

## **FACETS OF THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION FOR PROMOTING THE ROMANIAN INDUSTRIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE**

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**Abstract:** *In recent years, cultural heritage has been extensively considered by both marketing scientists and practitioners as an important resource capable to support the sustainable development of the local communities. Its diversified content, properly capitalized, can fuel the overall efforts made by the heritage owners and managers to develop their communities in economic, social, and environmental terms. Marketing communication plays a vital role in these endeavors by drawing attention, generating interest, stimulating desire, and determining the action of the consumers in relation to the cultural heritage. Industrial cultural heritage represents a segment in full ascent expanding as former factories and plants are decommissioned and join the older buildings, equipment, and technologies having already a historical value. The former centrally planned economies from Central and Eastern Europe, including Romania, are in the situation to manage what was called „a pile of scrap metal” by transforming it into a resource to be employed and capitalized as industrial cultural heritage. The paper aims to explore the extent to which this industrial cultural heritage may represent an attraction for the Romanian tourists and to identify how an appropriate marketing communication conducted under the particular context generated by the pandemics could transform it into a cultural tourism asset based on the results of a quantitative approach.*

**Keywords:** *cultural heritage, marketing communication, industrial heritage, cultural tourism*

**JEL Classification:** M31, Z32

### **Introduction**

The different definitions given to the cultural heritage have underlined its complex content including distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional characteristics inherent to a society or social group, a set of both material and immaterial works expressing the life and social organization of groups and communities (Riviezzo et al., 2021). According to Timothy (2021), cultural heritage is the past created by humankind and its various tangible and intangible manifestations, in the form of material objects such as buildings, archaeological remains, rural landscapes and villages, cities, art collections, artifacts in museums, historic gardens, handicrafts, and antiques.

The most formal and institutional definition sees cultural heritage as including monuments (architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings, and combinations of features, which are of

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**DOI: 10.29302/oeconomica.2021.23.2.12**

outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science), groups of buildings (groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science) and sites (works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view) (UNESCO, 1972).

Cultural heritage comprises any tangibles and intangibles inherited from the past that are associated with personal and/or collective identities and that can be used for contemporary purposes, including tourism (Jimura, 2021). The development of tourism should take into account new tourist attractions, new offers of tourist products that may also integrate the industrial cultural heritage providing an important opportunity to fulfill the tourism needs of consumers and, at the same time, to develop sustainable forms of tourism (Balažič, 2011). Promoters of industrial heritage tourism have sought to improve the image of old industrial sites and encourage appreciation for the industrial tradition represented by old factories, buildings and architecture, installations, machinery or entire communities with a considerable industrial base (Xie, 2015). The main industrial nature of the industrial heritage reflects the characteristics of urban industrialization and has an enormous potential of reuse by developing modern cultural and creative industries with high added value for consumers and the touristic destination (Yao et al., 2019). More, the combination between cultural heritage and tourism, including the revalorization of industrial buildings, initially meant for different scopes, contributes to the creation of a sustainable urban environment (Andrioti et al., 2021).

Tourism has proven to be an effective geospatial transformation tool, especially in the case of industrial heritage supporting the development of the local economy and strengthening the local identity by changing the image and transforming places in significant tourist areas emphasizing the cultural and recreational tourism based on industrial heritage attracting an increasing number of tourists (Ćopić et al., 2014).

The role played by promotion is essential for the development of modern tourism, various marketing communication channels, such as public relations, advertising, and word-of-mouth publicity playing an important role in building the image of a particular tourist destination, marketing communication becoming a way to reach potential visitors – vital for tourism marketing (Dasgupta, 2011). Online social networks have today become an increasingly powerful tool for tourism marketers, as digital media can lower costs, better communication with customers, with potential customers, while guiding customers to decide to order the tourist product they were informed about (Pride and Ferrell, 2014). Backed by consumer satisfaction, the positive word-of-mouth recommendation of the tourist product and destination to friends and relatives is a key part of the promotion (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007). Better informed and connected consumers, changing marketing strategies, and advances in technology are changing the way companies and customers communicate with each other using information and communication tools impacting significantly the marketing communication: (Kotler et al., 2017; 2021).

### **Methodological notes**

To explore the connections between the industrial heritage and marketing communication two distinctive sets of research variables have been considered, first concerning the types of industrial heritage, second regarding the sources of information used by the visitors, according to the typology proposed by Neacșu et al. (2016).

The types of industrial heritage taken into consideration referred to the: monuments of industrial architecture, stone or metal bridges (IH1), the ruins of smelters for gold extraction, the ruins of iron smelting furnaces, furnaces for making cast iron and steel components (IH2), hydraulically operated pre-industrial equipment such as mills, rollers, oilers, sawmills, saws (IH3), and the old factories and plants, the handicraft workshops and the hydro-technical arrangements, constructions for railways - stops, stations and infrastructure, but also for constructions associated with agricultural

production (IH4).

The sources of information used by visitors considered included: leaflets and/or flyers, magazines, photos distributed through travel agencies (IS1), photos, brochures and offers available on national tourist platforms (IS2), multimedia postcards from all over Romania offered by tourism bloggers (IS3), and memories of previous trips and visits of friends or family members (IS4).

