

WLC 2016 : World LUMEN Congress. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty 2016 |
LUMEN 15th Anniversary Edition

Gendered Constructions of Romania's Tourist Destination Image

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Abstract

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.09.120>

In the context of a rich international literature on country branding, this paper brings new evidence for Romania. The paper explores a new approach in the analysis of Romania's destination image construction in regards with the gender representations communicated through tourism promotion campaigns. Given the frequent sexist representations of Southern and Eastern countries in Western tourism advertising, the paper analyses the reproduction of a similar sexist imagery for Romania, meant to fit the Western male tourists' expectations and confining the Romanian people and destinations into stereotyped gendered roles.

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Keywords: Tourism promotion; gendered marketing; Romania; country image.



1. Introduction

Gender has been a topic mostly avoided in tourism studies until the mid -1990s (Kinnaird & Hall, 1994; Pettman, 1997). Afterwards, researches mainly focused on topics such as tourism labour force or sex tourism (Swain, 1995), and less on gendered tourist experiences and marketing (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a; Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000; Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011). Or, it is known that tourism is a product of gendered societies (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a) and images projected through tourism advertising reflect real relationships between genders, races, countries and cultures (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). Tourism advertising often uses desired gendered attributes to better communicate with their customers, reproducing and reinforcing stereotyped ways of seeing and judging people, gender roles and places (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). Through images and text, advertising builds tourist attractions and destinations, creating meanings and values that influence visitor decisions. But researches have revealed that media representations of gender and destinations did not change significantly over time: Western tourism advertising has conserved a postcolonial perspective, built on the North-South (or West-East) unequal power relations (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000b). It generally depicts a masculine, technological and superior Northern (or Western) visitor gazing and consuming the natural and exotic feminine landscapes of Southern or Eastern countries. Northern territories are often advertised as masculine, active and adventurous, whilst countries of the south and east are feminine, submissive and sensual (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000b). Situated in the Eastern periphery of Europe, Romania is expected to be the subject of such orientalist imagery, fitting the fantasy of a white, male and heterosexual Western tourist (Pettman, 1997; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). It should be also the subject of another sexist imagery generally associated with the European peripheries (Northern and richer ones included) that underlines their “otherness” (Alessio & Jóhannsdóttir, 2011). Both international media and scientific studies have repeatedly highlighted and reinforced negative stereotypes associated with Eastern Europe: from countries with beautiful and available local women, to sex tourism destinations and origins of human trafficking (Hall, 2011).

In the context of a rich international literature on country branding, this paper aims to fill in the gap regarding the study of Eastern Europe’s tourism marketing and its contribution to reinforcing place and gender stereotypes. It analyses gendered tourism representations built and communicated through Romania's international tourism promotion campaigns implemented by national authorities after the fall of communism (1989). Given the rather negative image of Eastern Europe in Western media and the frequent sexist representations of Southern and Eastern countries in Western tourism advertising, the paper analyses the reproduction of a similar sexist imagery, meant to fit the Western male tourists' expectations and confining Romania's people and destinations into stereotyped gendered roles.

2. Literature review

Romania has had 3 main tourism promotion campaigns implemented by the Romanian Ministry of Tourism (now the Romanian Tourism Authority) after 1989 (Stoleriu & Ibanescu, 2015): “Romania, simply surprising” - RSS campaign (2003-2006), ”Romania Land of choice” – RLC (2009) and the ongoing campaign “Explore the Carpathian Garden” – ECG (since 2009). Fifteen video spots were

produced in these campaigns and aired on major international TV chains such as Euronews, Eurosport, Discovery, CNN or BBC. Five TV commercials (a general spot and four themed ones: nature, history, seaside and Bucharest) were promoted in RSS; two spots in the RLC campaign and 11 in ECG (a general spot, a nature and a cultural-themed one, followed after 2013 by adventure, authenticity, rural tourism, circuits, city breaks, nature, culture and a second general spot) . All the campaigns were intended to address a western audience (Western Europe and USA) and in order to facilitate Romania's integration within major international networks such as the European Union and NATO (Stoleriu & Ibanescu, 2015).

