

## TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE OF THE ALBA IULIA FORTRESS

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**Abstract:** *The objective of this research paper is to explore the tourism destination image of the Alba Iulia Fortress, the largest fortress in Romania. The fortress serves as a locale where tourists can immerse themselves in a medieval ambiance. It is situated in the heart of Transylvania and stands as the most significant monument with Baroque elements in the province. Over recent years, Alba Carolina Fortress has undergone substantial transformations, progressively gaining prominence in European tourism. This site frequently hosts diverse cultural activities that continue to attract a growing number of tourists.*

**Key words:** *tourism destination image; destination management; tourism marketing*

### INTRODUCTION

The historical significance and cultural allure of Alba Carolina Fortress make it a compelling destination for both local and international tourists. This fortress stands as a repository of rich historical narratives, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in an array of diverse and touristic and cultural experiences [1,10,11,13].

Alba Carolina Fortress is a Vauban-style fortress with bastions serving as a strategic defensive fortification built at the beginning of the 17th century in the medieval city of Alba Iulia [2,11,15].

Defined as a voluntary, multisensory, primarily picture-like, qualia-arousing, conscious, and quasi-perceptual mental experience, the tourism destination image of Alba Iulia Fortress emerges as a private, nonspatial, and intentional phenomenon within the minds of tourists. This mental experience intersects with and parallels other cognitive facets of the tourist, including sensation, perception, mental representation, cognitive map, consciousness, memory, and attitude toward the destination [3-5,7,12].

This research endeavor is motivated by a desire to delve into the perspectives of tourists who have explored the unique ambiance of Alba Carolina Fortress. By examining and understanding the opinions of visitors, this study aims to examine the elements that contribute to the tourism destination image of Alba Iulia Fortress. In doing so, it seeks to unravel the nuanced impressions, perceptions, and experiences that shape the overall image of this historical landmark in the minds of those who have traversed its grounds. Through a comprehensive exploration of tourist opinions, this paper seeks to contribute valuable insights to the discourse surrounding destination image management and development, shedding light on the factors that influence the perception of Alba Iulia Fortress as a premier tourism destination [6,8,9,14].

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A structured questionnaire served as the primary tool for the quantitative analysis employed in the research. The questionnaire covers variables such as demographic information, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and overall satisfaction. The collected data underwent statistical analysis to unveil key insights into the tourism destination image.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

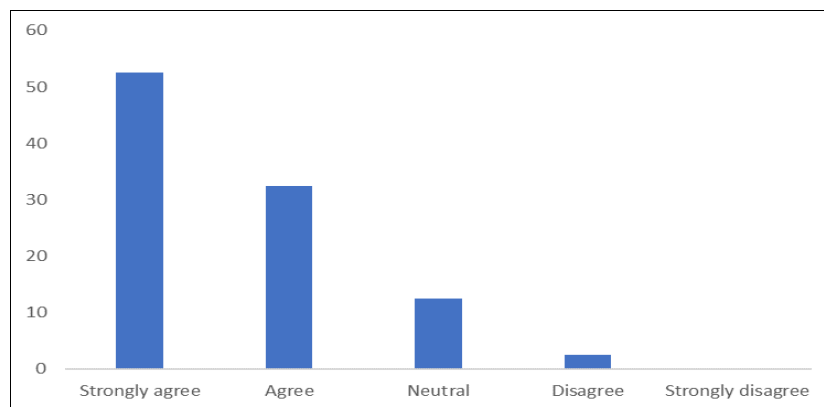
One of the key traits of the tourism destination image of Alba Carolina Fortress as reported by the respondents are the historical importance of Alba Carolina Fortress,

associating it with events such as the Marea Unire (Great Union) and the reign of Mihai Viteazul.

Specific historical elements mentioned include the Coronation Cathedral, the Museum of Art, and the successful reconstruction of a historical period. The architecture of the fortress is widely praised, with mentions of impressive structures such as bastions, gates, and the star-shaped layout. Positive comments are directed towards the restoration efforts and the overall aesthetic appeal of the fortress. The presence of museums, statues, and artistic elements within the fortress is acknowledged positively.

Some express concerns about the cleanliness of certain areas, parking availability, and the potential for congestion.

