CULTURAL TOURISM DIMEENSION IN ARGES COUNTY

VALENTELE TURISMULUI CULTURAL IN ARGES

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Abstract: *Cultural tourism occurs as a type of tourism clearly different from the other forms or types of tourism, especially by motivation. It can be defined as a form of touristic mobility whose main purpose is to enlarge the horizon of knowledge by discovering the cultural-artistic or architectonical patrimony and the territories where they are.*
Although strongly attached to their traditional and cultural values and norms, tourists are fascinated by the contemporary history flow, by the fast processes of modernization of today's world, in its way to standardisation and globalisation.
This paper describes the importance of cultural tourism in Romania and analyses the cultural touristic potential in Arges county.

Key words: *cultural tourism, tourist patrimony (heritage), tourist flows, cultural destination.*

INTRODUCTION

Culture is the expression of the material and spiritual civilization of a people, including both the material culture (all material and technical assets necessary to their production) and the spiritual one (creations from sciences, literature, arts). Therefore, cultural tourism is a form of putting forward the anthropic resources and that is why it can include the religious and rural-ethnographic tourism. The material patrimony includes museums, monuments, architectonical groups, arts cities, villages with well-kept traditions, archaeological sites, gardens, religious or military like edifices. The immaterial patrimony includes holidays and cultural events, traditions and creative abilities acquired in time.

The tourist flows within cultural tourism are characterised by the fact they are made up of their own clientele that can be specialised in a

certain theme, or attracted by culture, or occasional, which is usually the greatest part and is made up of those who – in a holiday, to rest and recreate, also visit the anthropic tourist objectives from the space they are in. Another characteristic is the affiliation of the participants to higher social-professional categories or medium or highly educated: pupils, students, intellectuals, generally representing urban population.

The cultural touristic practices are very different, too, from visiting museums and monuments, in order to effectively get acquainted to their patrimony, to their simple use, as setting for ludic actions (going to a café or a pub close to a patrimony objective, for example). It seems that there is a differentiation of cultural practices per sexes: women are more attracted by plastic arts and architecture which dominate the cultural tourist movements, while men prefer the technical- scientific sites, traditions and popular arts.

The cultural practices have an influence according to the mental and behavioural specificity of the individuals who prefer the Roman art or the Middle-Ages, to the retrieval of cultural roots, interest for discovering monuments and places which illustrate historical events, or the preference to visit sanctuaries and sacred places.

The efficiency of cultural tourism is the most reduced of all types of tourism, but its development has a series of advantages; the demand is stable, firm and does not follow the fashion, as in the case of balneological-climatical tourism.

CULTURAL TOURISM IN ROMANIA

The cultural tourism in Romania is generally religious, mostly practices by foreign tourists, attracted by the beauty and the cultural-historical part of tourist objectives (monasteries, churches, museums etc.). This form of tourism has an informational side, the tourists being motivated by the idea of learning and finding out new things about these places.

The religoius tourism appears in the second stage of tourism evolution, called the pseudo-tourist stage, which coincide with early and middle Middle-Ages until Renaissance. The religious pilgrimages were heading to Rome and Jerusalem for Christians, to Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia for Muslims, to Lhasa and India and Indochina sanctuaries for Buddhists, to Mount Fuji for Japanese. The religious tourism is that tourism

having the purpose of visiting religious edifices with spiritual implications. At present, the religious tourism requires from tourists a high degree of education and culture in order to be able to appreciate the cultural-religious objectives with regards to architecture, construction, value, spiritual meanings and contents of objects of art, to promote both cultural and spiritual values. That is why one cannot make a clear distinction between cultural tourism (related to visiting religious edifices) and the religious one. For example, the tourists who go to monasteries out of curiosity, of their need to find out new places and things, attracted by their beauty, because they are situated in remote or recluse picturesque places or because of the particular life of the people living there, when they reach such place, they suddenly become pilgrims: they change their clothes, light a candle, or pray. Such encounter changed something inside them. The encounter with the sacred changes the exterior motivation of the journey, the visitor discovering an inner motivation, too, different from the touristic one.

Starting from the notion of religious cultural tourism, we can speak about two big trends of journeys:

- Unifunctional journey, with only one purpose, the religious one. A very good example in the case of Romania is the religious journeys made in places with miracle making icons: the Neamt monastery, Agapia monastery, Sihastria or Nicula. The participant to this type of journey is strictly the pilgrim.

- Plurifunctional journey, joining the religious aspects with the strictly cultural ones, allowing the visit of a higher number of tourist objectives. When the element of attraction for tourists is in a monument or another form of religious cultural patrimony, we can speak about tourism within a religious space.

Another trend of the last decades from the past century was to spend a period of time close to some well-known religious monuments. Thus, many monachal complexes built their own guest houses where they receive a reduced number of believers and where certain norms should be complied with during the stay, in order not to disturb the monachal activity. Between tourism and religion, there are countless interactions and combinations based on the relation between the sacred place and the motivation of tourism.