Previous research indicated that the language of tourism promotion is dominantly scripted for a male heterosexual audience (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a, 2000b) and tourism advertising reproduces stereotyped representations of gender and places, with very few changes over time (Pritchard, 2001). Overall, women are still mostly portrayed through a Western male gaze (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a), in passive and domestic roles or as sexual objects, whilst men usually appear as authority or active figures (Pritchard, 2001; Antomarchi & de la Barre, 2010; Goffman, 1979; Pingree et al, 1976). Initially associated with indigenous women of Southern and Eastern countries, these gender stereotypes have been extended to all tourism markets, rich countries included (Pritchard, 2001; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a). Pritchard (2001) identified 4 levels of gender displays in tourism advertising: level 1) sexual and decorative roles; level 2) 'traditional' (e.g. women engaged in "traditional" female activities) and level 3) 'non-traditional' gendered roles (e. g. women in executive roles), or level 4) (equal) individuals.

3. Methods

Content analysis was applied to fifteen TV commercials from the three promotion campaigns. The basic unit of analysis was the shot, which is a sequence of frames captured from a single camera operation (Stoleriu & Ibanescu, 2015). From the 601 shots identified, only 293 were included in the analysis: those illustrating clearly individualized characters. Undefined (crowd or background) characters were excluded. Goffman' s (1979) six categories of gender displays were used, namely: relative size (e.g. exaggerated size suggesting superiority and domination); feminine touch (cradling objects or self-touching); rank order of gender (active, executive roles opposed to passive roles); gender depiction in the family (family structure and positioning of the family members) and general forms of subordination (lowering bodies, smiling, handholding, mocking the others, extending arms, childlike portrayals of women or gender detachment). The weight of these categories was calculated according to their duration (D) and frequency of appearance (N) in the TV spots.

4. Results and discussion

Weight of men and women. The study included about 49 % (293) of the shots in all the campaigns: those featuring clearly defined characters. Overall, women are less represented in the commercials than men, especially according to frequency values (51.5 % versus 70.6 %), and the gap has increased along the campaigns (see Table 1). There is a decreasing women's representation, from a 62 % frequency in RSS, to 44,1 % in ECG, whilst male characters increased up to 81 % of the ECG videos. The general

spots that synthesize each campaign key message are dominated by woman in RSS, by men in RLC and achieve a more balanced gender representation in ECG.

Table 1. Gendered representations in the TV commercials, in percentages

| Campaign | Shots number | F | M | FH | FT | MH | MT | F sit | F stand | F < M | F > M | F=M |
|----------|--------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|-------|-------|------|
| Total N | 293 | 51.5 | 70.6 | 36.5 | 24.9 | 32.4 | 42.7 | 19.2 | 82.8 | 65.3 | 24.5 | 10.2 |
| Total D | | 53.6 | 68.4 | 38.3 | 24.1 | 34.7 | 40.9 | 9.1 | 45.1 | 10.8 | 4.3 | 1.5 |
| RSS (N) | 100 | 62.0 | 50.0 | 48.0 | 22.0 | 38.0 | 16.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 | 44.4 | 55.6 | 0.0 |
| RSS (D) | | 64.3 | 42.4 | 49.8 | 22.4 | 35.7 | 14.5 | 0.0 | 66.7 | 3.5 | 5.5 | 0.0 |
| RLC (N) | 32 | 56.3 | 81.3 | 43.8 | 15.6 | 65.6 | 9.4 | 20.0 | 65.0 | 66.7 | 33.3 | 0.0 |
| RLC (D) | | 58.0 | 79.5 | 51.3 | 7.6 | 69.7 | 5.0 | 14.3 | 46.2 | 14.3 | 2.5 | 0.0 |
| ECG (N) | 161 | 44.1 | 81.4 | 28.0 | 28.6 | 22.4 | 65.8 | 36.2 | 65.2 | 70.6 | 14.7 | 14.7 |
| ECG (D) | | 44.9 | 82.6 | 26.4 | 30.7 | 22.8 | 70.4 | 13.7 | 30.1 | 14.6 | 4.0 | 2.9 |

(N = frequency of appearances in the spots; D = % of the shots duration; F = female, M = male, H = host, T = tourist, Sit = sitting, Stand = standing, < = shorter than; > higher than; in bold- highest values).

Social roles. Women in the commercials are more frequently represented as hosts (in 36,5 % of all the shots, compared to 24.9 % for female tourists), whilst men are more often represented as tourists (42.7 % compared to 24.9 % for women). The commercials tend to reproduce the visitor type usually portrayed by Western travel media: white, male and greeted by female hosts. On the other hand, the campaigns focus has progressively shifted from hosts to tourists and their experiences in Romania. The visitors' weight increased from a 24 % frequency in RSS (compared to 82 % for the hosts), to 15 .6 % in RLC, and 82 % in ECG (compared to only 45 % shots featuring the hosts). Several themed spots in ECG (culture, nature, active and circuits) are completely focused on tourists, compared to the RSS general spot presenting only hosts. Overall, duration (D) reinforces the roles expressed by frequency values (N).

