, and Italy. However, these are mentioned not in the description of the target customer, but in that of the market research.

S.1, *the discerning traveller* [sic], is the broadest and it is described in the most detailed manner, except for its demographic aspect, which is the point where a further segmentation takes place. The two variables with the most specifications for the two sub-segments are the psychographic variable and the behavioral one. While the benefits which the target customer expects from a travel destination are described in detail, they are taken to be the same for both sub-segments.

The market segmentation for this campaign can be interpreted as consisting of two segments which have quite a large amount of characteristics in common, and the most emphasized difference between them seems to be their age group.

At the same time, though, *the discerning traveller* [sic] together with its subdivisions can be interpreted as a niche, in Keller and Kotler’s terms (2006).

This is because, firstly, the specification that they “reject massive and artificial tourist destinations” correlates with one of Keller and Kotler’s characteristics of an ideal niche, which is that niche consumers are not interested in the competitors’ products. Secondly,

their ideal tourist destinations have very specific qualities. And lastly, because they are described as the first to visit Romania, and at the same time, they are expected to spread word about the country's tourist potential – this shows that they are seen as a small group which has potential for growth.

## 5.2 The logo



**Picture 1.** The campaign's logo (MRDT 2011a: 27)

The campaign's logo, which can be seen in Picture 1, according to the MRDT's brand manual (2011a: 28), is composed of three parts:

- 1) The logotype – the word *România*;
- 2) The isotype – the leaf and the blue stem;
- 3) The baseline – the text *explore the Carpathian garden*.

Generally, a logo would be interpreted as a symbol, in Peirce's terms, because the connection between the logo and the brand it stands for must be learned. However, not all of this logo's components can be seen as symbolic.

The brand manual describes the logotype as follows: “a handwritten typography with great and friendly personality, and a clean and original tracing. A visual tag, with

simple, firm and optimistic shapes” (2011a: 28). Furthermore, in their description of the logo’s color scheme, they say the following: “In the middle, the circumflex mark is a characteristic of Romanian grammar. Its arrowed form pointing upwards in warm colors creates contrast, notoriety and variety” (2011a: 28).

From Peirce’s perspective, handwriting is classified as an indexical sign, because there is a physical connection between the written text and the person who wrote it. One of the characteristics of handwriting is that it is unique for each individual, and also, it is spontaneous unless the writer makes a conscious effort to change it for whatever reason.

The handwritten effect of the logo is conveyed through three of its characteristics:

1. Firstly, the letters are placed at different heights, making the logo look as if it was written without much planning, for instance, by someone who is not particularly concerned with the aesthetic aspect of their handwriting and whose priority is not to impress the reader with its neatness, but simply to write in a way that is readable.
2. Secondly, when writing by hand, as opposed to typing, each letter will be rendered differently no matter how many times each letter appears in a given word. This is also true of the two instances of the letter *a* in the logotype.
3. Thirdly, there is a contrast between the way the logotype is written and the baseline, which does not resemble handwriting at all.

At the same time, however, it is certainly possible to produce a digital image which resembles handwritten text, and also, the curved lines and gradients which appear across every letter can be more easily associated with digital design rather than handwriting. From this point of view, the logotype is not actually indexical, but iconic, as it may or may not have been generated from actual handwriting, but at the same time, the illusion of indexicality is still noticeable.

The so-called circumflex mark is actually not a marker of grammar, as the manual indicates, but a marker of phonology, and it can be placed either instead of the dot over

the letter *i*, or above the letter *a*, such as in the logotype, and in both cases it corresponds to the vowel /i/.

In Peirce's terms, it is a symbol, which must be learned in order to be deciphered. A reader who is completely unfamiliar with the Romanian sound system and its spelling might be confused as to its purpose and meaning when looking at the campaign's logo, especially since its color scheme differs from the rest of the logotype.

Another aspect of the logotype which is connected to the sound marker is the choice of colors. The manual states the following: "a range of natural green colours, representing the natural richness of the forests, countryside and mountains" (2011a: 28).

The colors are connected to the isotype as well: "a leave[sic] represents the basic principle of nature, it occasionally symbolizes the silhouette of mountains; the blue stem stands for the importance of water and the Danube river" (2011a: 28).

The manual also provides three other versions of the logo, in which the sound marker and the stem are the same color as the rest, which are shown in Picture 2.

MONOCHROME VERSION



**Picture 2.** Monochrome versions of the logo (MRDT 2011a: 26–28)

From this point of view, the choice between the original color scheme and the monochrome green, black and white versions would be paradigmatic.

A reader who is familiar with the Romanian language would be able to identify the sound marker in every version of the logo; however, a non-speaker of Romanian might have a better chance of identifying its meaning in the monochrome versions than in the full color one. The sound marker is the only part of the logotype which is colored in shades of orange, which might suggest that it is actually meant to be seen as separate from the rest, which is to say, not as a component of the word *România*. Such an interpretation would be the exact opposite of what the brand manual indicates.