The tourism experience is touched upon, with respondents mentioning the availability of information, the success of historical reenactments, and the impact of a large number of visitors on the overall experience. Some respondents suggest that a more modern approach or implementation could enhance the overall experience, and there is a mention of the need for more accessible information.



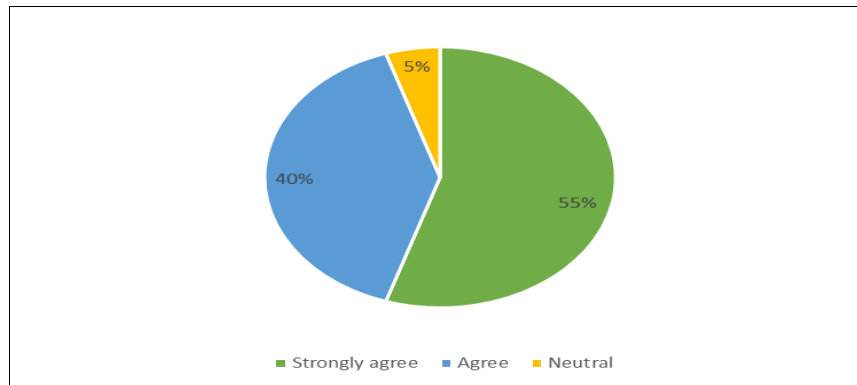
**Figure 1. Respondents response to “The museum prices in Alba Carolina Fortress are affordable”**

*Source: Own calculations*

The survey findings indicate a predominantly positive sentiment among respondents regarding the affordability of museum prices. A significant majority, comprising 52.5%, strongly agree, while an additional 32.5% agree that museum prices are affordable. A relatively small percentage, 12.5%, expressed a neutral stance, suggesting a lack of strong leaning toward either agreement or disagreement. Only a minimal proportion (2.5%) of respondents disagreed with the affordability of museum prices, and notably, there were no responses in the "Strongly Disagree" category.

The absence of strong disagreement suggests a general consensus or lack of strong negative sentiment among the surveyed individuals. These positive perceptions bode well for museums in terms of attracting visitors and fostering a positive image.

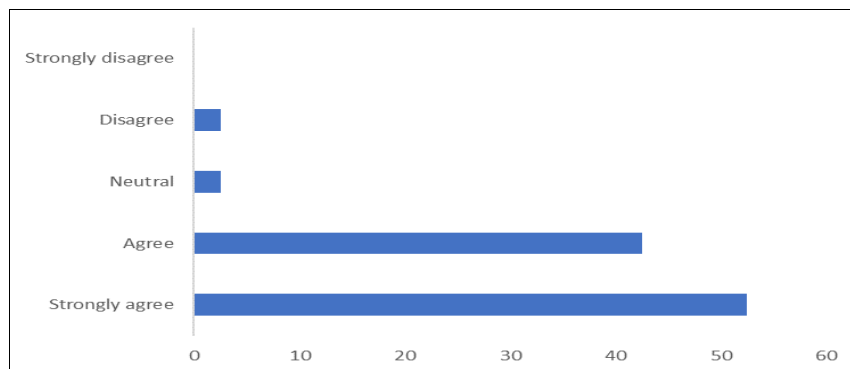
The survey findings regarding the cleanliness of Alba Iulia Fortress reveal a largely positive perception among respondents. The majority, consisting of 55%, strongly agree, while an additional 40% agree that the fortress is a clean place. A small percentage, 5%, expressed a neutral stance, indicating a minority without a strong inclination toward either agreement or disagreement.



**Figure 2. Respondents response to “The Alba Iulia Fortress is a clean place”**

*Source: Own calculations*

Overall, the overwhelmingly positive responses suggest that the surveyed individuals perceive Alba Iulia Fortress as a clean place. This positive perception contribute to a favorable visitor experience and enhance the overall image of the fortress as a well-maintained and appealing tourist destination.



