

### FOSTERING PUBLIC ATTENDANCE WITHIN TERRITORIAL MARKETING AIMING IMAGE STRATEGY IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ROMANIAN CITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA

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#### Abstract:

Market economy is a concept whose meaning is strongly related to the increasing competition at world level. In the context of globalization, in addition to big companies, small and medium enterprises, territories also have to be able to create an identity and furthermore to bargain it outside its boundaries. How can a local community reach the “state of the art” in terms of territorial marketing?

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

**Keywords:** *territorial marketing; analysis and diagnosis; strategic planning; public attendance*

### FOMENTANDO LA ASISTENCIA PÚBLICA EN EL MARKETING TERRITORIAL PARA MEJORAR LA ESTRATEGIA DE IMAGEN DE LA CIUDAD RUMANA DE CLUJ-NAPOCA


#### Resumen:

La economía de mercado es un concepto cuyo significado está fuertemente relacionado con la creciente competencia a escala mundial. En el contexto de la globalización, además de las grandes corporaciones, pequeñas y medianas empresas, los territorios también deben ser capaces de generar una identidad y, lo que es más, negociarla fuera de sus fronteras. ¿Cómo puede una comunidad local alcanzar el “estado del arte” en términos de marketing territorial?

Este artículo trata de demostrar que cuanto más se estimula la asistencia pública en el proceso de marketing local, más fácilmente se afronta el desafío de la marca territorial por parte de la administración local. Asimismo el presente estudio pretende identificar la forma de encontrar los pilares sobre los que poder construir una estrategia de imagen para la ciudad de Cluj-Napoca en Rumanía.

**Palabras clave:** *marketing territorial; análisis y diagnóstico; planificación estratégica; asistencia pública*

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## 1. Introduction

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

In this context, in recent years an image strategy conception stays being one of the main concerns of the municipal administration, round tables, conferences, brainstorming on this topic taking place quite often. Nevertheless, branding Cluj-Napoca does not seem to be such an easy task neither for local public administration nor for other categories of stakeholders. Thus, there are voices claiming that branding Cluj-Napoca does not require strategic approaches, encouraging not necessarily a kind of inertia but a self and uncontrolled branding while other opinions support rather the opportunity of fostering more involvement of local governors. All the discussions related to this topic are focused on fundamental questions as “who?” or “which?”. In some different words, trying to determine who has the faculty of taking territorial marketing decisions ascertaining what is suitable or not for branding this city, as well as which of several given branding outputs (logos or slogans for instance) fits Cluj-Napoca.

However, a neglected question related to territorial marketing in Cluj-Napoca has constantly been “how?”, a question meaning what kind of methodology should be used in order to make sure that a local brand is legitimated and indeed representative for community apart from being funny and catchy which may be in a way related to superficiality. Regarding the issue of branding Cluj-Napoca, discussions and analyses have been lacked transparency many times, public attendance being rather neglected or at least superficially approached. Therefore, this paper pleads for more public attendance in the territorial branding field stating that there is nothing more relevant and appropriate in promoting a city that community’s perception because almost each inhabitant must identify himself with the image of the place he lives in.

As a promotional strategy for a product or service is funded on marketing researches, promoting a territory should be supported by similar scientific pillars. Certainly, a suitable brand of Cluj-Napoca doesn’t necessarily have to represent a complete and exhaustive radiography of the city. As any other territory, this one also has its strengths good to be promoted and weaknesses needing amelioration. Creating a good image for the “product” named Cluj-Napoca requires an intelligent and effective exploitation of its qualities and strategic tools of handling its defaults. That is because, above all, a brand has –at least partially if not entirely– to “tell the truth” about a territory. For instance, we cannot lie that one of the main strengths of this city is the traffic while reality may demonstrate the contrary. Therefore without being sustainable, an image of a territory cannot be sold and, meanwhile, cannot convince potential tourists or investors.

Considering all of these thoughts or opinions, we suggest an exercise of *territorial diagnosis* regarding the city of Cluj-Napoca. This concept, inspired from a similar investigation carried out by García et al. (2009) in Granada –Spain– will be applied through an exploratory quantitative research based on survey.

The research is aimed at identifying those elements justifying a further SWOT analysis of the city from the perspective of inhabitants. Thus, it may be considered that the utility of the research is twofold: firstly, by emphasizing positive features as strengths and opportunities it may provide territorial marketing reliable tools; secondly, by underlining negative characteristics as weaknesses and threats it may detect elements justifying new public policies. However, we are conscious on the exploratory character of the study, but it may be approached as a pilot project for further enlarged investigations. In a way, this research may be considered what promoters use so often to name a *teasing*. Meanwhile, indicators going to be used are strongly related to Cluj-Napoca and its peculiarities.

In order to better argument the range of motivations requiring a territorial marketing scientific approach for Cluj-Napoca, it is advisable to identify and define the problem to be tackled through this research. Therefore, responding to six relevant methodological questions related to the problem definition (Fassio et al 2004) we may further strengthen the study premises. Each one of the proposed questions will be briefly approached through some short answers.

*What is the problem to be tackled?* Doubtlessly, a problem of Cluj-Napoca city which requires a particular scientific attention consists in the lake of a brand and a coherent territorial promotion strategy. However, considering the complexity of such an issue, this paper is not an attempt of solving it by providing touchable solutions but of emphasizing its magnitude and public outcome.

*Which are those main aspects or elements of the tackled problem?* The weakness of lacking a coherent territorial marketing strategy also may be caused by the incapacity of stakeholders to produce a consensus regarding the methodology of gathering the necessary data which may support further branding strategies. The paper seeks to emphasize that this aspect may be considered one of the most important obstacles in solving the tackled problem.

*How do relate those different aspects of the problem?* By pleading that a lake of consensus regarding the methodology of gathering necessary territorial marketing data is the main aspect of the problem tackled by this study, we may consider therefore that ameliorating this weakness is a necessary step (although insufficient) in providing territorial marketing improvements for Cluj-Napoca.