Similarly, the curved line under the leaf may be more difficult to interpret as representing a part of the leaf in the original version, because, unlike the rest of the leaf, it is blue, which many viewers might find counter-intuitive.

On the other hand, it is also debatable whether it can be interpreted as a stem at all, regardless of colors. For instance, a viewer might think that, if the three dents in the leaf are supposed to represent its veins, then they should be connected to the stem and share its color. From this point of view it could be said that the stem is already present as being a part of the background, and having another stem would be redundant.

At the same time, using a monochrome version would mean the loss of a separate layer of meaning, because the blue color is the only characteristic of the stem which is supposed to remind the viewer of the Danube. Apparently, a blue curved line would be enough for the viewer to think of not just a river, but one in particular, the Danube; however, the similarity is not guaranteed, especially since the same element of the isotype is meant to double as the leaf's stem, in every version.

A viewer who is familiar with Romanian geography would know that the Danube marks the southern border of Romania, and would probably not expect its symbol to be placed in the upper right part of the logo. Conversely, a viewer who does not associate Romania with the Danube might not even interpret it as the symbol of a river at all.

Another aspect of the logotype and isotype which is worth mentioning is its alleged similarity to the shapes of mountains: “Curved lines to resemble the Carpathians and the shapes of natural landscapes” (2011: 28). However, this might seem counter-intuitive to a viewer who would usually expect mountains to be designated by sharp angles which would resemble mountain peaks.

While the isotype is referred to as a leaf with a stem, which would imply that it is an iconic sign, since it is supposed to resemble a leaf, it can be argued that it is actually symbolic. Without an explanation of what each element stands for, most of the isotype’s intended meaning may be lost on the viewer. It can be concluded that the developers are counting on the isotype’s iconicity, but in fact, it is much more symbolic than it is iconic. Furthermore, they are counting on the fact that the color scheme will be interpreted in a certain way (for instance, green symbolizes nature, blue symbolizes water), and also, they are relying on the fact that these colors will be associated with Romania in turn.

### 5.3 The slogan

*Explore the Carpathian garden* has been described in both the Romanian and the international press as a misleading slogan. It is worth investigating what exactly gives rise to its ambiguity.

Firstly, as Popescu and Corbos point out, the Carpathian mountain range is not found exclusively in Romania, but also in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine and Serbia (2010: 11). They state that, by attempting to create a connection between Romania and the Carpathians, the campaign fails to solve the problem of uniqueness.

However, it can be argued that the slogan has more than one interpretation, and the problem of uniqueness is indeed addressed, but in a way which is often overlooked.

It can be proposed that the phrase *the Carpathian garden* has two readings:

A garden which contains the Carpathians (1)

A garden which belongs to the Carpathians (2)

The first reading would be similar to the way other kinds of gardens are understood, for instance, a botanical garden would be a garden which contains plants, and a zoological garden would contain animals; hence, a Carpathian garden would contain the Carpathian mountain range.

However, the brand manual includes five more versions of the slogan, in different languages (2011a: 30). For instance, the German version is “entdecke den Garten der Karpathen”, which translates into English, word for word, as *discover the garden of the Carpathians*. It is only in English that the adjective *Carpathian* is used instead of the genitive *of the Carpathians*, which is what gives rise to ambiguity. An example of the first reading would be an article from a Romanian newspaper, *Adevarul* (2010a), in which the campaign’s slogan is translated into Romanian as “Explorează grădina carpatină”, which uses an adjective just like in the English version, whereas the brand manual’s translation uses the genitive: “Explorați grădina Carpaților”.

It can be argued that *the garden of the Carpathians* would have been a more suitable choice; the English language requires adjectives to be placed before nouns, which causes the word *Carpathian* to be heard and read first, and this might be why it draws more attention than the noun *garden*, which, from this point of view, is the one which actually designates Romania.

The phrase *the Carpathian garden* can be interpreted as a sobriquet for Romania, in the same way that the city of Bucharest is called *the little Paris* and William Shakespeare is known as *the Bard of Avon*. However, this interpretation may be overlooked by many

viewers, because unlike the above-mentioned phrases, *the Carpathian garden* is not a well-known and widely used phrase – in fact, it was created by the developers for the sole purpose of the campaign.

From this perspective, it is arguable that the phrase does not necessarily suggest that the Carpathians are only located in Romania – what it is actually supposed to do is establish the national image of Romania as a garden which is somehow connected to the Carpathians. Hence, the slogan does not necessarily imply that the Carpathians belong to Romania, but the other way around.

However, this view is also problematic, because it is still debatable whether it positions Romania in a useful way. If Romania is indeed *the Carpathian garden*, this description can lead to two problems.

