Article

The online destination image of the protected area Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the online destination image of the protected area Bicaz Gorges-Hasmas National Park. Four objectives have been formulated, as it follows: (1) analyzing tourists' visiting behaviour at the destination, (2) evaluating tourists' appreciation of the different attractions inside the destination and implicitly comparing these attractions, (3) identifying the most emblematic elements of the online image for the analysed attractions and (4) identifying the issues that exist at the destination as perceived by tourists. The analysis of user-generated content from TripAdvisor and Google Maps platforms led to the folowing results for the study area: the National Park is characterised by high seasonality, with the peak season during the summer months; there is a certain uniformity regarding the geographical origin of the tourists who visited different locations inside the National Park; there is a generally positive opinion regarding the destination, which is perceived as "beautiful", "wonderful", and even "spectacular"; the issues related to the road infrastucture or to crowdedness (especially around Red Lake) represent the main negative comments of tourists regarding the destination. The results of this analysis can be of practical use in terms of developing future marketing campaigns and for designing strategic plans for solving the identified issues at the destination.

Keywords: online destination image, user-generated content, tourists' perception, conceptual maps

Résumé. Le but de cet article est d'analyser l'image de destination en ligne de l'aire protégée du parc national de Cheile-Bicazului Hasmas. Quatre objectifs ont été formulés, comme suit : (1) analyser le comportement des touristes dans la destination, (2) évaluer l'appréciation des touristes des différentes attractions à l'intérieur de la destination et implicitement comparer ces attractions, (3) identifier les éléments les plus emblématiques de l'image en ligne pour les attractions analysées et (4) identifier les problèmes qui existent à la destination tels qu'ils sont perçus par les touristes. L'analyse du contenu généré par les utilisateurs des TripAdvisor et Google Maps a conduit aux

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résultats suivants pour la zone d'étude: le parc national se caractérise par une forte saisonnalité, avec la haute saison pendant les mois d'été; il existe une certaine uniformité quant à l'origine géographique des touristes qui ont visité différents endroits à l'intérieur du parc national; il y a une opinion généralement positive sur la destination, perçue comme « belle », « merveilleuse », voire « spectaculaire »; les problèmes liés à l'infrastructure routière ou à la surpopulation (notamment autour de Red Lake) représentent les principaux commentaires négatifs des touristes à l'égard de la destination. Les résultats de cette analyse peuvent être utiles en termes de développement de futures campagnes de marketing et de conception de plans stratégiques pour résoudre les problèmes identifiés à destination.

Mots-clés: image d'une destination, contenu généré par l'utilisateur, perception des touristes, cartes conceptuelles

Introduction

The widespread application of information technology in tourism during the last decades has significantly influenced and upgraded the tourism industry (Lian & Yu, 2019). An important change is the extensive use of user-generated content (UGC) from social media in different stages of the travelling experience (Fotis et al., 2012; Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019), also referred to as tourist-generated content (TGC) (Mak, 2017). The utility of such content, which might consist of stories, reviews, ratings or pictures from destinations, comes from the fact that potential travellers are provided with a valid and trustworthy image of destinations directly from someone who experienced those destinations, which most likely will influence their choice of travelling (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015). It is essential to also consider that destination image does not only has an impact on tourist decision-making process, but it also significantly influences tourist's behaviour at the destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007), and hence the importance of TGC is so much higher. Considering the fact that most of the time the TGC does not imply any remuneration for the tourists producing it, the value of such content and its influence upon tourists' decisions is even more important, as their expressed opinions are most likely impartial (Mak, 2017). Recent research has even concluded that UGC from travel platforms is more influential in the creation of a tourist destination image than mass media (Marine-Roig & Huertas, 2020).

The importance of UGC for shaping the online image of destinations and for influencing potential tourists' motivation of travelling and their decision-making process determined a growing interest among researchers for studying various topics related to the online destination image (Jiang et al., 2021). A main stream of research on this topic aims at identifying the online image of various destinations on a certain travel website (Li, 2015; Marine-Roig, 2021; Stoleriu & Ibanescu, 2017) or on different such websites, with the purpose of comparing projected online images for the same destination (Choi et al., 2007; Dwivedi, 2009; Govers & Go, 2005). Some studies go into more detail, focusing on how UGC influences tourists' expectations and their satisfaction (González-Rodríguez et al., 2016; Jiang et al., 2021; Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019), analysing tourists' spatial and psychological involvement reflected in the

content they generated regarding the destination (Wang et al., 2021) or comparing the destination image based on user-generated content with that created through other online sources (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015). However, while significant advances have been made during the last years in the field, research on online destination image is still to be advanced through different approaches (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Lian & Yu, 2019).

Building on the already existent approaches from the literature, the aim of the current study is to analyse de online destination image of a protected area in Romania, respectively Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park and, simultaneously, to strengthen the affirmations related to the importance of UGC for the creation of a destination image. This analysis, based entirely on user-generated content from TripAdvisor and Google Maps, will be conducted following four main objectives: (1) to analyse tourists' visiting behaviour at the destination, (2) to evaluate tourists' appreciation of the different attractions inside the destination and implicitly to compare these attractions, (3) to identify the most emblematic elements of the online image for the analysed attractions and (4) to identify the issues that exist at the destination as perceived by tourists.