*What was previously said or written on this tackled problem?* The lake of an articulate branding strategy is approached as a poser by the community of Cluj-Napoca. Media, local public administration, business community, politicians or academics claim quasi-unanimously that a better local marketing should be appropriate for the city.

*Is the problem well enough defined?* For some of the inhabitants of Cluj-Napoca, a simple logo would be enough to encapsulate what is important and essential in branding the city while other opinions plead for an integrated territorial marketing approach. There is an ambiguity and lake of common vision in defining this problem. Therefore, the present paper will approach the whole branding Cluj-Napoca phenomenon as a process involving most of the human senses: *visual* by promoting representative images easy to be remembered, *acoustic* by promoting words or names easy to be captured and even *gustatory* (taste) by focusing a promotional strategy on those alimentary products representing as well as possible the agricultural and industrial profile of the city.

*On what purpose is this research achieved?* Considering the whole range of already mentioned answers, the purpose of this paper is to explore a territorial diagnosis aimed at identifying strengths and new development opportunities in order to define a target group justifying further territorial marketing strategies.

## 2. Theoretical framework: territorial branding challenges

It is clear that not only business, but also cities, counties and regions compete in order to reach investments, visitors or at least a bit of attention (Van Gelder 2008). Specifically, and according to some statistics, it seems that in Europe there are more than 105 000 communities and 500 competitor regions (Rainisto 2003), all of them fighting for limited resources both from the *quantity* and *quality* (diversity) point of view. Due to the complexity of contested resources, territories are determined to identify their own competition challengers consisting in other cities, counties or regions seeking to capture the same target groups: tourists, investors and the like. For instance, a city as Budapest may represent a point of attraction for those foreign tourists interested to explore closer capitals as Vienna or Prague<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the existence of a common interest beyond a larger number of territories may influence them to act as private enterprises in order to reach more “customers” (to magnetize their own target-groups).

The offer of each city is backed up by other type of offers related to *economy* (services or goods), *culture* (monuments, cathedrals, public events and the like), *infrastructure* (public services), along with *political*

<sup>1</sup> This idea on territorial competition between Budapest and other Central European capitals as Vienna or Prague was used and developed by Mihalis Kavaratsis in his speech delivered at the University of Cantabria (Spain) during an international event on the role of territorial marketing as key tool for the socioeconomic development of regions (November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

*environment* (rulers) therefore to everything that can determine the attractiveness of a local community. Thus, below the image of a territory there are distinguished elements, local peculiarities which must be expressed and represented.

Even if a territorial branding strategy can influence the quality of life in any kind of city or region, the opportunity of place promotion is still debated and doubted many times. In order to emphasize how important are territorial branding strategies, the following rows will provide a synthesis of the main advantages that can be taken by a well-promoted city (Daclin et al 2010). Primarily, a city holding a branding strategy can provide an increased competitiveness which may furthermore generate a positive impact on investment, jobs, inhabitants or visitors. Meanwhile, an integrated branding strategy can produce higher returns on investment in real estate, infrastructure and events along with a coherent city development as the physical, social, economic and cultural aspects all of them mixed in order to deliver the promised brand.

Moreover, an effective territorial branding may lead to at least one of the following positive consequences (Fernández 2010): creating a symbol able to identify and differentiate a place; transmitting a promise of a memorable touristic experience related to that place (destination); strengthening the whole range of pleasant memories related to a trip in that destination; and, finally, influencing consumers to oppose to any kind of alternative destination. However, it should be important to underline that a branding strategy is not all the time related to tourism because the complexity of territorial branding is from faraway bigger.

Therefore, this paper will not limit its paradigm to *destination branding* but to *place branding*, a concept including several elements related to economy, society and all the pillars of a good and sustainable territorial development (Fernández 2010). There are many ways of naming, titling the whole complex of activities, procedures and approaches aimed at promoting a place (Braun 2008): *city marketing*, *territorial marketing* (rather preferred by scientists pleading for the opportunity of relating a city with its surroundings), *urban marketing*, *municipal marketing*, *selling of places*, *marketing of places*, *geographical marketing* or *urban place marketing*. However, although *city marketing* remains the mostly used concept, this paper will rather focus on *territorial marketing* emphasizing in this way the link between Cluj-Napoca, the city going to be tackled in the empirical research and Transylvania, the region it represents.

In order to make all this complex of elements function, territorial marketing requires a type of leadership able to face some of the following challenges (Van Gelder 2008). The first challenge is the hybrid character of the whole human and organizational mechanism involved in territorial branding. This mechanism may include economic actors, politic actors, marketers and, above all, citizens. Public attendance in the territorial marketing field is a prerequisite, a *sine qua non* condition for success. A second challenge consists in the equality of territorial branding stakeholders in terms of rights and statute. This kind of situation also requires consensus, cohesion and negotiation instead of dictations and commands. A feature like this converts territorial branding into a process difficult to be controlled. Finally, the third challenge to be faced by a competitive territorial branding leadership (Rainisto 2003) consists in creating a harmony between *designed perception* –the way that a territory would like to be seen by its community– and *current perception* –the way that a territory is seen by others from beyond its boundaries–. This last challenge is aimed at underlying once again that a territorial brand has no chance to be effective unless is sustainable. In this purpose, an effective territorial marketing strategy should be developed in respect to four community pillars synthesized in a *territorial marketing mix* (Moreira 2009): *infrastructure* (education, culture and the like), *networks* (transport, water supply), *architecture and design* (urban planning, constructions), and *society* (population, culture, history). Therefore, we may easily conclude that territorial marketing is more than promoting a place due to its feature of involving spatial, functional, organizational and financial measures meant to improve the management of the city, all of these measures being thus synthesized in a *geographical marketing mix* (Eshuis et al 2011).