Specific assumptions have been built for each of the research variables, respondents expressed their agreement with them, and based on their assessments a measure of importance has been determined using a semantic differential scale (in which a score of 1 reflected a very low and a score of 5 a very high level of interest). Pearson correlation coefficients have been determined to assess the associations between the types of industrial heritage and the sources of information used by their visitors.

The results obtained allowed the assessment of the: (1) preferences of the visitors for the different types of industrial heritage, (2) preferences of the visitors for the different sources of information regarding the industrial heritage, and (3) the contribution of the sources of information to the selection of a certain type of industrial heritage.

The research sample included 226 respondents (55.3 % male and 44.7 % female, respectively 74.3 % high-school graduates and 25.6 % university graduates) that were asked a complex questionnaire including 47 items among which those regarding the industrial heritage and sources of information. Data were collected between January and June 2021.

### **Main findings**

The research results revealed that industrial heritage presents an average to a high interest for the visitors of the Romanian tourist destinations (the specific average score equal to 3.47). The ruins of smelters for gold extraction, the ruins of iron smelting furnaces, furnaces for making cast iron and steel components (with a specific average score of 3.69), hydraulically operated pre-industrial equipment such as mills, rollers, oilers, sawmills, saws (with a specific average score of 3.60), and the old factories and plants, the handicraft workshops and the hydro-technical arrangements, constructions for railways - stops, stations and infrastructure, but also for constructions associated with agricultural production (with a specific average score of 3.55), have significantly surpassed the monuments of industrial architecture, stone or metal bridges (with a specific average score of 3.07), the visitors appearing more interested in the first three categories.

These scores suggest that the categories of industrial heritage represent areas in which the managers, administrators, and owners have to make tremendous efforts to draw attention, raise interest, stimulate desire, and determine the action of the visitors in connection to the different forms of industrial heritage.

Creation and development of cultural products and/or services is the most appropriate way to capitalize the industrial heritage but the transformation of the industrial objects, facilities, technologies, and knowledge in cultural products and/or services is a very complex process. This complexity is the result of the mixture between the awareness that this type of heritage must have, as well as the interest it must arouse for its visitors, respectively the acknowledgment of the value of this heritage by its managers, administrators, and owners and their competencies to develop products, services, events, and cultural activities. To these should be added the transition from industrial employment to the tourist capitalization of this heritage, a process that involves its conservation, restoration, and promotion. One of the most provocative issues to be addressed in this respect involves repositioning these heritage objects and facilities in the mind of the visitors from manufacturing and industry to tourism and culture by providing opportunities to discover, explore, experience, and enjoy the related cultural tourism output.

Communication aiming to inform about the industrial heritage as a tourist attraction, respectively about the related cultural products, services, activities, and events as a source of cultural tourism experiences plays a key role in developing the appropriate marketing funnel supporting the

capitalization of this type of heritage.

The results of the research show that visitors of the monuments of industrial architecture as stone or metal bridges, the ruins of smelters for gold extraction and of the iron-smelting furnaces, furnaces for making cast iron and steel components, hydraulically operated pre-industrial equipment such as mills, rollers, oilers, sawmills, saws, and of the old factories and plants, handicraft workshops and hydro-technical arrangements, constructions for railways but also those associated with agricultural production did not take too much in consideration the information distributed through travel agencies, available on national tourist platforms, offered by tourism bloggers, and provided by friends or family members when selecting the tourism destinations including elements of industrial heritage (the specific average score equal to 2.76).

Leaflets and/or flyers, magazines, and photos distributed through travel agencies, as well as multimedia postcards from all over Romania, offered by tourism bloggers (both with an average specific score of 3.12) were relatively useful for the visitors, while photos, brochures and offers available on national tourist platforms (with an average specific score of 2.79) and, somewhat surprisingly, the memories of previous trips and visits made by the friends or family members (with an average specific score of 2.07) accounted to a limited extent.

By comparison to the national tourist platforms and friends and family members, travel agencies and tourism bloggers have an increased degree of reliability as information sources but it is obvious that, on a hand, the visitors did not fully employ them and, on the other hand, that there is a strong need for other sources to deliver the necessary amount of information to create the appropriate levels of awareness, interest, and willingness to discover, explore, experience, and enjoy the tourist destinations including elements of industrial heritage. The surprisingly low score of the memories of previous trips and visits made by the friends or family members suggests, on a hand that they did not have too many opportunities to visit industrial heritage related tourist destinations and, on the other hand, that their experiences were not quite so memorable to be shared with friends and relatives. Hence the demand for a marketing communication capable to create awareness, raising interest, and inducing a behavior related to the industrial heritage products, services, events, and activities by seizing the opportunities offered by a diversified mix of media and channels, also harnessing the power of the word-of-mouth and personal communication.