Gendered hosts. Idealized sexual images and text are often used to promote destinations from both rich and developing states (Prideaux et al., 2004). Most of the media advertising is dominated by images of submissive and sensual women and powerful, macho men (Goffman, 1979; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000b). Images of women are frequently used to express the exotic nature of destinations or the main reason to visit (Kinnaird & Hall, 1994), hence the highlighting of their desirable attributes such as youth, beauty, sexuality or the possession of a man (Goffman, 1979). In the Romanian TV commercials, female hosts are both submissive and sensual, playing two main roles: they entertain tourists (dancing, singing or crafting in 20.2 % of the campaigns shots) or simply host/ service them (in 18.2 % of the shots). Romanian women are also represented as part of the tourist attractions, namely as: a) beautiful young bodies displayed for the tourist gaze (e.g. semi-naked women on the beach or at the pool in RSS and ECG; young ladies walking and undressing in the streets - in RSS); b) attractive cultural breakers, smiling and introducing various attractions (e.g. several young girls in RSS; the gymnast Nadia Comaneci in RLC); c) part of a warm, safe and fun social environment (e.g. girls dancing in night clubs; women with children in public squares); d) keepers and performers of living rural authenticity, crafting, dancing and singing in front of tourists in RLC, ECG and RSS. Women are also illustrated as welcoming hosts and/or employees of the tourism industry, where they serve and assist tourists (e.g. hosting, cooking, giving spa treatments in ECG). In the tourism advertising of

Southern and Eastern countries, such as Pacific Islands or Caribbean, local people are strongly racialised and sexualized in order to illustrate their otherness and authenticity (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). Or, Romanian hosts are depicted from a similar Western perspective. Their exotism is enhanced by strong ethnic markers (e.g. traditional costumes and activities) or sexually desirable images. With few exceptions (in 25 % of the cases, when they play the caring and responsible roles of mothers/wives or older women catering for tourists and carrying on the traditions), Romanian female hosts are young, beautiful and available. Camera shots highlight their attractive bodies (undressing or wearing transparent clothes, short skirts, swimwear or towels) or body parts (smiling faces, long hair, upper body). Feminine bodies in the campaigns commercials are meant to: attract male travellers to hedonistic places where they can indulge (spa, beach) and to suggest a warm climate. As for the male characters, they are also mostly young, with very few exceptions: as adult hosts in RSS and RLC, or adult tourists in ECG. Male hosts dominate the RLC campaign (two of the three cultural breakers are male) and the RSS nature spot. They illustrate traditional male occupations (fisherman in RSS, shepherd in ECG) and outdoor rural activities, wearing simple or traditional clothes.

The relative size is one of the categories used by Goffman (1979) to analyse gendered representations. It reflects two persons' function towards each other, including women's subordination to men. Size, camera angles and positioning techniques (e.g. women sitting or in the background) are often used to increase men's size relative to women's (Goffman, 1979). In the TV campaigns promoting Romania, women are mostly shorter than men: in 65 % of all the shots analysed, and with an increasing frequency across the three campaigns (from 44 % in RSS to 71 % in ECG). Women only appear taller than men when they are the central focus of the tourist gaze (the main attraction). In this case their body is intentionally exaggerated (taller than buildings in RSS) and/or men are placed in the background and blurred (in RLC). Only in ECG women appear sometimes equal in height with men, especially when couples or mixed groups of friends are featured visiting cultural destinations in urban and rural areas.

Another technique to suggest subordination by lowering the female body is a sitting position. In tourism advertising men stand more often than women, implying the male social superiority and leadership (Goffman, 1979). On the contrary, in this study women are standing in 83 % of the cases and 45 % of the time: always in RSS, and in 65 % cases for RLC and ECG. But, even standing they usually illustrate subordinated social roles: most of the female hosts are standing while servicing tourists (in spas and restaurants, in ECG) or entertaining them (singing, dancing or playing music - RSS, RLC, ECG). As tourists, women are more often displayed sitting: with semi-naked bodies lying near swim pools or in the spa (36 % of the women in ECG). The few women riding (horses, zebras and bikes) or standing (walking, dancing in the clubs, playing sports) are usually in positions that focus the (male) visitor gaze on their body. Other techniques to lower the women's bodies are: lowering their head or body (21% of the cases) and their positioning in the background.