Considering that public administration (local authorities) play a key role in promoting a place, we may identify four types of local governors according to their territorial marketing abilities and achievements related to this field (Szabó et al 2009). Thus, we should refer at *losers*, consisting in those local governors having a low ability of strategy creation and realization. Secondly there are the *frustrated*, represented by those having high ability of strategy creation but low in realization. Furthermore, we should remind the *players*, consisting in those municipalities having a low strategy creation ability but good in realization. The last category of local authorities consists in *expanders*, those having high strategy creation and realization ability.

“Whether a place is looking to rebuild, enhance or reinvigorate its image, a comprehensive brand strategy is the first step to achieving this goal” (CEOs for Cities 2006, p. 3). In this sense, apart from being aware of the whole range of community-related elements which need to be taken into account in order to achieve a place promotion strategy, a territory also has to choose the kind of brand it considers to be more suitable to its identity. There are three types of brands that a place –whether it is a city, a county, a region or even a country– can use in order to improve its promotional activity (Daclin et al, 2010): *the fully architected brand*, consisting generally in a logo or a slogan, therefore something that can create a memorable image; *the propositional brand*, which means a statement or a proof expressing the positioning of the city; and, finally, *the naked brand*, represented by the city itself thus the most “natural” way of promoting a place.

Above all, a target group is definitely a prior condition for a good territorial marketing because a brand, whether its size and utility, cannot be universal. In 2008 for instance, Berlin started a promotional campaign titled “be Berlin”. The whole initiative was aimed at strengthening the identity of their inhabitants along with their pride to live in this city (Zenker and Braun 2010). The same campaign was carried on one year later but this time specifically focused in order to attract foreign tourists or investors. This attempt of aligning the campaign to a larger target group was less successful. How could a tourist “be Berlin” without living there and identifying himself with the image of that territory? Therefore, a successful internal territorial marketing campaign turned into a fail *just* because it changed its target group.

All of this features and challenges exposed in this theoretical framework encourage the reader to approach the image of a territory as an expression of its *social capital*<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, in order to emphasize how determinant are customers for territorial marketing, this study will agree with the Erik Braun’s definition of place marketing consisting in “the coordinated use of marketing tools supported by a shared customer-oriented philosophy, for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging urban offerings that have value for the city’s customers and the city’s community at large” (Eshuis et al 2011, p.3).

### 3. Empirical research: territorial diagnosis of Cluj-Napoca

#### 3.1. Methodology

An exploratory empirical research was carried out on a sample of 30 citizens of Cluj-Napoca aged over 18 holding at least a bachelor degree. To be precise, a 5% of them were located in the segment 18-25 years old, 65% of them in the segment 26-30, 25% in the segment 31-40, and the remaining 5% in the segment of 41-50. None of the respondents was over 50. Regarding their level of studies, 65% of them hold master or even master or even PhD degrees while 30% have a bachelor degree and 5% said to have succeeded medium studies.

The core point of the survey was to collect opinions of respondents related to several indicators representing the infrastructure of Cluj-Napoca as public transport, traffic, promenade areas, buildings and so on, up to a total figure of 16 urban indicators. Beside each one, there have been suggested Likert measurement scales ranged from 1 (*very weak*) to 5 (*very good*).

Moreover, respondents were asked to identify a dominant specific feature for Cluj-Napoca among academic centre, medical centre, the most important city of Transylvania and so on. Meanwhile more of included questions were aimed at challenging respondents to associate Cluj-Napoca with words or names through questions as “*which is the first word coming into your mind while saying Cluj-Napoca?*” or “*suggest a Romanian public person of Cluj-Napoca that you consider appropriate to promote the city due to its national and foreign reputation*”.

Three hypotheses were proposed, the first of them aiming to express the potential link between *satisfaction degree* and *awareness of territorial branding necessity*. So, it was laid out as follows:

*H<sub>1</sub>*: individuals having a moderate satisfaction regarding urban indicators of Cluj-Napoca tend to be more aware of the opportunity to design a territorial brand for this city.

<sup>2</sup> This idea about “social capital” in territorial branding was used and developed by Danuta Hübner, former European Commissioner for Regional Policy in her speech delivered at the University of Cantabria (Spain) during an international event on the role of territorial marketing as key tool for the socioeconomic development of regions (November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

The second hypothesis aimed to emphasize the potential relation between *Cluj-Napoca* and *university* or *the spirit of Transylvania*, and was laid out as follows:

$H_2$ : individuals tend to associate Cluj-Napoca either to academic centres or to cities of Transylvania.

Finally, the third sought to highlight a connection between the *image* of Cluj-Napoca and the most “successful” *urban indicator* of the city. It was laid out as follows:

$H_3$ : individuals tend to associate the image of Cluj-Napoca with that urban indicator raising the most their satisfaction degree.

### 3.2. Research findings

The respondents were firstly asked if the image of Cluj-Napoca was a topic raising their interest and their unanimous answer was “yes”, then all of them claiming their concern to the image of the city they live in. The second question was aimed at finding out if these same respondents considered or not that designing a local brand for Cluj-Napoca was an opportune issue for this city. An overwhelming majority of 85% said “yes” while the other 15% answered “no”, denying therefore the importance or opportunity of branding Cluj-Napoca.

The third question in the survey was challenging respondents to a word association exercise. Thus, each of investigated subjects was asked to write the first thing coming in their mind while saying Cluj-Napoca. Ideas resulted through this exercise were complex and diverse, and therefore it was impossible to detect a clear tendency. However, most of respondents, 25% (see Table 1), said “home” likely because they were living and/or were born in Cluj-Napoca. Another 20% answered “university” likely either because they were students or due to their awareness that Cluj-Napoca is an important academic community. There were also respondents writing “Transylvania” (therefore a name instead of a word), so emphasizing that Cluj-Napoca represents primarily a region of Romania. Finally, if we take in mind that most of the respondents were young, it is easy to explain that the 10% of them wrote words associated to “good time” (as “fun” or “entertainment”).

