

TOURISM - TRADITIONS AND CULTURE AMBASSADOR

Costel Ioan CIOBAN

"Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Romania

costel.cioban@gmail.com

Gabriela Liliana CIOBAN

"Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Romania

gabicioban@gmail.com

Abstract:

The purpose of this article is to show what are the strengths of cultural tourism, what characterizes it and what are the benefits it can bring. In the first part of the paper, we aim to show what are the steps were taken in the development of cultural tourism, as well as its capacity to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life. An important aspect of the work is found in the complex definition of the concept of cultural tourism, both from the perspective of some individual authors and also from the perspective of the World Tourism Organization.

The second part of the paper deals in its structure with the importance of cultural values and the promotion of their authenticity in order to preserve the integrity of the community and those who inherit this culture. Through the article, we want to highlight the scientific fields that offer subjects of cultural interest to many tourists. It also takes into account the assessment of cultural tourism, the promotion of cultural space, the promotion of cultural diversity, the development of new forms of cultural expression, the promotion of a cultural heritage of European significance. In this paper we analyze the role of the European Capital of Culture project in the development of cultural tourism, a project implemented at the level of the European Union, the objectives of the event "European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018", as well as the objectives of other projects proposed and realized by the Local Institutions, National Institutions and also at the European Union level. By presenting these projects we want to highlight the existence in our country of a rich treasure of folk art and ancient traditions of artistic crafts, evidence of creativity and love for the beauty of the Romanian people.

Key words: cultural tourism, cultural diversity, cultural heritage, urban tourism, artistic values.

JEL classification: I31, M00, R10, Z32

INTRODUCTION

Urban, rural, mountain and seaside developments, have led in the last century to the diversification of tourism products and also have improved the quality of life. We find that adapting to the changing economic environment, to the changes in the consumer behavior and requirements, to the structural changes in the economy and employment, as well as the European perspective, have contributed to an extremely dynamic tourism service.

The major changes that marked the Romanian economy since 1990 have opened the way to an international and global tourism industry. There have been many competitors, old local and regional firms have been either abolished or have turned into transnational agencies; the tourist information system begins to be identified with a mean of balancing the demand and supply of such services.

Tourism highlights and economically exploits that unique treasure made up of the richness created by nature and climate, or left by history, folklore and civilization. The effects of this service can be found in the evolution of the quality of the tourist's life on the one hand and on the other hand of the population in the host countries. The "welfare" of the tourist consists of offering rest, relaxation, culture and/or contact with other people, while for the local population providing tourist services, tourism is a means of raising living standards, improving conditions of existence.

The interconnections of the tourism with the economic, social, cultural, political, demographic and ecological environment determine the actuality of the preoccupations for knowing in detail this phenomenon, its sensitivities, and its influences. Intersecting it with various other areas of activity

raises a number of difficulties in defining it. Starting from service-specific interferences, we define tourism as an essential, specific and qualified way of an enjoyable use of leisure time (loisir). Gyer-Freuler E. (cited by Baretia R., Defert P., 1972) shows, in 1995, among others, that: "Tourism, in the modern sense of the word, is a phenomenon of our times, based on the increasing need for health recovery and the change of the environment, the birth and the development of a sense of receptivity for the beauties of nature ..., the result of the development of trade, industry and improvement of the means of transport. "

Jafari J. defines cultural tourism as "satisfying the demand of tourists eager to meet other peoples in their authentic environment, to see the physical manifestations of their lives expressed in crafts, music, literature, dance, food, and drink, plays, crafts, language and ritual "(Jafari, 2003).

In 1991, WTO - The World Tourism Organization and the Government of Canada, organized at Ottawa the International Conference on Travel and Tourism Statistics, during which the definition of tourism was adopted: it is the activity of people who travel to and remain in places outside their environment (usually) for a maximum of one year, for relaxation, business or other purposes (WTO Madrid, 1997).