1. Literature review

The online destination image can influence travel motivations and the attitude of tourists towards a destination, being one of the elements that help make travel decisions (Kislali et al., 2020; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015). The impact of the online image is given by the source, its elements and the quality of the image (Lian & Yu, 2019). Online tourist image or online destination image is defined by Mak (2017) as a sum of tourists' impressions, feelings, ideas, precepts and beliefs, and usually the elements at the centre of the destination image are those items which are the most frequent among these impressions, ideas, beliefs (Pan & Li, 2011). An important difference between the tourist image and the online tourist image is that technology allows users to create and send descriptions, impressions, ideas on various social platforms, and therefore the users have the power to build the online image of a destination themselves.

The researchers who have analysed this subject have generally used quantitative methods in their studies. Most studies are based on data extracted from social media platforms or travel websites such as TripAdvisor, Google Maps, Booking or Facebook. Based on these reviews, comments or pictures that tourists post on these sites, the data is interpreted to show how content generated by the users influences and creates the image of a destination through the eyes of the visitors. Numerous studies have explored the image of various tourist destinations by collecting images and text from online platforms during the last decades and by employing diverse

methods of analysis (Govers & Go, 2005; Hunter, 2013; Jiang et al., 2021; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Lian & Yu, 2017; Lupu et al., 2020; Stoleriu & Ibanescu, 2017; Tseng et al., 2015). The choice of methods and the manner in which the results are interpreted depend on the nature of downloaded data and on the purpose of each study. At the base of most of these studies lies the aim of identifying the key elements of the destination and its specific features.

With a focus on Wuyuan region in China, Zhou (2014) uses a qualitative approach for analysing two popular Chinese travel websites with the aim of examining the manner in which rurality is represented in tourism. His study underlines the positive image of rurality as connected to tourism in China and emphasizes authenticity, tranquillity or romanticism as core elements related to rural tourism. An important quality of user-generated content in tourism is that it helps compare the image of destinations as it is promoted by tour operators from different tourist markets, as Stepchenkova & Morrison (2006) emphasise through their study related to how Russia is illustrated as a travel destination on both US website materials and Russian website materials. While their results indicate some similarities between the images promoted by the tour operators from the two countries, there are also clear differences: US tour operators mainly promote Russia as a historical and cultural destination and focus on the western part of the country, while Russian websites are more interested in natural attractions of the country and target destinations that are more dispersed geographically. Stoleriu & Ibanescu (2017) resorted to both pictures' analysis and tourists' reviews analysis in order to identify and highlight the central elements of the destination image of Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. Their findings indicate this destination as a wild paradise and also point out the main preferences of tourists visiting the destination, such results being presented as a tool for destination managers. In a subsequent study on Danube Delta, Stoleriu et al. (2019) analyse the visitors' experiences and memories of this destination based on the user-generated content on TripAdvisor, respectively on the concepts and themes that also compose the destination image of Danube Delta. Similarly, Lojo et al. (2020) make use of both pictures and reviews to depict the online destination image of the city of Barcelona. Their approach is a complex one, as they mostly focus on advancing the understanding of theories and concepts related to the destination image, especially referring to three modes of image meaning (designative, appraisive, prescriptive).

Studies in the field are also concerned with how the online destination image is created in tourists' minds and how, precisely, the online image of a destination impacts potential tourists' decisions. This approach mostly employs interviews and/or questionnaires addressed to individuals who either already visited or had the intention to visit certain destinations. Rahman et al. (2021) referred to three main constructs in their study concerning the development of online destination image, respectively to authenticity, source credibility and involvement. Their approach involved both

interviews and questionnaires administered to those who either already visited St Martin's Island, Bangladesh or intended to visit the destination, the study's aim being to discuss the above-mentioned concepts in relation to the online destination image formation process and respondents' intention to visit the destination. Through a similar approach, involving a survey applied to 240 participants, Lian & Yu (2019) propose a model of the impact of the online destination image on travel decisions, focusing on the role of three main elements: source, direction and quality of online destination image.

While the approaches on the topic have diversified during the last decades, further investigations on online destination image are encouraged, both in the direction of developing new methods for the interpretation of the destination image and in the direction of covering new destinations. The current study will add to the current literature a case study on a protected area from Romania, respectively Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park, aiming at a detailed analysis of the online image of this destination through the use of tourists' reviews from two different online platforms: TripAdvisor and Google Maps.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study area

The protected area Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park is located in the Hășmaș Mountains, which occupy a central position in the Moldo-Transylvanian Carpathians, an important subdivision of the Eastern Carpathians. Geographically, the Park is located in the central-north-eastern area of Romania, within the Neamț and Harghita counties. In the northern part, the National Park includes the area of Bicaz Gorges and Red Lake. The territory of the park is included in the Area of Avifaunistic Importance Bicaz Gorges – Hășmaș Mountains.