There was also an important share of 30% of individuals writing unrepeatable words therefore original ideas impossible to be categorized. These words included “culture”, “Romania”, the “Statue of Mathias Corvinus” (a landmark of Cluj-Napoca) or “vargabeles” (a Hungarian dish very popular in Transylvania). Therefore, this question was aimed at stimulating the emotional memory of respondents in order to figure out what kind of mental associations are they able to do while talking about Cluj-Napoca. Then such kinds of answers from “Mathias Corvinus” to “Transylvania”, or from “university” to “vargabeles” may be used as emotional stimulus for potential tourists or investors.

Coming back to the main answers, by associating Cluj-Napoca to “home” it is suggested that the city is a warm and hospitable place making any passerby to feel home there regardless his cultural background. By using another word as “university” it is suggested that the city is a place able to provide high level education and meanwhile, an attractive life for students. Finally, the frequency of associating Cluj-Napoca to Transylvania may symbolize that this city embodies well enough the spirit of the whole region it represents. This finding may reanimate discussions regarding boundary limits of territorial marketing. The question is what kind of approach may be more appropriate for Cluj-Napoca: a city-limited branding or a widespread territorial marketing strategy embodying the whole Transylvania.

**Table 1** Main words/concepts associated to Cluj-Napoca city (results from an association exercise)

Word/concept	Importance (%)
Home	25.00
University	20.00
Transylvania	15.00
Fun	10.00
Others	30.00

**Table 2** Prevailing features of Cluj-Napoca which may be used as city brands

Feature	Importance (%)
Academic centre	65.00
Capital centre of Transylvania	25.00
Multicultural city	5.00
Medical centre	5.00
Historical place	0.00
Sports centre	0.00

Another question included in the survey was related to some representative features of this city. Respondents were asked to select one of the following prevailing features of Cluj-Napoca: “*academic centre*”, “*capital centre of Transylvania*”, “*multicultural city*”, “*medical centre*”, “*historical city*”, “*sports centre*” or other characteristics if they consider that none of above was suitable or representative.

As we can observe (see Table 2), an overwhelming majority of respondents (65%) considered that being an “*academic centre*” is from faraway the most representative characteristic of Cluj-Napoca. Another significant share of respondents (25%) stated that being the “*capital centre of Transylvania*” is the feature that fits better Cluj-Napoca. Some of the respondents chose either the option of “*multicultural city*” or “*medical centre*” (a 5% share in each case). Thus, it can be easily noticed the clear trend in respondents’ perception associating Cluj-Napoca with academic life. However, we have to take in mind that the study sample was not representative and therefore this paper cannot provide the certainty that this percent does reflect or express the real vision of the whole community of Cluj-Napoca’s inhabitants. Moreover, most of respondents were students or were linked in one or another way to higher education institutions and this fact was for sure more than enough to influence the findings related to this item.

Nevertheless, and even when it is clear that an extension of this research to a representative sample is required, it can be stated that there is indeed a tendency of respondents to associate this city with university, research or student environment. This topic of the investigation can be considered an applicative representation of the idea of *propositional brand* which was previously presented. According to the definition of this concept (Daclin et al 2010, p.7), academic life could thus be considered “*a statement or a proof expressing the positioning*” of Cluj-Napoca.

The following open question of the survey asked respondents to name a Romanian city which they considered similar to Cluj-Napoca. Each of selected respondents was allowed to choose any comparison criterion in order to answer. As in case of the previous items related to word association, this question also has a psychological component inviting respondents to associate Cluj-Napoca to any kind of Romanian city whether county seat or not. As we can see in Table 3, most of the respondents (35%) avoided giving a clear answer claiming that Cluj-Napoca is so unique that comparisons are not justified.

On the other hand, equal percentages of 20% of respondents chose “*Sibiu*” (a former European Cultural Capital), and Timisoara (another very well-known academic centre of Romania), while 15% of them selected “*Brasov*” (a city located in the central part of Romania, having an historical “flavour” similar to Cluj-Napoca). Finally, the remaining 10% of respondents claimed “*Iasi*” (the most important city of Moldavia, another representative region of the country, also known by providing an intense academic live in a similar way as Cluj-Napoca and Timisoara) to be the most similar city to Cluj-Napoca.

Therefore, although the question was an open one, the frequency of naming cities as Iasi, Brasov and Timisoara was quite big, then pointing to the question on the common points that those cities share with Cluj-Napoca and its features. In this sense, we should remind that all of these cities are academic centres and that tendency can emphasize once again the clear link between Cluj-Napoca and its dominant feature of city holding several prestigious universities and providing an intense life for students. Among these already presented urban communities there is one, Sibiu, holding in 2007 the title of European Cultural Capital and another one, Timisoara, seeking to achieve this statute in the future.

**Table 3** Perceptions regarding Romanian cities alike Cluj-Napoca

City	Importance (%)
Timișoara	20.00
Sibiu	20.00
Brașov	15.00
Iași	10.00
There is not a similar city	35.00

As Cluj-Napoca is also looking forward to reach this title, we may venture the direct competition between Cluj-Napoca and Timisoara related to this common objective also in their inhabitants' perception. Moreover, this similitude may justify as a further research direction a perception study on Cluj-Napoca's inhabitants aimed at detecting if they consider or not that being a European Cultural Capital can bring any influence in the territorial marketing positioning of their city. Above all, each of the other four cities are historical centres, a feature also characteristic to Cluj-Napoca. Finally, we should not forget the 35% of respondents answering that Cluj-Napoca cannot be compared to any other city. This may lead to the idea of particular, unique and key word of any marketing approach: *differentiation*.

