

The role of tourist image factor in the capitalization of a hydromineral resource potential. Case study: Turda Salt Mine

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ABSTRACT: As one of the most important tourist attractions of Transylvania, Turda Salt Mine, has been visited by about 2 million Romanian and foreign tourists, since its opening in 1992. As a tourist attraction based on a hydromineral resource - salt water, Turda Salt Mine's existence itself is due to salt and its exploitation since Middle Ages. This magnificent and uncommon spot was ranked by some famous publications, for example Business Insider, as the most beautiful underground place in the world. Likewise, Turda Salt Mine is ranked as one of the most spectacular tourist destinations in the world. With such a reputation and taking advantage of Transylvania's worldwide notoriety, of course the role of its tourist image is increasing and it's mainly about following two directions in the promotion process, the continuously redefining and improving its distinctive profile as a tourist destination, on the one hand, and the continuous effort of enlarging its notoriety, on the other hand.

KEY WORDS: tourist image, hydromineral resource, capitalization, tourist potential, Transylvania.

1. Introduction and history

Roman occupation in Dacia, marks the beginning of a systematic exploitation of mining iron or polymetallic gold, silver and salt in Transylvania. Salt exploitation in Roman times is probably, but a clear evidence of this activity are lacking, it is conceivable that the great medieval and modern exploitation (until the first third of the twentieth century) as the vaults in the old mines collapses, followed by appearance of salt lakes to be destroyed the marks of ancient mining (galleries, shafts, gears, etc.). In 1876, the mine gallery track "Ghizela" intercepted existence of underground mining work which nothing was known in the moment when making the gallery.

Except during the Dacian and the Roman occupation, the period for there is no another evidence of existence at Turda salt mines, we believe that early salt mining in sense in which that concept is defined in the present time is situated in the centuries XI – XIII. In 1075 the Hungarian chancellery in a document which refers to Transylvania also mentioned about the salt mines "to the fortress which is called Turda [...] the place which is called in Hungarian Aranyas and in Latin Aureus."

The first document who speaks explicitly the existence at Turda salt mines is dated May 1, 1271, was issued by the Hungarian chancellery. By that act, capitle gave himself Transylvania “the salt mine in Turda”. Subsequently, both the capitle of Esztergom and the bishop of Alba Iulia and Transylvania were growing privileges to use the salt mine.

Documents stored in XIII – XVI century’s that refer to salt exploitation from Turda salt mines mention here that salt mines were willing to microplateau Salt Baths and on the south-eastern part of the Salt Valley. Exploitation rooms were located on the current locations at the perimeters salt lakes above. In the eighteenth century start exploitation the first salt works on the side of the Valley NV Sprite, materialized in wells of the dome chamber “Theresa”. Shortly the “St. Anton mine is open and the perimeter exploitation activity continues until the first half of the twentieth century.

The report on the exploitation of mines in Transylvania issued on 16 August 1528 Hans Dernschwam is presented the situation where the pantry is found in Turda. As a Royal Commissioner sent to take over the administration of the Transylvanian salt pantry, Dernschwam presents in its report the issues to be resolved for a systematically exploitation, to increase the salt production and sale its the internal market and especially the external.

The Turda Salt Mine which was from its very beginning one of the most important in Transylvania, started to decline after 1840 because of the ever bigger competition from the salt mine in Ocna Mures, gradually coming to be but a reserve to the latter. Up to 1862 salt mine was extracted in Turda from the three old wells of “Joseph”, “Theresa” and “Anthony”. During this year the salt exploitation in the “Anthony” well, where extraction had reached the depth of 108 metres, was stopped because of a high infiltration of clay in the deposit. The biggest problem which the Salt Customhouse in the Turda was confronted with during this time consisted in the transportation of salt from the “mouth” of the wells in Valea Sarata (Salty Valley) to the storehouses in New Turda, the way begin rather abrupt. To make transportation easier and to cut the expenses, in 1853 was decided the building of a conveyance gallery which was to start from New Turda. This gallery, called Franz Joseph, reached the length of 780 m in 1870, being furthered to 137 m till the end of century. Along with the diggings for the conveyance gallery, “Terezia” well also modernized, it being provided with two more side compartments - “Rudolph” and “Ghizela”, extraction being concentrated in “Rudolph” mine though.

The tourists which are visiting Turda Salt Mine are able to see a part of the chambers where the salt was extracted and also the transportation gallery. First place that can be visit by the tourists after entering the mine is “Franz Josef” Gallery.