Tourism organizations and associations have the mission to find solutions for the development of tourism and the knowledge of the tourist potential of our country. (Figure 1)

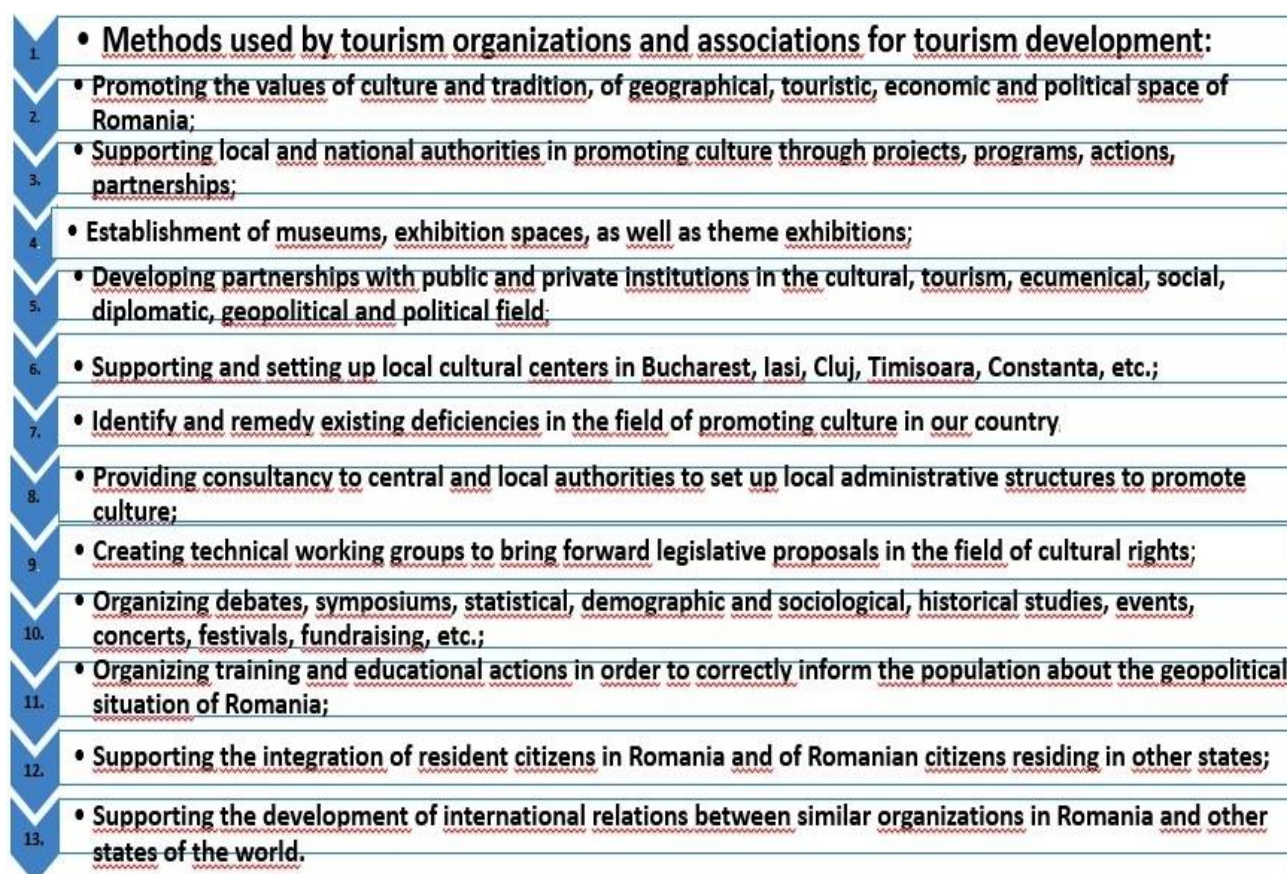


Figure no.1. Methods used in tourism development

Source: Own creation

In the same context, I mention that in any part of the world the increase in tourist attractiveness is determined by the natural potential of the respective areas, the tourist infrastructure, as well as the traditions and culture of the local population. With reference to the culture, we find that it is a determinant factor of the tourist attraction, the creation, and consolidation of the national identity, the creation and development of tourism patrimony in the developed countries.