The feminine touch. According to Goffman (1979), self-touching or cradling an object/person, touching it with finger-tips, hands or the face are considered feminine touches, illustrating delicateness and preciousness. On the other hand, women are often represented as subjects of a dominating male touch. The women analysed in this study touch: domestic objects traditionally associated with feminine

occupations (e.g. cooking, sewing, milking the cows, shopping - in 20.4 % of the overall shots, and increasing up to 30 % in RLC and ECG); or spa instrument and tourists' bodies, while providing health treatments (in 30 % of the ECG wellness spot). Self-touching appears in 14.2 % of cases and decreases from 21.3 % in RSS, to 7.4 % in ECG. Other touched/held objects associated with stereotyped representations of women are: fashion items (e.g. clothes, scarves, dominating in RSS - 30%, and decreasing to 3.7 % in ECG) or music instruments (symbolizing traditional feminine qualities - more frequent in RSS). Stereotyped images of young brides holding flowers appear in RSS and RLC. The few active female tourists represented in the spots (8.5 % in RSS and 9.3 % in ECG) touch maps and harnesses etc. On the other hand, men mostly touch objects suggesting active roles of domination and leadership (they drive various transport means e.g. horses, boats, cars, parasail) or indulging visitor roles (e.g. eating, drinking).

The **social rank of gender** indicates the relationship between men and women through their social and occupational roles. In tourism brochures men usually have the executive (instructing) role, associated with action, power and ownership, whilst women are mostly passive participants (watching, observing or just being there (Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000), associated with availability and being owned (Selwyn, 1992; Antomarchi & de la Barre, 2010; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994, Swain, 1995). As mentioned above, Romanian women in the TV commercials are most often represented as hosts (either as tourism industry employees or local people), available to service and entertain the generally male tourist. Executive male roles are rarely suggested directly (with only one explicit image of a business man assisted by a female colleague, in RSS), but mostly indirectly: handling transport means and sports facilities or creating things as potters and wood sculptors (ECG).

Active/passive roles. According to Pingree et al. (1976), most of the women's representations in tourism magazines are either in sexual and decorative roles, or engaged in traditional female activities (e.g. caring for children, shopping, grooming themselves, or as passive spectators of active men). This is confirmed by the Romanian tourism campaigns (see Table 2), where men appear active in 81% of the cases, and passive in only 19 % of the shots (when receiving spa treatments or observing nature). As expected, women appear less active than men (in 61% of the cases) and their activities are less effort-consuming: e.g. walking in the city or on the beach, hosting or giving spa treatments. On the other hand, the weight of passive representations of women increased along the campaigns from 26.3% in RSS, to 43 % in ECG (and duration reconfirms the frequency values). As for the associated tourist products, women appear more active in rural tourism (e.g. cooking and serving tourists in ECG) and urban or seaside destinations (walking in RSS and RLC), whilst static images of men are mainly associated with cultural and wellness tourism (ECG).

Table 2. Gendered representations in the TV commercials, in percentages

| Campaign | F act | F pas | M act | M pas | F smile | F det. | M smile | F ext | single F | F Couple | F group | Mixed group |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|--------|---------|-------|----------|----------|---------|-------------|
| Total (N) | 61.2 | 38.8 | 81.1 | 18.9 | 21.9 | 2 | 6.8 | 8.6 | 42.4 | 16.9 | 13.4 | 10.5 |
| Total (D) | 32.6 | 21.4 | 54.2 | 14.1 | 14.1 | 2.5 | 7.9 | 3.9 | 25.7 | 9.6 | 2.1 | 3.8 |
| RSS (N) | 73.7 | 26.3 | 85.1 | 14.9 | 30.6 | 6.5 | 0.0 | 8.1 | 71.8 | 9.9 | 0.0 | 8.5 |
| RSS (D) | 47.5 | 15.3 | 38.4 | 7.1 | 22.7 | 5.5 | 0.0 | 4.7 | 43.1 | 20.0 | 0.0 | 3.1 |
| RLC (N) | 38.9 | 61.1 | 70.4 | 29.6 | 38.9 | 0 | 26.9 | 11.1 | 8.7 | 26.1 | 26.1 | 13.0 |
| RLC (D) | 20.2 | 37.8 | 58.8 | 22.7 | 19.3 | 0 | 26.9 | 5.0 | 16.8 | 5.0 | 10.1 | 15.1 |
| ECG (N) | 56.9 | 43.1 | 82.0 | 18.0 | 9.9 | 1.2 | 5.3 | 8.5 | 25.6 | 20.5 | 21.8 | 11.5 |
| ECG (D) | 26.4 | 20.4 | 63.6 | 16.1 | 6.5 | 1.3 | 7.2 | 2.9 | 16.6 | 4.0 | 1.1 | 0.6 |

