

DARK TOURISM - NEW FORM OF TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *It is discussing, increasingly more often, in contemporary tourism, about new elements that enhances the appearance and development of new forms of tourism, including dark tourism which is based on the increasingly desire of modern tourist to achieve spiritual journeys, which have as attractions- deaths, disasters, atrocities, torture methods and other such issues. This subject has awoke our interest because we can find in Romania demand for this form of tourism but also various possibilities to use it in Romanian tourist circuits and also in the development of authentic tourism products with this subject. For Romania, this new form of tourism showed interest to academic research and to media, but in tourism literature we find a vacuum of information, being quite difficult to identify and label as dark tourism product a particular tourist site, a certain attraction or exhibition associated with death and dark, sinister and frightening elements, but we will try to discover certain components of this kind in Romanian tourism products.*

Key words: tourism, dark tourism, form of tourism, Romania

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Introduction

Tourism has many forms of action beginning with the oldest, if we talk about recreation tourism, balneary or business tourism and ending with the newest and modern forms such as dental tourism, medical, business, spelunking tourism and, why not, dark tourism. In the branch literature we find the following classification of tourism's forms after basic motivation: mountaineering, balneary, coastal, cultural, scientific tourism, MICE tourism (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions), business tourism, weekend tourism, automotive tourism, leisure tourist resorts, etc. Romania is a tourist destination for all ages and all seasons, as has a variety of attractions scattered in various areas, which satisfy the preferences of the skier, climber, hunter, but also of tourists who come to rest, for heliotherapy or spa.

In recent years, Romania has become a favorite destination for many Europeans, rivaling and being in competition with Bulgaria, Greece, Italy or Spain. Romania's tourist vocation is the complexity and variety of the landscape, the richness of surface water or groundwater, transitional continental climate, rich and diversified vegetation and fauna, the great hospitality of the people.

It is talking over and over about tourism development and an effective way to revive the Romanian tourism consists in proposing and supporting a comprehensive program to create attractive tourism products, to bring and develop around them a real network of corporate service providers. In this category of attractive tourism products are included those from dark tourism's category, because of increasingly demand especially from young people, Romania disposing of various possibilities of implementation.

Conceptual aspects of dark tourism

The concept of dark tourism, even if it is new to us, we can say that it was conceptualized many years ago. There are different definitions and ways of expression in the branch literature.

The term "dark tourism" was introduced, for the first time, in 1996 by Malcolm Foley and John Lennon[9], the research dating from the period 1980 to 1990, even if it is not a recent phenomenon because since oldest times existed tourist destinations. Dark tourism is considered the act of trips and places to visit, of attractions and performances that have as main theme suffering, macabre and death, real or reconstructed.

The literature is full of senses of this new form of tourism, discovering among others as synonyms of the term we chose, "dark tourism", those in English: "thanatourism", "fright tourism", "tragedy tourism", "morbid tourism",

"black spot tourism", "disaster tourism", "horror tourism", "grief tourism", "extreme thanatourism", "hardship tourism", "tourism warfare", „genocide tourism", "dark heritage" and even "phoenix tourism".

„Thanatourism” comes from the Ancient Greek "thanatos" which signifies death, being associated with dark tourism, but reporting particularly to violent death; it is used in fewer contexts than specific terms "black tourism" and „grief tourism”. It includes castles and battlefields as Culloden near Inverness, Scotland; places with disasters, whether natural or manmade, like Ground Zero New York; prisons recently opened to the public, such as Beaumais prison in Anglesey Wales; or center constructed as Dungeon from London. One of the most famous dark tourism destinations are Nazi concentration camp from Auschwitz in Poland; Chernobyl from the former USSR or Bran Castle and Poienari Castle from Romania.

Natalija author Minić [3] states that "this form of tourism is very permissive, meaning that any "story" can be told to visitors so can be build attractive packages, unique for the practice of dark tourism, each country having places, legends and stories which may be subject to dark tourist destinations". The author affirms her arguments due the myth of Dracula embedded very well in the foreign`s memory, which is associated with Transylvania because of Bram Stoker's bestseller.