Crossing the types of industrial heritage with the sources of information used by the visitors of the tourist destinations including elements of industrial heritage (table no. 1) reveals the statistically significant associations between the tourism bloggers and travel agencies, seen as sources of information, and all the four categories of industrial heritage. Also, the national tourist platforms associate significantly with three out of four categories of industrial heritage (the exception from rule being represented by the ruins of smelters for gold extraction and of iron smelting furnaces, furnaces for making cast iron and steel components. Last but not least, the friends or family members do not associate significantly with any of the four categories of industrial heritage confirming that friends and relatives can provide information about these forms of heritage but their inputs are less or even not at all relevant.

**Table no. 1** Measures of correlation between the types of industrial heritage (IH) and the sources of information (IS) used by the visitors of tourist destinations

Variable		IH1	IH2	IH3	IH4	IS1	IS2	IS3	IS4
<b>IH1</b>	Pearson's r	—							
	p-value	—							
<b>IH2</b>	Pearson's r	0.606***	—						
	p-value	< .001	—						
<b>IH3</b>	Pearson's r	0.400***	0.513***	—					
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—					
<b>IH4</b>	Pearson's r	0.473***	0.486***	0.596***	—				
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—				
<b>IS1</b>	Pearson's r	0.171**	0.178**	0.297***	0.351***	—			
	p-value	0.010	0.007	< .001	< .001	—			
<b>IS2</b>	Pearson's r	0.155*	0.080	0.143*	0.211**	0.441***	—		
	p-value	0.020	0.230	0.032	0.001	< .001	—		
<b>IS3</b>	Pearson's r	0.289***	0.266***	0.290***	0.353***	0.466***	0.265***	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
<b>IS4</b>	Pearson's r	0.069	0.020	0.108	0.098	0.102	0.246***	0.248***	—
	p-value	0.305	0.760	0.106	0.144	0.126	< .001	< .001	—

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001. Created using JASP Team (2021). JASP (Version 0.16)[Computer software].

*Source:* own projection

Measurement of the correlations between the types of the industrial heritage and the sources of information indicates the mix of the sources capable to provide the relevant information to the visitors interested to discover, explore, experience, and enjoy the tourist destinations including elements of industrial heritage:

- in the case of monuments of industrial architecture, such as stone or metal bridges, the combination of multimedia postcards from all over Romania offered by tourism bloggers, leaflets and/or flyers, magazines, photos distributed through travel agencies, and photos, brochures, and offers available on national tourist platforms, selected and employed in this order, seem to represent the best mixture;
- in the case of the ruins of smelters for gold extraction, the ruins of iron smelting furnaces, furnaces for making cast iron and steel components, the combination of multimedia postcards from all over Romania offered by tourism bloggers, and the leaflets and/or flyers, magazines, photos distributed through travel agencies, selected and employed in this order, seem to represent the best mixture;
- in the case of the hydraulically operated pre-industrial equipment such as mills, rollers, oilers, sawmills, saws, the combination of leaflets and/or flyers, magazines, and photos distributed through travel agencies, multimedia postcards from all over Romania offered by tourism bloggers, and photos, brochures and offers available on national tourist platforms, selected and employed in this order, seem to represent the best mixture;
- finally, in the case of and the old factories and plants, handicraft workshops and the hydro-technical arrangements, constructions for railways - stops, stations and infrastructure, but also for constructions associated with agricultural production, again, the combination of multimedia postcards from all over Romania offered by tourism bloggers, leaflets and/or flyers, magazines, photos distributed through travel agencies, and photos, brochures and offers available on national tourist platforms, selected and employed in this order, seem to represent the best mixture.

### **Conclusions and discussions**

The exploratory research approaching the connections between the types of industrial heritage

and the sources of information used by the visitors of the tourist destinations including elements of industrial heritage has been conducted under three important limitations represented by the definition given to the industrial heritage, respectively the sources of information, both susceptible to be improved, and the nature of the sample used to collect data. Still, the conclusions identified through the research can serve at least as a solid base for a future enhanced approach.

The industrial heritage represents an important asset that can be capitalized by its managers, administrators, and owners through the creation, development, and promotion of related cultural products, services, events, and activities.

Drawing attention to the existing industrial objects, facilities, technologies, and knowledge is the first step to be made to generate and, later, increase the awareness of the industrial heritage. Besides the mandatory actions of conservation and restoration, sound marketing communication campaigns designed to reposition this heritage in the minds of its potential audience should be conducted aiming to get the attention, raise the interest, stimulate the desire, and push to the action the visitors curious to discover, explore, enjoy, and experience it. The more numerous and favorable related experiences will lead to more memorable moments to be shared with the friends and family members improving significantly the value of this source of information.

Marketing communication is present but, obviously should involve a range of increased efforts from a more diversified group of entities. However commendable are the endeavors of the travel agencies, national tourist platforms, and tourism bloggers, they should be accompanied by the dedicated undertakings of the managers, administrators, and owners of the industrial heritage. An expanded and integrated amount of messages delivered to the industrial heritage audiences, such as leaflets and/or flyers, magazines, photos, brochures, offers, multimedia postcards, doubled by the press, radio, television, and outdoor advertising, direct mail, telemarketing, direct response advertising, and online marketing campaigns will lead to the appropriate levels of awareness of, interest for, and experience of the industrial heritage.

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