Tourist arrivals and overnight stays are an important indicator of tourist activity at the level of the National Park. Analyzing the evolution of tourist demand and referring to the period of the last years, data shows data prior to the global economic crisis in 2008, tourists' numbers were in decline, a decline accelerated by the crisis (Figure 1). However, after 2009 a growth of overnight stays and also of tourist arrivals is recorded for two years, followed by a period of slight fluctuations. Starting with 2015 tourist demand starts to grow again, reaching values of almost 70,000 overnight stays and over 30,000 arrivals in 2019. Unsurprisingly, after 2019 a strong decline has been caused by the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, recording losses both in terms of arrivals and overnight stays. Therefore, this tourist destination is an area with considerable variations in its attractiveness during the last decades, but which undeniably was on a growth trend prior to the pandemic.
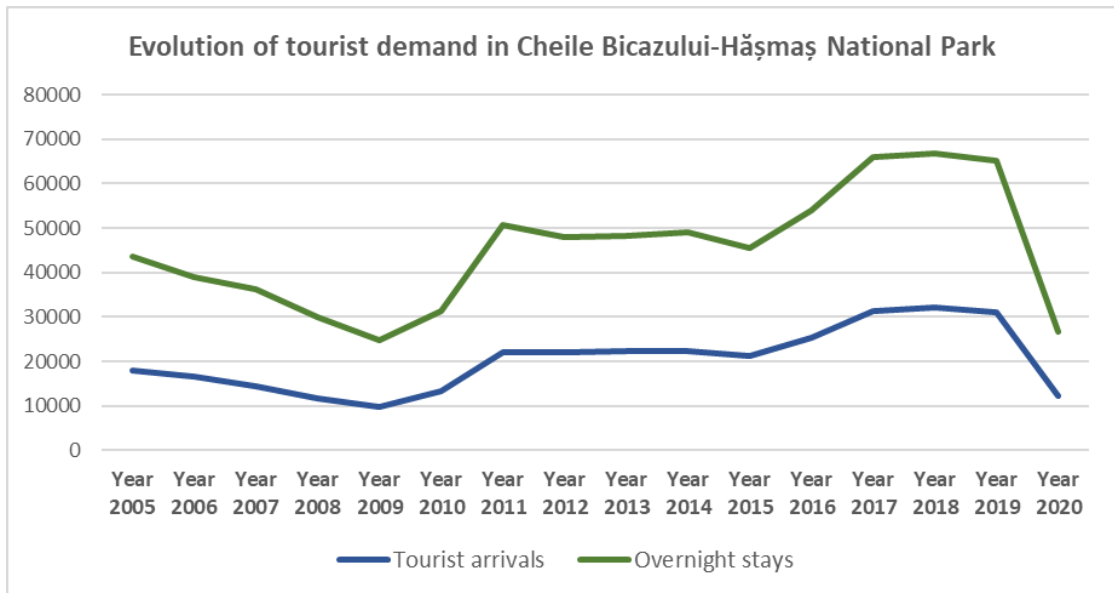
Figure 1. Tourist demand in the study area
Source: authors; Data source: National Institute of Statistics

2.2. Data

The data used in this paper was taken from the platform of the National Institute of Statistics (TEMPO ONLINE) and from the platforms TripAdvisor and Google Maps. There were downloaded 119 reviews from TripAdvisor and 3184 from Google Maps for Bicaz Gorges and 99 reviews from TripAdvisor and 2615 from Google Maps for Red Lake. These data were used for creating charts and conceptual maps for the interpretation of the tourist image of Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park.

2.3. Data analysis

The main methods employed in this study are descriptive statistical analysis, using data from the Institute of National Statistics, creation of conceptual maps and qualitative analysis of reviews, which are used to interpret the online tourist image of the National Park.

The most important part of the analysis is related to the extraction and processing of the reviews from TripAdvisor and Google Maps and of the data related to the users who have written these reviews. This data was downloaded for several attractions of the studied destination, for a more accurate definition of the image that is formed on the online platforms. Data mining on TripAdvisor and Google Maps platforms was done using code written in a programming language that automated the process.

Following the extraction of the reviews, their processing was done in Excel and VosViewer. The VosViewer software is essential in the creation of conceptual maps for

each attraction at the destination, based on the frequency of words in the reviews and on their co-occurrence.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. Visitors' characteristics and behaviour

Data provided on travel platforms, such as TripAdvisor, are useful in shaping the profile of tourists visiting a certain destination or attraction, regarding aspects related to geographical origin, traveller type or the preferred time for the visits. The information from TripAdvisor reviews for Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park indicate that the area is mostly visited by couples, followed by groups of friends and family, this hierarchy being similar for both Red Lake and Bicaz Gorges. To a reduced extent, the visitors appear to have been solo travellers in the area. These information underline that the focus of the market campaigns for the area should be on those travelling in couple or in groups and the services provided should be adapted mainly to these categories.

Geographically, the visitors of Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park have rather dispersed origins and come from over 20 countries, most of them, however, originating from European countries and, unsurprisingly, a high share being from Romania. Since most of the reviews for the two attractions are written by visitors from the same countries, it can be inferred that the visitors include simultaneously both Bicaz Gorges and Red Lake in their travelling plans. Therefore, the two attractions are complementary for the creation of a complex tourist product, due to their proximity, fact that should be considered in the marketing campaign for this area.