With a similar purpose, the following question asked respondents to select a foreign city which could be associated to Cluj-Napoca. Once again, a majority of 65% considered the city as unique and/or unrepeatable (see Table 4), far away from the 10% stating that "*Vienna*", the Austrian capital, is comparable to it. Moreover, there were other important shares of respondents (25% in each case) suggesting cities as "*Bologna*" (in Italy), "*Madrid*" (in Spain), "*Nurnberg*" (in Germany), "*Stuttgart*" (also in Germany) or "*Prague*" (in Czech Republic) as those most similar to Cluj-Napoca.

Therefore, we can emphasize the overwhelming majority of respondents unable to produce or at least to intent producing any kind of association between Cluj-Napoca and a foreign city whether of Europe or other continent. When looking for similar Romanian cities in the previous question, a larger share of respondents was able to provide some examples. Now, the results are pretty different because the comparison tackles different countries, cultures, architectural styles and so on, then making the exercise of imagination definitely harder. Moreover, Cluj-Napoca is not a capital of state and this feature also complicates its comparison to cities at this level. For instance, a comparison between Cluj-Napoca and Brno, the second city in terms of importance in Czech Republic would have been more reliable than a comparison to Prague. However, the collective perception that Cluj-Napoca is unique in its way may be considered an opportunity to be taken into account while looking forward to new territorial marketing approaches. However, the further challenge in branding Cluj-Napoca will consist in detecting those differences strengthening the image of this city.

**Table 4** Perceptions regarding foreign cities alike Cluj-Napoca

City	Importance (%)
Bologna	25.00
Madrid	25.00
Nurnberg	25.00
Stuttgart	25.00
Prague	25.00
Vienna	10.00
There is not a similar city	65.00



One of the characteristics shaping Cluj-Napoca and distinguishing this city from other Romanian county locations consists in its large range of squares, monuments or other points of attraction, each one being considered in its own way an attractiveness sign of the city.

So, another goal of the research was to identify that place, image and/or element that could be considered as more representative for Cluj-Napoca, just in the same way that the Belem Tower is a representative image for Lisbon, the Statue of Liberty is the most representative image of New York, or La Sagrada Familia is a cathedral magnetizing any kind of foreign tourist crossing Barcelona.

Thus, considering that Cluj-Napoca also needs a representative image, a partially-open question asked the respondents to choose among some options of answers each one representing a landmark of this city. Among them, the “*Statue of Matthias Corvinus*” (a famous Hungarian King who was born in Cluj-Napoca), the Roman Catholic Cathedral of “*Saint Michael’s Church*”, the “*Orthodox Cathedral*”, the recently built “*City Stadium*”, “*Eroilor Avenue*” (Heroes’ Avenue, one of popular and busy main arteries of the city), or “*Cetățuia Park*” (Citadel Park). To be precise, this last was the one which seemed to be the most representative landmark, as being selected by a significant share of 30% of respondents (see Table 5).

Another 15% of respondents preferred to associate the image of Cluj-Napoca either to “*Saint Michael’s Church*” and an equal percentage to “*Unirii Square*” (Union Square), while 10% of them selected the “*Orthodox Cathedral*” and other 10% the “*National Theatre*” or the “*City Stadium*”. There was also a 5% of respondents pleading for the “*Statue of Matthias Corvinus*”.

However, it is important to notice that both the Saint Michael’s Church and the Statue of Matthias Corvinus are both located in the Unirii Square. Therefore, by adding the percentages obtained by each one of these three proposed landmarks, we can gather a substantial share of 35% of respondents relating their answers to the Unirii Square. Thus, this old square would represent, according to respondents’ perception, the most visible and representative place of the city of Cluj-Napoca, even more than Cetatua Park.

The following part of the research was devoted to know the respondents’ opinion regarding a set of 16 urban indicators that were included in the survey: “*public transport*”, “*traffic*”, “*leisure*”, “*academic life*”, “*culture*”, “*sports*”, “*medical services*”, “*relaxation spaces/services*”, “*shops*”, “*walking areas*”, “*green areas*”, “*modern buildings*”, “*historic buildings*”, “*inhabitants*”, “*cleanliness*” and “*tourism*”. As in previous cases, individuals were asked to express their valuation in a Likert scale including five options: 1 (*very weak*), 2 (*weak*), 3 (*average*), 4 (*good*) and 5 (*very good*). Main findings related to the suggested indicators can be seen in Table 6.

**Table 5** Perception of respondents regarding potential representative landmarks of Cluj-Napoca

City	Importance (%)
Cetățuia Park	30.00
St. Michael’s Church	15.00
Unirii Square	15.00
National Theatre	10.00
City Stadium	10.00
Orthodox Cathedral	10.00
Statue of Mathias Corvinus	5.00
Taylor’s Bastion	0.00
Eroilor Avenue	0.00
“Spray” block of flats	0.00

**Table 6** Perception of respondents regarding the 16 urban indicators related to the image of Cluj-Napoca (%)

Urban indicator	Very weak	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Public transport	5.00	10.00	55.00	30.00	0.00
Traffic	5.00	20.00	55.00	20.00	0.00
Leisure	0.00	0.00	30.00	35.00	35.00
Academic life	0.00	0.00	0.00	55.00	45.00
Culture	0.00	0.00	35.00	40.00	25.00
Sports	0.00	10.00	25.00	40.00	25.00
Medical services	5.00	5.00	30.00	40.00	25.00
Relaxation spaces/services	0.00	10.00	35.00	40.00	15.00
Shops	0.00	0.00	10.00	45.00	45.00
Walking areas	5.00	20.00	35.00	35.00	5.00
Green areas	0.00	10.00	60.00	30.00	0.00
Modern buildings	5.00	20.00	40.00	25.00	10.00
Historic buildings	5.00	30.00	30.00	35.00	0.00
Inhabitants	0.00	10.00	30.00	45.00	15.00
Cleanliness	0.00	10.00	30.00	55.00	5.00
Tourism	20.00	35.00	15.00	25.00	5.00

The following paragraphs briefly describe the findings in the Table as general tendencies related to the suggested 16 urban indicators.