Turda Salt Mine - *The Gate to Transylvania`'s Heart*. An overview presentation

Franz Josef Gallery

It was built between 1853-1870, it is a horizontal gallery made to cut the costs of salt conveyance to the surface. When it was finished it was 780 meters long, but till the end of the 19th century it was furthered by 137 meters reaching the length of 917 meters. The sterile area (dug in the earth) is 526 meters long and it is strengthened with a 40cm thick stone wall. On the left side of the wall is marked the length of it. The electrical system was installed in 1910. Between 1948-1992 it was used as a cheese storage room. During this time the water and waste pipes were installed. On the left wall of the gallery are placed pickets with equidistance of 10 fathoms. As tourist enter the in the mine the underworld reveal its wonders.

Josef Mine – Echo Room

The Josef Mine can be visited through the balconies carved in salt and it is located next to the Franz Josef Gallery. This mine is a conical chamber of 112 meters deep with 67 meters at the base. A description of this mine from 1853 reads: “[...] mine where you first dropped in a basket, the ropes may have a depth of 50 fathoms. It has a perfectly shaped loaf belonging, which the mouth is lined up at a timber below begins to open and keeps expanding until the bell, leave the salt flat plate with a diameter of about 30 fathoms [...]” (Hetilap, 1853, p. 275).

Because its shape and lack of communications with the other major mining points this mine has a powerful sound echo reason why it is also called “Echoes Room”.

The Crivac (Extraction machine) room

The octagonal room hosts a winch called “crivac” or “gepel”. The “Crivac” was exploited by horse power and served for the vertical transport of the salt from the Rudolf mine. On the crivac is marked the date that it was built in-1881. This machine replaced another, smaller size crivac, what was installed in 1864. It is the only machine of its kind in Romania and probably Europe. It is unique because it is in its original shape and location.

The Extraction Shaft room

This room hosts a mining shaft through which the salt from the Rudolf Mine was transported vertically by the horses which action the Extraction machine in the other room. The salt was lift up on bags made from skin of buffalo. The bags were placed at the end of a very strong rope which was connected by two pulley with the extraction machine. The pulley tower shaft was mounted in 1864. The pulleys have a diameter of 3 m and are functioning even today.

The appeal room

It represents the starting day for the miners, because here in every morning all the miners gather together and here was made the countering of the miners (the presence). After making the presence miners took their cutting tools and they also made a pray at the little Chapel which is inside the room.

The staircase of rich people lying in the middle of the room, was located in the gateway to the mines Rudolf and Theresa before the completion of the transport gallery. Painstakingly cut parallel streaks on the walls of salt cutters hammers exhausting labor testify strangers who have labored here over the centuries.

Rudolf Mine

The Rudolf Mine is 42 meters deep, 50 meters wide and 80 meters long. The Rudolf Mine is the last mine from Turda where salt was exploited from. 172 steps lead to the heart of this magnificent Mine. Heading to the heart of the mine, on the walls is carved the year in which the salt was exploited. On the N-W side of the sealing salt stalactites can be admired that formed through the years. They grow about 2 cm / year and when they reach the length of about 3 meters, due to their own weight, they break. The panoramic lift offers tourists a whole picture of the Rudolf Mine.

Terezia Mine

It is a cone shaped mine (mini bell). The exploitation of salt from this type of chamber leaves the underworld with an impressive view. This mine is 120 meters deep. The salt cascade, the underground lake and a bloom of salt stalactites help in the decoration of this huge underground bell. The underground lake is between 0.5 and 8 m deep. In the center of the lake there is a 5 m

high island, what is composed of salt waste dumped in here since 1880, date when mining was stopped in this room.

The treatment base

It is located in the place where should be the extarction machine and the extrection shaft for Ghisela Mine. The mine it should look the same with Rudolf Mine, but because of an accident the mine was closed.

Now there is the treatment base, a room equipped with TV`s, playground for children an sofas and where the medical asisstent can give you advices about how it`s good to make the treatment in Turda Salt Mine. The treatment is for people who are suffering from respiratory problems like asthma or bronchitis.

Table 1 Prices for services – Recreation in Turda Salt Mine – 2014 (Source: <http://salinaturda.eu/program-vizitare/>).

Program entry		Tickets	
Monday – Sunday	9.00 – 18.00	Adults	20 lei/ person
		Children/students	10 lei/ person
		Retirees	12 lei/ person
		- children under 3 yers old have free entance; - children and students have to prove with a document (license/passport) aimed at day; - retirees will present the cupon Subscription for at least 7 days	
Operanting schedule		Adults	15 lei/ person/day
Monday – Sunday	9.00 – 19.00	Children/sudents	8 lei/ person/day
		Reterees	8 lei/ person/day
Entry teatment base program		- shelf subscriptions have doubled the time contracted.	
Monday, Tuesday, Saturday, Sunday	9.00 – 14.00		
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	9.00 – 16.00		
Salina Turda facilities		Rates	
Car parking		5 lei/day/car or motorcycle 10 lei/day/bus or minibus.	
Subscription for car parking minumim 3 days		3 lei/day/car or motorcycle 5 lei/day/bus or minibus.	
Rent cages for animals (dogs/cats)		15 lei/day/pet.	
Recreational activities		Rates	
The Big Wheel/8 min		5 lei/person	
Minigolf/30 min		10 lei/person	
Bowling/20 min		10 lei/person	
Boating on the undregrownd lake/20 min/boat		10 lei/person (max 3 person)	