The information collected about the visitors through TripAdvisor reviews are also a supplementary source of information, besides the statistical data, regarding the seasonality of tourist activity in the area. The visitors to both attractions inside the National Park follow the general tendency for Romanian destinations of visiting the area during the summer months, with the peak season in August (Figure 2). For the winter months, tourists are almost inexistent according to data o TripAdvisor, fact clearly explained through rather unfavourable natural conditions during the winter months in this area.
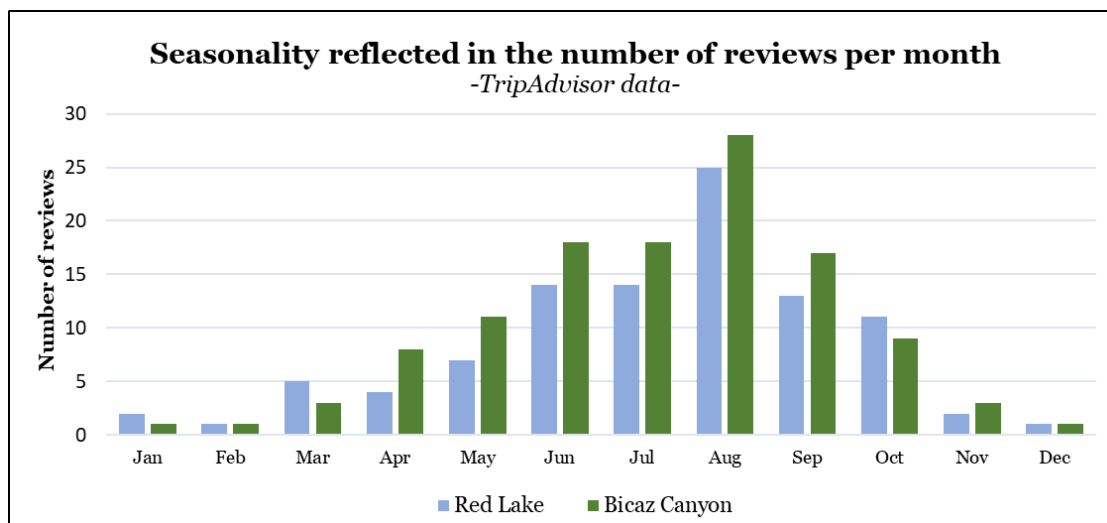
Figure 2. Seasonality in Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park
Source: authors

3.2. Visitors' perception and appreciation of Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park

Based on all the inventoried reviews, from both TripAdvisor and Google Maps, it is found that the destination image mostly includes elements related to the natural environment, general atmosphere and activities that can be practiced at the destination. Therefore, through these reviews are identified both the cognitive ("area for cyclists", "perfect for climbing", "paddling boat rides") and the affective ("wonderful landscape", "beautiful lake with impressing story", "spectacular") components that lead to the formation of the destination image for the National Park. According to the literature, both sides of the destination image are equally important, since the cognitive component represents the visitor's knowledge about the destination, while the affective one refers to the visitor's feelings and emotions related to the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Rafael & Almeida, 2017).

For an accurate outline of the online image of the Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park destination, and following previous approaches from the literature (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015), we analysed the content of the reviews posted by tourists on the TripAdvisor platform for the two important attractions of the area, Bicaz Gorges and Red Lake, by classifying the reviews into three categories: completely positive, completely negative and mixed (Figure 3 and Figure 4). Positive reviews are the most numerous and reflect the atmosphere of the place and elements of the natural environment, while the mixed comments expose both parts by which tourists were impressed and issues encountered by them at the level of the area. The occurrence of completely negative comments is specific only to Red Lake attraction, highlighting some rather unpleasant features of the studied area. Despite the really reduced number

of completely negative reviews, their relevance is high, since they inform on issues that definitely need to be addressed at the destination, issues which will be discussed later in this paper.
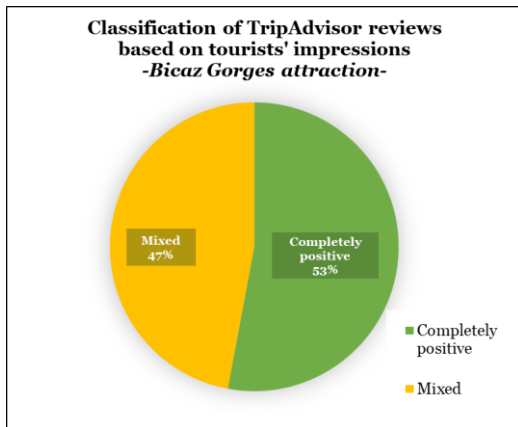

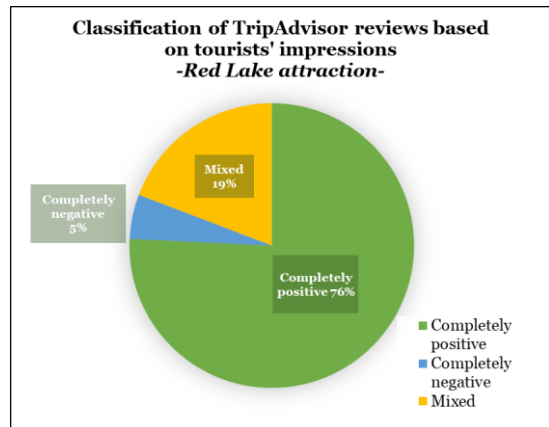**Figure 3.** Reviews for Bicaz Gorges
Source: authors

Figure 4. Reviews for Red Lake
Source: authors

The predominance of positive reviews is also reflected in the ratings that tourists assigned to both attractions on TripAdvisor and Google Maps. For the case of Bicaz Gorges, 84% of visitors that have written reviews on TripAdvisor and 97% of those from Google Maps rated the attraction with the maximum grade (*Excellent*). For Red Lake, while the majority of visitors also rated the attraction as *Excellent*, the opinions are more diverse. As such, regarding the TripAdvisor evaluation, 50% assigned the maximum grade, while on Google Maps 70% of visitors evaluated Red Lake as being *Excellent*. These findings are connected to the above observations regarding the occurrence of a number of completely negative impressions for the case of Red Lake.