(N = frequency of appearances in the spots; D = % of the shots duration; F = female, M = male, act=active, pas=passive, det.= gender detachment; ext = extending arms, F couple = women in couple; F group = female group; in bold- highest values).

Family roles. Women appear in commercials as: single woman, part of a couple (girlfriend or wife), or of a women or mixed group. Images of single and attractive women dominate the three campaigns (42.4 % of the shots), but decreased from 72 % in RSS to 26 % in ECG - Table 2. They are part of destination attractions; hence the highlight of their beauty features (face, hair, body). On the other hand, women in young couples or as brides have low overall shares (17 %), but increasing across the campaigns. The nuclear family (parents and children, mother with daughter) is rarely depicted in the commercials, usually as part of a larger crowd, illustrating the safe and animated atmosphere of city squares and parks (hence the lack of focus on beauty traits). The traditional family structure of power is only once suggested (in ECG), with the father positioned behind his family on a mountain trail, communicating the male protective power and authority in the household. Women in young female or mixed groups are even less frequent, but increased significantly in the last two campaigns where they portray Romania as an attractive destination for young people: e.g. mixed groups associated with seaside, spa and clubbing, in RLC and ECG. Other groups such as mother and daughters or older women and young girls crafting and singing in ECG, illustrate the women's role in the conservation of cultural rural heritage. Apart the lowering bodies, gender subordination is also illustrated in advertising through other techniques such as: smiling, handholding, being mocked or chased, extending arms, childlike portrayals of women or gender detachment (a psychological withdrawal from a social setting and disorientation, causing dependency on the protectiveness and goodwill of others) (Goffman, 1979). About 22 % of the women in the studied commercials smile, compared to only 6.8 % of men. Smiling women are less frequent in ECG (9.9%), compared to more than a third in RSS and RLC, where they portray young and beautiful hosts (cultural breakers) inviting tourists to Romania. Men are usually serious (in 34 % of the overall cases, and 54% in RSS). They smile mostly when they portray tourists interacting with locals (ECG) or male cultural breakers (RLC). The fragility and need for male protection are symbolized through images women bracing against objects (frequent in RSS), holding hands with men (especially in RLC and in the ECG circuits spot); as hosts extending their arms (9 % of the overall shots) when inviting, serving or waving at tourists; or as women chased by men (e.g. a young bride chased by four men in RLC). Typical displays of gender detachment in the commercials are: the partial depiction of the face or body (hiding the mouth with fingers, hiding behind objects or

persons), nuzzling or looking away. In our study, images of women looking away are much more frequent than men's, especially in RSS. As for the body displays, female bodies are partially depicted in 62 % of the cases, the camera usually focusing on their beautiful, young and smiling faces.