Firstly, one thing which the phrase does is locate Romania on the map, but this can only be achieved if the viewer already knows where the Carpathians are. Conversely, if the viewer does not know anything about the Carpathians, he or she might not react to this piece of information very strongly.

Secondly, in either case, calling Romania *the Carpathian garden* does not solve the problem of uniqueness, since any country which contains a portion of the Carpathian Mountains could attempt to position itself as such.

Finally, there is too much emphasis on the Carpathians and too little on what makes Romania unique as a travel destination. It can be argued that the slogan implies that being the garden of the Carpathians is what makes Romania unique, but this would be problematic for two reasons – firstly, as it was argued above, this reading of the slogan might be overlooked by some viewers, and secondly, it would only position Romania in comparison to other countries which contain parts of the Carpathian mountain range, and not in terms of its own attributes.

Another aspect of the slogan worth taking into consideration is the choice of the word *garden*, which can carry several implications.

Firstly, a garden is usually imagined as a carefully organized space which includes various sorts of plants. It needs to be tended to regularly, in order to prevent unwanted plants from growing in it. In other words, a garden is a natural space which is modified and kept under control by human activity. However, this interpretation of a garden contrasts with what the manual calls one of Romania's attributes, which is "unspoiled nature" (2011a: 24). Furthermore, it also contrasts with the verb *explore*, which the viewer might associate with adventure, while a garden might make the viewer think about relaxation instead.

However, it is possible that the preferred interpretation of the word garden is *a safe place*, as safety is also among the country's attributes according to the brand manual (2011a: 24). This might be seen as an attempt to distract the viewer from negative stereotypes about Romania. At the same time, though, it is quite likely that safety is not among the first attributes of a garden which they would think of.

#### 5.4 The videos

The campaign contains three television advertisements – Nature (MRDT 2011f), Culture (MRDT 2011g), and General (MRDT 2011h), which can be watched on the website of the MRDT. The first two are 19 second long, while the third is 29 second long. They are all voiced-over by a male narrator with a British accent, and the text of the voice-over is almost identical in the first two videos. The third is a combination of the previous two.

As Baldry (2004) points out, transitions between phases do not always have to be marked visually. In each of the three videos, the transitions are marked, first and foremost, by short pauses in the voice-over.

Another common feature of all three videos is the relationship between the narrator and the viewer. In Sutherland and Sylvester's terms (2008), as stated in Chapter 2, the viewer can be either a target or a bystander. In the case of the videos in question, the viewer is considered a target, because the narrator addresses the viewer directly, by using the pronoun *you*, and because the campaign's slogan is formulated as an invitation – *explore*.

#### 5.4.1 The Nature video

The video was divided into four phases, which were determined according to the pauses in the narration. In the following transcription, the stress is marked in italics, and the number of stressed syllables is marked in brackets.

The words between square brackets are a feature of the visual part of the advertisement. During the two shorter videos, five words appear on the screen during different phases. They are each placed in different areas, in such a way that they are always visible over the background. They appear in a gradual transition – when they first appear they are very translucent, after which their opacity increases, and then decreases again until the word disappears.

Phase 1 sub-phase 1: From the *moment* you *start* your *journey*(3)

[explore]

Phase 1 sub-phase 2: to the *adventure* it *becomes* (2)

[nature]

Phase 2 sub-phase 1: from *nature's finest moments* (3)

Phase 2 sub-phase 2: to the *feeling* of being *lost* amongst them (2)

[relaxing]

Phase 3: for *everything Romania has to offer*(3)

[pure]

2-second transition: silence

[experience]

Phase 4 sub-phase 1: *Romania*. (1)

Phase 4 sub-phase 2: *Explore the Carpathian garden* (3)

The stress pattern alternates between three and two stressed syllables throughout the duration of the voice-over, except during phase 4. It is also before that moment that a two-second transition occurs, during which nothing is said. Simultaneously, an instrumental music track begins during the first second of the advertisement, which is kept at the same volume throughout the video until the two-second transition, during which the volume increases and remains constant again until the end of the video.

It can be argued that the rhythm during the first three phases is kept constant in order to prepare the viewer for phase 4, during which the country's name is announced again. This second utterance is reminiscent of numerous commercial product advertisements, during which the brand name is uttered right before the slogan.

The visual aspect of the advertisement seems to be rather cluttered up to the 4<sup>th</sup> phase. The shots are very short and frequent – two shots per second. As it was stated in Chapter 2, Altstiel and Grow (2006) would not recommend such a high shot rate per second, and they also advise against having more than two words per second – the Nature video has at least five on average.

There is also very little camera movement in the videos. Most of the movement is caused by moving objects on the screen, such as birds flying, for instance. However, there are a few moments when the camera does shake, but not too much.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, a few shots from the Danube Delta are shown, and the angle of the shots, together with the slight shaking effect of the camera, almost makes the video look as if it had been shot by a tourist.