ARGES COUNTY – CULTURAL DESTINATION

The millenary Arges, where the most beautiful legend about a deathless construction was created – the legend of Master Manole, is the location of the first Romanian ruling and of the first battle won for liberty, where the Romanian people was created and where the feudal state, Tara Romaneasca, was founded, where the first document in Romanian was written, where some of the most famous Wallachian rulers lived and where many Romanian cultural and historical figures started. Arges was and will be one of the most important cradles of the history of the Romanian nation, of the culture and spirituality, with a rich cultural and religious heritage. It is one of the wonderful waivode spaces where the natural framework harmoniously mixes with the remains of the glorious past and with the Romanian cultural traditions. The historical monuments still speak about the tumultuous past of the Romanian nation, about the first capital cities of Tara Romaneasca – from Curtea de Arges and Campulung – and about the first Basarab rulers, fearless fighters for defending the ancestress land. The existence of this rich spiritual patrimony is very interesting for a particular category of tourists, "consumers of culture". Arges county has a lot to show to travellers coming for the holiday or just passing by our area.

The forms of culture represent a significant motivation for the increasing number of tourists who are attracted to architectonical and religious monuments, cultural remains. Also, the folklore cultural events represent a potential that needs to be valorised in order to develop the Arges tourism.

The objective of increasing the competitiveness of Arges tourism can be achieved by improving the image and promoting the existing tourist potential. Also, the areas around the north of the county can reach an economic revigoration by establishing some new business and new jobs, by marketing the natural food products coming from the population households. Thus, the inequalities from the north of the county could disappear (Corina Grigore, 2009), compared to the ones in the south. Therefore, we should make an analysis of the cultural tourist potential of Arges county.

In the next table, we make an analysis of the cultural-historical potential of Arges county, showing the strong and weak points.

Table 1. The SWOT analysis of the cultural potential of Arges county

STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESSES**
Rich cultural patrimony Arts monuments of religious type, monasteries and churches financed by great waivodes, medieval fortresses, Roman remains, monuments and archaeological sites. The rich historical and ethnographical heritage materialized into a list of monuments from the national cultural patrimony as objectives of local and national importance. Memorial houses, theme museums, Cultural festivals Folklore events Rich traditions. Popular costumes whose originality was kept unspoiled Specific gastronomy Wine-growing tradition Institutions for performances (theatre, philharmonic, Popular orchestra, Popular dance groups) Presence of European transport corridors, highway A1 (Bucureşti - Piteşti)	Insufficient investment in developing and promoting cultural objectives Insufficient promotion of cultural events allowing a higher absorption of tourists Insufficient funds to preserve buildings and edifices, especially to preserve the architecture Arranged parking for tourists close to tourist objectives Lack of means of transport to take the tourists to the most remote monasteries, fortresses etc. Absence of tourist signs Absence of an airport Poor organisation of tourism operators regarding cultural tourism Old tourism infrastructure, most of the accommodation structure being of two or three stars and the leisure structures being built around the 70s'.
OPPORTUNITIES High potential of tourism development due to rich natural and cultural resources, as well as to the increase of the demand in cultural and religious tourism. Association of tourism operators to achieve common interests Financing tourism through non-reimbursable funds and national funds Development of entrepreneurship Expanding& modernizing the transport road network	THREATS Location of investors in certain areas, while neglecting other areas. Deepening the discrepancies between the south more developed areas and the north non-developed areas Lack of capital to support the economic investments Deepening the lack of balance between demand and offer on the labour market Insufficient financial means to develop the infrastructure Migration of personnel

Considering the tourist potential that Arges has, the local administrations and the business environments should exploit together these resources to increase the competitiveness of Arges county at regional and national level. Strategy achievement and implementation offer the premises of attracting non-reimbursable financing in the tourist field.

CONCLUSIONS

The institutional offer of the cultural tourism should agree with the cultural mission of the respective place, thus enlarging the target segments. The offered products should maintain the qualities of a spiritual asset, but also to take over the touristic ones without loosing its value.

The cultural tourism can become an important source of income, a marketing element for different places, provided they are able to exploit it. It is also an essential element of the regional economic development.

For the cultural tourism to express itself at full potential and to support the economic development, it should not be regarded as an isolated act, but in interdependence with the local authorities and the local cultural institutions and with the interests of the tourism operators. The cultural tourism is first of all a strategic option assuming, mandatorily, the existence of an interesting spiritual patrimony for a particular category of culture consumers: the tourists.

The cultural tourism, besides the rural one, is the main type of tourism that Arges county can offer at European level. It can be an engine for developing and promoting the Arges cultural identities, by offering the neighbouring communities the chance of preserving the cultural patrimony and the resource for local social-economic development.

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