- “*Public transport*” was perceived as “*average*” by a majority of 55% of respondents. 30% considered it as “*good*” and 10% as “*weak*”, while 5% of them said it to be “*very weak*”. Unfortunately, none of respondents considered that public transport should be valued at the “*very good*” level.

- The “*traffic*” of Cluj-Napoca was perceived in a similar way, as there was a 55% majority tendency of respondents valuating this item as “*average*” and a 5% of them considering it as “*very weak*”. Equal percentages of 20% of respondents considered it “*good*” or “*very good*”.

- The item related to “*leisure*” seemed to gather a better appreciation from respondents as 35% of them chose the option “*very good*” and the same percentage chose “*good*”. There was also a 30% considering “*average*” as their preferred option. Regarding the possible answers “*weak*” or “*very weak*”, none of respondents chose any of these options.

- According to a 55% of respondents Cluj-Napoca has a “*good*” “*academic life*”, while the remaining 45% of them preferred to answer “*very good*”. None of respondents considered it as “*average*”, “*weak*” or “*very weak*”.

- The indicator related to “*culture*” or cultural life was valued as “*good*” by 40% of respondents, as “*average*” by 35% and “*very good*” by 25% of them. There was no answers considering it as “*weak*” or “*very weak*”.

- Regarding “*sports*” or sporting life, most respondents chose “*good*” as the option which better represented their opinions, while in equal shares of 25% there were individuals selecting “*very good*” and “*average*”. A smaller percentage of 10% of respondents chose the option “*weak*”.

- Although having a reputation of medical centre, there was a share of respondents valuing the “*medical services*” in the city as “*weak*” or “*very weak*” (5% in each case). However, quite a significant percentage of 30% of respondents chose the option “*average*”, while 20% selected “*very good*” and most of them, 40%, preferred “*good*”.

- Opinions regarding “*relaxation spaces/services*” were favourable in general terms, as a majority of 40% of respondents said them to be “*good*”, 35% to be “*average*” and 15% to be “*very good*”. Only a 10% of individuals said them to be “*weak*” and nobody considered them as “*very weak*”.
- Respondents also seemed to be satisfied when talking about shops and quality of commercial life. 45% of them valued “*shops*” as “*very good*”, another 45% valued them as “*good*” and only a 10% referred to them as “*average*”.
- Regarding “*walking areas*”, respondents valued this item as “*good*” and “*average*”, both options registering a 35% of answers in each case. An additional 20% of respondents chose the option “*weak*” and equal percentages of 5% were registered for the “*good*” and “*very good*” options.
- The topic of “*green areas*” was valued with moderation by the respondents. 60% of them decided to answer “*average*” to this question, while 30% selected the option “*good*”. A smaller percentage of 10% preferred to answer “*weak*”. None of the respondents considered the options “*very good*” or “*good*” when providing answers.
- The item on “*modern buildings*” (recently built) was valued as “*average*” in most of the cases, thus registering a percentage of 40% of respondents. Moreover, an important share of answers of 25% referred to this indicator as “*good*”, while a comparable percentage of 20% referred to it as “*weak*”. A 10% of interviewed individuals considered that the aspect of modern buildings of Cluj-Napoca was “*very good*”, while 5% considered it as “*very weak*”.
- The following urban indicator of the survey was aimed at tackling the topic of “*historic buildings*” of Cluj-Napoca. Thus, respondents were asked to value this indicator and the results were 35% of “*good*” answers, 30% “*average*”, 30% “*weak*”, 5% “*very weak*”.
- The attractiveness of a city is also linked to its community, i.e. its “*inhabitants*” or, to be precise, the extent they are pleasant and nice people. Depending on the findings it will be possible (or not) to count on them when aiming measures or actions to promote the city. In this case, a majority of 45% of respondents attributed the qualifier of “*good*” to Cluj-Napoca inhabitants, while another 30% chose “*average*” in this same sense. Meanwhile, 15% chose “*very good*” and 10% chose “*weak*”. None of the respondents answered “*very weak*”.
- “*Cleanliness*” also represents a relevant quality indicator, which importance should be taken into account while trying to set some premises for a territorial marketing strategy. In the case of Cluj-Napoca, it was perceived as “*good*” by a 55% majority of respondents, as “*average*” by 30% of them, as “*weak*” by 10% and as “*very good*” just by 5% of interviewed individuals. None of them valued “*cleanliness*” as “*very weak*”.
- Finally, the last of the 16 indicators referring to the quality of life in Cluj-Napoca presented in the survey was related to “*tourism*”. Appreciations regarding this item were not so favourable according to respondents, as most of them, 35%, valued it as “*weak*”, while 25% considered it as “*good*”, 20% as “*very weak*”, 15% as “*average*” and only 5% as “*very good*”.

Considering these 16 urban indicators, we may conclude that the utility of the conducted research is double-sided. On one hand, it allows an initial identification of those city features which are perceived by respondents as strengths and may furthermore be prioritized as elements justifying a territorial marketing strategy for Cluj-Napoca. That's because in order to brand Cluj-Napoca we should rely on what is good with this city or, at least, perceived as positive.

On the other hand, the research also allows the diagnosis of perceived weaknesses, so justifying further public policies aimed at improving the quality of life in the city because a place which needs promotion also needs to permanently improve and reinvent itself in order to handle new territorial marketing challenges.

Summarizing the above comments, Table 7 shows a hierarchy of the already presented urban indicators prioritizing them according to the more or less positive valuation by respondents. To be precise, the percentage appearing beside each item is obtained by adding the shares of answers related to “*good*” and “*very good*”. According to this hierarchy, while “*academic life*”, “*shops*” and “*leisure*” (the first two rows in the table) are perceived as the main strengths to promote and brand the city. On the contrary, “*traffic*”, “*tourism*”, “*public transport*” and “*green areas*” are perceived as the main obstacles.

