

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF BLACK TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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***Abstract.** The attraction for bloody events attracted mankind, like a spectacle. Today, the places where these events took place are more and more important tourist attractions. The aim of this study is to come up with a classification of these places that can attract, that can become points of tourist interest. In addition to the description of the events that took place in these places, new things can be discovered, especially historical, related to causality, thus going to a much deeper knowledge. The methodology uses empirical analysis, based on the method of the applied questionnaire, to which 111 people answered. The study shows that the main results show a clear image of interest in places where phenomena that can be more difficult to explain are attractive, and this attractiveness is maintained by curiosity and the desire to be better informed about certain places or events with this kind of value. In conclusion, the attraction of places where either there are phenomena that can be more difficult to understand or explain, or the places where events with dark load took place, are more and more attractive, for all categories of age, occupation or place of affiliation or religious.*

***Keywords.** Black tourism, cemeteries, legend, local culture, paranormal*

INTRODUCTION

From immemorial time, mankind has been drawn to the dark aspects of life; yet travelling to places associated with death, violence, or tragedy does not represent a current phenomenon. For example, about 2,000 years ago, during the Roman Empire, people gathered in the famous Colosseum to watch the bloody battles between gladiators. The most representative period of cruelty was the Middle Ages, when, on the contrary, people came from afar to attend public events involving physical punishment, such as beheading, torture, or hanging. Pilgrim journeys to holy places can also be

considered dark acts. Even though there has been a decline in popularity over time, these activities have not disappeared, but have taken on a different form to adapt to current standards. Over time, legendary tourism has established itself for such tourism, leading to the development of certain brands on them (Aro et al., 2018; Clark et al., 2005; Geyskens et al., 2018; Stephens et al., 2011; Dincă et al., 2015).

Black tourism is an umbrella term that covers a variety of tourist attractions associated with wars, slavery, crime, prisons, cemeteries, paranormal activities, areas where natural or nuclear disasters have occurred, places of death or burials of important celebrities or places in which conflicts take place. It can be said that the heritage of black tourism is diverse, some activities can be classified as "darker" than others. Thus, several researchers have developed the idea of the spectrum of black tourism, the activities can be considered "darker" or "less dark" depending on the intensity of the moment, its authenticity, its purpose and the motivation of tourists, being considered pale tourism. The extremities of this spectrum can be considered diametrically opposed, for example: education / entertainment; authentic / nonauthentic.

All forms of tourism can have a much stronger impact as they are supported by creative forms of presentation and consumption (Pintilii et al., 2017; Casidy et al., 2018; Iancu et al., 2014).

BLACK TOURISM IN ROMANIA

Romania, a country located in southeastern Central Europe, deserves its place on the map of black tourism due to its significant cultural and historical heritage and folklore rich in myths, stories and legends, Romania being the home of dragons, "iele" (female magical forest spirits), undead and Count Dracula (Teodorescu et al., 2012; Segovia, 2009).

The spectrum of black tourism in Romania is diverse, comprising several categories, all with a significant "dark" load, capturing in the present study the tourism genre based on the offer of cemeteries, Dracula's tourism and paranormal tourism, these belonging in a greater measure to dark tourism.

These three mentioned categories capitalize on the Romanian stories, myths and legends about important personalities of the country, about long gone times, about places shrouded in mysteries or about fantastic characters.

Although cemeteries have been designed as eternal places, some are important tourist attractions due to their antiquity, personalities, stories behind the tombs, but also the historical, artistic and architectural value of

the monuments in their composition, which make them really resemble open-air museums. These cemeteries represent a significant part of the country's cultural heritage, being visited due to their historical values, but also for recreational purposes.

Similarly to classical museums, these cemeteries are quiet places with wood, stone, marble or bronze carvings, busts, round-box carvings, bas-reliefs, monuments, decorative objects, paintings, poems, jokes, quotes, works by important people, culture, biographies and stories. Thus, cemeteries should not be perceived as macabre places, but as parts of history, which, through funerary buildings, express the culture of the place.

People who visit cemeteries to recreate, contemplate and discover monuments of art and architecture, natural landscapes and the history of places can be called practitioners of cemetery tourism.