It is also during the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase when the key word of the advertisement – *nature* – can be observed. It is the only word which is both uttered by the narrator and shown on the screen.

At the end of phase three, a flock of birds is shown; they are flying from the lower left corner of the screen towards the upper right, where a white light source (presumably the sun) is located; as soon as the birds reach the upper right corner, the whole screen turns white and a visual transition occurs: the campaign's logo appears gradually, letter by letter, as if it were being written by an unseen hand, at the same time when the first sub-phase of phase 4 begins. The baseline also appears on screen in a similar manner and it is also read aloud.

#### 5.4.2 The Culture video

The phases of the second video can be described as follows:

Phase 1 sub-phase 1: From the *moment* you *start* your *journey* (3)

[explore]

Phase 1 sub-phase 2: to the *adventure* it *becomes* (2)

Phase 2 sub-phase 1: from the *unique culture* (2)

[unique culture]

Phase 2 sub-phase 2: to the *discovery* of *friends* (2)

[welcoming]

Phase 3 sub-phase 1: from the *first* look at the *past* (2)

[heritage]

Phase 3 sub-phase 2: to *everything Romania has to offer* (3)

[authentic]

Phase 4 sub-phase 1: *Romania*. (1)

Phase 4 sub-phase 2: *Explore the Carpathian garden*. (3)

Unlike in the previous video, the rhythm does not alternate between two and three stressed vowels – most of the time only two are stressed. Also, the pauses in the voice-over are much shorter; the two-second transition which occurs in the Nature video before phase 4 – 1, when the country's name is uttered for the second time, is less than a second long in the Culture video. This is most likely because of the fact that the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase consists of two sub-phases, while in the Nature video it only has one.

There is a slight difference in the phrasing as well. In the Nature video, the line in phase 3 begins with the preposition *for*, whereas in the Culture video, each of the first three sets of sub-phases begins with the prepositions *from* and *to*.

The instrumental music track is the same as the one in the Nature video, and it behaves similarly. The shot rate is also quite high, but there is more variation as far as the camera movement is concerned – the shots alternate between dynamic camera movement, still shots, and shots in which the camera is still but objects are moving.

Just like in the previous video, there is a visual transition which marks the beginning of the phase when the country's name is uttered for the second time and the brand logo appears on the screen, and it also consists of a white light which gradually covers the whole screen.

However, while in the Nature video, the light seemed to come from the sun, this time, there seems to be no visible source of light; the camera moves horizontally from right to left, and the light starts from the bottom left corner of the screen, which is the exact opposite to the way it was done in the Nature video.

The Culture video has a key word as well – *unique culture* – which appears at the exact same moment as the previous video’s key word does, namely, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase.

#### 5.4.3 The General video

As it was mentioned previously, the General video is a combination of the other two. It can be transcribed as follows:

Phase 1 sub-phase 1: from the *moment you start your journey* (3)

[explore]

Phase 1 sub-phase 2: to the adventure it *becomes* (2)

[adventure]

Phase 2 sub-phase 1: from the *inspiring architecture* (2)

[architecture]

Phase 2 sub-phase 2: to the *discovery of traditions* (2)

[traditions]

Phase 3 sub-phase 1: from *nature’s finest moments* (3)

[nature]

Phase 3 sub-phase 2: to the *feeling of being lost* amongst them (2)

[mystical]

Phase 4 sub-phase 1: for *everything Romania has to offer* (3)

[authentic]

Phase 4 sub-phase 2: to the *experience you’ll take away* (3)

[experience]

Phase 5 sub-phase 1: *Romania* (1)

Phase 5 sub-phase 2: *Explore the Carpathian garden* (3)

In the General video, the phases alternate between unequal and equal numbers of stressed syllables – phase 1 (3; 2) – phase 2 (2; 2;) – phase 3 (3; 2) – phase 4 (3; 3) – until the last phase, which, similarly to the other two videos, enunciates the country's name and the slogan.

Unlike in the other two advertisements, the music track does not start from the very beginning – instead, the first sounds are birds chirping, which can be heard for two seconds during the first phase. It is only then that the music begins, and just like in the other two videos, it gradually gets louder.

However, this video contains a longer portion of the same track. Also, during phase 4, the music overlaps with the voices of four young girls singing in unison, who also appear on the screen.

The camera movement is similar to that which was used in the Culture video, whereas the visual transition to the last phase has more in common with the Nature video.

The end of the 4<sup>th</sup> phase, which is the last but one, is marked by a pair of theatre curtains opening and revealing a theatre as seen from the stage, and then a light in the center of the screen begins to grow, which might remind the viewer of artificial lighting equipment.

An aspect which is unique to this video is the fact that there seem to be five key words, or at least, five words which are both uttered and shown on the screen. These are *adventure*, *architecture*, *traditions*, *nature* and *experience*.