For a more precise and detailed interpretation of the online destination image of the National Park, a series of conceptual maps (Figure 5 and Figure 6) were created for the two attractions using the VOSviewer software. This software uses clustering as a method of analysis, an algorithm based on the frequency of words from the reviews, but also on the connections between them. The resulted conceptual maps highlight specific characteristics of the analysed places, the key elements of the attractions, such as the lake or the gorges, and also other central elements that describe the atmosphere or the landscape as perceived by the tourists. The maps are composed of circles and lines which connect the circles. The variable size of the formed circles reflects the frequency of each word, while the thickness of the lines (links) between the words is proportional to the co-occurrences of each pair of two words, meaning the simultaneous mention of two terms within the same review.

The first analysed attraction was Bicaz Gorges. Due to the fact that the number of reviews is significantly higher on Google Maps, as compared to TripAdvisor, the conceptual maps are very different in terms of complexity of connections between the concepts and in terms of number of resulted clusters. As such, the conceptual map based on reviews from Google Maps is formed of seven clusters, while the one based on TripAdvisor reviews contains five clusters. Both conceptual maps capture groups of key elements for the destination and help to render a reality as close as possible to the image of the destination seen through the eyes of tourists. The similarity between the two maps is found in the core ideas that they encompass, both maps containing clusters built around the central features of the attraction (Bicaz Gorges, Bicaz river) and around the geographical points of interest in the area and in the proximity (Moldova, Transylvania, Red Lake). However, the two maps are in general quite different, with the one based on TripAdvisor reviews being more simplistic than the one based on Google Maps reviews, the second one creating a more complex image of the destination, especially through more terms related to the affective component of the destination image.

The conceptual map based on Google Maps reviews for Bicaz Gorges is formed of 7 clusters, which differ from one another both in terms of size and density of concepts, and in terms of their central themes. The red cluster is the one which appears to be the most complex and it is mostly based on elements related to the affective component of the destination image, being significantly descriptive and indicating visitors' impressions and emotions regarding the destination, through concepts as "beautiful place", "wonderful place", "miracle" or "wonder". Similarly, the green cluster is both quite dense and with a pronounced affective component, being centred on the "landscape" and "scenery" concepts, which are connected to appreciations of the destination as being an "amazing place", "great place", "superb". The blue cluster is mainly based on words which describe visitors' opinion of the destination – "dream landscape", "beautiful area", "worth", but it also refers to a main activity in the area ("walk") and to a practical issue, that of the "parking space". A fourth rather complex cluster is the yellow one, this time focused entirely on the cognitive component of the destination image and generally resembling a geographical map of the area, encompassing both the broader context ("Moldova", „Transylvania") and places located at the destination or in the immediate proximity ("Bicaz", "Gheorgheni", "Bicaz Gorges"). Another cluster which includes geographical points of interest is the purple one, which has at its centre the Red Lake. The presence of Red Lake in this conceptual map (and also in the one based on TripAdvisor reviews), indicates that tourists often associate the two attractions with one another and most probably they include both of them in their trips. The conceptual map is completed by two very small clusters, one illustrating the destination as a place for relaxation ("peace", "fresh air")

and the other describing again the destination as "beautiful" and "nice" and, apparently, indicating it as suitable for "everyone".

The reviews from TripAdvisor, bring to attention new elements that form the destination's image. The red cluster, respectively the most complex one, is entirely related to the cognitive component of the destination image and it offers a synthesis of the main attributes of the destination ("Bicaz gorge", "narrow road", "scenery", "souvenir shop", "Bicaz River") and of the locational features ("Romania", "Moldova", "Transylvania"). As such, this cluster provides an overall image of what the representative components of the destination. The green cluster complements the red one through additional information, indicating the connectedness between a series of elements of the natural environment, such as "nature", "cliff", "rock", "water". The "tourist" and "traffic" concepts might indicate a potential pressure that tourism activity puts on the environment through the congestion that large masses of visitors might generate in the area. Unsurprisingly, the Red Lake attraction is present in this conceptual map, this time an entire cluster including terms related to it ("Red Lake", "boat", "lake", "trip", "picture"), part of the terms pointing out the most relevant activities for this attraction, as perceived by visitors.