THE METHODOLOGY USED

The research methodology is based on identification elements of the specialized literature, its selection, the corroboration and the synthesis of the data. The important aspects found in the literature are studies and researches conducted a national and international level showing a fundamental theoretical orientation of cultural tourism.

The methods used are focused on conceptualizing and describing the cultural tourism phenomenon, and it is necessary to thoroughly examine this concept, given the opportunities it offers to both national economy and tourism industry. We selected content-based literature focusing on elements such as the meaning of cultural tourism term, development factors, and the key elements that contribute to the long-term cultural and social development of the city.

The next step to identifying and analyzing the conceptual provided the possible strategic options for cultural tourism development. For the realization of the paper were used information published on the websites of some projects developed on the theme of cultural tourism, as well as the literature in the field.

CULTURAL TOURISM

The increasing responsiveness of services to technical progress is a result of the development of innovation, technique, and technology, as well as increasing investments in Research & Development. The benefits of twentieth-century inventions are found in the emergence and perpetuation of a consumer society, as well as in increasing the needs of the population for different goods and services. Consumption of goods and services is complemented by "consumption of art and culture".

Culture is synonymous with the civilization of the people with all the processes of continuity and change and is the expression of peoples' values, concerning beliefs and rituals, as artifacts and instruments. Cultural values are important because they provide a way of seeing the world, people, things. These possibilities determine the development of cultural tourism. It defines the desire and the effort of the people to travel in order to find the way of life of the past and present people as well as the consumption of cultural ideas, specific services, of art and architecture (MD Borak Ali, M. Alamgir, Al.M Nedelea, 2017).

The desire and the effort of the people to travel in order to find the way of life of the population from different places of the world, as well as the desire to use cultural ideas, specific services, and architecture, are advantages in the development of cultural tourism (Nițulescu G., 2009).

In the same context, we mention that cultural tourism needs to be developed, its authenticity to be promoted to preserve the integrity of the community and those who inherit this culture. It is necessary to maintain and preserve regional cultural characteristics, but also to accept the transformation mechanisms that will generate new forms and adaptations of the culture.

This should allow the implementation of new trends in the cultural patrimony elements, in order to adapt to the requirements of the current market. Therefore, tourists will be interested in the dynamics of cultural property if the cultural elements are displayed and presented in an authentic way.

Cultural tourism approaches the culture of a region, especially its artistic values, and offers it to tourists. Cultural tourism includes: (Figure no. 2)



Figure 2. Cultural tourism

Source: Own creation

Cultural tourism tends to increase the cultural awareness of the individual by providing him with new knowledge and experiences, as well as the opportunity of intercultural dialogue through the possibility of a dialogue of discovering and appreciating cultural diversity. It follows that any form of tourism can be defined as cultural tourism if it succeeds in satisfying the basic human need for diversity. In the same context, we note that tourists who practice cultural tourism may be interested in issues related to religion, philosophy, history, anthropology, etc., and want to take part in the action of knowing past events. Contemporary evolutions in various spheres of human activity and progress in scientific, technological, educational and sociological fields are also subjects of cultural interest for many tourists.

Cultural tourism enjoys a rich culture and some of the oldest historical heritage and most important legacies producing tourism.

The increased interest in this form of tourism has some key elements, namely: (Figure no. 3)



Figure no. 3. - Trends in cultural tourism

Source: Own creation

Cultural tourism is being accessed by a growing number of tourists who have a cultural motivation and are eager to discover as much as possible of a region's culture during their journey.

Therefore, cultural tourism can be characterized by a clientele of its own, that can be specialized in a particular topic, may be attracted to all that is cultural, or can be composed of most of those on leave, vacation and visiting the anthropic touristic objectives from the space they are in. Also, the participants in cultural tourism can be represented by different higher socio-professional categories or with a medium and high level of education (pupils, students, intellectuals) and therefore its mass character is uncertain.

European Commission studies show that cultural tourism attracts an increasing number of tourists. The same study states that 20% of visits in Europe have a cultural motivation, while 60% of European tourists are really interested in cultural discoveries during their journey.