In Romania, there are few authors who wrote about Romanian dark tourism. Alexander Dincovici approached the subject from the fascination perspective of death on tourists, explaining the success behind of this type of tourism product in an article about the exhibition at the Antipa Museum from Bucharest -"The Human Body": "Its experience gives you some near death, removes at least some of the taboos that accompany it and may, in addition, to make you feel good. Even if, in a perverse aspect, the vision of death gives you satisfaction. Satisfaction to be missed and to approach near it as a spectator, proud and disconnected, who look at it from the top. It is kind of voyeurism, but a winner voyeurism who defeated at least one death. The death of another. "[11]

Motivation for dark tourism

In order to develop a form of tourism should be a good motivation to achieve the need for dark tourism.

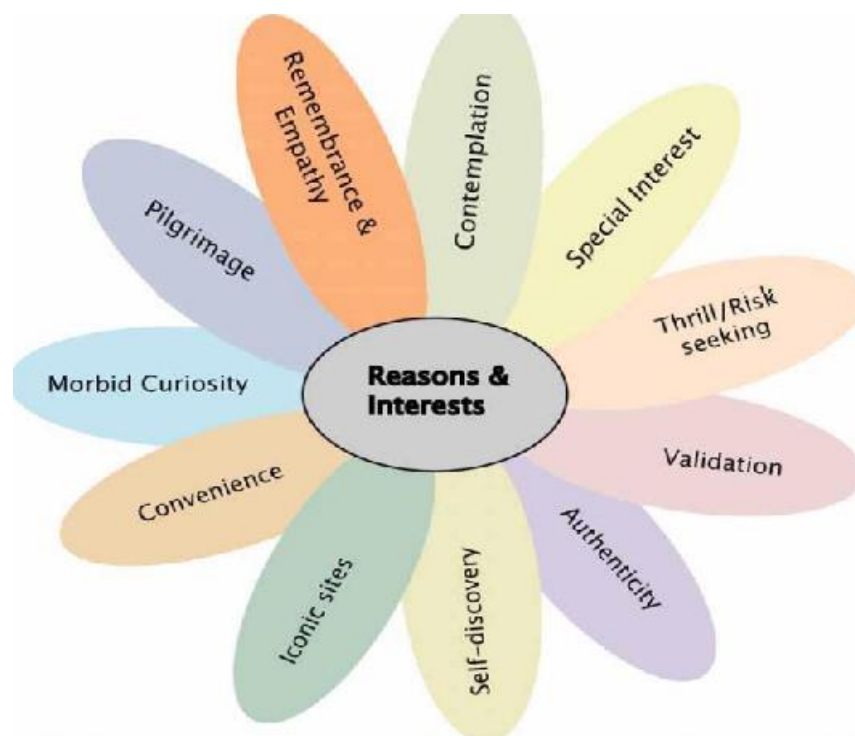
At a conference on tourism topics held in 2010 at Eselnita, Mehedinti, was made an analogy between this form of tourism very successfully promoted in America, having as central element that haunted houses, which beautifully presented and stuffed with scary stories become real attractions, and Romanian tourism who does not know to create its own stories. It is called in speech at the famous line of the movie actor Mircea Dinica, in the movie „Philanthropy”: "The helping hand that does not tell a story, is not receiving alms".

We are, thus, facing a challenge to create the need for dark tourism by bringing to present some written or unwritten stories about phenomena that may be components of the dark tourism product. And it is not difficult as long as they exist, but should animate and staged them.