For the case of the Red Lake attraction, the two conceptual maps are even more different, especially considering the fact that the Google Maps map is very complex and rich in concepts with 7 clusters, while the TripAdvisor map consists of only 3 clusters, built based on 13 terms. Starting with the conceptual map based on Google Maps reviews, it is worth mentioning that all of the 7 clusters contain elements related to the affective component of the destination image. The largest clusters, respectively the red one, the blue one and the green one, stand out as the richest regarding the positive descriptive words. The red cluster is above all centred on the beauty of the attraction ("beautiful", "beautiful nature", "beautiful location", "great place", "exceptional"). However, these positive opinions of the tourists are also connected with two potential representative issues for the destination: aspects related to the infrastructure, respectively to the "parking space" and problems with the level of cleanliness at the destination ("mess"). The blue cluster further emphasises the qualities of the destination ("superb", "nature", "worth". "relaxation", "story"), but again it points out the cleanliness issue, through the term "garbage". The third complex cluster, the green one, is mostly centred on the interconnected elements of the natural environment, such as "forest", "fresh air", "tree", "beautiful lake", all being part of a "beautiful view". The smaller clusters are either reinforcing already mentioned qualities of the destination this time through different connections among the terms ("beautiful place", "nice", "great view" in the purple cluster or "heaven", "beautiful area", "great location" in the orange cluster), or they are bringing to attention other issues encountered at the destination. Concerning the issues, the yellow cluster includes a reference to the crowdedness at the destination, associated with otherwise

positive opinions regarding the beauty of the landscape or the boat trips, as main activity at the destination. The purple cluster, on the other hand, once again point out the transport infrastructure issues ("bad road"), issues outlined, again, along with generally positive impressions regarding the Red Lake.

Despite the scarcity of terms in the conceptual map based on TripAdvisor reviews, this map manages to provide a fairly comprehensive image of the attraction, predominantly consisting of elements of the cognitive component of the destination image. The blue cluster, provides a very general image of the destination, with location elements ("Red Lake", "Romania"), reference to the whole "area" and one central attribute of the location, respectively the "forest". The green cluster outlines the presence of a landmark of the destination, the "tree trunks" from the lake, and this cluster also contains a first element of the affective component, "great place". As in the case of the conceptual maps for the Bicaz Gorges, this map for Red Lake also indicates connections with the proximate attractions, the green cluster containing a reference to the Bicaz Gorge. The last cluster, the red one, connects elements related to the formation of the lake ("landslide") and to various stories around it ("legend") with the "tree" theme, again as a central attribute of the destination and with a positive impression of the attraction as being a „"nice place". Moreover, the reference of the summer season indicates a prevalence of visitors at the destination during this time of the year.