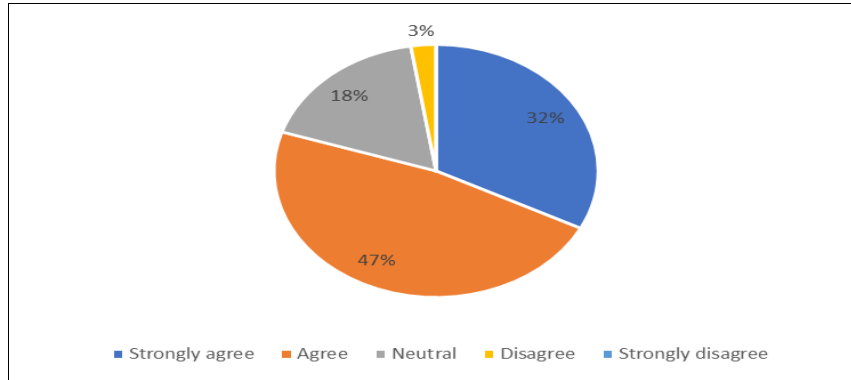
**Figure 3. Respondents response to “The Alba Iulia Fortress is safe”**

*Source: Own calculations*

The survey findings regarding the safety of Alba Iulia Fortress suggest a predominantly positive perception among respondents. The majority, comprising 52.5%, strongly agree, while an additional 42.5% agree that the fortress is a safe place. A small percentage, 2.5%, expressed a neutral stance, indicating a minority without a strong inclination toward either agreement or disagreement. Similarly, another 2.5% of respondents disagreed with the statement, suggesting a very small proportion expressing concerns about the safety of the fortress.

Overall, the data indicates a strong and positive consensus among the surveyed individuals that Alba Iulia Fortress is a safe place. This positive perception is crucial for attracting and assuring visitors, contributing to a positive image of the fortress as a secure and enjoyable tourist destination.

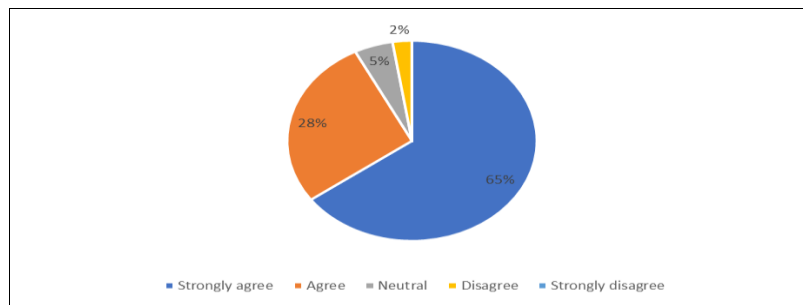
The survey results regarding the quality of food amenities in Alba Iulia Fortress suggest a generally positive perception among respondents. The majority, with 32.5% strongly agreeing and an additional 47.5% agreeing, indicates that a significant portion of the surveyed individuals views the food amenities as high quality.



**Figure 4. Respondents response to “Food amenities in the Alba Iulia Fortress are high quality”**

*Source: Own calculations*

A moderate percentage, 17.5%, expressed a neutral stance, suggesting a segment without a strong inclination toward either agreement or disagreement. Importantly, there were no respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement, and only a small proportion (2.5%) disagreed.



**Figure 5. Respondents response to “The Alba Iulia Fortress is easily accessible**

*Source: Own calculations*

The survey results regarding the accessibility of Alba Iulia Fortress suggest a highly positive perception among respondents. The majority, comprising 65%, strongly agree that the fortress is easily accessible. An additional 27.5% agree with this statement, indicating a significant consensus among participants regarding the accessibility of the fortress. A small percentage, 5%, expressed a neutral stance, suggesting a minority without a strong inclination toward either agreement or disagreement. Only a minimal proportion (2.5%) of respondents disagreed with the statement.

### CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the survey findings on Alba Iulia Fortress reflect overwhelmingly positive perceptions among respondents. The majority expressed strong agreement or agreement with statements affirming the affordability, cleanliness, safety, and accessibility of the fortress. There is also a positive view regarding the high quality of food amenities. Negative responses were consistently low, suggesting a generally favorable sentiment.

The strong consensus on safety and accessibility highlights key strengths, contributing to the fortress's appeal as a tourist destination. While the positive feedback is predominant, the presence of neutral responses suggests potential areas for enhancement or communication to further improve the visitor experience.

Overall, the survey underscores Alba Iulia Fortress's positive image but also provides insights that can guide efforts to continuously enhance and promote the destination, ensuring a positive experience for visitors.

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