A societal fascination with site of death and destruction is neither new nor a specifically western phenomena, attending public executions has long been a popular outing. The term 'dark tourism' was coined to describe "the phenomenon that encompasses the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commoditized death and disaster sites" (Lennon & Foley, 1996). Tourist visitations to sites of death and disasters are becoming a pervasive feature of modern society (Stone, 2010) examples include the Killing Fields of Cambodia, the ruins of Hurricane Katrina and the site of Ground Zero, where commercial journeys and experiences are provided to individuals wishing to „interact with the macabre”. [6.8]

Also, Stephanie Marie Yuill, in the summary of one of the most cited thesis about dark tourism, drops out information connected to the tourist motivations for these forms of tourism: "People have always been fascinated by what is related to death. Even when an accident happens on the street, they slow down and being curious they are interested to find out "spicy" or gloomy details. But their fascination goes beyond a highway and penetrates even tourism domain. Today many destinations that are related to the natural phenomenon of death attract millions of tourists, the list of destinations is increasing each year due to the increasing popularity of these tourism products.” The author believes that there are various reasons for visiting these dark places: the motivations of identity, historical motivations, curiosity, search for novelty, adventure, education, nostalgia, memories, artifacts, sacralization of what they saw, framing the event and elevation, consecration, social and mechanical reproduction of what they visited.

In the Ria Dunkley`s opinion, the main reasons why a tourist would choose such a form of tourism can be found in the image below:



Source: Ria Dunkley Reasons for Dark tourism, 2005:<http://pages.123-reg.co.uk/pstone1-995478/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/riadunkleypresentationTSeventlondonoct2006.pdf>

It should be realized that death has fascinated all of us, at one time, even if we talk about our death or of others, for which we have developed a sense of respect and reverence or curiosity and superstition. We find motivation for dark tourism nowadays as an extension of the desire of young people to watch horror films, of their fascination for the boundary between reality and fiction, of the paranormal phenomena which feed our curiosity and imagination.

Dark tourism has existed since ancient times even if it was supplied many times as religious or pilgrimage tourism products. As concrete examples we have Roman gladiators games where death and suffering were behind the show and the audience wanted such a spectacle, the Roman Colosseum being considered one of the first sights of this kind. Another example is the popularization of public executions in the medieval period until the nineteenth century, in the awareness of those watching the heinous punishment and even deterrence. Remnants of these periods and events are found at Tyburn in London where were raised stands to offer viewpoints. Still in London, there is the possibility of reliving a round of terror, the first in England in 1838, which consists of a trip by rail in Cornwall with two criminals and also of guided tours of the horror of Victorian period, like Chamber of Horrors exhibition of Madame Tussauds, or to "houses of correction" of the nineteenth century, which were built galleries to be visited.

However, dark tourism in the last century has become more widespread and varied. Smith (1998), for example, suggests that sites or destinations associated with the war probably are "the largest unique category of tourist attractions in the world" (see also Henderson, 2000). However, war-related attractions, although diversified, are a subset of all the tourist sites associated with death and suffering (Dann, 1998).

Among the many tourist products of the same nature and destination, there are always differences arising from the fact that the environment where they are integrated is different from one product to another. We can explain this also due the fact that touristic environment is a combination between an artificially created place and a natural one which is chosen and unique. We believe that we are fully entitled to say that marketing strategy based on differentiation of tourism services, concerning dark tourism it proves its importance in the fact that, as the supply of service benefits will be more diverse and more nuanced in terms of quality, as the risk of disappointing tourist will decrease and, therefore, decreases also the risk of alienation, in future periods, of a part of potential customers, which currently has ample option possibilities before touristic offers competing more attractive, located within various destinations.

Romanian „dark” attractions

After the era of communism in Romania, which ended with the bloody revolution of 1989, Romania has experienced a true turning point in comparison with the communist past and sought various positions on the world market, based on commercial projects competing with other countries in the region.

Romania has been progressing by practicing a proper marketing to promote the legend of Vlad Tepes, nicknamed Dracula. The beginning of tourist demand for "Dracula tourism" dates from 1960, but has experienced a

significant growth in 1970, being tolerated but not encouraged by the communist government. Since the 1980s, the demand for this type of tourism decreased with time but began in 1989 to gain back momentum.