Cultural tourism is growing due to the fact that modern tourist is looking for different cultural experiences and local authorities have understood that tourism is a source of income and also contributes to the economic growth of the area.

Taking into account the fact that historical attractions are mainly inside the cities, we can talk about urban tourism. In order to achieve an urban tourism in good conditions, investors have understood that cultural facilities and tourism infrastructure need to be developed and improved, as they have a direct impact on the economy and on the living standard of the population.

An important support in the development of urban tourism was the decision taken by the Council of Ministers of the European Union in 1985 to launch the event "European Capital of Culture" (CEC). This event aims at several objectives: (Figure no. 4.)



Figure no.4. The objectives of the European Capital of Culture event

Source: Processed after www.ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/

The implementation of this project has led to the development of the candidate-city both in cultural, social and economic terms. Developing this theme we find that holding the title of European Cultural Capital leads to urban development, the development of creative industries, the promotion of the city's image internationally, the generation of hundreds of construction and restoration works, the deployment of hundreds of cultural events in that city, the creation of new jobs, the entrance of the city in the top tourist destinations, etc. In this context, we specify that the title gives the city the opportunity to modernize the infrastructure, attract new investments, enhance the image of the city and the whole region.

Reports from the title of European Cultural Capital have revealed that these cities have provided tourists with cultural experiences and events related to art and crafts, their personal and national identity, the diversity of the city's population, and the history of the city.

The benefits of this project are found in the results obtained by over 55 cities that have held the title of European Capital of Culture until 2017¹. All these cities have had the opportunity to regenerate, to change their image, to advertise themselves a European and international level and of course have benefited especially in areas such as tourism and culture, as well as in the economic one.

In Romania between 2009-2016, cultural tourism benefited from investments in tourism infrastructure and the annual growth rate of tourists in this form of tourism was 22.1%². Also, the annual growth rate of the number of tourists in TAU³ with investments in tourism infrastructure (distribution by development areas) is 29.7% in South-West Oltenia, 9.5% in the Center, Northeast is 9.4 %, South is 9.2%, Northwest 5.2%, West is 2.1%, and South East is -0.5%. In the same context, we mention that the national distribution of investments in tourism infrastructure, depending on the major area of intervention, is divided into 47% in Urban growth, 27% in tourism infrastructure, 25% in cultural heritage and 1% in National Tourist Information and Promotion Center (CNIPT). The structure of the financing sources for investment in tourism infrastructure is 59% of European funds and 41% of national budget and beneficiary contribution⁴.

For the year 2018, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union also launched the event "European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018", an event whose main objectives are to present Europe's cultural heritage, its role in encouraging a shared sense of identity and building the future of Europe; promoting cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion; to strengthen the contribution of Europe's cultural heritage to society and the economy through its capacity to support culture and creative sectors, including small and medium-sized enterprises, etc.

For the year 2018, the event "European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018" was launched, an event whose main objectives are to present the richness of Europe's cultural heritage, its role in encouraging a common sense of identity and building the future of Europe.

Reports on this event are also found in the statements given by the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport, Tibor Navracsecs: "Cultural heritage is at the heart of European way of life. It defines who we are and creates a sense of belonging. The cultural heritage is not only made up of literature, art, and objects, but also from the crafts we teach, the stories we say, the food we eat and the films we are watching. We must preserve and cherish the cultural heritage for the future generations. This year's festivities will be a great opportunity to encourage citizens, especially young people, to explore the rich cultural diversity of Europe and reflect on the place that cultural heritage occupies in our lives. They will allow us to understand our past and build our future. "²

At our country level, there are other projects running that help area with tourism potential to develop. There are projects that provide funding from the European Union and projects proposed and carried out by local and national institutions. The number of investment projects implemented in the field of tourism, financed under the Regional Operational Program, is 352, of which 61 projects are in the field of cultural tourism. ⁶ We specify that in terms of their number, the projects are relatively equally divided among the different regions. The South-East Region has the largest number of financed projects, while the Bucharest-Ilfov region has the lowest number of projects. The development of these projects has as a major objective the enhancement of the historical and cultural-religious monuments³ the development of modern highway networks to meet the growing demands of road transport, the modernization of international airports, the rehabilitation and modernization of museums, the restoration and preservation of cultural heritage of the monasteries that are in the tourist circuit, the rehabilitation and modernization of the buildings that are part of the tourist attractions of the tourist areas (V.Hapenciuc, P. Stanciu, A. Morosan, 2014).