**Table 7** Strategic priorities vs. obstacles in branding Cluj-Napoca

Indicator	Importance (%)
1. Academic life, shops	<b>90.00</b>
2. Leisure	<b>70.00</b>
3. Cultural and sporting life	65.00
4. Medical services, cleanliness, inhabitants	60.00
5. Relaxation	55.00
6. Walking areas	40.00
7. New and historic buildings	35.00
8. Tourism, public transport, green areas	<b>30.00</b>
9. Traffic	<b>20.00</b>

Thus, “*academic life*”, “*shops*” and “*leisure*” are revealed as those indicators raising a significantly positive interest to interviewees. This entitles us to believe that branding Cluj-Napoca should definitely rely on these features, this city being rather perceived by an overwhelming majority of respondents as an academic centre, but also as a city providing leisure and good time opportunities. However, indicators related to infrastructure as “*traffic*”, “*tourism*”, “*public transport*” and “*green areas*” appear as obstacles or features with a “bad reputation” that needs to be improved in order to make Cluj-Napoca a competitive city in the international context. Meanwhile, although being perceived as a historic town, Cluj-Napoca is negatively valued in terms of the aspect of its “*historic buildings*” because many of them are badly maintained providing thus an unpleasant image for a tourist or any other kind of passerby.

Therefore, what is good with Cluj-Napoca is rather related to its community (nice inhabitants, intense cultural and sporting life or good atmosphere providing opportunities for entertainment), while what is wrong seems to be much more correlated to the administrative issues of the city (mediocre public transport, badly organized traffic plans making difficult for drivers to move around or cross the city by car as well as unsatisfying tours). So, considering the hierarchy of all these “reactions” coming from respondents, we may remember the classification of municipalities according to their marketing abilities and achievements by Szabó et al. (2009). Adapting this approach to Cluj-Napoca, the Local Administration of the city along with the whole community can be rather related to “frustration” because Cluj-Napoca is perceived “high” in potential but “low” in realization, a weakness affecting furthermore its territorial marketing possibilities. As a consequence, Cluj-Napoca has to start its promotional plans by improving its management in order to succeed in achieving territorial marketing improvements.

The empirical research also included a question asking respondents to associate Cluj-Napoca to any famous personality either born in this city and/or living there and whose positive national or international reputation may be a promotional asset for this place. Being an open question, it allowed the respondents the possibility to imagine any kind of famous person which owns his/her identity to Cluj-Napoca regardless the field of activity making him/her famous.

In this sense, most of the respondents (35%) chose Florin Piersic, a very popular theatre and cinema actor of Romania born in Cluj-Napoca as the most relevant personality who could be associated to the city (see Table 8). This tendency of associating Piersic to Cluj-Napoca and its identity is likely influenced by the municipality’s decision several years ago to name as “Florin Piersic” a very well-known cinema of Cluj-Napoca. However, the decision was controversial at that time because “baptizing” a street, institution building or hall with the name of a famous individual was rather considered an *a posteriori* initiative aimed at celebrating the memory of a passed away public figure. Nevertheless, Florin Piersic, today in his 70s, is still living and moreover he still can be seen on the stage or on national wide television channels which broadcast him very often. Anyway, Florin Piersic stays being a representative figure for Cluj-Napoca, his humour and language bringing the spirit of the city and Transylvania and so strengthening the link between him and this place.

**Table 8** Famous people of Cluj-Napoca associated to the city image

City	Importance (%)
Florin Piersic (actor)	35.00
Emil Boc (politician)	15.00
Ghiță Mureșan (NBA basketball player)	10.00
Others	20.00
I don't know	20.00

On the other hand, 15% of investigated respondents have chose Emil Boc, a famous Romanian politician, as the city most representative personality. Boc became well-known to the public after 2000, once he was elected as city councillor of Cluj-Napoca. After finishing his term of office, he got involved again in local elections, becoming Deputy Mayor of the city. In 2008, shortly after being re-elected Deputy Mayor through a landslide victory, Emil Boc was appointed as Romanian Prime Minister, serving in this position until 2012. Nowadays he is still leading the current Romanian governmental party.

There were also a 10% of respondents naming Gheorghe (Ghiță) Mureșan, a former NBA basketball player. His sporting carrier became him very popular all over the world. Moreover, his popularity increased after he played with the American actor Billy Crystal in a famous comedy broadcasted in Hollywood. Despite his retirement from sports, Mureșan is still being considered a public figure due to his involvement in several activities related to civil society. Each summer he returns from USA to his Romanian hometown Cluj-Napoca in order to organize summer schools for children and to teach them basketball.

Apart from these three celebrities, respondents suggested other important names as relevant individuals linked to Cluj-Napoca. Namely, Andrei Marga (former President of the Babes-Bolyai University –the biggest one in the city– and also Romanian Minister of Education by late 90's), Tompa Gabor (a theatre director holding internationally prestigious awards for his activity) or Tudor Giurgiu (a film director). This last one organizes each year in Cluj-Napoca the famous Transylvanian International Film Festival (TIFF), allowing Cluj-Napoca the opportunity of receiving international guests as Catherine Deneuve, Jacqueline Bisset, Armand Assante and the like.

At any case, VIPs are necessary for branding a city but they are clearly and completely insufficient, as the “life cycle” of a famous individual is from far away shorter than the expected one of the projected image of a territory. However, a famous actor, singer, dancer or politician can bring through his/her image some benefits that a local community can take advantage of. Meanwhile, a celebrity could also be toxic for a community in case his/her image is affected by unpleasant public scandals that can be transferred to the image of the whole community where he/she is associated to.

## 4. Conclusions

### 4.1. Hypothesis-data confrontation

The first hypothesis was aimed to express a relation between the satisfaction degree of respondents regarding the 16 urban indicators of the survey (public transport, traffic and the like) and their willingness to brand Cluj-Napoca. The core point of the hypothesis was that people giving moderate appreciations to those indicators as “average”, “weak” or “very weak” are more aware of the problems of their city and, therefore, they will better understand that a branding strategy is indeed important and opportune.