Overall, it can be concluded that the two platforms, TripAdvisor and Google Maps, are complementary in creating a comprehensive destination image. While the conceptual maps resulted from reviews from the two platforms present similarities (for each individual attraction), it is notable how each of the two maps contain unique elements, which bring new perspectives on each attraction. All conceptual maps include elements from both the cognitive and the affective components of the destination image. While the elements of the cognitive component generally refer to the main features of the attraction and on geographical location, the affective component consists mainly of positive impressions of visitors in the case of both attractions. Although some clusters in the conceptual maps also contain concepts with rather negative connotation, which indicate issues at the destination, it is notable that these negative terms are always part of clusters mostly composed of positive opinions regarding the attractions. This fact proves that tourists who encounter those issues do not focus only on them and these issues do not prevent them from perceiving the overall positive image of the destination.
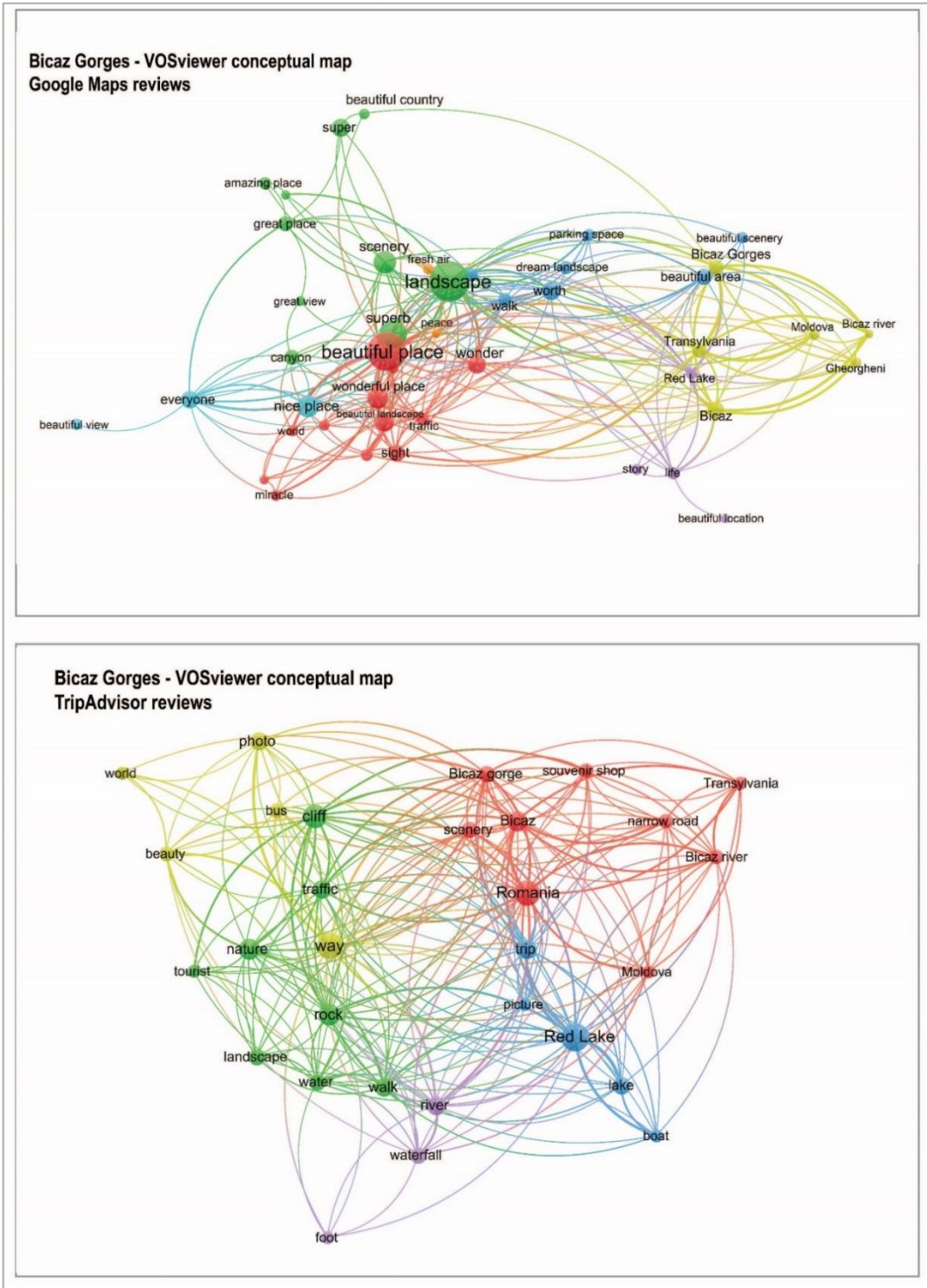
Figure 5. Conceptual maps for Bicaz Gorges
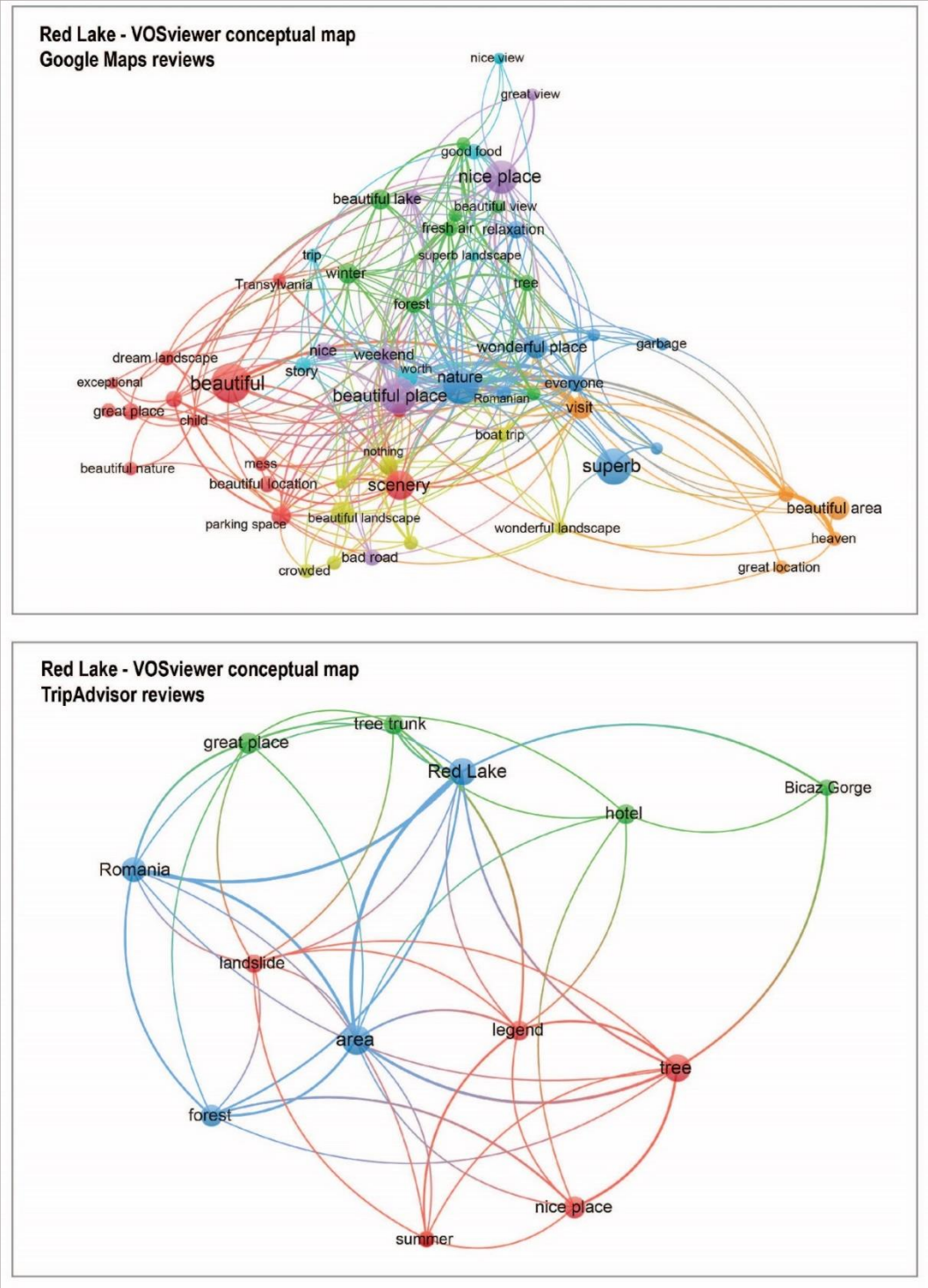Source: authors