Romania has a valuable cultural heritage defined by the archaeological vestiges such as the Greek fortresses, the Dacian fortresses, the Roman fortresses and the medieval fortresses of the early age; historical monuments of art and architecture; cultural and artistic institutions and events; art and folk traditions of Romania; museums and public collections; festivals, theater performances, concerts, exhibitions, sports competitions, customs and traditions; the existence of an ethnographic

and folkloric treasure of great originality with a rich calendar of traditional fairs and folk manifestations throughout the year, etc. Due to these elements, as well as the investments completed in the tourism infrastructure, the annual growth rate of the number of tourists (in the period 2009-2016) in Romania was for 16 counties of + 7.6% and for four counties (IL , TR, SM and GR) was -0.5% to -2.5% ⁸.

The realization of these projects must be complemented by a more efficient promotion of cultural tourism for the tourist market in our country, especially for the integrity of the community and for those who inherit this culture. Cultural tourism requires the preservation of past features that have created the culture in question, as well as the acceptance of transformational mechanisms that will generate new forms and adaptations of culture.

The value of Romanian traditions and culture gain an increasingly important place in the contemporary environment due to man's desire to surround himself with old objects rooted in the traditions of our people. At the same time, these objects speak to the whole world about the existence in our country of a rich treasure of folk art and of old traditions of artistic crafts, proof of creativity and love for the beauty of the Romanian people.

Through the programs carried out at the country level, there are taken into consideration sustainable development strategies that require the traditions and development of authentic Romanian folk art production. We illustrate here the European Union's Culture Strategy, the European Union's Strategy for the international environment of cultural relations - founded on supporting partnerships and promoting a world peace-based order, the rule of law, freedom of expression, mutual understanding and respect for fundamental human rights¹⁰. The National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania - the thematic priority axes in this document refer to the sustainable development and promotion of tourism, the sustainable valorisation of the cultural heritage and the natural resources with tourism potential, as well as the improvement of the quality of the tourist accommodation and leisure infrastructure in order to increase the attractiveness of the regions , the development of local economies and the creation of new jobs.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this article suggests that authenticity should be understood from the perspective of the short-term environment or historical aspects and not only through the active culture of the traditions.

Cultural tourism contributes to improving the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of a nation, helping to preserve and save the cultural heritage, etc. The advantages of cultural tourism derive from elements such as the existence of intercultural dialogue and reciprocal exchanges between the cultures of some regions, the importance of culture to the socio-economic development of the region concerned, the recognition of culture as an economic factor and as an important factor in social integration and European citizenship, as well as ensuring access to culture and participation in cultural activities in the national and international context for as many citizens as possible. We consider that the cultural tourism has fundamental elements for the sustainable development of a region.

ENDNOTES

- [1] Athenam Florența, Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris, Glasgow, Dublin, Madrid, Anvers, Lisabona, Luxemburg, Copenhaga, Thessaloniki, Stockholm, Weimar, Reykjavik, Bergen, Helsinki, Bruxelles, Praga, Cracovia, Santiago de Compostela, Avignon, Bologna, Rotterdam, Porto, Bruges, Salamanca, Graz, Genova, Lille, Cork, Patras, Luxemburg, Sibiu ,Liverpool, Stavanger, Vilinius, Linz, Essen, Pecs, Istanbul, Turku, Tallinn, Guimaraes, Maribor, Marsilia, Kosice, Umea, Riga, Mons, Plzen, San Sebastian, Wroclaw, Aarhus, Paphos.
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- [3] UAT - Territorial Administrative Units
- [4] www.turism.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MPI-21.07_2017.pdf
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