Sport field/1 hour	100 lei
Amphitheatre/1 hour	200 lei
Pool table/10 min	2 lei
Table tennis/30 min	5 lei
Tax after visiting hours / 1 hour	300 lei (minimum 50 persons)
Guide on request – romanian language	35 lei
Guide on request – foreign language	50 lei
Professional video (weddings, albums)	100 lei/day
Professional photo (weddings, albums)	50 lei/day
Sound recording	100 lei/day
Photo-video tax for commercial purposes (movies, music videos, magazine etc)	min. 1000 EUR/day
Civil wedding	300 lei

3. The promotion of the tourist destination image of Turda Salt Mine

In this section, we analyze the two main distributed folders for the promotion of Turda Salt Mine's tourist image. In order to illustrate the actual image of this sight, we also present beneath this promotion products, for a visual correspondence with the textual component.



Figure 1 The first folder – frontside.

The frontside of the first folder (Figure 1) presents the Salt Mine as a place which [...] invites you to discover its treasures, and exploring every room to get into the history of underground unprecedented architectural masterpieces. The very eloquent slogan: *A Cave to Transylvania's Heart* is the hard component of the image formation effort.

The story of an underground brand sounds the title of the main piece of text: *The spectacular and sophisticated Salt mine in Turda is hiding an underground world "designed" some 13 million years ago whose architecture was accomplished by the salt miners with primitive tools, who descended into the deep to recover one of the most valuable resources on Earth. After having attracted the Dacian, the Hungarians kings and the Habsburg Emperors with its precious ore during the ages, now it's the turn of the tourist from all over the world to admire one of the most important monuments in Transylvania.*

It is assumed that the history of the Salt mine in Turda dates back to the times of the Dacians and it was first mentioned in documents in 1271 when salt was more precious than gold and the Teutons were gratified for their services and loyalty with blocks of salt. As soon as the Habsburg rule was instituted at the beginning of the 17th century, the salt mine in Turda became a strategic objective of the Vienna Court due to the income that the ore brought to the exchequer.



Figure 2 The first folder – backside.

On the backside of the first folder (Figure 2), a piece of mine history is written: *The works at the first mine called Theresa started in 1690, hosting today a salt island that would be appropriate for the screen play of the Sci-Fi novel. 112 meters deep, the mine bears the name of Empress Maria Theresa of the Holy Roman Empire and is the place where the tourists descend to have a boat ride on the peaceful waters of the salty lake or read a book while enjoying the healthy air. The Theresa*

mine offer a unique sight over the walls decorated with stalactites and a salt cascade, which had been declared a monument of nature.

After the Theresa mine, the exploitation continued with the Joseph mine, the only one in which the sounds are dispersed in 20 echoes due to its shape and the lack of communication with the other room. Alongside this mine, the Antony mine also brought its contribution so that the Salt mine in Turda becomes the most appreciated mine in Transylvania.

Rudolf and Gisela were the last mines where salt was mined using a new mining technique: the walls were carved in a trapezoidal shape not a bell-shape like before. Today the Rudolf mine is the attraction of the salt mine, the place where the movies and the concerts of any sort feel at home, and the sports, such as basketball, table tennis, bowling or mini golf are a novel experience for any sport lover. A well-equipped balneary patient unit was created in the Gisela mine for all the patients with respiratory diseases, where the children can play at ease while their parents can watch the news on the main TV channels or can surf the web thanks to the free wi-fi connection.

The story of the Salt mine in Turda would not be complete without the Franz Joseph gallery carved out with the chisel and the hammer between 1853 and 1870, in order to take the salt to the surface. The ore was taken to surface with the help of the so-called crivac operated by the horses taken over from the cavalry. In the crivac room of the salt mine the tourist can see such a device, the only one in Europe kept on its initial location.



Figure 3 The second folder – frontside.

The Salt mine in Turda is completely the creation of the salt miners who had sculpted its walls during the centuries, so that we can admire their work today. Their work was not easy at all and this is why before going down to the pit, they should say a prayer in front of the altar and after the
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call they would start working. The proof of these historic facts is kept in the Call Room where one can also admire the Staircase of the Rich built from pine in Transylvanian Baroque style around 1700, on which the nobleman, the mine keepers and the priests would come down to the entrance of the Theresa and Rudolf mines.