The "Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe" established in 2001, has drawn up a map of the most significant cemeteries in Europe, which includes Romania with only two cemeteries, the Bellu Cemetery in Bucharest and the Hajongard Cemetery in Cluj-Napoca. However, in Romania there are many more significant cemeteries, which are important tourist attractions, such as: Veșel Cemetery in Săpânța, Cemetery of the Poor in Sighetul Marmăției, Medieval Jewish Cemetery in Siret, Jewish Cemetery in Iloaiei Bridge, Eternal Cemetery, The Evangelical Church Cemetery in Sighișoara, the Jewish Cemetery in Alba Iulia, the Living Cemetery in Sulina, the Animal Paradise Cemetery in Cățelu Commune, the Philanthropy Jewish Cemetery in Bucharest and the Heroes of the Revolution Cemetery in Bucharest.

Cemeteries are important tourist attractions that reflect certain eras and parts of society (Fig. 1). For example, the Merry Cemetery in Săpânța reflects the traditional values, the joy and optimism, the humorous wit of the people of Maramureș, the Cemetery of the Poor in Sighetul Marmăției told the story of thousands of political detainees who were killed after communist repression the events of 1941 during the Pogrom in Iasi, while the Bellu Cemetery in Bucharest hide countless unfulfilled love stories. From this point of view, the cemeteries in Romania have an immeasurable tourist potential that must be capitalized for the preservation and promotion of the Romanian cultural and historical heritage (Teodorescu et al., 2017).

The diverse spectrum of black tourism is also felt in this category, as the cemeteries mentioned above, such as the Cemetery of the Heroes of the Revolution in Bucharest, the Cemetery of the Poor in Sighetul Marmăției or the Jewish Cemetery at Iloaiei Bridge have a strong negative emotional impact on visitors; this negative impact is due to the tragic stories they

evoke. At the other end of the spectrum there are cemeteries such as the Animal Heaven Cemetery, which is a place to commemorate man's best friends, or the Merry Cemetery in Săpânța, which, by its very name, indicates that it has nothing to do with the dark side of black tourism, presenting in a unique, satirical way the life of the Maramures village through painted images and playful epitaphs engraved on graves (Szemkovics et al, 2018).

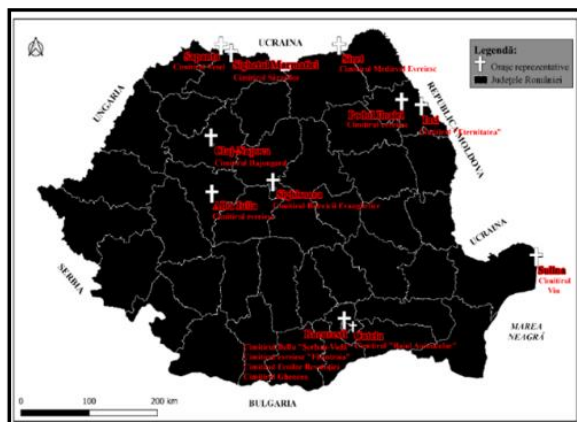


Fig. 1. Tourist attractions associated with cemetery tourism



Fig. 1 a. Bellu Cemetery - Gheorghieff Bankers Mausoleum



Fig. 1. B. Cemetery Vesel, Săpânța



Fig. 1. c. Hajongard Cemetery



Fig.1. d. The "Heaven of Animals" Cemetery

The next category is the legendary tourism, offered by the image of Count Dracula, which is the result of an increased demand from Western tourists. In recent decades, Romania, especially Transylvania, has become a sought-after destination by foreign tourists due to Dracula's myth, promoted mainly through Bram Stoker's novel "Dracula" written in the late nineteenth century, but also Hollywood cinema in which Romania is described as "Dracula's country" (Light, 2007; Teodorescu et al, 2016).