Looking at the figures in the previous Table 6, the largest percentages in the “average” column (surpassing 50%) were those ones associated to “public transport” (55%), “traffic” (55%) and “green areas” (60%). Therefore, in most cases the respondents behaviour is somehow linked to “average” appreciations. Then –and generally speaking–, we can find support to the idea that respondents tended to express moderate appreciations on all the 16 items. On the other hand, 85% of respondents considered that designing a brand of Cluj-Napoca is opportune and necessary. The relation among all these findings leads to the confirmation of the first hypothesis.

The second hypothesis of the research was aimed to highlight a tendency in respondents to associate Cluj-Napoca with other cities embodying either academic life or the spirit of Transylvania. In this sense, respondents suggested four Romanian cities: Sibiu, Brasov and Timisoara –the three of them located in Transylvania– and Iasi –a city located in another Romanian region, but also reputed as academic centre–. As each one of those cities holds at least one of the two named characteristics, therefore the second hypothesis can be confirmed.

Finally, the third hypothesis was based on the potential clear relation between the perceived image of Cluj-Napoca and the most appreciated urban indicator of the city. At this point, the indicator showing the better appreciation by respondents was “*academic life*” (with a 55% of “*good*” and a 45% of “*very good*” valuations). On the other hand, being an “*academic centre*” was also emphasized as the feature most suitable to Cluj-Napoca. This similarity justifies the confirmation of the third hypothesis.

In order to summarize, Table 9 provides a final synthesis of the results from the hypotheses-data confrontation.

#### 4.2. Further discussions

Testing public perceptions regarding territorial marketing approaches for Cluj-Napoca is a technique which can convert itself into a reliable tool of supporting further debates related to a territorial branding strategy of this city. Primarily, researches as current one may help to indentify the main strengths of the city and furthermore to prioritize them as elements justifying a promotional strategy. As in case of a product we seek to launch and promote by popularizing its qualities, Cluj-Napoca definitely needs a promotional strategy embodying its strengths.

However, it is important to be aware that the city qualities or positive features have to *differentiate* Cluj-Napoca from other potential competitor locations inside or outside the country. There is no doubt that “*cleanliness*”, for instance, can be considered –accordingly to the findings from this research– as one of the main city’s strengths, but we have to check that this strength could allow to make Cluj-Napoca different than other Romanian or European cities. Generally, European touristic cities are well maintained in terms of cleanliness, and therefore this quality should rather be a sign of normality and civilization than something original. Thus, in order to promote Cluj-Napoca anywhere outside its boundaries, it is important to find and define what is peculiar and indeed original to this city. Meanwhile, in order to make possible a promotional strategy for Cluj-Napoca, it is also important to better define this place in terms of target group and *competitors* consisting in similar cities able to be alternative perspectives for potential tourists or investors.

**Table 9** Hypothesis-data confrontation

Hypotheses	Relation	Connected data	Confirmed/informed
<i>H<sub>1</sub></i> : individuals having a moderate satisfaction regarding urban indicators of Cluj-Napoca tend to be more aware of the opportunity to design a territorial brand for this city	Satisfaction degree and awareness of territorial branding necessity	The frequency of respondents using the average level of the measurement scale with the frequency of respondents answering at the related question	Confirmed
<i>H<sub>2</sub></i> : individuals tend to associate Cluj-Napoca either to academic centres or to cities of Transylvania	Cluj-Napoca and university along with the spirit of Transylvania	Findings related to the research data: Iasi, Timisoara, Sibiu and Brasov, all of them cities embodying features as academic centres or Transylvanian cities	Confirmed
<i>H<sub>3</sub></i> : individuals tend to associate the image of Cluj-Napoca with that urban indicator raising the most their satisfaction degree	The image of Cluj-Napoca and the most appreciated urban indicator of the city	Consideration of the city as an academic centre by 65% of respondents, as well as 55% of them considering its “ <i>academic life</i> ” as “ <i>good</i> ” and 45% as “ <i>very good</i> ”	Confirmed

In this sense, by designing competitor cities we may raise other appropriate questions, as the one referred to the kind of tourism that Cluj-Napoca should be able to provide, or the one related to the “distance” between it and each one of its competitor cities.

Let’s think, for instance, that a city as Christchurch, in New Zealand, would hypothetically embody some similar or comparable features with those of Cluj-Napoca. Being an attractive city, Christchurch has a large number of tourists coming most of them from Wellington, the capital city of the country, and thus its inhabitants being a target group for Christchurch. Would it be worthy to attempt convincing those potential tourists living in Wellington that somewhere at 20 hours of fly linked with 3 airports there is a similar city in Romania named Cluj-Napoca which may provide more attractiveness for them? Would that be a wise approach? If the answer is predictably “no”, we should therefore attempt to set clear *competition distances*. These are some of the logical questions taking rise from this research. This paper keeps pleading in its end for the double utility of a territorial diagnosis research justifying a SWOT analysis of Cluj-Napoca. Therefore, those strengths and opportunities may identify promotional opportunities while weaknesses and threats are pillars justifying further public policies aimed at raising the quality of life within this community.

The findings of this research also lead us to the conclusion that, according to respondents’ perception, the image of Cluj-Napoca is defined mainly by the combination of two of its outstanding characteristics as a reputed academic centre and being the city that better symbolizes Transylvania and Transylvanian values. Thus, the last one of these two features requires a stronger connection between the city and regional branding because Cluj-Napoca does definitely need to be related to its surroundings.

At any case, both elements are suggested to be used as promotional opportunities because they fit the culture, civilization and the history of the place representing meanwhile its identity. However, some infrastructure related weaknesses (unreliable public transport, traffic and touristic circuits) may produce important difficulties in carrying out a territorial marketing process. Branding Cluj-Napoca also has to be supported by a better local management able to improve some neglected functional aspects.

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