Similarly to the Culture video, the General one follows the *from - to* pattern, but only up to a point. In phase 4, the preposition *for* is used instead of *from*, which breaks the pattern.

### 5.5 The brochures

Three of the brochures – *A Journey into Nature*, *A Cultural Journey* and *A City Journey* – are each 36 pages long. *Guide to Spa Resorts*, however, is 60 pages long. In terms of layout, the first three are almost identical. They have the same rectangular shape, they utilize the same fonts, the photographs are placed in a similar pattern, and they contain almost the same ratio of images to text. The spa-themed brochure, however, contains very few photographs in comparison to the others. It is also square-shaped, and it utilizes different fonts. The photographs are also placed in a different pattern as well.



**Picture 3.** The nature brochure(MRDT 2011b: 1);  
**Picture 4.** The culture brochure (MRDT 2011c: 1);  
**Picture 5.**The city brochure(MRDT 2011d: 1);  
**Picture 6.**The spa brochure (MRDT 2011e: 1)

The nature-themed brochure contains the highest number of photographs – 108, followed by the city-themed one with 92, the culture-themed one with 90, and lastly, the spa-themed brochure with only 23.

The nature-themed brochure, which contains the most images, features people in 29 of the 108 photographs, only 5 of whom can be identified as Romanians (judging by their occupation, for instance, boat rowers on the Danube river). 19 of the rest of the photographs feature animals, while the rest show landscapes.

The city-themed brochure, which contains 92 photographs, which is the second highest number, features people in only 16 of them; only two of them feature Romanian people, and the other 14 photos contain groups of people which appear so small in size that it was impossible to determine their status as locals or tourists.

The culture-themed brochure contains 90 images, 36 of which feature people, which is the highest amount out of all the four brochures. 18 of them include Romanian people in traditional clothing, 10 show groups of tourists, all of which occupy a very small portion of the photographs, five include ethnic minority groups (a picture for each group), and the rest show large groups of people who could be either locals or tourists. This brochure also features three photos of famous Romanians – the scientist Ana Aslan, the writer Mircea Eliade and the sculptor Constantin Brancusi.

The last brochure, which is spa-themed, contains only 23 photographs, out of which 10 include people, all of whom are women. The scientist Ana Aslan appears in this brochure as well. Four of the photographs include two women each, one being a doctor and the other a patient. While the status of the patients is unclear, it can be argued that the tourists are meant to identify themselves with the patients or imagine themselves in their place, which is why they will be counted as tourists.

### 5.5.1 Visual modality

The nature-themed brochure contains extremely vividly colored photographs and large amounts of detail. In most of the photos, whether they depict people or natural environments, the background is usually a blue summer sky with very few clouds.

The predominant colors are shades of green, brown and blue. Most of the landscape photographs are shot from a very long distance, but there are also quite a few close-ups of flowers and animals.

The city-themed brochure features the most amount of detail in its photographs, many of which seem to be taken from a very high altitude. The predominant colors are light shades of beige and gray, but also red, which correspond to building walls and roofs.

Unlike the nature brochure, which features mostly summer photographs, and some in wintertime, many of the city-themed photographs seem to be taken in fall. It is the only brochure which contains nighttime photographs, which have the highest color variety but also the darkest colors.

The culture-themed brochure seems to have common features with the previous two – lots of photographs show buildings with light-colored walls and red roofs, but there are many shades of greens and blues as well. Many of the photographs depict interiors, which are highly detailed.

There are very few close-ups and aerial shots – most of the photographs are taken from a rather close distance from the subject. The photos of the scientist Ana Aslan, the writer Mircea Eliade and the sculptor Constantin Brancusi differ greatly from the other images in the brochure – they are all portraits and they were taken in black and white, which sets them apart as pertaining to Romania's past.

The spa-themed brochure contains two kinds of photographs as far as the distance is concerned – they are either aerial photographs or they were shot from afar, or interior shots of patients undergoing medical treatments. These photographs feature the least amount of detail and color variety, as well as variation in terms of angles and perspective.

### 5.5.2 The relationship between the viewer and the image

For the purpose of this part of the analysis, the photographs in each brochure were analyzed according to van Leeuwen's factors which determine the relationship between the viewer and the image, as summarized in Chapter 4.

The people in the photographs were divided into two groups, locals and tourists. Locals were mostly identified by their occupation or traditional clothing, while the tourists were identified by their activities, for instance, practicing sports.

#### Tourists

The largest number of people who are identifiable as tourists appears in the nature-themed brochure. Most of them are photographed from afar, possibly in order to highlight the characteristics of the landscape as well as their presence. They usually appear in groups, and most of the time, they are photographed from the back. However, there are also a few closer shots of tourists, in which the emphasis is clearly on them; a few of them are making eye contact with the viewer and smiling. The tourists who are photographed from a shorter distance are also photographed from below.