In 2008, the grandiose salt mine underwent a thorough process of rehabilitation and two years later around 500,000 Romanian and foreign tourists came down its stairs in order to mark the beginning of a new age in the history of the most unusual tourist attractions in Transylvania. The frontside of the first folder (Figure 3) also presents the Salt Mine's slogan: *A Cave to Transylvania's Heart* and the Rudolph Mine: *80 meters below ground an oasis of health and innovative and relaxing resting place is waiting for you.*

On the same side there is the address and contact of Turda Salt Mine and the address and contact of Turda Town Hall.

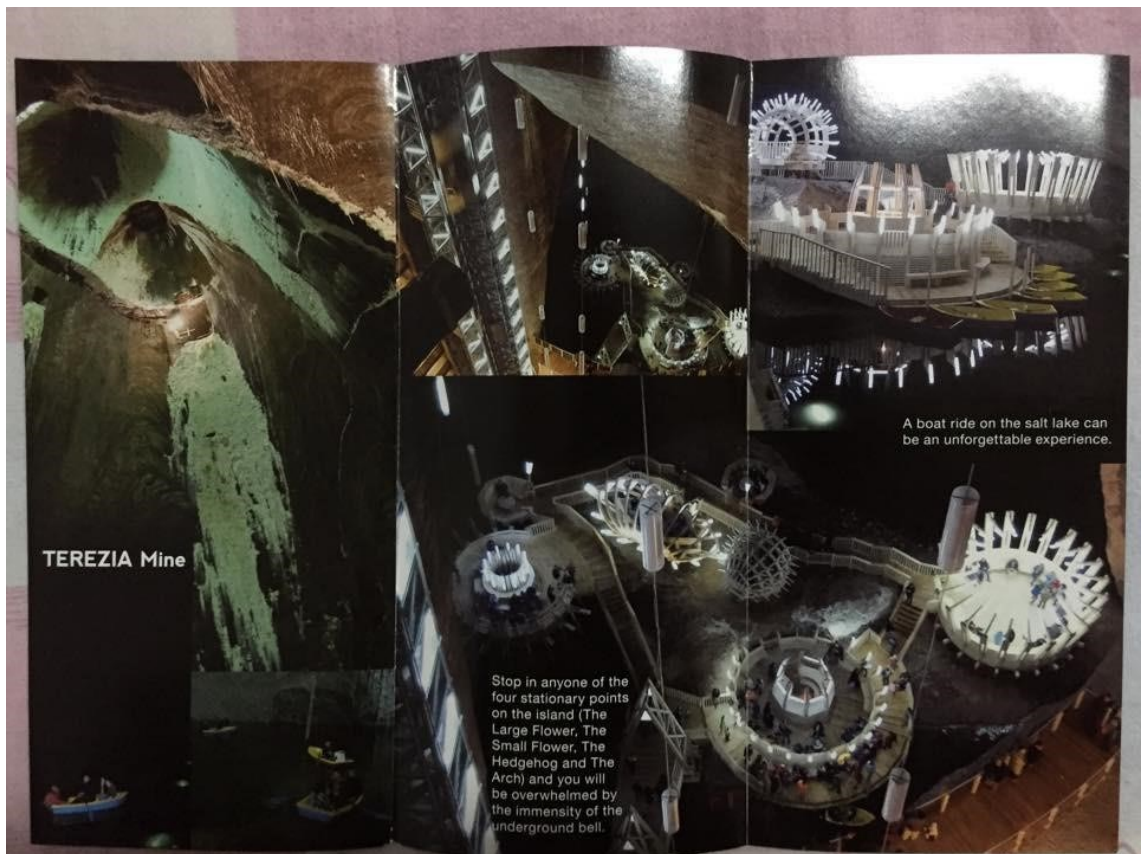


Figure 4 The second folder – backside.

On the backside of the second folder (Figure 4), exhibiting Terezia Mine, the textual message reflects the visual message of the photographs: *Stop in anyone of the four stationary points on the island (The Large Flower, The Small Flower, The Hedgehog and The Arch) and you will be overwhelmed by the immensity of the underground bell.*

The other message on this side, slightly stereotypical, is: *A boat ride on the salt lake can be an unforgettable experience.*

4. Conclusions

At the end of this paper, we consider that Turda Salt Mine is an emerging tourist destination of Romania, due to the massive investments, spectacularity and unique features in the world tourism landscape.

Being ranked as one of the most spectacular tourist destinations in the world, Turda Salt Mine has already got its own international good reputation and its strong individualized identity.

In the tourist image formation and promotion process of Turda Salt Mine, the promotion materials makers are hardly doing the effort of taking advantage of Transylvania's worldwide notoriety, and this is normal, considering this unique place as part of the above-mentioned region.

Turda Salt Mine has a fast-increasing tourist image capital due to the continuous effort for redefining and improving its distinctive unique profile as a tourist “underground” destination, supported by the marketing aim of enlarging its brand notoriety.

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