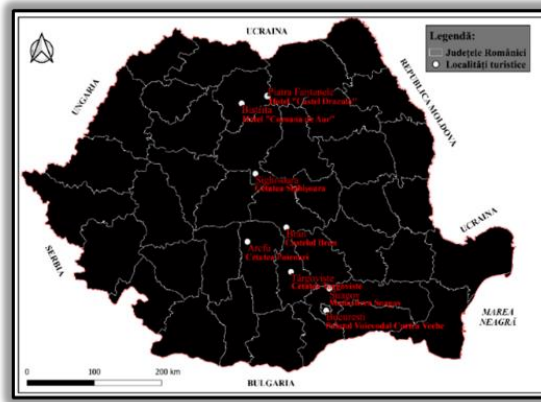


Fig. 2. Representative objectives for Dracula tourism



Fig. 2a. Bran Castle



Fig. 2b. Dracula Castle Hotel sursa



Fig. 2c. Poenari Fortress



Fig. 2d. Curtea Veche Voivodship Palace in Bucharest

Dracula's tourism in Romania is a combination of fiction and history, capitalizing on the stories behind the fictional character Dracula, as imagined by the writer Bram Stoker, but also the historical character "Dracula", represented by Prince Vlad Tepes. Thus, Dracula's tourism heritage consists of Poenari Fortress, Curtea Veche Voivodal Palace in Bucharest, Snagov Monastery, Targoviste Fortress and Sighisoara Fortress, associated with Vlad the Impaler, and Bran Castle, Dracula Castle Hotel in Piatra Fântânele and Coroana de Aur Hotel from Bistrita, associated with the character of the novel by the Irish writer. Also, in 2001 there was proposed to build a Dracula theme park that would have been the most spectacular tourist complex in the country, but the project was abandoned in 2006 due to organizational problems (fig. 2).

Legendary tourism or Dracula tourism in Romania is difficult to frame in a form of tourism, it includes literary, cinematographic, black tourism, but also heritage tourism, by capitalizing on the historical character, Vlad Țepeș (Hovi, 2014; Teodorescu, 2009; Reijnders, 2011; Scott et al., 2016). Although Dracula tourism can be much more associated with literary or film tourism, it is also a category of black tourism, dwelling at the bright, pale end of the spectrum, this being a form of tourism based on a dark story, centered around a mythological character who exudes terror among the villagers, but who does not have a strong emotional impact on visitors; it is meant to entertain, scare, expose in a comic, romantic, attractive, unusual way the myth of Count Dracula of Transylvania. Dracula tourism is the palest or most faded away form of black tourism, practiced by tourists with a low interest in death, but who are looking for scary, thrilling experiences based on fear. Dracula tourism is a unique form of tourism, which only Romania can capitalize on to its full potential, this country being the original "home of Dracula". The promotion of this form of tourism would contribute to the diversification of the tourist offer, being able to become a true national brand, which would attract important flows of tourists, passionate about the myth of Dracula (Fig. 2).

The last category is paranormal tourism. Although it is a less addressed topic in academia, lately the bizarre phenomena have caught the public's attention, leading to the emergence of the phenomenon of paranormal tourism. It can be defined as the journey to haunted places, places related to tragic events, where violent deaths took place, places shrouded in mystery that attract adventure enthusiasts and the unknown.

In Romania, although the heritage of paranormal tourism includes only two objectives, namely Hoia-Baciu Forest in Cluj County and Iulia Hasdeu Castle in Campina, they are known internationally due to the mystery in which they are shrouded (Fig. 3).

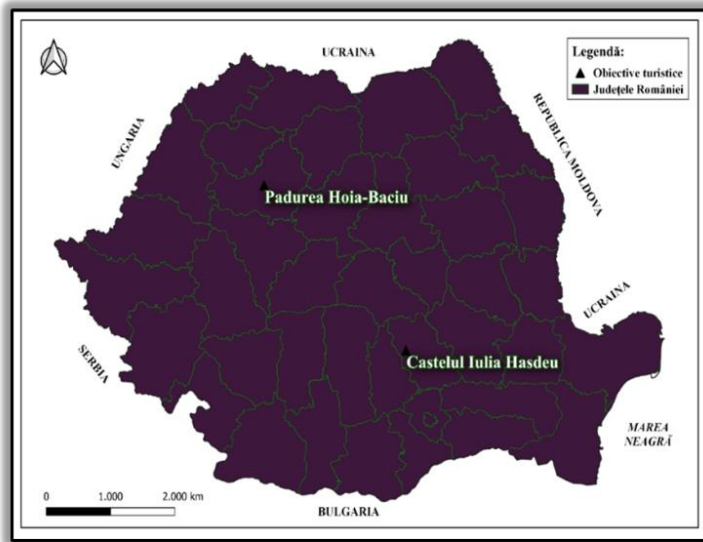


Fig. 3. Representative tourist objectives for paranormal tourism



Fig. 3a. Hoia-Baciu Forest, source:
<https://hoiabaciuforest.com/photogallery/#prettyPhoto>