To make this type of tourism known, in Bucharest was established in 1991 The Dracula Society is extensively promoting this myth by organizing events on this topic like tours between 3-7 days with the itinerary Bucharest, Targoviste, Poienari, Borgo's pass, Sibiu and other destinations that are related to this myth; demonic processes for "Halloween" into Dracula's castle; event Miss Transylvania - Countess Dracula; and "the most loyal fans of Dracula", after several trials held in a citadel of Brasov, acquire the title of Knights and Ladies members in Transylvania.

Also, there was a plan to build a Dracula Park, but was abandoned in 2006, currently selling travel packages that contain this kind of touristic product being sold and designed by various travel agencies or companies specializing on the subject. For example, only in 2005 more than 20 foreign and Romanian companies were selling packages based on this myth. Like other dark destinations, also this (Dracula) has benefited from the contribution of books, blockbuster movies that have sparked interest in this myth, like the series of films with Dracula produced by Hammer Films, where is performing the actor Christopher Lee (1958 -1973), the movie "Dracula" made by Bram Stoker's book (1973) with Jack Palance in the title role and one with Gary Oldman in the title role and the recent movies - "Dracula-the dark Prince" (2013) and "Dracula untold (the Untold Story)" (2014), etc.

Following research in order to establish marketing strategies of these destinations, it was found that the myth of Count Dracula has become a major brand of the region Transylvania, and also of Romania. As a form of dark tourism, this topic offers to visitors fun, amusement, safety, visiting Transylvania, Halloween costumes, experiences "horror" in a safe environment.

Aside from Transylvania and Dracula, there are other areas where it could achieve dark tourism in Romania.

Banffy Castle is located in Cluj and it was declared a historical monument in 1990. It is being restored and is one of the major baroque attractions in Transylvania. Ex noble residence, Bontida Castle, is not impressing only by the architecture and grandeur, but also through a series of stories about the ghosts of prisoners who were tortured and killed by German soldiers. Here seems to have been photographed some strange entity.

Bride's Crucifix in Gaesti is a monument built in 1936 in memory of a nobleman philanthropist's daughter from Campulung, Margaret, who died in a terrible car accident, in the day of her wedding. A series of tragic events happened after the death of the bride strengthen the words of those who believe that the place would become a curse one because since then has occurred many accidents, where unmarried young people die.

Chiajna Monastery located in Bucharest was built in neoclassical style and completed in 1790. It is one of the most important churches of our land, but it never got to be sanctified. It seems to have been assaulted by the Turks, who thought that was a city. At that time, many people sick of plague, including the Metropolitan of Romania, Cozma, who died in the church. The monastery is now a ruin, its dome fell in the earthquake of 1977. Legend says that the church would be cursed and that people can hear bells, although they no longer exists. But these rumors did not prevent climbers to climb it or church representatives either, who intend to restore it.

The cave of Zamolxes from Polovragi is a cave in the small town of Polovragi where the legend says that it was the home of the all-mighty Dacian God. It is a mystical place where, as the legend says, the dacian priests performed many rituals. The name of Polovragi comes from the name of a plant "Polovraga", which is extinct now, but, as to the local legends, in ancient times, it had the power to heal any disease or wound.

Hoiia Baci Forest from Cluj became famous in the last 50 years after testimonies of several people who claim to have noticed this strange phenomena. Strange shapes, nebulous light, occurrences of unidentified flying objects, strange humanoid appearances, twisting trees in intervals of tens of seconds, moving radioactive fields or squiggly sounds were, for years, the subject of controversial discussions that have sometimes been caught scientists too. To these things have contributed photos that various people passionate with Hoiia Baci Forest's phenomena managed to surprise them. In 1993, the researcher Adrian Patrut identified in Baci Forest a particular area which he called it "Paragraph 3 active welfare". The area seems to be the center of maximum activity for paranormal phenomena observed in the heart of Transylvania.