**Picture 7.** Tourist climbing a mountain (MRDT 2011b: 8)

The culture-themed brochure shows very few people who are identifiable as tourists, and they mostly appear in groups, photographed from afar, and from the back. The same can be said about the city-themed brochure.

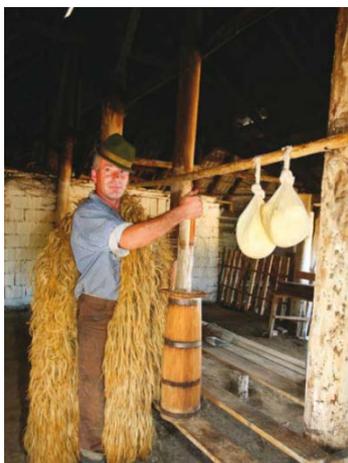
The spa-themed brochure, on the other hand, seems to follow a different pattern. The tourists in this brochure were identified by their status as receivers of medical treatment. They are mostly photographed from approximately a few meters or closer. In almost every photograph, they are seen from above, because they are either lying on spa beds or sitting in tubs for the purpose of undergoing treatments. Many of them make contact with the viewer and smile.



**Picture 8.** Spa patient (MRDT 2011e: 31)

## Romanians

The nature-themed brochure features very few photographs of locals. Three of them show Romanians in traditional clothing, while the other two show boat rowers on the Danube. The people are all photographed from a frontal angle and from a short distance, but there is only one person who makes eye contact with the viewer. The man in the photograph is one of the very few people shown both looking at the viewer and smiling, not just in the nature-themed brochure, but in the whole campaign.



**Picture 9.**Romanian host (MRDT 2011b: 32)

The city-themed brochure has the fewest photographs in which locals are easily identifiable, namely two. One of the photographs depicts three drummers at a festival, and the other, two sailors. They are all photographed from a short distance. The drummers are photographed from above and their gaze is oriented downwards, possibly towards their musical instruments. The sailors, on the other hand, are photographed from a frontal angle, and their gaze is oriented to the right, towards something which the viewer cannot see.



**Picture 10.**Drummers (MRDT 2011d: 21); **Picture 11.** Sailors (MRDT 2011d: 34)

The culture brochure contains the largest amount of photographs of Romanian people, who are easily identifiable by their traditional clothing. Most Romanians are

photographed from the distance and appear quite small in size. They are generally photographed from a frontal angle, with very few exceptions.



**Picture 12.**Romanian group (MRDT 2011c: 5)

Most of them do not make eye contact with the viewer. They look directly at the camera in only three of the images.



**Picture 13.**Romanian dancers (MRDT 2011c: 27)

In the spa-themed brochure, the emphasis is placed almost entirely on the tourist experience. The locals (the doctors) only appear together with tourists, and they are photographed from the same distance as them. However, none of them make eye contact with the viewer; instead, they are either looking down at their patients or talking to them. This is the only instance of locals and tourists shown interacting.



**Picture 14.** Doctor and patient (MRDT 2011e: 31)

### 5.5.3 The visual representation of people

Tourists generally appear as agents, except in the spa-themed brochure, in which they are literally shown as patients. There are no tourists who are not shown in a generic way, and most of the time they appear in groups. Almost all Romanians in the brochures appear as generic and in groups as well.

However, there are three exceptions – the scientist Ana Aslan (who appears in both the culture-themed brochure and the spa-themed one), the writer Mircea Eliade and the sculptor Constantin Brancusi.

Also, these three individuals are also among the few Romanians who are not shown wearing traditional clothing, which would be a cultural characteristic in van Leeuwen's terms.



**Picture 15.** Ana Aslan(MRDT 2011c: 28);  
**Picture 16.** Worshipers in front of a church(MRDT 2011c: 15)

Romanians always appear as agents, whether they are shown participating in religious ceremonies, crafting traditional items, or performing on stage (mostly in the culture-themed brochure), or as doctors in the spa-themed brochure.

The latter is the only brochure which shows generically-represented Romanians who are not wearing traditional clothing.

#### 5.5.4 The balance factor

The nature-themed brochure contains mostly centrifocal photographs. Usually, the ones which feature landscapes are centralized, while the ones which show tourists tend to be polarized – for instance, a row of tourists shown walking along a winding path appear to be distributed along a diagonal line. The close-ups of plants are always centralized.

On the other hand, the nature-themed brochure also contains photographs in which the subjects are scattered across the whole area of the photograph, for instance, trees on a hill, or birds in the Danube Delta.

In the culture-themed brochure, almost all of the photographs are centralized, mainly because most of them show buildings. In the city-themed brochure, however, in most of

the aerial shots, the elements seem to be scattered, because of the varying shapes and sizes of buildings, as well as the curved streets.

People and cars seem to be scattered as well. Photographs of individual buildings, however, follow the pattern of those in the culture-themed brochure.