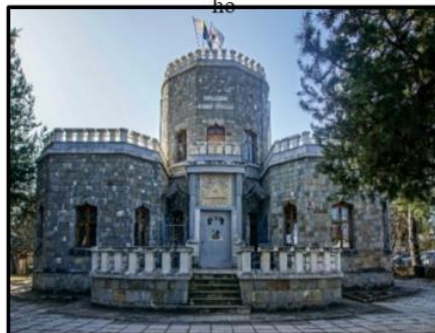


Fig. 3b. Iulia Hasdeu Castle, source:
<http://savizitam.ro/castelul-iulia-hasdeu.html>

Hoia-Baciu Forest in Cluj County, which has become known worldwide for its strange activities and legends about ghosts, UFOs, time travelers, twisted trees, shadows chasing visitors, strange sounds and lights, this being ranked by BBC in the top 5 most haunted places in the world.

The castle in Câmpina was built at the end of the 19th century, by Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, according to the plans of his daughter, Iulia, which she transmitted to him from the other world through spiritualism sessions. Iulia Hasdeu Castle is an altar of worship, in which Julia's father took refuge after her death.

This, together with Julia's tomb in Bellu Cemetery, are considered the only spiritualist temples in the world. The castle is a symbol of paranormal tourism due to the legends about how Julia's spirit could be seen in the castle garden or on the balcony, about the nights when the locals could hear her playing the piano to her father's applause or about the spiritualism sessions in which Julia, from the world beyond, gave his father advice on various matters, even told him about his previous lives, and gave him instructions on how to build the two temples that Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu had erected in her memory.

All that once said, paranormal tourism is a new form of tourism, but one that is appealing to tourists intrigued by its unknown, through mysterious stories.

STUDY RESULTS

The results of the study follow the answers provided by the 111 respondents of the objectives in the three categories presented. Questions about the attractiveness of these goals provide a suggestive and clear picture of the attractiveness of such goals (on a scale of 1-5). The purpose of this type of questions was to discover the attractiveness of the tourist objectives that are part of the black tourism in Romania and the reason why this type of objectives may lead to the satisfaction of those interested in such tourism.

Cemeteries are attractive places from a tourist point of view, so the most attractive seems to be the Merry Cemetery in Sapanta. Funny lyrics attract tourists. Equally, the place attracts by the beauty of the place, by the colors, by its uniqueness offered by the way there were built these monuments.

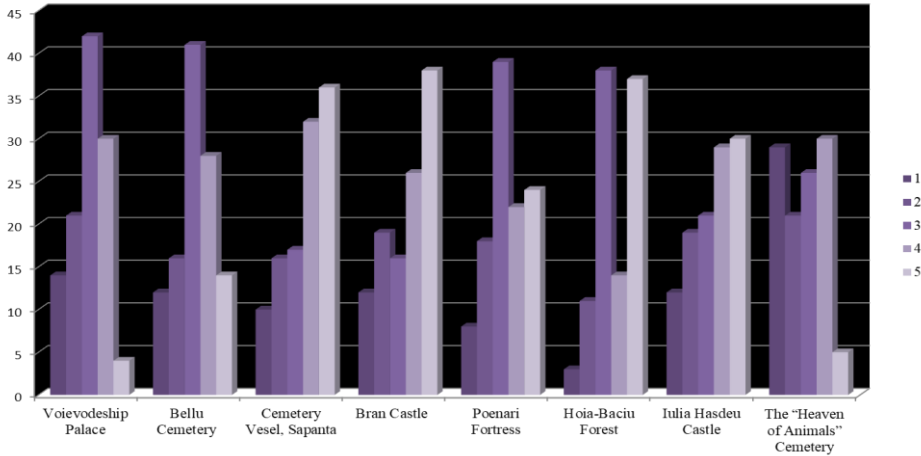


Fig. 4. The attractiveness of black tourism

There are also tourists who visit this cemetery, who are also influenced by the fact that death is a sad moment, but giving it yet a slight funny connotation could simply make it easier to get over this unfortunate event.

Belu Cemetery is attractive for the architecture of the funerary monuments, for the personalities who find their place here forever. History can be understood by reading the information on these funerary monuments. Many historical personalities, artists, poets, educated people and not only, represent the points of attraction for those who want to discover "a lost world".

On the other hand, monumental constructions, such as palaces or fortresses that have a dark charge in their history, especially those related to the bloody voivode Vlad Tepes, are for many a tourist attraction. The attractiveness of these objectives is rated as medium to high. The recent arrangements make from these tourist attractions more and more appealing points of touristic magnetism.