Figure 6. Conceptual maps for Red Lake
Source: authors

3.3. Identified issues at the destination through visitors' reviews

As in the case of previous research (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015), in this study a central concern has been to distinguish between the positive and the negative impressions of visitors regarding the destination. Through Figures 3 and 4 it has been emphasised how the majority of the visitors' impressions at the destination are positive, but it is also notable that there are a series of completely negative traits indicated by the visitors, as well as mixed reviews, which point out some issues, along with the more positive views of the destination. Since the issues that arise in a tourist destination can greatly affect its image even in the online environment, the staff from Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park administration have uploaded on their website a survey[2], in Google Forms format, through which they want to find out the opinion of visitors about the elements that negatively influence tourism in the area. An interesting observation is related to the fact that four out of seven given answer options from the survey can also be found in the analysis of the reviews from TripAdvisor, such as pollution, infrastructure (roads, bridges), facilities for accommodation and food. Therefore, the reviews which contained rather negative opinions regarding the destination are of significant relevance for the study, as they allow for the identification of those issues perceived by tourists at the destination. The results indicate that the main issues for Bicaz Gorges are the state of road infrastructure and that of tourist infrastructure, mainly the aspects related to the souvenir kiosks and the lack of space to store waste, which sometimes lead to unpleasant experiences for the tourists.

Just like for Bicaz Gorges destination, there is also a classification of TripAdvisor reviews for Red Lake, out of which five completely negative comments stand out, which indicate various issues from the point of view of tourists. One tourist mentions that Red Lake is no longer a major tourist attraction and that it is becoming a boring and irrelevant place, while another one states that it is a place you can only visit if you have nothing better to see. The other three tourists found as inconveniences that it is a crowded place and also "not at all impressive". The last negative comment is about the food in the restaurants, which is appreciated as not being so good and also about the long queues for the boat rides, which clearly generate inconveniences for the visitors. Therefore, the most significant identified problem for the Red Lake area is the congestion observed both in the very long queues for boat rides and in some mentions regarding the insufficient parking spaces. Related to the road infrastructure there were also 3 comments that indicated a precarious state of the road, which is considered by tourists to be even rather dangerous.

All these results recorded after analysing the content generated by users on TripAdvisor are highly relevant for emphasizing existent issues at the destination and they can be transmitted to the administration of Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park

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[2] Source: https://www.cheilebicazului-hasmas.ro/index.php?aT0xNjY=

or to local authorities in order to take measures for regulating and improving these negative aspects mentioned by tourists. Consequently, solving these issues will ensure better experiences for future visitors and implicitly will improve the online destination image.

Conclusion

The current study aimed at underlining the importance of user-generated content in the tourism industry, starting from previous affirmations regarding the significant influence that UGC has at the level of tourists and enterprises in the pre-travel stage (Narangajavana Kaosiri et al., 2019), but also during the tourists' experiences at the destination (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Simultaneously, this paper aimed at conducting a thorough analysis of the online destination image of Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park. Consequently, the importance of UGC for the formation of online destination image is discussed through the example of the results obtained regarding the case of this National Park.

First of all, the current study underlines the utility of UGC and of the travel platforms from which this content is collected, for informing on the profile of visitors in a particular destination. In this case, through the use of TripAdvisor, it has been identified that Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park is mainly visited by couples and groups (friends and families), the majority of whom are from Romania or from other European countries. The usual time of travelling in the area, unsurprisingly, is represented by the summer months. Such information contributes to a better understanding of the target group to which destination managers should address and also helps identify potential new markets where there are opportunities to extend.

Secondly, the analysis of the conceptual maps allowed for the identification of the defining attributes for each attraction from the National Park, as perceived by the visitors. As such, the destination image is, unsurprisingly, built around the lake and the gorges, along with connected elements of the road, boat and landscape and with elements generally related to the natural environment. This destination image consists mainly of positive impressions of the visitors, the area being perceived as beautiful and wonderful. These elements and the more detailed results from this paper could be further capitalized towards designing the brand of the destination and, implicitly in marketing campaigns destined towards both Romanian and foreign potential visitors.

A third conclusion is related to the importance of tourists' perception regarding the issues that occur at the destination. The tourists are, in the end, the most reliable critics of a destination and their negative opinion regarding the destination should be regarded as essential information for future strategic actions for the development and improvement of the destination. For the case of Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park the priorities for the intervention should be related to the management of crowds in

more popular areas (especially around Red Lake) or to the precarious state of the roads (especially for the case of Bicaz Gorges).

Naturally, the current study has its limitations, mainly related to the availability of data for the area. Therefore, although the Bicaz Gorges-Hășmaș National Park covers a considerable area and includes several attractions, only two main attractions, Bicaz Gorges and Red Lake, have sufficient reviews on the analysed platforms for allowing a thorough analysis of visitors' perception. Consequently, the current online destination image, as it resulted through this analysis, might lack valuable information related to other important point of interest in the National Park.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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