**Picture 17.**Aerial view of Brasov (MRDT 2011d: 14)

In the spa-themed brochure, most of the photographs are centralized, especially the ones which show people. The distance shots of spa resorts, however, follow the pattern of aerial photographs from the city-themed brochure.

## 5.6 Campaign cohesion

The three video advertisements are extremely similar in terms of structure at first sight. However, the way meaning is conveyed in each of them tends to differ, albeit in subtle ways.

It can be argued, though, that the amount of similarities between the videos is so great that the viewer might confuse them for one another and decide to change the channel, thinking that she or he has already seen it before. It is possible that the videos ended up looking so similar precisely because of too much emphasis on cohesion.

In terms of structure, the videos seem rushed and cluttered, and it would be somewhat unreasonable to expect the viewer to be able to pay attention to everything that is happening on the screen. The culture-themed video in particular has extremely short pauses in the narration, which, combined with the high rate of frames per second, which is more than is usually recommended in literature, can cause the viewer to regard it with confusion or disinterest.

The decision to include so many frames in only nineteen seconds might be a consequence of the desire to avoid some of the disadvantages of television as a medium; however, if that is the case, including as much visual information as possible within the given amount of time is probably not the ideal way of solving the problem of duration.

It can be argued that the brochures, especially when considered as a whole, provide a much broader image of Romania than the videos. Whereas the advertisements focus mostly on nature and lifestyles in the countryside, the brochures provide information about cities as well.

For instance, while the culture-themed video advertisement focuses only on rural architecture, Christian imagery (for instance, churches) and traditional occupations, the corresponding brochure takes more aspects of culture into consideration, such as Romanian theatre, ballet, museums and festivals. Judging by the content of the culture-themed video alone, it would seem that Romanian culture is something which only occurs in rural environments.

Similarly, the nature-themed video simply shows images of the Carpathian Mountains, which are supposed to be extremely important to the essence of Romania's national image; it is in the brochure that people are actually shown enjoying the activity of exploring them, for instance, by practicing mountain climbing and winter sports.

In terms of their content and structure, the brochures complement each other and follow similar patterns – all except for one, namely, the spa-themed brochure.

### 5.7 Romania's national image

The campaign's slogan, *explore the Carpathian garden*, seeks to position Romania in two ways – firstly, as a country which is worth exploring, and secondly, as a safe and well organized space. However, it can be argued that the campaign emphasizes the second aspect, which is that of a peaceful garden, much more than the first. The sense of excitement which is evoked by the word *explore* seems to be limited to the invitation expressed in the slogan, while in the actual contents of the campaign's materials it is more elusive.

The campaign seems to paint a rather static picture of Romania. One thing that the videos and the brochures have in common is that they all show a rather small number of people who can be seen clearly in the imagery, regardless of whether they are Romanians or tourists.

There is very little movement in the videos, and their emphasis seems to be on things which can be experienced passively rather than actively. The sense of adventure which is mentioned in the voice-overs has no visual correspondent because of the lack of human presence throughout them.

It seems counter-intuitive that a seemingly static medium such as a brochure would depict more instances of adventure and exploration than a dynamic medium such as a video. However, this can be said about the entire campaign as well; there is too much emphasis on places – natural environments and buildings – and too little emphasis on activities.

According to the MRDT's brand manual, though, "Romania offers its visitors to become a part of the travel experience themselves" (2011a: 8). However, judging by the content of the campaign's materials, it is unclear in what way this could be achieved.

Secondly, the static view of Romania is also due to the fact that tourists and locals are hardly ever shown interacting with each other, except in one of the brochures – the spa-themed one. Everywhere else, Romanians and tourists are shown separately.

The culture-themed video invites potential tourists to discover friends in a welcoming place; however, the instances of tourists engaging in conversation with locals are very few and none of them are shown in the videos.

On the subject of the attitude of Romanians towards tourists, the MRDT's brand manual states the following: "They will not smile at every foreigner immediately, but the open-minded traveller [sic] will be able to uncover and experience an incredible warmth and honesty being in touch with the locals that will surprise and delight him" (2011a: 13).

Firstly, it can be argued that this statement about Romanians is another attempt to position them in terms of uniqueness, but in fact it could easily be claimed by people from other countries as well. Secondly, according to this passage, it is possible to befriend Romanians once their initial reticence is gone – however, this possibility does not manifest itself in any way in the imagery presented in the materials.

The unique culture which is mentioned in the culture-themed video appears to only be observable from afar. Not even in the culture-themed brochure is there one image of, for instance, a Romanian artisan showing her work to a tourist, or tourists joining locals in folk dances, or sampling traditional meals.

Furthermore, since very few locals are looking towards the camera, they might appear to be either not interested in acknowledging the presence of tourists, or unwilling to interact with them. This is why the viewer might not imagine Romania as a place which is as open to tourism as the MRDT's brand manual describes it.