The paranormal tourism offered by Horia Baciui Forest from Cluj County and by Iulia Hasdeu Castle from Campina is gaining more and more attractiveness.

The motivation or the main reason that the respondents offered as an answer, is "curiosity", as they want to know more about the tragedies and mysteries of the past that black tourism capitalizes on. The second reason chosen was the "unique experience", the black tourism being practiced to a large extent in authentic places, where the respective events took place. Thus, visitors have the most real experiences. Also, black tourism is practiced "to learn more about the cultural heritage of the location" and "for

tourists to get acquainted with the myths and legends of the place", through this form of tourism being presented both real events that marked history, as well as the fictitious elements of culture that together form the cultural heritage of black tourism (fig. 5).

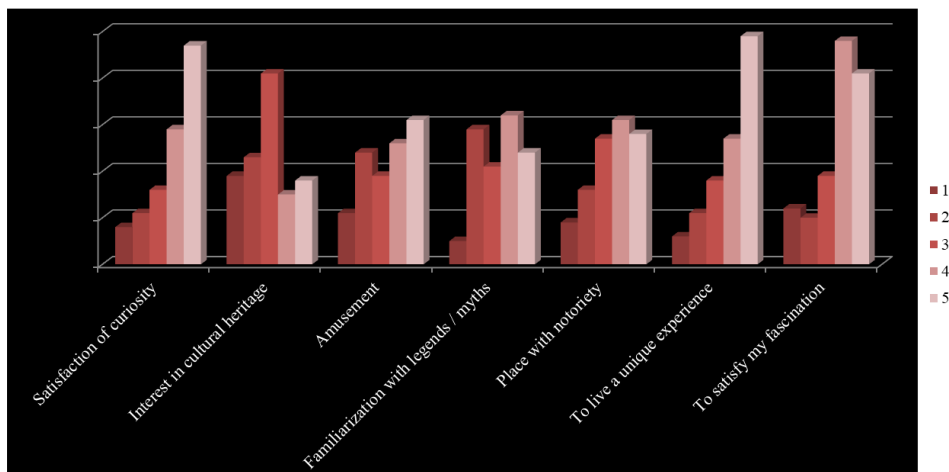


Fig. 5. Motivation of the respondents regarding the visit of the presented black tourism objectives

As a type of tourism preferred by tourists, legendary tourism or Dracula tourism has been ranked as the most attractive category of black tourism. There must be understood that the dark spectrum of black tourism has an educational purpose, exposing significant events in history that can have a strong negative emotional impact on the visitor, producing states of sadness, anxiety, while the pale spectrum of black tourism aims to entertain, shudder, to expose in a comic, romantic, attractive, unusual way the mysterious events, this being practiced by tourists with a low interest in death, but looking for scary, thrilling experiences based on fear. In such a context, it is necessary to analyze this type of tourism, because the educational side of black tourism is the one sought by the respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, from the beginning of the development of the tourist phenomenon until now, it has evolved and diversified, appearing new destinations and forms of tourism meant to satisfy the needs of the whole society. One of these forms of tourism is black tourism, which contradicts

the classical definition of tourism as "spending free time in a pleasant way", which is a special category of cultural tourism, which involves visiting places that have a direct link, or are associated with death, disasters and tragedies, capitalizing on a dark chapter in history.

Although the term "black tourism" was introduced into the literature recently in 1996 by Malcolm Foley and John Lennon, mankind has been drawn to the dark aspects of life, the bloody battles of the Colosseum gladiators, since ancient times. Public events in the Middle Ages involving physical punishment, such as beheading, torture, hanging, or pilgrimages, can be labeled as an early variant of "black tourism."

Romania deserves a special place on the map of black tourism due to the significant cultural-historical heritage acquired over time as a result of recent political events that have had tragic effects on society, but also the richness of myths and legends that surround some mysterious locations. This vast cultural-historical heritage led to the development of black tourism, which in Romania involves visiting places associated with wars, the Holocaust, the repression applied by Security forces during the communist regime, the Revolution of 1989, visiting cemeteries that are important tourist attractions as a result of the historical, artistic and architectural value of the monuments in their composition, of haunted cataloged places, but also of the places associated with a character that made Romania internationally known, Count Dracula.

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