The Iulia Hasdeu Castle is a folly house built in the form of a small castle by historian and politician Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu in the city of Câmpina, Prahova County, Romania. The only descendant of Hasdeu family was Iulia, a prodigy child, born on 14th November 1869 who died eighteen years later, on 17th September 1888 because of an unmerciful tuberculosis. At the age of 11, she graduated at "St. Sava" Gymnasium and the Music Academy of Bucharest (piano and canto). As a pupil of the "Sévnigné" College of Paris, where she continued her secondary school studies, Iulia aroused her teacher's admiration for her brilliant intelligence. She took private lessons in drawing, painting, piano playing and canto. She continuously wrote poems, prose and theater plays. At 16, she attended the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at "La Sorbonne" in Paris. Meanwhile, Iulia attended courses at the School of Higher Studies in Paris. Her literary creation was to appear posthumously, under her father's careful watch, at "Hachette" Paris, in three volumes. Deeply affected by his daughter's death, an event that dramatically shook and changed his life, Hasdeu started in 1893 to build a castle on a small piece of land in Câmpina. He claimed that his belated daughter provided the plans for building the castle during sessions of spiritualism (which took much of Hasdeu's imagination and time after Iulia's death). The building was completed in 1896. The castle is built based on the magic numbers 3 and 7, having, for example 3 towers, 3 underground rooms and steps formed of 7 steps each.

Statistics regarding Romania`s dark tourism

Bran Castle in the Carpathians of Romania is certainly the most valuable brand in the world. In every corner of the world, the great building is the first landmark that foreigners think when it comes to Romania. And this is seen through the number of visitors and the queues which are collected every day, especially in high season. Alexandru Priscu, PR and marketing director of the castle, spoke in an interview that in 2009, when Bran Castle changed into private management, that the number of foreign visitors has increased every year. We could say that this defies crisis, if we think that tourists budgets have suffered from the recession.

In the top are tourists coming from EU. There are visitors from the USA, Israel, UK, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Hungary. Definitely an overwhelming percentage is attracted by the myth of Dracula, the vampire Count Carpathian legend. There are tourists who come to know the true history of the place.

Only last year, 540,000 tourists visited Bran Castle. And from 2009 until now there were over 2.3 million visitors.

Also, given the beauty of one of the most impressive caves in Gorj and investments that were made in the area for its preservation, Polovragi Cave attracts like a magnet, thousands of tourists annually. Only this year the tourist attraction was visited by approximately 25 000 tourists.

In Romania, annual values increasing the number of tourists attracted by morbid/dark destinations are somewhere between 5.4 and 11%.

Dark tourism represents the choice for creating a solid, mature touristic brand because it is able to correctly promote and conserve the country`s true historical origins by laying on the table concrete places and facts regarding our past, while at the same time being able to keep up with current trends that are evolving in the global scene of tourism. Also, dark tourism attract thousands of foreign visitors, fact that will create a good opportunity to promote Romania and to be known as a beautiful country full of different attractions of all kind.

Conclusions

In the above it is noted that dark tourism is a new form of approach the tourism in the world and, why not, in Romania. Expanding outward tourism market requires adapting Romanian tourism products to the requirements and needs of present tourists.

We believe that dark tourism still can not be developed in Romania as an independent form of travel except certain situations in some proper themed circuits. On the other hand, it can be a part of a travel package to achieve an appropriate combination to attract tourists eager to experience such kind of tourism.

Dark tourism may be the perfect choice to create a mature and solid tourism brand for tourists eager for such a kind of tourism because it is able to properly promote and preserve the true historical origins of the country by concrete places and facts about our past, while being able to keep up with current trends, which are evolving on the world`s tourism scene. Thus, because of dark tourism, Transylvania became a more attractive tourist destination and Romania is known to the world as the birthplace of Count Dracula and because of the myth that arose around him. This example can be followed and expanded with other objectives in Romania as well.

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