Moreover, on the subject of the representation of Romanians in the campaign, most of them appear in rural contexts, surrounded by traditional elements, having traditional

occupations and wearing traditional garments, both in the videos and in three of the four brochures. The campaign's portrayal of Romanians as passive artisans and performers can be interpreted as an attempt to distance itself from Romanians' international reputation of being initiators of illegal activities.

The intention behind this choice of portrayal might be positive, as is usually the case in nation branding campaigns. Yet, depicting Romanians in large, unapproachable groups of traditionally-minded people can make their lifestyle seem frozen in time and space, and most worryingly, averse to change and development.

It would seem that, by trying to portray Romania as a place where nothing unfortunate happens, the campaign has fallen into the trap of making it look like a place where nothing happens at all. At the same time, it would appear that the image of Romania as a safe place is over-emphasized. Security, among other features, is even listed among the "rational benefits" of the Romanian nation brand in the MRDT's manual (2011a: 15). It is possible, however, that by emphasizing the idea of security to such an extent, the message might be regarded as either too self-conscious or even suspicious.

Moreover, it would seem that the campaign developers adopt Urry's theory of the tourist gaze (1990), rather than the arguably more encompassing landscape approach (Knudsen et al 2008), which acknowledges an aspect of the tourist experience which does not seem to be reflected in this campaign at all, namely that tourists do interact with the destination they are visiting in various ways, and by doing so, they devise their own interpretation.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The first chapter has provided an introduction to the research problem and the research question, and it has also sought to familiarize the reader with Romania's past attempts at creating a nation brand and the reasons why they have been criticized.

The second chapter has provided insight into theories and concepts pertaining to the field of advertising, as well as its goals and methods, and it has explained the basics of the development process of campaigns.

The third chapter has discussed the field of nation branding; it has defined this phenomenon and provided an account of some of the debates within the field. Next, the chapter sought to provide a working definition of the concept of a country's image, and it has also explained a few different perspectives on the tourist experience.

Chapter four has provided an introduction to the basics of semiotics and social semiotics, and it has also explained a series of concepts from this field. It has also pointed out the methods which the analysis in the next chapter has used.

Chapter five has sought to delve into the structure of the campaign's materials, in order to find out how meaning is constructed in each of them. It was argued that the logo and the slogan are quite problematic due to ambiguity.

The videos were transcribed and divided into phases, in order to reveal details about their structure which might show how meaning is constructed.

Next, the brochures were analyzed, mainly in terms of their layout and the content and composition of the photographs they contain. It was also suggested that most of the imagery in the brochures, except for one, depict Romanian people in a highly problematic way.

Finally, the chapter discussed the differences in message and content between the television advertisements and the brochures, and it compiled the results of the analysis in order to provide an interpretation of the campaign's version of Romania's country image.

It has been concluded that the nation branding campaign *Explore the Carpathian garden* seems to continue the path of its predecessors, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, previous campaigns were criticized for failing to show what exactly is unique about Romania and why it would be worth visiting. *Explore the Carpathian garden* seeks to position Romania in terms of the beauty of its nature and the uniqueness of its culture. However, it can be argued that such a strategy could easily be employed by any country, because all nature can be considered beautiful and all cultures, unique.

Secondly, the meaning of the slogan *Explore the Carpathian garden* is interpretable, and not necessarily in favorable ways. On one hand, it has caused some critics to believe that Romania claims exclusivity as far as the Carpathian Mountains are concerned. On the other hand, if Romania is the Carpathian garden, it is can still be argued that it is not a useful way to position it.

Furthermore, the campaign seeks to promote international tourism, and yet, the full meaning of the logo as intended by its developers might not be understood as intended by viewers who are not familiar with Romanian sounds and spelling.

There seems to be a discrepancy between the message of the campaign and what is shown in the materials as far as certain attributes are concerned. Romania is described as a land of adventure, and yet, places seem to be emphasized more than activities.

Its inhabitants are supposedly friendly, and yet, there are very few situations in which the campaign shows Romanians and tourists interacting with each other. The country is likened to a garden, but its nature is referred to as being “in its pure and original state” (MRDT 2011a: 13), “virgin” (MRDT 2011a: 12) and “wild and untouched” (MRDT 2011a: 4).

The fact that Romania is shown to be a static place with passive inhabitants may be a consequence of yet another criticism of past campaigns, which is the fact that they were trying to describe the country in terms of what it is not, and not what it is.

While the campaign may portray Romania as a calm, uneventful place – a garden – most researchers from the field of nation branding agree that campaigns are not enough to change the minds of people who are already prejudiced against a country, or they might not even be useful at all.

However, if nation branding is to be used, it is important to remember that it should not be assumed that there is only one possible interpretation of the campaign’s message, namely that of the developers.

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