Gendered tourist experiences. Research has shown that travel motivations and behaviour differ in relation with gender: men prefer more recreation and activity at destination, whilst women prefer relaxation, escapist activities and wellness (Antomarchi & de la Barre, 2010). Men travel to discover the world and women travel to discover themselves. Women are more concerned with the quality of the experience and its process, whereas men are more orientated towards the activity and the visit (Humberstone & Collins, 1998). Women react better to destination attributes such as uniqueness, adventure and interesting places, whilst men are more interested in service quality and comfort variables (White & Yu, 2005). As tourists, women's experiences of landscape is known to be more reflective and spiritual (often passive) compared to the competitive, exploitative experience of men (White & Yu, 2005), usually associated with action, power and ownership. In the TV commercials analysed, female tourists mostly walk (in the city or on the beach - 17 %), relax (in spas, urban or seaside destinations -13 %), practice softer sports (13.7 %), or simply watch (5.2 %). They are rarely illustrated having fun in bars or clubs (4.6 %), visiting museums (1.3 %), eating (1.3 %), enjoying nature (1.3 %) or working in business environments (0.7 %). On the other hand, men are active in about half of the shots analysed (45.5 %) and illustrate stereotyped masculine roles such as: nature conqueror/explorer, competitive and independent visitors. They engage in nature based-sports (37 % of the shots), they explore wild nature and conquer mountain peaks (watching from high viewpoints - 8.6 %). They are also illustrated as medieval warriors (8.1%) or modern conquerors that chase/marry beautiful young women (1.9 %). They enjoy multisensory experiences such as: eating, drinking and interacting with locals (9.1 %) or having fun in bars and clubs (2.4 %). Men are rarely associated with less effort consuming activities: e.g. walking (5.7%), admiring cultural heritage (5.3 %), or simply relaxing at the beach /pool/spa/in salt mines (5.7 %). As hosts, they serve (1.4 %) or entertain tourists, but contrary to the female hosts, men do it from equal (sitting at the same table) or even leading positions (as DJs or bandmasters). Rural male hosts are mainly engaged in outdoor, traditionally male activities and crafts such as: fishing, haying or wood sculpting (10.2 %). Within each campaign, female characters highlight several feminine tourist products: the seaside, cultural urban tourism and wellness tourism (in ECG), for which women appear in more than 80 % of the shots. Men strongly dominate nature-based and adventure tourism (100 % of the shots in ECG and 87.5 % in the RSS spot for Danube Delta), as well as rural tourism (more than 75 % in ECG). Gender representation is more balanced for the cultural circuits and the second nature-themed spot in ECG.

Gendered tourist places. Many studies showed that place has a gendered identity and advertising builds this perceived identity based on power relations, by sexualizing people, destinations and landscapes (Kinnaird & Hall, 1994; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000b). Thus, women are often used to promote the exotic and erotic nature of destinations from southern/eastern or third world countries in general. These are usually promoted as feminine, appealing places (e.g. seaside resorts or wild natural landscapes), waiting to be discovered and dominated by male Western tourists (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a). Nature is often feminized and presented as passive, wild, mysterious and seductive; hence it is

gazed, explored and conquered. On the other hand, male tourist landscapes are places of adventure, celebrating masculinity and patriarchy and excluding women (Kinnaird & Hall, 1994). Northern landscapes are often promoted as male and active, wild, untamed and harsh. If in feminine landscapes, male tourists are invited to discover their treasures; in masculine landscapes men rediscover the real, natural world, with other male friends (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a). In the TV commercials, women dominate (with an 80 % frequency) the characters associated with urban cultural landscapes and religious attractions: as visitors in major cities or monastery hosts. With lower shares (50 - 65 %), they also dominate the tourists and hosts characters associated with spa and seaside resorts, nightclubs and rural ethnographic destinations. These places are associated with traditionally feminine activities or features such as: keeping traditions, welcoming guests, attracting/entertaining male visitors or simply relaxing in safe/feminine environments (public squares, spas). As expected, men strongly dominate natural landscapes (mountains, forests and the Danube Delta), some religious destinations (as visitors), and, in lower shares, historical attractions (castles and fortresses) or sportive ones, as well as outdoor rural landscapes (fields and sheepfolds).

5. Conclusions and implications

Overall, the paper underlines very few changes in the gender representations communicated by tourism advertising, in relation with the evolution of the tourism market. There is a slowly increasing weight of female tourists and feminine tourist products: wellness and urban /cultural tourism. Overall, women are mostly represented as hosts and confined to traditionally feminine activities, such as inviting, greeting and entertaining male visitors. Excepting the last campaign, feminine customers are rarely portrayed, all the campaigns mainly addressing a typical male Western visitor and increasingly, young travellers. The commercials communicate an overall country image that reproduces similar gender stereotypes to those often used to promote countries of south and east, as well as European peripheries to the western market. In order to attract visitors, TV commercials communicate Romania's otherness through images of young women mostly portrayed in sexual and decorative or submissive, male or visitor-subordinated roles. The reproduction of these representations in international tourism promotion campaigns managed by credible national authorities reinforces a generally limited (sexist and ageist) way of seeing and evaluating Romanian places and people from abroad. Women are mostly depicted as single, young and attractive, thus supporting the stereotypes often associated to Eastern Europe by Western media: countries with beautiful, welcoming and available young women and destinations for sex tourism. Further studies should use social surveys to verify the effect of these tourism commercials on the perceived representations of Romania and Romanian women from abroad.

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